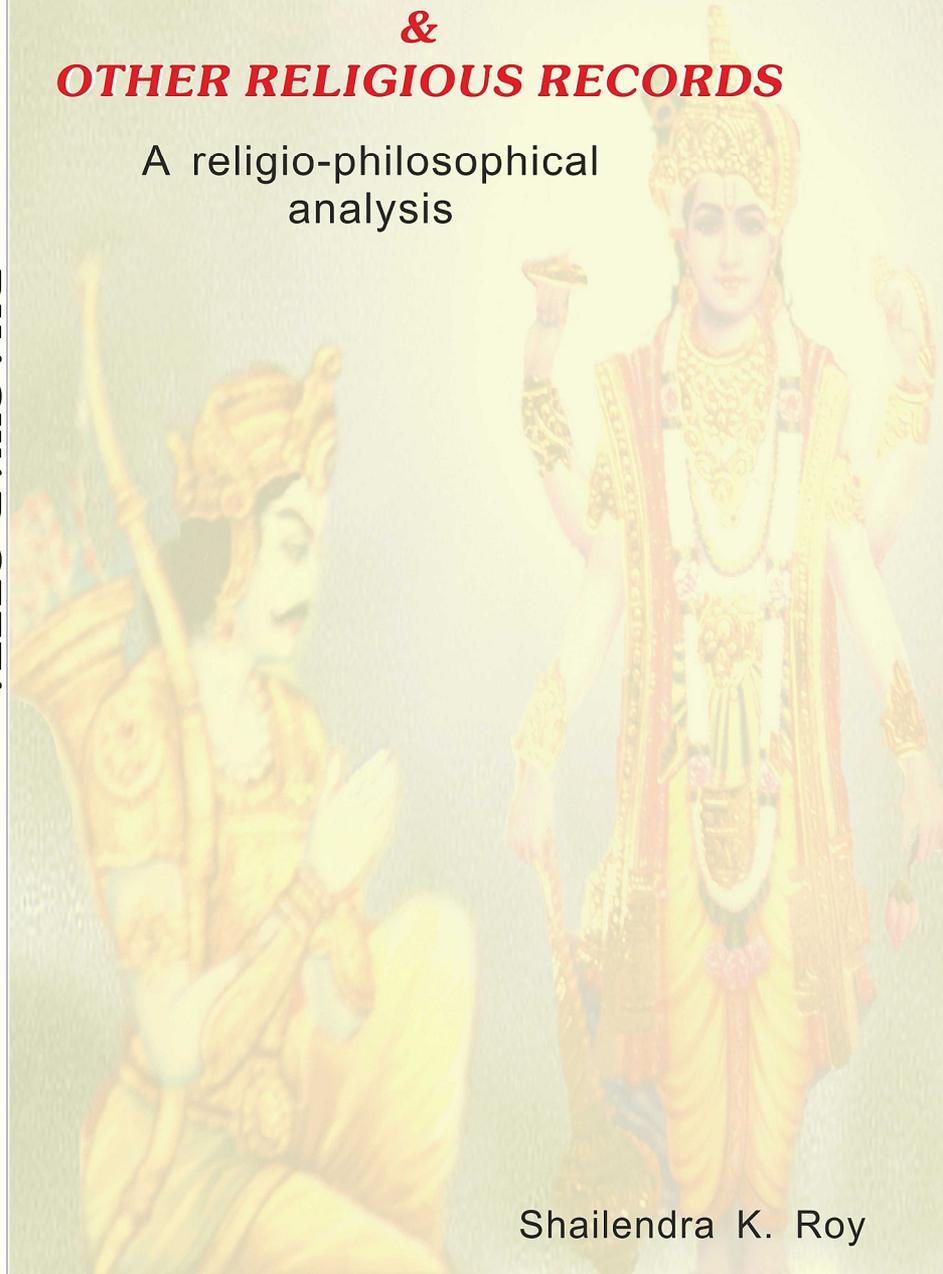


BHAGWAD GEETA **&** **OTHER RELIGIOUS RECORDS**

A religio-philosophical
analysis

BHAGWAD GEETA



Shailendra K. Roy

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&
Other religious records

A religio-philosophical analysis

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Preface

Bhagwad Geeta - considered one of the pillars of Vedanta or the *prasthantrayi*- is not a book of religion, revealed or otherwise, nor does it set forth a creed nor a faith nor a belief system nor a cut and dried system of philosophy nor a meticulously thought out logical system but a great message, delivered through the medium of Arjuna, to the humanity at large so that it may cope with individual and collective crisis for all times to come. The occasion was extremely critical when armies were poised for a final showdown, tempers were at their edges; deep emotional issues -- issues of life and death -- were at stake. It was a 'to do or to die' situation when a man was to kill his brothers, uncles, grandfathers, revered preceptors with whom he had grown up and mingled without any inhibition. For a brutish man there is no dilemma as he is blinded by his passion or his under-evolutionary status but for a sensitive, thinking man like Arjuna—representative of his age as well as of the times to come — a man of action as well as of thought, it was indeed a totally hopeless situation. Which sensitive man would not be driven to despair in such a situation? Who would not sink into depression in such bleak forebodings? The Geeta, thus, starts with '*Arjuna Vishad Yoga*'. *Vishad* or depression is the stepping stone to yoga. This, indeed, is a most interesting observation of the Geeta.

In such hopeless and hapless scenario, the Divine comes to the rescue of Man. For the Divine is the '*Suhridam sarvabhutani Gnatwa Mam Shantim Ricchati*' (Knowing Me as the real friend of all beings he enters into Peace). He is literally 'the friend, philosopher and guide' of all men, irrespective of caste, creed, country or color. He is seated in the hearts of all men. '*Ishwara Sarva Bhutanam Hridayeshe Arjuna Tishati, Bhramayan Sarva Bhutani Yantraruddhani Mayaya*' (Oh! Arjuna, the Divine is seated in the hearts of all beings and moves them by the

machination and power of Maya). His Inscrutable Power and Machine is what goes by the name of Maya.

In this scripture, therefore, one does not find any one philosophy being expounded or any particular religion preached or any dogma to be accepted or any logical system propounded or any particular God or His name propagated. These are best left to philosophers, thinkers, preachers or even to sectarian prophets. The Divine is beyond all symbols and symbolisms, sects and creeds, formulae and formulations. He is the Ultimate Refuge for all men, when they are in quandary. The Geeta is a scripture of synthesis of *yoga* and *sankhya*, of the synthetic and analytical approaches. The paths of karma (action), Jnana (knowledge), Dhyana (meditation), Bhakti (devotion) and Yoga (communion) all find their due place in that book. It is pointless to enquire who delivered that message— Shri Krishna on the eve of an epic war or some sage who later expanded the essence of that clarion call or whether it was an actual war situation or a symbolic war between Righteousness, exemplified by the Pandava brothers and a Hundred Evil personified as Kaurava brothers. The essence of that teaching, in every case, is a mighty one meant for the succeeding millennia. There is no iota of doubt that the Divine does incarnate Herself/Himself, from age to age, to push the humanity from its moribund situation to a higher level of existence, called evolution, so that 'it may live more abundantly'. He comes 'not to destroy but to fulfill' though in the process some weeds have to be cleared of. That is what one understands by '*yadayada hi dharmasya glanir bhavati bharata abhyuthanam adharmasya tada-atmanam srijamyaham. Paritranaya sadhunam vinasaya-cha-dushkritam dharma sthapanarthaya sambhami yuge yuge*' (whenever virtue subsides and vices prevail, to uphold righteousness, to protect the virtuous and to eliminate the evil-doers I manifest Myself from age to age, oh! Bharata). Incarnation of the Divine as a human person, 'the word becoming flesh' is not an everyday phenomenon but happens only at critical junctures of human existence - from time to time. Inspired men, men of spiritual genius, do appear, that too rarely, but an Incarnation or a Son of

Man is the rarest of the rare cases. Man with his limited faculties, is simply incapable of recognizing a Human Divine, unless and until, the Divine out of His immeasurable Grace, chooses to reveal Himself. And when he reveals Himself, it is for the entire world to see. When the Sun rises does it require anyone's certificate? If the Divine chooses to deliver a message nothing can obstruct the same. It has been well declared that *'Heaven and Earth shall pass away but My words shall not pass away'*.

The Geeta is a scripture of the 'Synthesis of Yoga' and of 'Integral Yoga' - terms first set out by Sri Aurobindo. Earlier to him, it was pithily symbolized by the monogram of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission designed by the genius of Vivekananda. This is the only scripture delivered in a war situation, not in a forest refuge or ashram nor in a lonely cave; nor to a gathering of attentive listeners nor to a multitude following an Incarnation or a prophet. In that manner, it stands apart from all other scriptures of the world including the Vedas and the Upanishads. This is not to denigrate or to belittle any one of the scriptures but only to highlight a distinctive feature of the Geeta. It is not for nothing that this message has been likened to the Ambrosial Milk which nourishes and immortalizes a person who cares to drink deep into it. For what can be more important to a person than to seek Immortality in this ephemeral world?

Men of action like, M.K. Gandhi likened it to the Universal Mother. Bal Gangadhar Tilak saw in it as an outstanding teacher of selfless action. Mystic, yogi and thinker like Aurobindo wrote classic 'Essays on the Geeta', Vivekananda gave scintillating insight into this great scripture, Dhammapada immediately reminds one of the Geeta. Arnold saw in it as the 'Song Celestial. Ancient acharyas like Adi Shankara found the book vindicating the philosophy of Advaita. Ramanuj and Madhava or saints like Gnyaneshwara wrote commentaries on it. Thus savants from the east as well as the west have been attracted to it. It is, so to say, a 'broad spectrum' panacea to which men of different belief systems have found solace excepting those whose 'hearts have been hardened'. It is the very epitome of universalism for it declares *'whosoever approaches Me in whatever manner, I approach him'*

accordingly; for all men follow Me in their diverse ways'. This can only be the Voice of the Godhead not of any sectarian god.

Among such a brilliant galaxy of sages, saints, great men, poets and scholars, why a non-entity dares to enter where 'angels fear to tread'? Because in an Oceanic ecosystem, there is space and necessity of whales as well as of coral reef forms to sustain the system. Time is dynamic, unfolding, evolving. There is always the necessity to harmonize a great message to the contemporary level of knowledge. An attempt, perhaps feeble, has been made. Wise readers will judge it on merits.

The book is the outcome of a faltering enquirer who gradually realized that the study of plant form is ultimately an offshoot of a much larger study called philosophy. The terrain, then, became more arduous. The Indian and the Western philosophies are just twins - one more intuitive while the other more discursive or speculative. Indian philosophies, both orthodox and heterodox, have been called *darshan* or vision. They were mostly born out of the realizations of seers. They attempted to grasp the Ultimate Reality not by thought alone but by *Aparoksh Anubhuti* or non-mediatory realization. Science also attempts to unravel the Truth. Einstein rightly felt that Religion and Science are complementary. He wrote "*.....I think that science without religion is lame and, conversely religion without science is blind*". There is no antagonism between the two. All sincere seekers would come to the Vedic realization that 'Truth is one; sages call it by different names'.

Those who are not well acquainted with the Hindu ethos would obviously, find it difficult to comprehend why a war engulfed the then civilized world centered around Greater India or Mahabharata. This was prior to Babylonia, Assyria, Egypt and even the Indus civilization. What were the exigencies for such a 'world war' and why a Divine message was needed? To facilitate the same, the first chapter is entitled "The Background". With regard to the Puranas there are two extreme viewpoints. The Indian masses literally believe in the mythology of the Puranas. The other extreme is represented by the semi-educated and the ultra-educated who consider them as mere fantasies written by halfwits of a bygone age. Hence some instances of their symbolism have been

incorporated with the hope that these works may be researched with greater sympathy.

Tele-vision and Tele-audience may appear miraculous to the 'rationalists'. But in-depth study of the human geniuses – mathematical, scientific, musical and spiritual would point towards untapped power or possibilities of the human mind. The second chapter deals with only some of the well documented instances of such possibilities. Many 'paranormal' phenomena have been left out otherwise the main focus of this enquiry would have been lost. The Vedantic view of life cannot be treated in isolation. Hence a comparative overview of other religions and of the basics of modern physics is the theme of the fourth chapter. Latest findings about the Old and the New Testaments have been incorporated for the liberal followers of these two faiths. It may interest others as well. The underlying theme of the Geeta is the subject matter of the present work. Obviously philosophical questions are bound to arise. These have been attempted in as simple a manner as possible as the author is neither a philosopher nor a specialist of the subject. The entire exercise is of a preliminary nature. An in-depth consideration of this great scripture is left for the future which, in any case, is always uncertain.

The views expressed here are entirely of the author. Sanskrit mantras/slokas quoted in the book have been translated into English by the author otherwise the source is properly indicated. Any other quotation, recent or ancient, has been duly acknowledged. The author would welcome a critical appraisal of this work. Dogmatism and its offspring fanaticism have been a bane of the human society. The author would be deeply satisfied if this work contributes even infinitesimally, towards that goal of liberalism.

Acknowledgement

The author first expresses his inestimable sense of debt to his mother. The Taittiriya Upanishad says that the mother is primary of all gods. Nothing can repay that debt. After the formative period, 'years of wandering and years of learning' (Goethe), in an intellectual sense, commenced. The initial guiding star was his father, whom, as a boy, he saw him burning midnight lamp in pursuit of his Indological studies. In those days electricity was hardly available in suburban towns of India but he doggedly pursued his work after the tiring office work of the British Indian Government.

Then, as a young student he found in Dr. V. Puri, dedicated teacher and researcher. A man, according to the Hindu ethos, is indebted to all the past seers. This has been called the *Rishi Rin* (ऋषि ऋण). This book is an effort to repay that enormous debt of gratitude. Also to the huge body of students, who by their questions have enriched the author's intellectual life. To name them is simply impossible. His wife, Gouri Roy, has been a constant companion, for almost half a century, in prosperity and in adversity. Heartfelt gratitude is expressed to her. His children, Aditi Sengupta (Roy), Sashwati Roy, Himadri Roy; son-in-law, Dr. Prabal Sengupta; daughter-in-law Dr. Shalini Roy (Bhardwaj), grandson Anirban Sengupta are an integral part of the writer. Hence no formal thanks are expressed to them. To Virol Jindal sincere thanks are expressed for the many discussions on mathematics, physics and philosophy during the common evening walks in the sprawling Victoria Park grounds of Meerut College, Meerut. Professor Chandan Sen (OSU-USA) took great pains in taking the author to many places in North America, particularly to places associated with Swami Vivekananda. Loving thanks are given to him. Dr. Savita Khanna, like a daughter, has assisted him in several ways. Loving thanks are also expressed to her. Colleagues of Sri Ramakrishna Ashrama, Meerut and Sri Aurobindo Centre Meerut, have enriched, in one way or the other the author's view

on life. Grateful thanks are expressed to all of them. Professor (retd.) Sourendra Roy, of Burdwan University and Shri Soumendra Roy have been a source of strength to the author. Grateful appreciations are expressed to them. Finally, Shri Tilak Sen and his Data-Info, Shibpur, Howrah, personnel must be thanked for their pains in typing out the manuscript.

*This book
is
Dedicated
to
the sacred memory
of
my father, Lalit Mohan Roy
my mother, Swarna Lata Roy
and
my daughter, Jayati Roy
who early left her earthly life.*

Foreword

“Do not believe in anything because you have heard it Do not believe in anything because it is spoken by and rumored by many. Do not believe in anything simply because it is found written in your religious books. Do not believe in anything merely on the authority of your teachers and elders. Do not believe in traditions because they have been handed down for many generations. But after observation and analysis when you find anything agrees with reason and is conducive to the good and benefit of one and all, then accept it and live upto it.”

The Buddha

“Therefore, be ye lamps unto yourself, be ye a refuge unto yourself. Holdfast to Truth as a lamp, holdfast to the Truth as a refuge”.

The Buddha

“ Raise your Self by yourself; never allow your Self to be depressed; as Self is the friend of Self and Self is the enemy of the Self ”

Sri Krishna in The Geeta [6:5]

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problem of the Universals; the scholastic period. Bhagwat
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Chapter I

The Background

The Geeta or Srimad Bhagwad Geeta, a scripture universally revered by the Aryan-Hindus, has been handed down from a dim and remote antiquity. It calls itself a 'song of the Divine' as also an Upanishad. It is an integral part of the Mahabharata which is a massive work of Veda-Vyasa with one hundred thousand (1 lakh) *slokas*. Western scholars have called Mahabharata an epic very much like the works of Homer, Dante or Milton. But traditional Aryans (who have been called Hindus by some invading tribes, because these traditional Aryans lived beyond the Sindhu or Indus and those invaders pronounced S as H or I) used to call Mahabharata as *Itihas-cum-Purana* (Itihas = history; Purana = ancient).

A little digression here. Western scholars, in general, have considered the Puranas as mythology but not history. Indians were already enslaved under the Muslim invaders for about a thousand years, when the English, the French or the Portuguese conquerors came to India. The Indians had, by then become famished due to widespread loot of their wealth. However, this country was once rich and opulent as per the testimony of foreign travelers. Along with the western conquest, attention of their scholars was focused on India thanks to the superlative praise by Goethe, Schopenhauer etc. But ancient Indian works were all in Sanskrit and the westerners didn't understand a word of Sanskrit or its grammar. How could such enslaved people have a rich and powerful literature? They were heathens and idol worshippers with strange customs. It was the bounden duty of the conquerors to civilize and to salvage these people from eternal damnation and perpetual hellfire.

Further, the Puranas abound in allegories and hyperbolics, which could, by no stretch of imagination, be intelligible to unsympathetic foreigners – even scholars– without a thorough understanding of Sanskrit grammar or its ethos. But many of such

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allegories are nothing but certain truths couched or concealed under symbolism, so that as stories they are perpetrated by the people through oral tradition. Indian seers knew that books or monuments are apt to be vandalized by the inexorable onslaught of Time. Traditions and stories are preserved through centuries and millennia. Consider how the great library of Alexandria was destroyed by the religious fanatics of the Roman Empire. The great university of Nalanda was destroyed by the hordes of Bakhtiyar Khilji. Even now the handful of mounds, unearthed by Cunningham [1861], speaks of the grandeur of Nalanda. But where are the priceless books of the same? The great monuments of Egypt or of the Inca or of the Maya tribes of S. America are slowly coming to light but many of their invaluable relics have already been irretrievably lost. In the recent past we have seen the great Bamiyan Buddha statues were ruthlessly destroyed in Afghanistan by religious fanatics.

To substantiate the point that the Puranas contain some valuable truths concealed in stories, the following may be considered:

It is stated that there was a king called Soma (सोम) or Chandra (चन्द्र). He had twenty seven wives with whom he would sleep successively. Due to overindulgence, he contracted tuberculosis (called *yakshma* in Sanskrit) and started to become emaciated. In those days pulmonary tuberculosis was almost an incurable disease. Hence it was called king of diseases, Soma or Chandra has, also, been called a *nakshatra* (नक्षत्र) ¹. Now scholars mistranslated *nakshatra* as star and jumped to the conclusion that Indian astronomers didn't know the elementary fact that Chandra (or Moon) is a satellite of earth and not a star. What those scholars don't understand was that *nakshatra* in Sanskrit meant a constellation - not a star. The Moon successively remains in one constellation at a time and then, apparently, passes on to the next. The total constellations in the sky were categorized into twenty seven. It then returns to the first. Carl Sagan (1980) narrates the following regarding a roofless temple of 'Kiva' (11 Century A.D.) in

New Mexico where the Anasazi people gathered on June 21 to celebrate the power of the Sun. "*They also monitored the apparent motion of the Moon; the twenty eight higher niches in the Kiva may represent the number of days for the Moon to return to the same position among the constellations*" (p 47 Cosmos). He further writes "*Other devices based on similar ideas are found in Angkorwat² in Cambodia, Stonehenge in England, Abu Simbel in Egypt, Chichen Itza in Mexico; and the Great Plains in North America*" (Ibid p 47). The story of Soma, thus, encapsules an astronomical phenomenon also seen elsewhere in little understood monuments of a bygone age.

Another common tale is of Brihaspati (Jupiter). When broken, Brihaspati is seen to be two words conjugated together. *Brihati + Pati*. Now Brihati means big or large. We know Jupiter to be the largest and the heaviest planet of the solar system. It is also called Guru or Dev Guru. Guru also means a teacher; he is so called because he is heavier by virtue of his knowledge.

To resume the main theme. Veda-Vyasa or more precisely the twenty eighth Veda-vyasa [asta=eight; Vimshati = twenty] wrote the Mahabharata. In other words, twenty seven of his caliber had preceded him in prehistoric antiquity. Veda-Vyasa is an epithet given to a person who is capable of classifying the Vedas. His actual name is Krishna Dvaipayana which means a 'person of dark hue born on an island'. Krishna Dvaipayana was born out of the union of *rishi* Parasara and Matsya-gandha. She was a fisherwoman and obviously carried the odor of fish. But she was extra-ordinarily beautiful. The great *rishi* fell for her beauty. A son was born to her in a lonely island of the then mighty Ganges. Such islands are sometimes found in big rivers.

Later, king Shantanu, of the Bharata clan, was also attracted by her great beauty and took her as a duly wedded queen. Shantanu was a widower; his only son, Devabrata, was the heir-apparent. The marriage would obviously complicate matters regarding succession.

But before giving Matsyagandha to Shantanu, her father extracted a promise from the king that only sons born of

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Matsyagandha would be able to ascend the throne after the king's demise or abdication. Thus Shantanu was in a fix. He loved Devabrata dearly and wanted him to ascend the throne after him; simultaneously he wanted to marry Matsyagandha. Devabrata understood his father's dilemma. Hence he took the severe vow to maintain lifelong celibacy and also to relinquish any claim to the throne. Thereafter Devabrata earned the laudatory epithet of Bhisma (literal meaning severe or tremendous).

Matsyagandha - also known as Satyavati – had two sons from Shantanu: Vichitravirya (or strange semen) and Chitrangad. The latter died early due to some disease. Vichitravirya had two wives: Amba and Ambalika. They were the two daughters of the king of Kashi or Varanasi. He was deeply attached to his two wives but unfortunately couldn't impregnate them due to defective semen. Satyavati became worried about the continuation of the Bharata clan. She hit upon the idea of using Krishna Dvaipayana - her first son from Parasara rishi – to impregnate her daughters-in-law.

This was the custom of *niyoga* which was considered legal and ethical in India of those days. To keep a dynasty in continuation such a method was permissible. In later years, the *Smritis*, expressly prohibited *niyoga* in the Kali-Yuga (Iron Age). *Niyoga* is similar to the use of 'Sperm Banks' for human and animal procreation. The only advancement being the technology of storing sperms in ultra-frozen conditions for a long time. A woman is free to use the sperms of any one she likes. The identity of sperm donor may be disclosed by her or she may refuse to disclose the same. Such things are becoming common in societies which are labeled as advanced. But in tradition bound societies, where the status of women is anything but enviable, such freedom will be considered shocking. But *niyoga* was considered ethical around five thousand years back! Which is more advanced: *the Kaliyuga* or the *Dwapara*?

One son, each, was born to Amba and Ambalika. Dhritarashtra was elder but blind; while Pandu was younger but pale. Pandu might have suffered from a permanent anemic condition or pallor as is found in certain diseases producing hemolytic anemia

When the question arose as to who should ascend the throne, a lively debater perhaps, a recriminatory dispute must have come out in the open. It was generally agreed that Dhritarashtra, being blind, would not be able to administer a vast kingdom of North India. Hence Pandu was chosen as the monarch.

Dhritarashtra must have fumed and fretted internally. This fire was constantly stoked by his near and dear ones - especially by his wife *Gandhari* and her brother *Shakuni*. *Dhritarashtra* was married to a beautiful maiden of Gandhara (modern day Kandahar of Afghanistan). It is interesting that a prince of Delhi region (Hastinapur) marries a woman of a far off place as Kandahar when the means of transport and communication were rudimentary! How was Kandahar related to Delhi in those almost prehistoric or proto-historic days? (Why do we find the mention of *Gandhara desh* in the discourses of Gautama - the Buddha? Or why did *Jivaka* - the renowned physician of the Buddha's time- go from Bihar to Taxila (Taksha-Shila) to study medicine?)

It seems intriguing that *Gandhari's* brother was a constant companion of *Dhritarashtra* or his elder son *Duryodhana*. He was also a permanent resident of Hastinapur - the capital city. Evidently *Shakuni* wielded influence or clout in the Hastinapur court.

Gandhari had one hundred sons and a daughter. How could a woman produce so many offspring? Mahabharata states that *Gandhari* delivered a mass of undifferentiated tissue - akin to callus tissue. This tissue was taken away (evidently in aseptic conditions), and then cut into 101 pieces. Thereafter they were put in separate vats or jars. *Vyasa* forbade that these should not be opened before two years. By that time each developed into a fully formed baby. The first or the eldest was named *Duryodhana* while the daughter was called *Dushala*. Thus there were 101 children of *Dhritarashtra* and *Gandhari*.

It is incomprehensible how *Vyasa* could resort to such imagination or to such an exotic idea when the technology was of the level of cart and wheel or of plough and bullock. Tissue culture, organ and embryo culture are more recent developments in biology.

The Background

It started with plant tissue culture (Haberlandt 1904). He also put forward the theory of totipotency in plants. The Austrian botanist's seminal work is '*Physiologische Pflanzenanatomy*'. The English version -'Physiological Plant Anatomy' appeared in 1884. Alexis Carrel succeeded in producing animal tissue culture. He was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1912; the Nobel Committee ignored the earlier monumental work of Haberlandt.

Tissue culture requires highly sophisticated technology. Stem cell research is, actually, animal tissue culture. It is considered a frontier research field. We do not understand how tissues get differentiated; all this is in infancy. Sudden mention of human embryo culture by Ved-Vyasa is indeed very puzzling. Were those days not as primitive as we now assume them to be? How could Stone Age or Bronze Age men even imagine about embryo culture outside the human female body? It was in fact, an in-vitro animal embryo culture still beyond the ken of bio- sciences. Way-back, we read, skin grafting and nose grafting was a surgical practice in ancient India. This is mentioned in the *Shushruta-Samhita*, a treatise on surgery. It existed prior to Christ Jesus; perhaps even prior to the Buddha. Modern surgery has re-invented this ancient Ayurvedic knowledge. It is now called plastic surgery.

The seeds of Mahabharata war were planted here and now. The simmering dispute was bound to explode into a full-fledged war in due course of time. The fatality of events arose with Shantanu's marriage with Satyawati.

Pandu had two wives: Kunti and Madri, Kunti had four sons - *Karna, Yudhishthira, Bhima and Arjuna*. Karna was born when Kunti was a maiden: something like Immaculate Conception, only difference being that here the Sun-god. (Surya) sowed the seeds of conception. Anyway, Karna was abandoned by his mother on a float (cf. Moses who was also abandoned on a float). Radha, the wife of a chariot-driver, Adhirath found the baby. She nurtured the baby-boy to his manhood. This was another sore point in the narration of Mahabharata with all pathos and tragedy. Madri had twin sons – Nakul and Sahadeva. Pandavas were, thus, six in number (Five

Pandava brothers & Karna).

Pandu also died early. Dhritarashtra had, now, to ascend the throne. Duryodhana was growing up along with his first cousins – the Pandavas, They were educated together in a residential institution of Dronacharya where they were learning the then military sciences and other arts. Gurugriha or in-house education was a prominent feature of the ancient Indian education system. Sometimes these were called *ashramas* which were maintained by kings. Meaning of *ashrama* has come to occupy a different connotation in to-days India. Gurukuls or Gurugriha education is still found in music, in martial arts or in Vedic education. Gurukuls are relic of the past. Modern university education has supplanted them.

Duryodhana was gradually becoming an extra constitutional authority aided and abetted by his wily uncle - Shakuni. The king himself was only a titular head; all effective power was wielded by Duryodhana. People used to call him a Raja or a king³. Yudhisthira, though senior in age, was being sidelined.⁴

The official advisor or minister to Dhritarashtra was Vidura. He was again a palace maid's (*dasi*) son through Vyasa⁵. Thus Vidura was a foster brother of Dhritarashtra. The official advice of Vidura was also becoming redundant.

Duryodhana and Shakuni prevailed over the court. The king and the queen were silent, if not active abettor of such a situation. Otherwise how could the notorious Lac-House (*Laksha-Griha*) episode of Varanavat [near modern day city of Baghpat] take place? The Pandava brothers were saved from burning at the last minute tipoff from Vidura. He nurtured a soft corner for these guileless Pandavas.

Prince Yudhisthira was a thoughtful young man wedded to truthfulness as a cardinal virtue so much so that he was called as the son of Dharma [= righteousness; Dharma has no equivalent in English; its connotation is wide. It has been mistranslated as religion]. But with all this excellence, his character had a fatal flaw. He was addicted to gambling - the game of dice. Dyut was the

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ancient Indian form of gambling; this is now called Pasha - a Persianized word. Ancient India also discovered chess. This was later called shah by the Persians. It became chess in English by linguistic mutation. (Sanskrit: satarang – sataranj- shah - chess). Now all gambling games have probability at their base; hence unpredictable.

Knowing this weak side of Yudhisthira, Duryodhana and Shakuni enticed him to a game of dice with palpable stakes. Shakuni was, of course, a past-master in subterfuge and deceit. The game was to take place before all elders, members of the court, relatives and kinsmen in their official capacity. It was not a pastime game. Even the king was to be present and preside over the occasion.

Every time Yudhisthira played, he lost. Gradually he was losing his personal property, the landed property and even his warrior brothers. When everything was lost he betted his wife, Draupadi⁶, in the hope of retrieving all that he had lost earlier. It seems monogamy; polygamy and polyandry were all present during the Mahabharata period. Even in modern times polygamy, up to four wives at a time, is permissible under the Islamic law. But it is said that the Kuran frowns upon such a practice. In medieval period of India, Muslim kings used to maintain harems of wives or concubines. Polygamy and Kulin tradition was a widespread practice among Hindu Brahmins in the nineteenth century Bengal against which reformers waged relentless fight. Monogamy alone is permissible under modern Hindu law after India had become independent.

Now Yudhisthira lost even Draupadi. The interesting part of the story is that wife and even brothers were considered property; they could be lost or gained in a game of dice! A study would show that women's position has been anything but desirable. In U.S.A. up to 1800's women had few legal rights; they didn't have any right to vote. In 1872 Susan Anthony was arrested because she cast her vote in the Presidential election. She was tried in a court of law and fined \$100. Susan died in 1906. In 1917, Alice Paul picketed the

White House; she was arrested, put in a jail and tortured. Then sent to a lunatic asylum, force fed during her hunger strike. In 1920, after the 19th Amendment, all sexes were given the right to vote. In U. K. women were granted right to vote only in 1928. In this respect Finland had a better record; they granted right to vote in 1906. The U.S has yet to elect a female as its President during its 200 + years of existence. In this respect the tradition bound societies like India, Sri Lanka, Israel and even Pakistan can boast of a female prime minister. U.K. can also cite one example of a female P.M. The present dynastic monarch is also a female.

Ours is a man's world; here the scales are heavily tilted against the women. Their status is anything but enviable. Societies are patriarchal. Only in N. E. India there are matriarchal societies⁷. Thus the gambling episode of Mahabharata may seem shocking to us but women's position in our modern societies is anything but laudable. These matriarchal societies that way seem to be superior. Even now a person is known by his father than his mother name. But who bears most of the burden of childhood of a person? The father or the mother? Once Draupadi was lost in gambling, the utterly shameful episode of disrobing her by Duryodhana and his accomplice brother, Dushashana, started in the presence of elderly, venerable men and women assembled in their official capacities in the court. Could there be anything more dishonorable or disgusting than this? Can we imagine this type of event even in the present permissive age?

Nowhere in the world, are the women safe without a proper escort. But to enact such a heinous crime in the presence of high functionaries of a state is totally unthinkable. Individually, in privacy, heads of governments or states may have been lecherous or perverse but in official capacities or in collectivity this is unknown even in the permissive cultures. See how they react when a sex scandal breaks out upon a high state functionary.

Thus during Mahabharata, the rot must have gone deep and wide. The Draupadi episode was only symbolic of that period. It called for a drastic surgical operation. And it did happen in the form

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of a massive destruction called the Mahabharata war. Recollect what Sri Krishna said in the Geeta (11.32) *"I am the Time, now engaged in destroying the people. These warriors will be annihilated even without your effort"*. Hence he exhorts Arjuna "to rise, to earn fame and to enjoy a rich and opulent kingdom; for I have already killed these warriors; you become only the instrument! Oh Savyasachin" (Ibid 11.33)⁸

Draupadi was in a precarious condition. In vain she tried to save her honor. In vain did she implore and cry before the elders, the great Bhishma or Kripacharya or Dronacharya, the blind king and his consort or her warrior husbands. She literally ran from the pillar to the post. Her plight could be better imagined than described. Only women can properly understand her humiliation. But due to some unfathomable reasons, none of the so called great and powerful responded! They were, perhaps, engaged in mental quibbling. But in the final analysis they were mute spectators to such an extreme outrage. Why were all paralyzed before a raging evil? Why did the whole German nation cower before Hitler's outrage? Why does the U.N. cower before many outrageous acts of the sole super power of the world? The latest being the naked aggression on Iraq on the pretext of non-existent W.M.D!

When no help came from men, Draupadi turned to her Lord, Sri Krishna. He was the Divine Man of the Age. His response was prompt and immediate. In all times of human crisis, the Divine help is always sure and prompt if man can put faith in Him. It is rightly said that faith, even of the size of mustard, can move mountains. The Lord has said in the Geeta "I carry the burden of his welfare and yoga" (9/22)⁹. He saved her from total disgrace by continuously supplying her clothing. This may appear supernatural. One is of course free to believe in such an episode.

But let us remember that all religions have their quota of miracles. Consider the Old Testament account of Moses. He got the Ten Commandments from the Lord God Himself on the Mount Sinai of Egypt! The Jews used to call the Lord Ya-Ve (sometimes now called Jehovah). Moses wanted his Jewish folks free from the

clutches of Ramses the great. He was the Pharaoh of those times. As the Pharaoh becomes stubborn, Moses and Aaron show him miracle after miracle! Ultimately Pharaoh relents and allows Moses and his Jewish folk to cross the Red Sea, The Sea allow hundreds of thousands of people to pass through! And the miracle of miracles is that when the Egyptian army tries to cross the same, they are drowned!!

More miracles are yet to happen. The vast multitudes are hungry. They are fed by Moses with heavenly food—honey and manna! Other miracles have also been performed by lesser prophets of the Old Testament.

When we come down to Jesus, again great miracles were performed by him. He feeds multitudes (around five thousand) with just five breads and two fishes! The dead Lazarus is brought back to life after he was four days in the tomb! The Sea is rebuked and its raging storms calm down! Kenneth Davis (1998) has drawn up a list of miracles performed by Jesus. He says “Apart from his own miraculous birth and resurrection and the transfiguration, Jesus performed thirty two miracles in the Gospels”. (p 393)

Even now, preachers and evangelists emphasize upon credulous and unsuspecting people that they ought to put their faith in such miracles of the Savior or face eternal damnation. They even resort to subterfuge while curing people of their diseases. The greatness and grandeur of Jesus, his spirituality, his love for the humanity, is seldom emphasized. Jesus said ‘Kingdom of the Heaven is within’ and that ‘He was not of this world’¹⁰ It is indeed an irony that the professed followers of the Son of Man have been trying to amass more and more of the wealth of this world, mostly by exploitation - sometimes by outright plunder and have conveniently forgotten His saying :

‘Do not store up treasures on earth where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven where moth and rust do not destroy and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is there your heart will be also’ [The Holy Bible NIV 1983].

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The purpose of this is to point out that if miracles in certain religious traditions can be believed in, then, what is the fault with others? Else let all miracles, in all systems, be shunned. If a religious system is strong, let it stand on its own strength, because of its inherent spirituality, not on the crutches of miracles, real or feigned. Let all religious systems stand the test of logic and the spirit of enquiry. This is not to suggest that in human understanding logic is ultimate. Gödel's Theorem, Quantum theory, Special and General Relativity and spiritual realizations of sages and saints have all pointed out, in a telling manner, the limits of logic. The universe or existence is not sub-logical, it cannot be fully comprehended by logic alone; it is supra-logical or supra-rational. Man has to come to terms with these latest trends in sciences and mathematics; spiritual geniuses, past or present, have long arrived at this conclusion. The Truth or Truths are multifaceted, multi-splendored and transcends all cut and dried logical formulations.

The period of Mahabharata corresponded to the Dwapar yuga ¹¹ (Yuga = age or era), perhaps, equivalent to what is now labeled as the Bronze Age. It was in a state of utter degradation of Dharma. The Hindu allegorically equates Dharma with a cow. As a cow supports itself on four legs so too Dharma has four legs on which it supports itself. They are Tapa (=austerity), Pavitrata (=holiness), Daya (=mercy) and Satya (=truth). In the Satya Yuga (akin to the Golden Age of the West) all the four legs were intact.

In the Treta, Dharma lost its leg of Tapa. It was balancing itself on three remaining legs. In the next age i.e. Dwapar it lost one more leg viz. Pavitrata, So it's act of balancing became more difficult. In the Kali Yuga or Iron Age, only one leg is left i.e. Satya. Dharma is, therefore, limping. If all the legs are lost, then human society (not the Hindu alone) will be annihilated, It must be emphasized once more that there is no English equivalent to Dharma. Its translation as religion has been, rather, unfortunate. Dharma originates from the Sanskrit root *dhri* which means to hold or to uphold. Dharma, thus, basically means the laws that hold or uphold the universe and its constituents. With regard to the human society it means those basics which maintain or uphold the society. In the Buddhist

canonical literature one comes across this term quite commonly. (e.g. धम्मं शरणं गच्छामि = take refuge into dharma or to know the *dhamma* by the mind -मन से धर्म को जानकर or Dharmakaya of the Buddha or Dharmachakra)

Further, this concept maintains that Time does not move in an unidirectional arrow often called the Arrow of Time, but in a cyclic manner. Time is supposed to be Deity's invincible cycle allegorically called Sudarshan Chakra (or the beautiful Cycle). Nothing can stop such a cycle once it is released from the hands of Deity. Scientific thought which believes in the Big Bang¹², holds that along with such a bang, Space-Time also came into existence. What was before that Big Bang is a meaningless question as far as Space-Time is concerned. In Black-Holes, having huge gravitation beyond several solar-masses, Space-Time also collapses. This is often called Space-Time singularity (Penrose p335-339). In such a catastrophe, Space-Time disappears. What happens next is almost unthinkable. Does a White Hole appear after a Big Crunch? Black-Hole concept springs from Einstein's Relativity Theory. The General Theory of Relativity postulates a curved Space-Time. Do all these have some common points with the Cyclic Time concept of the ancient Hindus? The Arrow of Time concept corresponds to a flat Euclidean space rather than to a curved Space-Time of Einstein.

The Pandava brothers along with Draupadi were exiled to forests for twelve long years with the added penalty to remain incognito for one more year. If, however, they were recognized during the thirteenth year, they were to undergo another thirteen year cycle and so on. Duryodhana, thus, assured himself about the Pandavas not being able to claim the kingdom or part thereof in any foreseeable future. He would be able to enjoy the vast kingdom in solitary splendor.

The Pandavas, now, wandered in hamlets and in the then dense forests of India for twelve long years. This part of their lives was punctuated by numerous episodes which, though interesting and instructive, need not detain us. The thirteenth year was spent incognito in the kingdom of Virat. The Kauravas tried their level best

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to locate the Pandavas during this period but without any success.

Mahabharata is a rich mine of information and instruction hence it has earned the distinction of being called the fifth Veda in the general Hindu psyche. For instance, on the single episode of Savitri - Satyavan of Mahabharata, Sri Aurobindo has created his massive epic poem of Savitri. This mighty work can be safely said to rank among the best in literary works of the classical period and or the modern period.

The Pandavas after completing thirteenth year, come back to the capital city of Hastinapur to stake their claim to the kingdom or part thereof. Duryodhana, however, flatly refused to entertain their claim. The titular king is totally bypassed. The crown prince had almost become the king. The titular king was not only physically blind but appears to have been blinded by filial affection to his eldest son. What ambitions or designs he covertly nurtured all these years have now become overt. All pretence of being an impartial ruler or even as the head of a dynasty was thrown to the winds. This was the stark reality staring at the face of the Pandava brothers.

In early negotiations, it seems, Lord Krishna's active participation was not sought. One reason might be that Sri Krishna was the King of Dwaraka (in the present day Gujarat) which was quite far off from Hastinapur, When Duryodhana became adamant about his refusal to part with anything, then the good offices of Sri Krishna was sought. He was a friendly figure especially to the Bharata clan. He was already a famous person of the period. He had eliminated the great tyrant of Mathura even when he was a teenage boy. He had also successfully fought and liquidated lesser tyrants. He had a multifaceted personality. Knowledgeable saints of those times were already calling him a Divine Man complete in all the sixteen aspects¹³ of a human personality. Reference to sixteen aspects of human personality is found in such an authoritative text as the Chandogya Upanishad (6.7.1)¹⁴

The concept is that even though the Divine is beyond thought and speech, beyond the categories of infinite and finite, yet due to

His/Her inscrutable power, He/She manifests as a human personality (son of Man). These are called Incarnations of God or Avatar. In other words, it is the descent of Godhead into man. These Avatars manifest their powers in different degrees, though in essence, they always remain the supreme Divine (cf., I and my Father are One - Bible). Of all the Divine Incarnations of the past, Sri Krishna, alone, manifested all the sixteen aspects. He is, therefore, often been called a Purna Avatar (Complete Incarnation) sometimes as the Godhead Himself.¹⁵

As stated earlier, Sri Krishna had gained wide popularity even during his boyhood days but He also had His share of opponents, even enemies. Why, even the Prince of Peace had His enemies who plotted against Him and ultimately got Him killed. His fault, if any, was to call men to the path of God, rectitude and righteousness. The foolish men of His times preferred Barabbas - a thief/murderer to this Man God. The incomparable Buddha was opposed by His own cousin – Deva Dutta - who tried, to kill Him. It is a different matter that the Buddha always remained triumphant. It is no wonder, then, the Buddha has been called the Ninth Incarnation by the writers of the Puranas. He is, perhaps, the only historical personality who was deemed a God Incarnate even while he was alive.

Dwaraka is on the west coast of India. Dwaraka sounds like *dwar* (=door). Was Dwarka, the Gateway of India in those days? Was it a port city of India even as Lothal¹⁶ (Gujrat) has been a harbor of the Harappan period? According to Mahabharata the ancient Dwaraka was submerged in the sea when Sri Krishna passed away from the earthly scene. He had foretold Arjuna that with his passing away the city and the fort of Dwaraka would be engulfed by the sea. The Dwapara age would come to an end and the Kaliyuga would step in. He had instructed Arjuna to go a to a safer place in North India along with the queens, princess etc.

The ancient fortress of Dwaraka has now been discovered at Bet-Dwaraka submerged under the Arabian sea. This has been made possible by the indefatigable researches of S.R. Rao. This

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seems to be an unique archaeological corroboration of what has been mentioned in Mahabharata. There are other sites such as Hastinapur, Baranawat (notorious for lac-house episode and present day Barnawa) which require thorough excavations. It has either not been under-taken or half-heartedly done as Mahabharata has been labeled as an epic, not a document, The remarkable findings of Rao and the exact astronomical dates mentioned in the corpus of the book nails down the epic theory.

Sri Krishna belonged to the Lunar race (Chandra Vamsha). Yadavas are descendants of king Yadu, a prominent clan of the Lunar race¹⁷. The other important clan was the Solar race (Surya Vamsha) of which Sri Rama is also considered a Divine Incarnation. The Pharaohs of ancient Egypt were called Ramses I, II etc. This seems to be a mutation from the Sanskrit Ramji. The ancient Egyptians had a belief that their king was a descendant of the Sun god sometimes called Ra. Sun temples or their remnants have been discovered by Egyptologists.¹⁸ It is rather interesting to find sun worship prevailing in many far flung ancient civilizations such as Inca, Maya, Aztec etc. Even in modern Japan, the Emperor is considered a direct descendant of the Sun-god.

Pandavas now request Sri Krishna to come to Hastinapur and negotiate with Duryodhana. He goes to Hastinapur as an ambassador of the Pandavas. It is interesting to find that even in those ancient days ambassadors enjoyed diplomatic immunity. They could neither be arrested nor killed by the adversary kingdoms. Duryodhana requests Krishna to stay in royal style in one of his place suites. He, obviously, wanted to influence his guest's judgment or negotiating power by his munificence. But Sri Krishna refuses to accept such an offer for a variety of reasons mentioned in Mahabharata. Instead he goes to Vidura's modest accommodation. Vidura was not only the blind king's official advisor but was a political thinker of his times. Much before Kautilya wrote his celebrated Arthashastra, Vidura is known to have written Vidura-Niti on statecraft and policy.

Each proposal of Sri Krishna to equitably divide the kingdom

between the contending parties was outright rejected by Duryodhana. As a last resort, it was suggested that five regions (or *prasthas*), one each for the five Pandava brothers, be given. Some of these *prasthas*, to this day, have come down albeit with linguistic distortions (Sonepat, Panipat, Baghpat, Tilpat and of course Indraprastha etc). These are now part of west U. P. or Haryana. Delhi, the seat of modern political power of India, is obviously Indraprastha.

Duryodhana rejects even this modest formula. He was arrogant enough to say that he would not part with even a needle point of land, in today's parlance even an inch of land, without war. Such an aggressive attitude finally closed the doors to an amicable settlement of the dispute. Duryodhana was foolish enough to try to arrest Sri Krishna who was only playing the role of an ambassador. Krishna foiled this attempt by giving a glimpse of his superhuman personality. This aspect was, generally, hidden by his human personality. We shall have occasion to look into his superhuman side while dealing with the tenth and the eleventh chapters of the Geeta.

War between the Kauravas and the Pandavas thus became inevitable. Fatalities of events move inexorably towards a climax. How was it that an intra-dynastic dispute became a full-fledged war where the then known civilized world of the Indian subcontinent¹⁹ became fully engulfed? Could it even be a catastrophic world war?

In our modern times, why was Europe engulfed in World War I in a dispute essentially between Britain and Germany? Why again, nations became grouped into the Allied and the Axis powers during World War II? Why was the USA, beyond the Atlantic and the Pacific, dragged into the conflagration as a major combatant? It has been repeatedly emphasized that the war was an ideological tussle between the liberal democracies on the one hand and the dictatorial regimes of the Nazis and of Fascists on the other. It has again been emphasized that war became imperative to protect the Human Rights and Democracy from the evil personified by Hitler-Mussolini-Tojo combination. But, as all enlightened people know, causes of

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war are basically economic and seldom, if at all, purely ideological. Generally powerful men in all countries and climes, embellish their nation's economic aims-cum-their own personal aims with ideological and sometimes with religious rhetoric. If the reasons were only ideological (to protect human rights etc.) why, then, the British were ruthlessly trying to suppress the rightful claim of the Indian people to Independence from their oppressive yoke? They were doing the same to all other countries under their colonial rule. Basically the reasons were economic. The British opulence was based upon the economic exploitation of Asian people under their rule. And they didn't want to release their hold on them. This, of course, does not mean the author's endorsement of Hitler etc. of their wrong doing with the Jews and others during or prior to the war days; nor does it mean any endorsement of the superiority of the Aryan race hypothesis of Hitler or his Nazi ideology or his form of government or its methods. But once those Axis forces were defeated by the Allies, they turned their attention to another perceived 'devil' – the communists. The irony is that during World War II, the very same 'liberal democracies' thought it expedient to collaborate with the 'communist devil' personified by Stalin.

But when Subhas Bose extended this theory of 'enemy's enemy is my friend' to enlist the support of Germany and Japan so as to liberate his own motherland from the tyrannous British rule, he was called a fascist by his erstwhile collaborators in the Indian National Congress! Such is the tenuous logic; such is expediency!

For the Allies, Stalin became the sole 'devil' to deal with once the war with Hitler-Tojo combine ended. The other 'devils' like Mao, Ho Chi Minh, Fiedel Castro were left out for the time being as they were less dangerous than comrade Stalin. If all this could happen in the twentieth century's enlightened age, is it any wonder that around five thousand years back, an intra-dynastic dispute centering on property and woman could gather around its 'eye' a severe cyclonic storm called the Mahabharata war ? It has been well said in Urdu that all disputes occur around property, woman and land²⁰.

Now the Kauravas and the Pandavas try to muster their forces. Both Duryodhana and Arjuna go to Dwaraka to enlist the support of Shri Krishna. At the very outset, he clarifies that he wouldn't take up any arms in the war. One who chooses him should know that he would remain unarmed. His royal forces would automatically go to the other side. These forces were, of course, quite substantial.

Arjuna unequivocally chooses Krishna. Duryodhana considers it a god-sent opportunity and might, as well, have considered Arjuna a sentimental fool who had rejected the huge Yadava forces. Shri Krishna consents to become Arjuna's charioteer (saarathi) – not a very honorable position considering the then hierarchical society. Even in our modern societies which is a more dignified position - that of the C-in-C or his driver? But, then, the ways of a Divine Man cannot be measured by ordinary standards. Why did Jesus submit to all the indignities heaped upon him by the foolish men of his times? Why, after all, he did not even try to defend himself before the Jewish High Priest or the Roman Pilate? He even said that his Heavenly Father could send legions of angels if that was His will.

He commanded 'Resist not evil'. Honestly speaking, his professed followers and all mankind in general, have been trying to resist evil or perceived evil or even some cooked up evil. In the name of civilizing the heathens, whole races have been exterminated or subjugated by those who swear by the name of the Son of Man! In spite of what he said to Peter²¹, men have put more faith in their words as the sole arbiter between the heaven and the earth rather than to 'love thy neighbor as thyself'?

Sri Krishna was much misunderstood in his own days. On the one hand he was deified; on the other, he was called a war monger. As alluded to earlier many saints even called him the Divine Himself. When the Mahabharata war ended and all the Kaurava brothers, excepting, Jujutsu²² were killed; Krishna went to Hastinapur to meet the elders. He also met Gandhari whose sons were almost all killed. Her motherly heart was cut asunder. Her deep grief is understandable. Which mother would not be aggrieved by such a massive bereavement? Krishna paid his usual obeisance

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to aunt Gandhari in the typical Indian style. Queen Gandhari said "Krishna you had the power to stop this fratricidal war but you did nothing of the sort and allowed my sons to be killed" She then pronounced a severe curse on Him "As I have been made desolate, so you too would be made desolate by extermination of your sons and grandsons in a fratricidal war". The Ever-Joyful One didn't feel angry or sad over such a terrible curse. He accepted the same with humility, with bowed head. He knew that His clansmen had become a menace to human welfare, in the words of Mahabharata a 'burden on the Earth'. They needed eradication like the weeds in a farmland. It needs to be told that when Krishna was about to leave this mortal world, the young Yadava princes, along with their pals, in a state of alcoholic inebriation, fought savagely amongst themselves and all got killed. Earlier these princes had insulted a *muni* (or a thinker/sage) while drunk. The muni, according to Mahabharata, pronounced a curse on those Yadava men. In those days, it seems curses mattered. Now it seems to have become obsolete.

The stage was thus set for a titanic clash in which the Greater India²³ was fully engulfed. They mustered 18 *akshouhini*²⁴ combatants; of these the Kauravas gathered 11 *akshouhini* and the Pandavas 7 *akshouhini* (almost in the ratio of 3:2 respectively). Logistical requirement for such a huge army (food, medicine, auxiliary services, tents, horses, chariots, elephants, their keepers, suppliers, accountants etc.) is indeed mind boggling. The finances for such an astronomical affair would also be mind boggling. How could such a huge affair take place in modern Kurukshetra²⁵? It must have required a much larger area which is rather difficult to visualize now. Further to maintain such an army, the entire population of Greater India along with their resources must have been involved. After all, war not only brutalizes men but drains the finances of nations to the hilt. In those days, there was no such concept as total war; the civilian population was not killed. The warfare took place only during the daytime. With sunset fighting stopped. This code was broken by Ashwathama— the only son of Dronacharya. He killed the five sons of Draupadi while they were

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asleep. Hence he was considered a war criminal by the victorious Pandavas. He was only disgraced but not killed as he was the son of their preceptor - Dronacharya.

With such a background, the arch enemies enter the arena of Kurkshetra for a final showdown.

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NOTES

1. नक्षत्राणां अंह शशि (Among the constellations I am the Moon – The Geeta)
2. (अंकुर वट) This Sanskrit word seems to have become Angorwat in English; while Kamboja became corrupted to Cambodia.
3. 'आचार्यमुपसंगम्य राजा वचनमब्रवीत् ' १/२, (गीता) 'Going near Dronacharya the king thus spoke' 1/2 (The Geeta)
4. Even though Gandhari conceived earlier than Kunti, yet Yudhisthira was considered senior in age as Kunti delivered after the usual period of pregnancy; but as stated earlier, Gandhari delivered only a mass of tissue which was cultured for two years to bring out 101 babies. Duryodhana was thus two years junior to Yudhisthira.
5. It seems such a system was prevalent in ancient societies. For instance Prophet Abraham (of the Old Testament) has his elder son, Ismail, through Hagar; She was a maid of his wife, Sarah. This made Sarah uneasy and jealous. Hagar and Ismail had to be banished to the deserts. Only later, Sarah gave birth to Isaac. Chandra Gupta Maurya (Sandra Cotta of the Greeks) was himself the son of a palace maid. His father was none other than Mahapadma Nanda of Magadha (modern Bihar). Later Chandra Gupta overthrew the great Nanda dynasty and established his own, the Maurya dynasty
6. Draupadi was the wife of all the five brothers. It was a case of polyandry. This is even now prevalent in isolated pockets of Chakrata hills, Uttarakhand, India. This is also found in some other people, e.g. Tibetans, in some castes of Kerala. It may appear shocking to us but according to those people, polyandry prevents division of the landed property among the brothers. It prevents land fragmentation and land based court disputes. Courts in India are overflowing with land and property based civil & criminal cases. Their backlog is notorious. It is a headache for the Government and the Judiciary.
7. It is curious that Chambers dictionary has chosen to label matriarchal system as primitive compared to patriarchal. Has it anything to do with the Jewish-Christian - Moslem view that the Divine can only be a Male? A Female Divine would sound blasphemous! In the Hindu ethos, the Godhead may be Impersonal, Transcendental, Personal, Immanent, Father, Mother, Master, Friend, Child or even a lover. Motherhood of God is as dear, perhaps dearer, than the Fatherhood of God.

8. कालोऽस्मि लोकक्षयकृत्प्रवृद्धो

लोकान्समहार्तुमिह प्रवृत्तः।

ऋतेऽपि त्वां न भविष्यन्ति सर्वे

ऽवस्थिताः प्रत्यनीकेषु योधाः . ११/३२

Srimad Bhagwad Geeta

तस्मात्त्वमुत्तिष्ठ यशो लभस्व

जित्वाशत्रुन्भुङ्क्व राज्यंसमृद्धम्।

मयैवैते निहताः पूर्वमेव

निमित्तमात्रं भव सव्यसाचिन् ॥ ११/३३

9. योग क्षेमं वहाम्यहम् (९/२२)

10. "you are of this world; I am from above. (John 8.20-23-NIV 1983 p 952)

11. According to the Puranas there are four Yugas constituting a quartet or Chaturyugi. Satya or Krta 4; Treta 3; Dwapar 2; Kali 1; thus 4+3+2+1 =10. This equals 4320000 years. Hence Kali has 432000 years; Dwapar 864000years; Treta 1296000 years; and Satya 1728000 years. This totals upto4320000 years in a Chaturyugi)

12. Penrose, Roger - The Emperor's New Mind - Penguin. (1991 Along with the Big Bang theory, there is also the Steady State theory of Fred Hoyle and Narlikar, J.

13. 'According to this concept a human personality has sixteen main aspects (or kala) although according to the Geeta there is no end to the Divine Glory (Geeta 10.40 'There is no end to My Divine Glory अस्ति मम दिव्यानां विभुतिश्च परंतप')

14. 'षोडशकलः सौम्य पुरुषः.....॥ ६-७-१ ॥

15. 'कृष्णस्तु भगवान स्वयं' – Bhagwatam16. 'Lothal about 100 Km from Ahmadabad, is the first Harappan site to be discovered by S.R. Rao and his team in political India after the partition of 1947. It is a remarkable site where all Harappan type artifacts have been found. It was a port; hence anchors have been found.

17. Yadu bears a curious similarity to Judea and Yehudi; J is often pronounced as Y in many European languages.

18. Heliopolis was a prominent township located near Cairo. Helios in Greek means Sun; polis is a township or a village. Polis is obviously derived from the Sanskrit 'pally' which means a village or a habitation.

19. The term Yavana or Yavana-sena (army) is found quite commonly in the Mahabharata war. Yavana refers to Greece; Ionia is derived from Yavana. Unan of the Persians and the Arabs is also derived from this term and referred to Greece. Even now Unani system of medicine is practiced by the Moslems of India and Pakistan.

20. Zar, Zoru, Zamin (जर, जोरु, जमीन)

21. 'Those who take to the sword shall perish by the sword'

The Background

22. It is interesting that a form of martial art is called Jujutsu in the present day Japan.

23. Mahabharata literally means Greater India.

24. Akshouhini is supposed to consist of 21870 chariots ; 21870 elephants; 109350 infantry men; and 65000 horsemen (cavalry). This roughly totals two hundred thousand armed men. 18 akshouhini would be around 3½-4 million armed men!

Chapter VIII

Tele-vision and Tele-audience

The opposing armies now face each other in military formations, called *vyuha*, for defense and offence purposes. Hastinapur is far away from Kurukshetra. The blind king is eager to know what is happening there. But how? In those days there were no televisions nor any modern electronic gadgets nor any web-cams to see or to hear what was happening at a far off place.

The Geeta starts thus:

*'O Sanjay! Having assembled for a war at Kurukshetra, also the field of Dharma, what are my sons and those of Pandu doing?'*¹

Sanjay now narrates to the King what is happening at Kurukshetra. His audio-visual narration about the dialogue between Krishna and Arjuna, constitutes the Bhagwad Geeta, spread over eighteen chapters.

Sanjay narrated the whole thing verbatim. At the end of the eighteenth chapter, Sanjay says what is narrated has been heard and seen by him personally, by the grace of Vyasa. He was thrilled by what he had seen and heard. Recollecting the wonderful vision of the Lord and his wondrous words to Arjuna, he again and again felt electrified (The Geeta XVIII 74-78). Now, of course, the Geeta has not clarified what was this 'grace' (prasadam) of Vyasa. The present writer would not be presumptuous enough either to explain or to scoff at it. Better would be to remember what Shakespeare said in Hamlet:

*'There are more things in heaven and earth Horatio,
Than are dreamt of in your philosophy.'*

Consider what other religions have to say in such matters: Let us first take the chapter of Revelation in the New Testament. The author is John who calls himself a servant of the Lord. Some writers on the Holy Bible do not consider him as St. John of the Gospels. The place of revelations was an island on the Aegean Sea which

was used by the Romans as a penal colony even as the British used the Andamans for the freedom fighters of India.

John describes the opening of the Heaven. The vision is, indeed, fantastic and written in details. He outlines the signs of the end of the Age. The coming of one on a white horse (reminding the coming of Kalki incarnation of the Puranas); creation of a new Life and a new Jerusalem where the Lord will reign supreme. The Satan, the ancient dragon, will be locked up in the abyss for a thousand years! At the end of the Revelation, John pronounces a curse on those who take away or add a word to these visions.

Consider also the vision of Saul. He was one of chief persecutors of the small Christian community. He was going from Jerusalem to Damascus. Then he had that wonderful vision. He fell down unconscious, lost his eye-sight and heard the voice of Lord Jesus.

“Saul, Saul, Why do you persecute me” (Acts 9 : 1-4 NIV)

Saul asked “who are you Lord”?

“I am Jesus whom you are persecuting” (Acts 9:5-6).

The men travelling with Saul stood there speechless; they heard the sound but did not see any one (Acts 9:7).

Men travelling with Saul took him to Damascus where, after three days his eye-sight was restored.

After this vision Saul becomes St. Paul. It is better to remind us that St. Paul was the chief architect of Christianity as we know it today. But he was not among the chosen twelve of Jesus who were present in the 'Last Supper'. Even the contributions of St. Peter, perhaps, nearest to Jesus and the greatest among the twelve, are not as significant as of St. Paul. It is not for nothing that Christianity is often called Pauline Christianity.

In case of Prophet Muhammad, we again, find the importance of 'vision' as an instrument of decisive change in personality. Up to the fortieth year of his life, he was living like an ordinary Arab of the Middle Ages; nothing extraordinary happened to him. He was,

however, inclined towards contemplation. He would sometimes go to a cave near Mecca and brood over the problems of Arabs. On that fateful year, Muslims believe, angel Gabriel visited Muhammad in the cave as a human person and started revealing unto him the contents of Koran. Henceforth Muhammad became a prophet of Allah; the *ayats* (verses) were revealed to him for the next twenty two years. He was no more an ordinary person engaged in his vocation but a Messenger of God to lead the humanity. The Prophet's followers are now a billion plus spread over many parts of the earth.

Guru Nanak, the first Sikh Guru, started his religious mission after he remained immersed in a river for three days in a state of Samadhi (deep meditation). He also emphasized upon the Oneness of the Godhead whom he called 'Omkar' or 'Om'. The Godhead was a Timeless Person (Akal-Purush). The Granth Sahib contains many names of the Godhead including Hari, Krishna, Rama etc. The sanctum - sanctorum of the Sikhs, Hari-mandir Sahib of the famed Golden Temple of Amritsar (by linguistic distortion it is often pronounced as Harminder Sahib) is dedicated to Hari/Har. Here the Formless, Timeless, Blameless, Godhead is worshipped as the Granth Sahib. This holy book is believed to be the embodiment of the Guru who successively appeared in ten personalities. The tenth or the last, Guru Gobind Singh (Gobind Rai), founded the Khalsa Panth or the Path in the form of an organized religion.

Sri Chaitanya or more correctly Sri Krishna Chaitanya of the medieval times, appeared in Bengal. The present day name, Krishna Consciousness, by certain western followers of Swami A. C. Bhaktivedanta, derives its origin to Krishna Chaitanya. This, perhaps, is not an accurate translation for there is no English equivalent to Chaitanya. Chetana is more akin to consciousness while chaitanya is much superior to consciousness. In any case, Sri Chaitanya used to have three forms of consciousness which the Vaishnava literature, respectively calls bahyadasha (externalized conscious state), ardh bahya-dasha (semi-external conscious state) and antar-dasha (internalized conscious state). In bahya-dasha, he could communicate with people; in such a state he preached. In

ardh-bahya-dasha, he would dance in ecstasy and was able to utter the holy name of the Godhead. This is often known as the ecstatic state. But in the antar-dasha, he was muted, totally oblivious of the outer world. He stood or sat like a statue. His face and his entire being exuded brilliance showing thereby, that he was not unconscious. He seemed to have been in total communion with the Godhead. All the eight forms of bodily changes² mentioned in Vaishnava books were manifested in his person.

In the many 'visions' that Sri Chaitanya had during his sojourn in India, he pointed out the lost holy places in Mathura and Vrindavan. Ever since, those spots have become pilgrimage centers for the devout Hindus.

In more recent times, one comes across a remarkable personality in the form of Ramakrishna Paramahansa. He is also called as the Saint of Dakshineswar for he lived most of his saintly life in Dakshineswar. Rasmoni— often referred to as Rani Rasmoni because of her wealth - built a magnificent temple dedicated to the Mother Goddess of the Universe. Gadadhar³ was appointed a priest in the temple of the Mother Goddess. The priest did his job in a sincere manner. Gradually the thought occurs to him: does the Mother Goddess hear the prayers of the devotees? Can She be 'seen' at all? Or is She a mere idol? Is She a 'Living Reality'? The young priest is overpowered by these thoughts; he becomes, as if, mad with this idea ; his entire consciousness becomes one with this idea alone. After long, and often bitter, supplication to the Goddess, he finds no response. Gadadhar now decides to end his life with the sword in one of the hands of the Mother's idol. At that very moment a wondrous vision engulfs the young priest. In Sri Ramakrishna's words:

'It was as if houses, doors, temples and everything else vanished from my sight leaving no trace whatsoever. However far and in whatever direction I looked I saw a continuous succession of effulgent waves madly rushing at me from all sides with great speed. I was caught in the rush and panting for breath I collapsed unconscious. (Swami Yogeshwarananda)

According to the biographer of Sri Ramakrishna – Swami Saradananda (who was a direct disciple of the Master himself) ⁴ the 'visions' were so frequent, so many and so vivid that it was not possible to record all of them. Some of these 'visions' were when Ramakrishna was wide awake; some were futuristic.

He foresaw things or events and strangely, they did come to happen. Would it not be naive to group all these under 'hallucinations' as some so called 'rationalists' tend to do?

When Narandra Nath Dutta (later famous as Swami Vivekananda) was just a teenage boy, he was eager to know about God and Samadhi. He was directed by one of his teachers in the Scottish Church College, Calcutta, to meet Sri Ramakrishna. The young boy met the Saint of Dakshineswar who just touched him on his chest; lo and behold! Narendra found the whole world dissolving before his very eyes. Even he himself was getting dissolved! The boy got terrified. He shouted 'I have my father and mother'. Ramakrishna retouched him; Narendra came down to his normal self. The Master smiled and said. 'Alright, alright, not now, not now'.

After passing away of his Master, Vivekananda travelled across the length and breadth of India, mostly on foot, to see for himself the masses of India. He met the princes and the pariah, the learned and the illiterate. He saw the glory of a lost India and its pathetic modern tragedy. He travelled for seven long years from the snow capped Himalayas to its ocean washed shores. At last he reached Kanyakumari – the farthest tip of south India where the great Indian Ocean, the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal mingle together. On the last tip of India, on a granite rock, he sat in meditation for three days and nights at a stretch. Before his 'minds eye' passed the hoary past of India, its present degradation and its future possibilities. In commemoration of this historic meditation a magnificent temple now stands as a token of India's respect for its Saint - Patriot.

Vivekananda, as a rule, was averse to talk about his spiritual experiences. But he did indicate that he 'saw' Ramakrishna crossing the sea and beckoning him to come behind him. Henceforth all

doubts regarding his proposed journey to America vanished. He then went to the Parliament of Religions, Chicago. He delivered his, famous Chicago Address to the Parliament with the phrase – Sisters and brothers of America. The audience consisting of thousands of delegates from all over the world and of all living faiths was thrilled by such an address. They spontaneously gave him a standing ovation.

Vivekananda was not now an unknown monk turned away from many homes as a beggar, but a celebrity and a world figure whom the rich and the opulent vied to welcome him to their household. Rest is, of course, a well documented history.

At the dilapidated temple of 'Kshir Bhavani', Kashmir, (India), Vivekananda, distinctly heard the Divine Mother's command 'Do you protect Me or do I protect you'? He felt sorry that the temple was vandalized by the invading hordes of an alien faith. After he heard the Divine Voice, Vivekananda lost all active interest in the management of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission, Belur, which he, founded at great pains.

Vivekananda passed away on the 4th of July, 1902. He had invited some of his disciples, including the renowned Sister Nivedita⁵ for dinner in the monastery premises, the previous night. After the dinner, Vivekananda started washing his disciples' hands. Nivedita objected to such a reverse practice (as elders are not supposed to wash the hands of their disciples as per Indian custom). To this the Swami smiled and said: Didn't Jesus wash the feet of his disciples after the Last Supper? Next day the monk passed away after meditation.

Aurobindo Ghosh, better known as Sri Aurobindo, is another of the more recent spiritual personalities of India. Romain Rolland⁶ considers him 'a great philosophical and religious mind of India today' (p 218) and '----- a master metaphysician of India today' (p 219). His father was a medical doctor and was so much anglicized that he abhorred Hinduism, everything associated with India and Hinduism. He took special care to insulate his sons from the Hindu cultural influences. Aurobindo was sent, very early, to England

under the care of an English lady. Aurobindo was totally oblivious of India. He studied English, French etc. along with the classical languages like Greek and Latin, but he did not learn Sanskrit or Bengali. He became a master of these European languages. As per his father's wishes he also qualified for the elite Indian Civil Service. He, however, renounced the Service voluntarily and thus became the first Indian to have rejected such a coveted job. Contrary to his father's cherished wishes, Aurobindo did not become an 'Englishman' by a strange quirk of Destiny. The Maharaja of Baroda became his admirer and friend. Aurobindo came to India to work as a Vice-Principal in a college of the Maharaja. When he landed in Bombay (now Mumbai), he felt a strange spiritual Silence. Aurobindo now engaged himself in the Indian Studies and Yoga along with his teaching duties in the Baroda College.

He also kept himself abreast with the revolutionary movements of Bengal. Those were the turbulent days of the Partition of Bengal movement. Aurobindo actively participated in the movement, nay he was a leader of the movement. His writings were fiery and it lit up the youth of Bengal in particular and the masses of Bengal in general. The British were suspicious and afraid of Aurobindo. His younger brother, Barin, was directly involved in revolutionary activities.

He was incarcerated in Alipore Jail, Calcutta, in 1908-1909 and was kept in solitary confinement in a small cell of 9'x5'. He was allowed to walk half an hour in the morning and in the evening. In Aurobindo's words "I walked under the branches of the tree in front of my cell but it was not the tree, I knew it was Vasudeva⁷ it was Shri Krishna whom I saw standing there and holding over me His shade. I looked at the bars of the cell, the very gratings that did duty for a door and again I saw Vasudeva⁸. In short Sri Aurobindo found the Divine manifested in the jail, in the jailor, in the trial judge and everyone else. He felt reassured that he was in the safe hands of the Divine. His defense was handled by none other than the renowned barrister, C.R. Das, who in a moving speech before the judge, inter alia, said "long after he is dead and gone, he will be

looked upon as a poet of patriotism, as the prophet of nationalism and the lover of humanity”⁹

After his release from the Alipore Jail, Aurobindo secretly left the then, British India and first went to Chandanagar (then a French colony, near Calcutta) and from there to Pondicherry (also a French colony near Madras) in 1910. As alluded to earlier, he was tipped off about the British intentions of implicating him, in another case, by Nivedita. He also received Divine Command to go to Pondicherry and engage himself in yoga. Thus from 1910 to 1950, Aurobindo left all active politics and immersed himself in yogic sadhana (practice), He kept himself confined to the premises of Sri Aurobindo Ashrama, Pondicherry to perform intense yogic pursuits. He wrote prolifically of which *The Life Divine*, *Savitri*, *Essays on the Gita*, *The Synthesis of Yoga*, *the Integral Yoga*, *The Secret of the Veda* are some of his remarkable creations. In *Savitri* and *The Life Divine* he has put forth his yogic view of life and its future possibilities. When India became free from the British yoke, the Indian political leadership wanted Sri Aurobindo back but he declined the same because he felt that his yogic work was more pressing than the hum-drum of politics. Whether Aurobindo’s Superman, will at all come to existence is a moot point. Similarly whether such concepts as the Millennia or the Satya-Yuga or the Golden Age are at all realizable are difficult propositions to comment upon. What is certain is that man’s intellectual evolution has far outstripped his moral progression. The hiatus is evident in all walks of human behavior more so in politics and in international relations. Here, Might rules over Right and not vice-versa.

Romain Rolland¹⁰ has referred to the vision of St. Teresa of Avilla. ‘She felt herself engulfed in the infinite until the scruples of her faith and the stern admonitions of her directors led her against her own convictions to confine God within the form of the Son of Man.’ (p16) Paul Brunton, born in London and educated in the USA from where he earned a doctorate in philosophy, was deeply interested in the Indian mystical tradition. Being a westerner, he had a skeptical but also an enquirer’s mind. He writes¹¹ ‘I prided myself that experience as a journalist fitted me to draw out, with the least possible delay,

much of the information which I sought;, (p 12) He further writes 'It taught me never to permit my sympathy with Oriental methods of probing life's mysteries to subvert my scientific desire of critically and impartially finding the facts. Without that sympathy I could never have gone among people and into places where the average, Englishman in India may disdain to tread' (ibid p13). 'That the West has little to learn from present day India, I shall not trouble to deny but that we have much to learn from Indian sages of the past and from the few who live today, I unhesitatingly assert' (ibid p13).

Brunton peregrinated through many parts of India's great cities, villages, hermitages, caves and the riversides of Ganges, Yamuna, Godawari and others. He met many types of people; some of them were mere beggars in the garb of holy men, some magicians, some even frauds. But he did come across some wise men of the East. They were yogis and even Rishees (or seers). One such was the distinguished author of Kathamrita¹². He was a householder and a direct disciple of Sri Ramakrishna. Brunton writes: when at last - for he moves with extreme slowness - he enters the room, I need no one to announce his name. A venerable patriarch has stepped from the pages of the Bible, and a figure from the Mosaic of times has turned to flesh,' (p182). Master Mahasaya, as he was popularly known, was a teacher by profession. He was gifted with phenomenal memory and used to write down, verbatim, the sayings or the 'dialogues' of Ramakrishna. Kathamrita, thus, finds a distinguished place in the pantheon of religious literature of the world. Such accurate and authentic rendering is, rather, rare in such literature.

As Destiny would have it, Brunton came in contact with Ramana Maharshi of Arunachalam (S. India). The Maharshi was widely known as a man of realization¹³ of the Highest. He rose to the highest tip of the realization of Atman - Brahman of the Upanishads, by his solo effort. The Maharshi was a man-god or as the Hindus would say, Jeevan Mukta' (free while living in a body). Ramana Maharshi's grace fell on Brunton. See what he writes: I settle down and try to fix my eyes on the Maharshee, but after a while feel a delicate urge to close them. It is not long before I fall into a half

sleep lulled by the intangible peace, which in the sages proximity begins to penetrate me more deeply. Ultimately there comes a gap in my consciousness and then I experience a vivid dream. (ibid p 157)

Brunton then narrates his experience in some details, in which he climbs up to the pinnacle of the holy Arunachala hill with the Maharshi who holds his hands and guides him like a five year old boy. Brunton finds his old motives vanish, his desires no longer bother him, his cold selfishness disappears into nothingness. He concludes: An untellable peace falls upon me and I know now that, there is nothing further that I shall ask from life (ibid p.152). *'Then suddenly bids me turn my gaze away to the bottom of the hill. I obediently do so and to my astonishment discover that the western hemisphere of our globe lies stretched out far below. . It is crowded with millions of people, I can vaguely discern them as masses of forms, but the nights darkness still enshrouds them'* (ibid p 152) [emphasis mine]

Such an experience or 'vision' of modern, occidental Brunton is extraordinarily similar to what the oriental Sanjay experienced some five thousand years back. Both are due to prasadam or 'grace' of perfected souls - Ramana Maharshi and Veda-Vyasa respectively.

In Somerset Maugham's¹⁴ 'The Razors Edge' the main fictional character, Larry, after much travelling and travails, ultimately meets a Rishi in India. His name has not been mentioned by Maugham but undoubtedly, it alludes to Ramana Maharshi. Larry, like Brunton, finds his fulfillment at the feet of the perfected Rishi. The title of the book is obviously based upon the famous Katho-Upanishadic mantra¹⁵. Christopher Isherwood helped him in understanding this mantra.

'Arise, awake and stop not till the Goal is reached. The Path is sharp as the razor's edge and full of mighty difficulties so have the all-knowing seers declared'[1-3-14].

Vivekananda has made this mantra the motto of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission. (The first part of the mantra's translation is from Vivekananda; the second part is of the author).

Present scientific paradigm would like to view the 'visions' of saints and sages with skepticism, Hence subjects like ESP, clairvoyance etc. are a taboo for it¹⁶. Yet it is remarkable that interest in the sixteenth century French prophet, Nostradamus, has continued unabated ever since his predictive quatrains started appearing near about 1555.

Michel Nostradamus was born in southern France in 1503 in a middle class family. His father was a merchant. They were probably Jewish in origin but Michel Nostradamus, as a boy, was baptized a Christian. It seems he was born with strange powers. These powers were harnessed by an initiate teacher whose name is, however, unknown. One author, Paracelsus, describes him as a man touched by a drunken star, a *stella dilutior*, a man just a little inebriated by the influx of spirit' (Ovason p18)¹⁷. He acquired diverse types of knowledge including the then sciences, medicine, astrology, astronomy etc. He also obtained proficiency in the European languages including Greek and Latin. He started writing in medieval French with liberal dozes of Greek and Latin.

These writings are, of course, cryptic, in an arcane language and in the style of poets. These poetic stanzas have been called quatrains. In occult circles such writings are classified under the Green language; also language of the Birds. Regarding his writing, Nostradamus wrote to King Henry II:

'But, O most serene King, the exigencies of the times demand that such events (as I predict) should not be made public other than by enigmatic sentences, having only single sense and unique meaning, containing neither ambiguities nor equivocating calculation'. (Nostradamus, from the Epistles to Heny II in the 1668 edition of Propheesies) [Ovason p 121].

In short, Nostradamus wrote in such a manner that profane wouldn't make a sense out of it but the wise enquirer would be able to decode the same.

After his passing away, interpretations on the 'Quatrains' started appearing. This continued, with unabated zeal, through the intervening centuries. In fact, the last three decades of the twentieth century saw a flurry of research, mostly in France, on Nostradamus. This is in spite of the fact that the twentieth century saw such epoch making work in physics as Relativity, Quantum mechanics, Elementary particles and Antiparticles, Quarks and Gluons, Semiconductors and Superconductors etc. It also saw the rise of computers and supercomputers and pointed towards the possible existence of Artificial Intelligence. On the technological side, scientists built giant telescopes like the Hubble telescope which could peep into almost the farthest corner of the universe. Man's journey to Moon threw open the possibility of interplanetary and space travel. The spectacular achievements in molecular biology have almost limitless possibilities in life sciences. Earlier, Darwin-Wallace Theory of Evolution had already debunked Special Creation. Adam-Eve story and creation in six days appeared untenable in such a scenario.

Thus man seemed to outreach himself so as to touch the mega and the nano in one sweep. The basic riddles of life seemed to be clearing up. With such a way of science and technology, is it not then, enigmatic that man's interest in the paranormal has refused to die down? Also with such an imposing array in the background, is it not remarkable that Nostradamus could still attract hundreds of titles on his work?

David Ovason who has devoted around forty years of research on Nostradamus, describes him as 'the most renowned clairvoyant in the Western history.' In another recent work of Ramotti (1998), Nostradamus is called the 'master prophet' (see foreword). Ramotti seems to have discovered mathematically sound system for ordering the quatrains.

It appears, then, that Nostradamus was not a mere astrologer but a visionary or a clairvoyant. He was a gifted man of insight and foresight with, of course, requisite knowledge of astrology and allied subjects.

What are the most important conclusions that have been drawn from Nostradamus? According to Ovason (2001): *'Perhaps the most exciting conclusion is that his prophecies demonstrate, beyond a shadow of doubt, that it is possible to predict future events several centuries before they occur'*. Of course in this respect, Nostradamus was far from unique; other genuine prophets have written about the future, and often with equal precision (p 371).

This brings us to the predictions found in the Hindu Puranic literature. There are eighteen main Puranas which are all ascribed to Veda-Vyasa. He headed a school (or gurukul) and all the literature created by the school were ascribed to him. A similar practice is even now followed as far as the scientific publications are concerned. The last author of a scientific paper is the director or the professor who heads the group. The paper is authenticated by him/her. Veda-Vyasa was not only a person but an office of perpetuity as the Pope is a person as well as an office of perpetuity.

Tradition has it that the Rishis of yore were Trikal-Ajna (knower of the past-present and future). Modernist, of course, look upon such a proposition with suspicion if not with disbelief. The Puranas, thus, have been labeled as mythological. According to tradition, for a book to be labeled as a Purana it ought to fulfill ten criteria, sometimes only five. One of them should be the description of the ruling dynasties beginning with the first Man or Manu. It must also deal with the origin of the Universe, the Life and also with their final dissolution. Thus a Purana is a book of human history. The Bible also deals with the origin of first Man whom it calls Adam. Then it deals with the later dynasties, the prophets their teachings or preaching as also with the catastrophic dissolution of life. It is thus a Purana, of course, from a Jewish standpoint where Adam is equivalent to Manu.

The Hindu Puranas, written in Sanskrit, were couched in a symbolic language which sometimes appears fantastic. This is not because their writers were ignoramuses or half-wits or primitives-without-perspectives but were wise men who wrote with the purpose:

(i) To hide the inner meaning from the profane (as was done by Nostradamus of more recent times); and (ii) to pass on the hidden meaning to the posterity as stories or as religious practices so that such truths remain protected from the vandalism of the barbarian tribes. The world knows very well how invaluable monuments or great treasure houses of knowledge preserved as libraries, universities or works of art have been ruthlessly vandalized by fanatics.

Srimad Bhagwata is one of the eighteen Puranas. It has 18000 *slokas* (or stanzas) divided into twelve main chapters called *skandhas*. This book specializes in the biographical account of the Avatars or Incarnations of God. Even though the basic Hindu scriptures as the Vedas and the Upanishads have repeatedly stressed that the Ultimate Reality or Para Brahman can, in no way, be comprehended by human thought or speech¹⁸ yet due to His/Her inscrutable Power, He/She/That appears as a Man in a human birth. This is the essence of an Avatar who is called the Son of Man in the New Testament. For a Hindu, the Avatar may appear many times during the long human existence¹⁹ but for a Christian, the Son of Man has appeared only once and that too as Jesus, In another emetic system there is no such concept as Son of Man but only Messengers of God.

The Bhagwata has not only mentioned the total number of slokas present in its corpus but also mentioned the number of slokas in other Puranas. All this has been done with the sole intention to protect these books from infiltration of spurious slokas. Thus it would appear far flung to conclude that the Bhagwata was composed during the Maurya period because it mentions the name of Kautilya or Chanakya or Vatsayana or that it was composed during the Muslim rule of India because there is the mention of Yavanas, Turks or the Gurus. These books are not mere fantasies written by half-civilized men but are documents to be researched

with care. One is likely to come across gems in these storehouses of knowledge.

In the Buddhist literature one finds the Buddha telling about some of the ancient Buddhas but also predicting about the coming of a future Buddha called Maitreya. The exact dates have not been explicitly indicated as the dates of the coming of Kalki or of the Second coming have not been divulged.

When his aunt, Gotami, was admitted as a bhikshuni (nun) in the *sangha*, the Buddha declared that his sangha would now last, in full glory, for only five hundred years; otherwise it would have lasted for a thousand years. History tells us that the first five hundred years of Buddhism was of expansion of this Dharma and the next five hundred years was of its gradual decline. About a thousand years later, Shankaracharya arose with his blazing Advaita and drove away the decadent Buddhism from India. Shankara had, however, incorporated many of the tenets of Buddhism into his system so as to attract the epithet of crypto-Buddhist (prachanya Baudhya) on his name.

The subject of spiritual vision, clairvoyance and related topics is a fascinating one and requires in depth study. It only points towards the immense possibilities of the human brain. Neurologists have stressed that so far only a fraction of its potentiality has been utilized by common people²⁰. Indian Yoga has long emphasized that at the base of the spinal column lies coiled untapped source of power which it calls as the Kundalini²¹. With proper training, this power can be aroused. It successively passes through six chakras (or plexuses) and finally reaches the brain or the Sahasra (Thousand Petal plexus) to bring Enlightenment or God Realization. A man who has thus perfected himself can do so called miracles. Of course a perfected man is not a magician nor is he interested in power, pelf and aggrandizement. Clairvoyance, future telling etc. are baser achievements which he finds hollow. He has gone beyond all allurements and temptations. He is a person without bondages. The persons whom common people call prophets or avatars, have gained mastery over themselves through rigorous

practice. Grace (Prasadam) ²² or Descent of Godhead into man is another way to perfection.

Scientific, literary or artistic inspiration manifested in men of genius is a fractional manifestation of the Kundalini. This much about the spiritual literature; but what about rationalists, scientists etc.?

Let us hear what Bertrand Russell²³, considered a doyen of rationalist, has to say about it : “Everyone who has done any kind of creative work has experienced, in a greater or lesser degree, the state of mind in which after long labor, truth or beauty appears or seems to appear in a sudden glory — it may be about some small matter or it may be about the universe. The experience is, at the moment very convincing; doubt may come later but at the time there is utter certainty. I think most of the best creative work in art, in science, in literature and in philosophy, has been the result of such a moment. Whether it comes to others as to me, I cannot say. For my part, I have found that when I wish to write a book on some subject, I must first soak myself in detail until all the separate parts of the subject matter are familiar, then some day if I am fortunate, I perceive the whole with all its parts duly interrelated. After that I only have to write down what I have seen”. (p 138)

Even Russell used the word ‘seen’ which in other words, would mean ‘vision’. If a thorough going philosopher, a mathematician and a logician had ‘visions’ then, why not in spiritual geniuses or others?

Everyone is familiar with the inspirational flash of Archimedes even if the popular myth around it is left out. The organic chemist, Kekule, could discover the ‘ring structure’ of Benzene only through a dream. Descartes spelt out ‘cogito ergo sum’ after remaining deeply immersed in thought. It was an inspirational flash. It is widely held that the falling of an apple triggered Newton thoughts towards the Law of Gravitation.

Special Theory of Relativity (1905) had changed mankind’s such basic mode of thought as Space and Time. It took another ten years for Einstein to put forth his, equally revolutionary, General Theory of Relativity. A news paper reporter once asked how he hit upon the

idea of Relativity. Einstein is said to have replied that he had seen a man falling off a Berlin rooftop. The man survived the fall. Einstein rushed to the man and enquired: how did he feel while falling? The man said: I didn't feel any gravity. This is said to have triggered the idea of Curved Space in the General Theory. Ronald. W. Clark, however, felt that it was 'a poor joke played to a foolish gallery', but in an unpublished manuscript of Einstein, Gerald Holton (a science historian) found: 'There came to me the happiest thought of my life If one considers an observer in free fall, for example, from the roof of a house, there exists for him during his fall no gravitational field — at least in his immediate vicinity'.²⁴ (p33)

So a falling apple leads Newton to the Law of Gravitation and a free falling man leads Einstein to Curved Space in the General Theory of Relativity. Both of them are all-time great geniuses!

Hadamard (1945, 1996)²⁵ who initiated the study of psychology of inventions in the mathematical field, narrates a very interesting case of Henri Poincare, Now Poincare was deeply concerned about what mathematicians call 'Fuchsian functions'. Hadamard writes:

'At first Poincare attacked the subject vainly for a fortnight attempting to prove that there could not be any such functions, an idea which was going to prove to be a false one'. (p 12-13) Further: 'Indeed during a night of sleeplessness and under conditions to which we shall come back, he builds up one first class of these functions. Then he wishes to find an expression for them'. (ibid p13).

In a later paragraph we find the following significant words:

'Just at this time, I left Caen, where I was living, to go on a geologic excursion under the auspices of the School of Mines. The incidents of travel made me forget my mathematical work. Having reached Countances, we entered an omnibus to go some place or other. At the moment when I put my foot on the step, the idea came to me, without any thing in my former thoughts seeming to have paved the way for it that the transformations I had used to define the Fuchsian functions were identical with those of non-Euclidean geometry. I did

not verify the idea, I should not have had the time as, upon taking my seat in the omnibus, I went on with conversation already commenced, but I felt a perfect certainty. On my return to Caen, for conscience sake, I verified the result at my leisure' (ibid p13).

Poincare had another such experience when he was engaged in some arithmetical questions. He didn't get much success in the matter. Becoming:

'Disgusted with my failure, I went to spend a few days at the sea side and thought of something else. One morning walking on the bluff, the idea came to me, with just the same characteristics of brevity, suddenness and immediate certainty that the arithmetic transformations of indefinite ternary quadratic forms were identical with those of non-Euclidean geometry' (ibid p 14). According to Poincare:

'Most striking at first is this appearance of sudden illumination, a manifesting of long, unconscious prior work. The role of this unconscious work in mathematical invention appears to me incontestable' (ibid p14).

Gauss, another outstanding mathematician, worked unsuccessfully, for years together, on an arithmetical problem; finally he got the solution as a flash of lightning. He felt it was due to the Grace of God – again 'Prasadam'!

Mozart felt that tunes come to him, whence and how, he did not know. But they come linking themselves with each other. Then his soul lights up with fire of inspiration. Finally 'my mind seizes it as a glance of my eye a beautiful picture or a handsome youth'. Poet Tagore sang that his songs appear to come to him from some far-off days.

Such illumination occurs, generally, after a silent period of incubation. Romain Rolland feels that:

'Almost always it comes about that when effort has been exhausted, the spirit attains through anguish. The despair crushing the old self is the door leading to the new'. Further: 'Again it is a

remarkable fact that the great vision often manifests itself through 'photism' (luminous phenomenon) and by an oceanic flood²⁶ [p16].

According to Aurobindo²⁷:

'A consciousness that proceeds by sight, the consciousness of the seer, is a greater power for knowledge than the consciousness of the thinker' [p 945]. Also 'Intuition is always an edge or ray or out leap of superior light; it is in us a projecting blade, edge or point of a far off super mind' [ibid p 948].

With this in mind, it seems not improbable for Sanjay to have personally 'seen and heard' the war of Kurukshetra from a far off place like Hastinapur. A hundred years back, could anyone imagine seeing and hearing, in the cozy comfort of his home, events taking place thousands of miles away? Even today, annual migration of birds or the return of salmon fishes to their original place of hatching before dying, are only some of the unexplained biological phenomena in terms of physics and chemistry. Sanjay's feat is thus not a 'miracle' introduced in the Geeta.

Tele-vision and Tele-audience

NOTES

1. Dharmakshetre Kurukshetre samaveta jujutsava .

Mamaka Pandavaschaiva kim akuravata Sanjaya 1-1

धर्मक्षेत्रे कुरुक्षेत्रे समवेता युयुत्सवः ।

मामकाः पाण्डवश्चैव किंकर्तव्यः संजय ॥ १-१

2. अष्ट-सात्त्विकविकार = eight-sattwick bodily changes

3. His original name was Gadadhar. Ramakrishna Paramahansa was the monastic name given to him by Tota Puri who initiated him to sanyasa (monastic life). Ramakrishna attained to the realization of the Absolute Brahman (the Nirguna Brahman of the Upanishads.) after Tota Puri gave him **sanyasa**. Paramahansas are the highest class of sanyasins. Outwardly .Ramakrishna did not take the robe of sanyasins. Tota Puri himself belonged to one of the ten lines of sanyasins started by Shankaracharya.

4. The Visions of Sri Ramakrishna— Swami Yogeshwarananda - Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras. This book is essentially based upon the original biography, in Bengali, by Swami Saradananda under the caption ' Lila Prasanga'. It was later translated into. English under the caption 'Ramakrishna — The Great Master'.

5. Nivedita was the monastic name of Margaret Noble given to her by Vivekananda. It literally means 'the consecrated one'. She originally hailed from Ireland which to this day hasn't reconciled itself to British hegemony. She was totally 'dedicated' to the Indian cause and to the monastic life. It was Nivedita who alerted Aurobindo Ghosh about the intentions of the British to arrest him.

6. The Life of Ramakrishna — Romain Rolland - Advaita Ashrama - Calcutta 2000 (First published in 1929)

7. Vasudeva = Divine

8. From Uttarpara speech delivered on May 30, 1909 after his acquittal in the Alipore Conspiracy case. Published by Sri Aurobindo Ashrama, Pondicherry.

9. Concluding speech of C.R. Das at the trial of the Alipore Conspiracy case.

10. The Life of Ramakrishna — Romain Rolland, Advaita Ashram, Calcutta (2000). (First Published in 1929.)

11. A Search in Secret India — Paul Brunton. Srishti Publishers & Distributors New Delhi, (1999). (First Published in 1934.)

12. Kathamrita literally means the 'Nectar of Utterances' (or 'the Sayings of Sri Ramakrishna .It was originally written in Bengali by Mahendra Nath Gupta (or Master Mahasaya) who wrote in the pen name of 'M' to erase his ego of authorship. Later it was translated into English under the caption 'The Gospel of Ramakrishna' by

Srimad Bhagwad Geeta

Swami Nikhilananda of Ramakrishna Mission, New York. The great Hindi poet, 'Nirala' (Suryakanta Tripathi- Nirala) later translated the 'Sayings' under the title 'Vachanamrita' into Hindi.

13. Vivekananda has crisply defined 'Religion is realization'

14. Maugham earlier met Ramana Maharshi at his ashram in India and had some remarkable things to narrate about the same.

15. उतिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत ।

क्षुरस्य धारा निशिता दुरत्यया दुर्ग पथस्तत्कवयो वदन्ति ॥ १-३-१४

16. Even then the CIA has secretly utilized the services of some clairvoyant individuals to spy upon its rival Russia; similarly Russia is also reported to have secretly used such psychologically potential individual's services to spy upon USA.

17. David Ovason. The Secrets of Nostradamus. Harper Collins Publishers. NEW York 2001 (originally published in UK 1997)

18. 'From where the mind is reflected back with speech'. [Taiteeriya Upanishad]

19. 'I and you have had many births. Of them I know all, but not your austereself. [The Geeta 4.5]

20. First it was estimated that humans use only 50% of their brain potentiality. Gradually it has come down, to 40%, then 30%, then 20% and to 10%. But in 1990's it was estimated that humans use only 1% of their brain potentiality. There are some 10 billion neurons in the brain; some 120 billion glial cells.

21. Mul-adhara Chakra: Translated into English by Arthur Avalon as 'Serpent Power' (1924). Vivekananda has used this symbolically as the seal of Ramakrishna Math and Mission.

22. 'By the Grace of God'. [Patanjali Yoga Sutra]

23. Bertrand Russell - The History of Western Philosophy - George Allen & Unwin Ltd. London— 1961 (Reprinted 1996)

24. Nigel Calder - Einstein's Universe - Wings Books, New York. 1979 (Viking Press 1979)

25. Jacques Hadamard - The Mathematicians Mind. Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey. First published in 1945 - The Psychology of Inventions in the Mathematical Field.

26. Romain Rolland - The life of Ramakrishna. Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta (1929).

27. Sri Aurobindo - The Life Divine. Sri Aurobindo Ashrama. Pondicherry.

The Basic Thread of the Geeta

Chapter III

The basic thread of the Geeta has been uttered in the book itself. At the end of all the chapters, there is a common prayer which runs thus:

*'Aum Tat Sat iti Shrimad Bhagwat Geetasu Upanishadsu
Brahmavidyayam*

Yogshastre Shrikrishna-Arjuna Samvade.....¹

Then at the end of the first chapter one finds.

'.....Arjuna Vishad yogo Nama Prathama-adhyaya' after samvade.²

In the second chapter one comes across:

'.....Sankhya yogo Nama Dvitiya-adhyaya' after samvade.³

This is repeated for all the eighteen chapters. Thus the first portion is the essence of the Geeta while each chapter is considered a specialized subject of the same. The essence or the basic theme, therefore, requires a careful consideration.

Aum ॐ

Aum is the most sacred, primal sound in all the Vedas, the Brahmanas, the Upanishads, the Aranyakas and in all the scriptures of the Aryan-Hindus. In short all the Agamas, the Nigamas and the Puranas have sung the glory of Aum. This is the Nada-Brahman⁴ or the Anahata Dhvani⁴ [Unstuck Sound], the Primal Sound which symbolizes the manifest and the un-manifest Brahman; the Conditioned and the Unconditioned Brahman.

The very first mantra of the Mandukya Upanishad is:

'Aum is the Imperishable Word;

*All the Universe that was, that is and that will be is but Aum;
Whatever is Timeless that too is Aum.'*^{[1]⁵}

In the Kathopanisad we find:

*'All the Vedas repeatedly stress about that Supreme Status,
All the austerities again aim towards that status;
All desirous of attaining that status practice celibacy;
I will briefly tell you 'It is Aum' [1-2-15]⁶*

Kathopanisad again declares:

*'This word is Brahman,
This word is the Supreme,
Knowing this word,
Anyone desiring anything gets the same' [1-2-16]⁷*

Kathopanisad further declares:

*'This is the Best support,
This is the Supreme support,
Knowing this support,
One excels in Brahmaloaka.'*^{[1-2-17]⁸}

In the Taitteriya Upanishad one finds:

'Aum is Brahman, Aum is all this.....'^{[1-8]⁹}

Chandogya Upanishad declares:

*'Aum is the Imperishable Word,
This is Udgeetha which is to be worshipped,
The sama-singer initiates his song by first uttering Aum,
This is its explanation.'*^{[1-1-1]¹⁰}

According to Mandukya Upanishad:

The Basic Thread of the Geeta

'All this is Brahman, This Atman is Brahman. This Atman has four states. [1-2]¹¹

'The waking-state is externally conscious, with seven organs, nineteen mouths, gross-eater and is the Universal Person [Vaishwanara]. This is the first state.' [1-3]¹²

'The dream-state is internally conscious, with seven organs, nineteen mouths, subtle-eater and shining. This is the second state. [1-4]¹³

'When asleep, it desires not, dreams not. This is the sleep state. When asleep, it is concentrated consciousness, delightful, consciousness oriented, eater of delight, especially conscious, consciousness mouthed. This is the third state.' [1-5]¹⁴

'This is the Lord of All, this is Omniscient. Inner Controller, Origin of all the worlds, Originator, Maintainer and Dissoluter of all beings'. [1-6]¹⁵

'Neither inwardly conscious, nor outwardly conscious, nor both, nor concentrated consciousness nor consciousness nor unconsciousness. That is Unseen, Unworkable, Self-Awareness being its only proof, where all activities or actions have come to an end. One who is Silent. Shiva, Non-dual. That is Atman. That is considered the Fourth state. That ought to be known'. [1-7]¹⁶

Vivekananda has explained that AUM constitutes the entire process of sound production in man. It is, thus, the seed mantra of all mantras. In all human languages, A (अ) or Alpha or Aliph is the first alphabet. U (उ) is the middle order of sound production. It again, is a vowel. M (म) closes the sound production process, as the lips have to be closed for saying M (म). अ represents the waking state; उ represents the dream state while म is the sleep state. अउम or ॐ is, thus, the counterpart of the entire universe. What has been called as the fourth state in the Upanishads is also called the Turiya state. This is beyond the universe-visible or invisible, known or unknown, beyond the ken of thought and mind and therefore, of speech and expression, beyond spacetime- causality; unconditioned.

This has been called as the Nirguna Brahman of the Vedanta. This is a Reality without any qualities or qualifications. For to qualify is to specify; to quantify is to bring that under the limitation of number, dimension, space-time, or any other category of thought. The Upanishads have declared the Nirguna Brahman as Neti-Neti¹⁷. At best That (not this) can be called in negative terms. Even such description as Infinite is to bring the Reality under some category of thought.

The Taittiriya Upanishad states:

'From where the speech turns back along with the mind, knowing that Delight of Brahman, the wise man is never afraid of anything.....' [2-4]¹⁸.

In the Brihad-Aranyaka-Upanishad we come across the sage Yajnavalka saying to Gargi [a female sage]:

'That is called by the knowers Brahman as Akshara. That is neither gross nor subtle; neither small nor big; neither red, nor fluid; neither shadow nor darkness; neither air nor space; neither attached, nor taste; neither smelling nor with eyes; neither with ears nor with speech; nor mind, neither energy nor prana; neither with mouth nor with an exterior. Neither It eats nor It is eaten.' [3-8]

In another significant passage of Brihad-Aranyaka-Upanishad, Yajnavalka says to Maitreyi [a female sage]:

'Where there appears duality, there one smells another, one sees another, one hears another, one salutes another. But where all has become Atman, there, by whom shall he smell another; by whom shall he see another; by whom shall he hear another, by whom shall he salute another; by whom shall he think about another; and by whom shall he know another? That by which all this is known, by what can that be known? How can the knower be known?' [2-4-14].

What we have quoted from the Upanishads is the essence of the Vedas, the Vedanta and the Geeta. This, one can say with confidence, is the essence of Hinduism. It is this essence of AUM which has been placed before the humanity in all its boldness, in all

its simplicity. I wonder if any religion, any philosophy has arrived at such a Truth and stated it with such a conviction of certainty-a Truth that is beyond all human formulae or formulations. How can the knower be known? [येनेदँ सर्वं विजानाति तं केन विजानीयात् विज्ञातारमरे केन विजानीयात् इति ?]

Aum is both the Para Brahman and the Nada-Brahman. Para Brahman or Nirguna Brahman is the Transcendental Reality-beyond everything, every conception, as outlined by the Upanishads. This cannot, even, be called Ishwara or God, for it becomes, so to say, [Brahman in relation to Maya] a lesser Reality.

Nada-Brahman is the Brahman with Vibrations. Nada is sound; the essence of sound is vibration. Physics has a theory where every form of energy is a Wave [all waves are particles and all particles are waves]. This is wave Mechanics of Schrödinger. Earlier to him, DeBroglie postulated Matter Wave Theory where everything/matter was conceived as waves. Sound waves are the most palpable form of air-vibrations. The Vedanta, therefore, calls the manifest universe as Nad-Brahman or Vibratory Brahman.

The humming sound made by a bumble-bee is typical sound of Nada. A yogi hears such a sound while ascending the sevenfold scale of consciousness. This happens when the Kundalini Shakti (translated into English as Serpent Power by Arthur Avalon) forces its way through the spinal column. Kundalini is viewed as a coiled up Divine Energy lying asleep at the base of the spine. This is the Muladhara-chakra [a chakra is a plexus]. It passes through the successive five chakras¹⁹; finally it reaches the Sahasra. Only, then, a person is said to be Enlightened.

When the Kundalini reaches the Anahata, a yogi is able to hear the humming sound typically made by a bumble-bee. This sound automatically happens; no one has to make it or to strike a wire etc. to create such a sound. All persons can hear a similar sound if he/she closes his/her ears. This is irrespective of the professed religion or the race of the person. Similarly, when in pain, a person makes a humming sound [Aum], so as to find some relief. This,

again, is irrespective of his/her professed religion. The birth cry of a baby is Omma..... If it does not make this cry, it is likely to die! The attending doctors or nurses make every effort so that the baby may cry and live. This has nothing to do with the professed religion of the parents to whom the baby owes its origin. The sound coming out of conch-shells [so common in the Hindu households or temples] is nothing but the sound of Aum. So also the bells in the Hindu temples or the churches. Thus the sound of Aum ॐ is not the property of the Hindus but common to all the mankind.

Only the Aryan-Hindus-not in the racial sense of Mueller/Wheeler/Marshall had the sagacity to incorporate it [Aum] in their sacred books while others, due to the mighty onslaught of time and clime, have forgotten the same partially or completely. It is quite significant that Mongolian tribes, even now, are able to produce various modes of vocal sound that are only the variants of Aum. All Indian classical musical systems, best exemplified by the Dhrupad [Dhruvpad] system start with the sound of Aum. All the religions that have originated in the Indian subcontinent have taken Aum as their sacred symbol. The Sikh sacred book-Granth Sahib starts also with *Omkar* or Aum.

The Gospel, according to John, starts, [1.1]:

'In the beginning was the Word, and the word was with God, and the word was God.'

The 'Word' has not been clarified by the New Testament writer (s?). Though later theologians have equated it with Logos or with Jesus Christ. [The word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made].

Sanskrit grammar has studied Word or Vak in details. It is four layered viz. *vaikhari*, *madhyama*, *pashyanti* and *para*.²⁰ *Vaikhari* literally means that which gets scattered. Spoken language is verbal; the sound waves get dispersed or scattered. Waves have the tendency to circle out-hence *vaikhari*. *Madhyama* means intermediate. Before anything is spoken out, it must originate as a

thought. Thoughts may be uttered or may remain silent. In dreams, for instance, we seem to speak with persons of dream-creations but seldom, if any, sound is created. Similarly most of our thoughts are spoken out unless we intentionally desire not to do so. Can humans think without their corresponding words? Can a born deaf-mute think? There are hordes of such unanswered questions. Suffice it to say that Sanskrit grammar has held that words and their corresponding meanings are eternally joined together.

Pashyanti Vak is at the level of spiritual vision; roughly it is seeing with the 'mind's eye'. A rishi, in the Indian tradition, is one who has seen the truth²¹. A rishi is not a thinker or a philosopher; he is a seer. He does not reason out to arrive at a truth. He arrives at it intuitively. We have seen earlier [chapter II] how Poincare arrived at a mathematical theorem not through an active process of thought but by sudden 'illumination'. In fact, there is a strong mathematical school which believes that 'mathematical truths' are arrived at by the process of intuition rather than by mere discursive process. These 'truth' have 'eternal, independent existence' of their own apart from human existence or terrestrial existence. [For a full discussion see 'The Emperor's New Mind' - Roger Penrose 1989].

A rishi only 'sees' a 'pre-existing truth'. He is not an inventor of a mantra but only its discoverer. This immediately brings to our mind the well known Pythagorean dictum that 'all things are numbers'. He firmly held that 'numbers', or in our modern parlance, 'mathematical truths' can be grasped only by the intellect-not by the senses. Such truths have their own independent existence beyond the ken of sensory perception. They, we may say, are God's 'thoughts' and are imperishable. Ancient India called them mantras. These could be 'seen' by qualified men called rishis. We now call them 'geniuses'.

Plato took this Pythagorean doctrine and modeled his own philosophy of 'Forms' or Ideas'. This had a pervasive influence on the later European philosophy from Neo-Platonism of Plotinus and his disciple Porphyry, through the scholastic period down to Kant, Spinoza and Hegel. The Christian teaching that 'word is God' and

that Jesus Christ was 'Word became flesh' actually stems from this Pythagorean-Platonic world-view.

It will, at once, be observed that the Hindu view of the Vedas being 'Eternal, Imperishable and Uncreated', in short, *Apaurusheya* and that the Vedic-seers were not their composers but only their 'seers' are, in essence, similar to Pythagorean- Platonic philosophy only couched differently and in a different language. The followers of Islam devoutly believe that Kuran is 'eternal and imperishable'. It remains in the safe custody of Allah who chose to reveal it to Prophet Mohammad in historical times.

In our own times, these ancient doctrines have reappeared in higher physics and mathematics. Sir James Jeans, for instance, believed that 'God is addicted to arithmetic' and that 'the universe begins to look, more like a great thought than a great machine'. Galileo believed 'Mathematics is the language in which God had written the Universe'. Georg Cantor held 'The essence of mathematics lies in its freedom'. The very first inscription at Plato's Academy was: you are not allowed to enter here, unless you know geometry. Plato thought 'God was a geometer'. Einstein's driving passion was to understand God's mathematical thoughts. This was one main reason why he couldn't go whole hog with Niels Bohr and went on stressing that 'God does not play dice.' He was convinced about the basic harmony behind the Universe. Quantum mechanics, on the other hand, postulated a fundamental 'uncertainty' in Nature's scheme of things. Einstein devoted rest of his life, almost fruitlessly, in search of a 'Unified Field theory'. In spite of many dazzling advancements in physics, the two towering physical theories viz. Relativity and Quantum mechanics still remain unreconciled. The Mega and the Nano remain to be reconciled even today²³.

Para-Vak [परा-वाक] is beyond thought-even beyond spiritual vision or intuition. It is Transcendental, hence unutterable. The Upanishads have, again and again, stressed that the ultimate realization or the 'fourth state' is beyond all conceptions, beyond all categories or relations. It is non-dual [advaita- अद्वैत]. It is self or Atman. 'One who has known It, he alone knows, he alone knows'. [Mandukya. 12].

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The Atman can be known only through Atman-not by any instrument, mind or even a supermind. The Upanishads call it unutterable. It is significant that Ramakrishna Paramahansa, who would often enter into 'nirvikalpa samadhi' or the 'fourth state', used to say: '*I can utter Aum only when I have come down one hundred cubits from Samadhi*'. It is in this light one understands why the Buddha never tried to define Nirvana because it was undefinable. How can you utter what is unutterable? How can you define **That** which is undefinable? **That** which is limitless, **That** which is beyond thought and speech?

Again, only in such a light, one can make a sense why John said 'word was God'. Now such a 'word' could not be human speech. It is also in this light one can make a sense out of John's saying:

'No one has seen the Father, except the one who is from God; only he has seen the Father'. [John 6:46 NIV]

For the Transcendental Godhead can never be 'seen' or 'grasped'. For 'None can see the Father except through the Son'. Biblical interpreters have equated the Son with only Jesus Christ but Son here meant a human personification of the Godhead. Such a personification has been called Avatar by the Hindus. The crucial difference is that the latter believe in many Divine manifestations as human persons, of which Jesus was one, but to limit Him in the body of only Jesus would be to put a bar on the Infinite Divine and His potentialities. In fact, Srimad Bhagawat states that the Divine incarnations are not limited to ten or to twenty two but may be infinite.

In the Geeta, Shri Krishna says:

'I and you have had many previous births, I know them all but yourself of supreme austerities know them not.'[4:5]²⁴

The difference with the Islamic viewpoint is that they call such manifestations as Paigambar [or Messengers] while the Hindus call them Avatars. The literal meaning of avatar is one who has come down or one who has descended. Obviously avatars are not invisible but when in a human form they are 'son of man'. The Hindu

equivalent of 'son of man' is Nara-Hari i.e. Man-Divine. They are humans but not in any way less than the Supreme Godhead. Inwardly they are all the time aware of their Divinity though they may not choose to reveal it to all and sundry. Generally they behave like an ordinary man but at special moments or to special persons they may reveal their true nature. Thus Sri Chaitanya would act like a devotee of the Lord, at most of times, and would like to scotch any reference to him as the Lord but at special moments he would cry out 'I am that, I am that'. [मुई सेई, मुई सेई]²⁵

Ramakrishna, almost always, behaved as a child of the Divine Mother even though he had realized the *Nirguna Brahman* within hours. His preceptor, Tota Puri, took forty long years of *sadhana* to reach that state. The great Tota Puri was amazed at such a rapid realization of his disciple. Towards the end of his life, Ramakrishna had deadly cancer. He was about to leave his body and Narendra [later Swami Vivekananda], his beloved disciple, had his unspoken doubts about Ramakrishna being an avatar. Sensing his thoughts, Ramakrishna opened his eyes and distinctly said 'He who was Rama and He who was Krishna is now verily Ramakrishna in this body but not according to your Vedanta.' Henceforth, Vivekananda's doubts were dispelled for good.

In John, we find, Jesus telling unbelieving Jews 'I and my Father are one' [10:30]; or.....that 'Father is in me, and I in the Father' [10:38]. He also asserted 'I am the resurrection and the Life [11:25]. When Philip said, 'Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us' [14:8]. Jesus answered: 'Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you for such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say 'Show us the Father' [14:9]. Earlier Jesus had told Thomas: 'I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.' [14:6]

In fact, no one can understand an avatara or the Son of Man, unless the Supreme Divine graciously reveals Himself/Herself to man. Sri Krishna was with Arjuna for such a long time, yet he failed to recognize in Him the Divine. Only when He graciously showed

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him His Universal Divine form [Vishwaroop Darshan Yoga-11th Chapter: Geeta] that Arjuna felt that he was in the presence of the Supreme whom he was considering only his friend, companion and even his charioteer!

'Even if a thousand Suns had arisen simultaneously in the sky, the glory of the same could hardly compare with that of the Lord's Universal Form'²⁷

It is not that when the Lord, assumes a human form, He becomes something inferior or loses some of His divinity or loses His Transcendental state, He retains all of these but only withholds His All-Powerfulness because man cannot comprehend His powers. Only in a human form, man can interact with the Supreme otherwise He is remote and inaccessible²⁶.

Consider what happened to Arjuna when he was bestowed with the vision of *Vishwaroop* [the Universal Form]. Arjuna couldn't withstand that great form. He begged Sri Krishna to assume His human form. When He reassumed the same, Arjuna was reassured, comforted.

In the New Testament, there is the episode of transfiguration of Jesus before Peter, James and John. His clothes '*become dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach*'. '*And there appeared before them Elijah and Moses*' [Mark 9:5]. In Mathew: '*There he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the Sun, and his clothes became as white as light. Just then there appeared before them Moses and Elijah, talking with Jesus*' [17:15] [Compare Geeta 11:12]²⁷.

In all these Testament accounts, the disciples - very much like Arjuna - were terrified by what they saw or heard. They fell 'face down to the ground terrified'. When Jesus touches them saying 'get up. Don't be afraid' only then they felt reassured and they saw no one except Jesus (Mathew 17:6). In Mark: 'they were so terrified'. [9:6]

Is it not amazing that in spite of transfiguration or what Jesus had done earlier or declared earlier, the disciples/apostles couldn't comprehend that he was Divine incarnate or the Son of Man; or why

should Judas Iscariot betray him for mere thirty pieces of silver? Alas! Few of his times believed in what he said. To cap the unfolding drama, they put him to a most painful form of death along with some criminals!! This was, indeed, a tragedy of unspeakable dimensions.

This reminds us of what the Lord said in the Geeta:

'The foolish men, try to belittle Me, not comprehending that I have taken up a human form yet I am essentially the Transcendental Reality and the Great God of all beings.' [9:11]²⁸

Avtarhood is the 'word becoming flesh' where *Paravak* appears as a human person. This is the descent of Divinity. Sri Rama, Sri Krishna and Jesus are instances of such descent. There are also others. Ascent of man to Godhood is best exemplified by the Buddha. He was a Bodhisattva but became the Buddha.

The Upanishads declare:

'The knower of Brahman attains the Supreme'. [Taittiriya 2:1]²⁹
'.....One who knows Brahman becomes Brahman'. [Mundaka 3:2:9]³⁰

The Geeta echoes such Upanishadic declaration:

'Many by virtue of their austerities, effort, knowledge and purity have arrived at My status.' [4:10]³¹

In the Vedantic terms man was or is essentially Divine but due to *avidya* [Ignorance] deems himself as flesh. He is *Paravak* or the Spirit but due to Error calls or feels himself as a mortal. This, perhaps, has been called a fall from divinity by certain scriptural traditions.

Tat-Sat तत् सत्

The next part of the Geeta's chapter-end prayer is *Tat-Sat*. It can, perhaps, be best translated as 'That-Existence'³². 'Thatness' is opposed to 'Thisness'. '**This**' can be properly pointed out but not '**That**'; it has some vagueness about it. Hence Godhead has been called in the Hindu scriptures as *Tat*. There is another Sanskrit word

'*anirdeshya*' which means that 'which cannot be properly pointed out'.

If the Godhead is limited that would be subject to change e.g. birth, growth, death, decay etc. If **that** is limited, there ought to be something else to limit the Godhead. There should be, at least, two which would be limiting each other. Thus Godhead would be confronted with something other than Him/Her/That, like a Satan or Ahriman of certain religious systems. Both, eternally, at loggerhead with each other!

Necessarily, thus, the Godhead ought to be Transcendental, Non-dual, beyond Space-Time Causality (in short beyond *Maya*). This Non-dual Reality must, thus, be beyond all human formulations of magnitude, number and thought itself. Since man has to communicate, it seems best to call the Reality, *Tat*.

The Upanishads have always spoken about That in negative terms [Neti-Neti]. The Buddha was Enlightened par-excellence. But lesser minds called him either an atheist or a nihilist. An European writer on Buddhism, for instance, remarks³³: 'Nirvana or annihilation, is a monstrous conception, repugnant to all instincts of human nature, revolting to reason and implying atheism' [p.175]. Another European scholar of Buddhism, Eugène Burnouf, also held the opinion that 'nirvana means complete annihilation' [ibid p 140]. These authors were perhaps so thoroughly soaked in the Biblical lore of a Creator, the heaven, and the earth, the original sin, a jealous God intolerant of every other form of worship, redemption through the blood of the only Son and an Eternal life in the Heaven for the faithful and an Eternal hell for the non-believers etc. that they could neither conceive of a Non-Dual Reality beyond the thralldom of senses or more philosophically, beyond ever changing, nevertheless the same flux of Space-Time-Causality or in terms of modern physics, Probability Waves. (Such waves are not like the sound waves or the water waves. They have only a tendency to exist). For such persons, Nirvana seems to be a total annihilation and the Buddha's doctrines as 'monstrous'.

If, then, there is a Reality, it ought, at least to exist. A non-existing-Reality would be logically 'No Reality' or 'UnReal'. Hence Sat (सत्) is a must. We say we exist; we do not feel that we do not exist. If we do not exist, there can be no further discussion. Thus, the Chandogyia Upanishad declares:

'O amiable one, in the beginning this was Existence one without a second.' [6.2.1]³⁴

If I [by extension also you] do not exist, then where is the question of logic? How can human logic exist? Where are the proofs? Where are the axioms? Where, then, the much vaunted science and philosophy?

The Chandogyia in very next mantra puts it:

'But O! amiable one, how can it so happen? How can Existence come out of Non-Existence?' [6.2.2]

The rishi then himself replies:

'Hence O amiable one, in the beginning was Existence without a second.' [6.2.2]³⁵

The cornerstone of Vedanta [and Hinduism] is Sat [सत्] or Existence. No one, not even the rank atheist can ever be a nastik [न अस्ति] or a believer in non-existence. One may deny the existence of a Creator God for inequities, injustices and arbitrariness or a God for whom some people are 'chosen' or a God who is jealous of other gods/goddesses or a God who likes to be called by one name or group of names and directs his followers to eliminate others who due to linguistic or other causes call upon Him by different names, but surely no one can ever be a believer in non-existence. Even a materialist believes in something which he labels as matter or at times nature. Even Buddhist *Kshanika Vigyanvad* [momentary consciousness - क्षणिक विज्ञान वाद] believes in a stream of momentary consciousness, or a Nihilist believes in a Zero. A Heraclitean fluxist believes in an eternal flux, like a 'river where no one can step in the same river twice'.

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The Buddha did declare: सर्व अनित्यं [All is non-eternal]³⁶.

By 'All' what did he mean?

'Form' is non-eternal. [रूप-अनित्य]

'Sensation' is non-eternal. [वेदना अनित्य]

'Perception' is non-eternal. [संज्ञा अनित्य]

'Movement or memory' is non-eternal. [संस्कार अनित्य]

'Consciousness' is non-eternal. [विज्ञान अनित्य]

These are the 'Five Categories'. [पंच स्कंध]

These 'Five Categories' constitute Nama-rupa. They are non-eternal and subject to change. Nirvana means extinction of these 'Five' not a Total Nihilism. What Exist beyond these [non-eternals] is obviously, and logically, Eternal, Self-Existent-Indestructible-Unchanging. 'That' cannot be expressed by words. And 'silence is golden'. Buddha's silence with regard to Atman is, therefore, fully understandable. To call him a nihilist is born out of incapability to fathom such thoughts.

Now take the case of 'materialists'. What, after all, is this 'matter'? The primary concern of physics is this 'matter'. All elementary books on physics start with the 'General Properties of Matter'. Newton made a sharp distinction between 'matter' [or body] and 'force'. If a 'body' is at rest, it will continue in that state unless acted up on by a 'force'. If the 'body' is in motion, it continues to move in a straight line with uniform velocity for an indefinite time unless, again, disturbed by a 'force'. The 'force' may accelerate, decelerate, or change the direction of motion of the 'body' or may stop it's motion. The 'force' is proportional to acceleration [$F \propto a$] or [$F = m \times a$] where F =force; m =mass; a =acceleration. This, in essence, are the Newton's celebrated Laws of Motion-simple and elegant. They were supposed to account for the motion of small particles to the heavenly bodies like planets, suns, stars etc. Later studies in physics, particularly of Faraday and Clerk Maxwell, showed that

Electromagnetism could not be accounted for by Newtonian laws. Einstein made fundamental changes in the Newtonian mechanics. Matter [or body or mass] and force [because force is nothing but energy with a direction] were one and the same. This was done with another elegant and very widely known formula.

The universe was now composed of only energy. Matter-energy duality was removed for good. Quantum theory showed that all energy came in discrete quantities per Planck's formula. Einstein showed that light consisted of particles called photons. Earlier it was shown by Young that light consisted of waves. Thus, light was both a particle and a wave. But these are contrary in character-particle a localized phenomenon, wave a spread out phenomenon. Thus arose the wave-particle duality, not amenable to ordinary logic.

Light [other radiations including elementary particles like electrons etc.] showed a strange experimental behavior. Suppose a fine slit is made in an opaque obstruction and a beam of light is made to pass through this slit, then it lights up the screen beyond. But if two such slits are made near each other, one gets alternate light and dark bands. Why so? Because light, considered as waves, interfere; where the crests of the waves are superimposed the effect of light is enhanced; but where the crests and troughs meet, they try to cancel each other resulting in dark bands. These experiments were conducted by Young to fully establish that light is propagated as waves. There is no mystery here.

But consider that the light beam is composed of photons. As long as one slit is open the photons pass through and light up the screen. But the moment the other slit is opened, how do the photons know, that they are not to go in certain regions? Are the photons conscious particles? How does the information go so quickly-instantaneously? This is a mystery of the Quantum theory.

According to Henry Stapp: 'the central mystery of quantum theory is: How does information get around so quick? How do the particles know that there are two slits?'³⁷. The picture that is emerging is that the 'matter' of the ancient, the medieval and even of the nineteenth century thinkers and physicists as 'dead and inert' has, perforce, to

give way to a scenario where the world of elementary 'wave-particles' seem to consist of conscious Quanta. Evans. H. Walker [1970] felt:

'.....since everything that occurs is ultimately the result of one or more quantum mechanical events, the universe is "inhabited" by an almost unlimited number of rather discrete conscious usually non-thinking entities that are responsible for the detailed working of the universe. [Quoted from Gary Zukav's, 'Dancing WuLi Masters' - 1980]. The whole picture would unnerve the dogmatic materialist. But the function of science is to break-down dogmatic assertions and march forward regardless of human fancy or long held beliefs. Thus the Vedantic conclusion of the Sat [Existence] seems to be unassailable.

Shankaracharya³⁸ starts his magnum opus-Brahma-Sutra Bhasya³⁹ – with the significant words:

'It being an established fact that the object and the subject that are fit to be contents of the concepts of 'you' and 'we' (respectively), and are by nature as contradictory as light and darkness cannot logically have identify, it follows that their attributes can have still less [p 1]. Continuing Shankaracharya further says: [ibid p 12] *'for everyone feels that his self exists, and he never feels "I do not exist". Had there being no general recognition of the existence of Self, everyone would have felt "I do not exist". And Self is Brahman'.*

My existence [or the existence of the Self] is, thus, self evident. It needs no further proof—sensory or inferential. A mathematical system starts with definitions, postulates and axioms [which are considered self evident truths].

Euclidean geometry, considered unassailable for two thousand years or so, has twenty three definitions, five postulates and nine axioms [Efimov 1980]. But during the nineteenth century, the 'unassailable' Euclidean geometry came under the scanner of some mathematicians' viz. Lobachovsky Riemann etc. The fifth postulate [or the fifth axiom also known as the parallel lines axiom] was found to be not axiomatic [or self proved]. Thus came the Non-Euclidean

geometries which played such an important role in Einstein's General Theory of Relativity. We are, obviously, not contending with Gödel's Incompleteness Theorem wherein it was concluded: *'the impossibility of ever attaining a situation in which every true statement can be proved'* [V.A. Upensky — 'Gödel's Incompleteness Theorem', MIR Publishers-Moscow, 1987]. Gödel's theorem has brought into bold relief that: All statements, mathematical or otherwise, which may be true, cannot be proved to the hilt. Some incompleteness is inherent in such statements. Russell has shown that certain mathematical statements are fundamentally paradoxical⁴⁰. These intricate questions of mathematics are, however, best left for the mathematicians to ponder over.

In contrast to the Vedantic position, Rene Descartes pronounced 'Cogito ergo Sum'. It has been translated as 'I think, therefore, I am'. If expanded this expression becomes: 'If I do not think then, I am not'. In deep sleep [not REM], I have no thinking. From the Cartesian statement, the inference is: 'I do not exist during deep sleep'. How, then, a person getting up from deep sleep could assert: I slept peacefully? If he did not exist, then, did he come from non-existence? Nonexistence begetting Existence would be absolutely illogical.

Existence denotes unchangeability. Existence is being not becoming. It is. **Is** cannot become **is not**. Since Existence is unchangeable, it is everlasting. If Non-Existence cannot become Existence; conversely, Existence cannot become Nonexistence. Thus by bringing thought before existence, Descartes in a sense, brought the cart before the horse. Thought has, at least, to exist before it becomes thought at all.

Further 'I think, therefore, I am' presupposes the existence of **I** before **thought**. Thinking is predicated to 'I'. All predicates have to have a subject or else the expression is meaningless. Descartes, thus, a great philosopher and a mathematician who is credited with the invention of analytical geometry and pioneered the modern analytical method of science, floundered on a fundamental issue.

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Scientific thinkers [like Capra] have pointed out that Descartes was responsible for another cleavage. Mind-matter dichotomy, in the Western thought, owes its origin to him. Mind is *res-cogitans* while matter is *res-extensa*. Both are irreconcilably different. *Cogitans* does not fill up space. Newton viewed space as 'absolute and immovable'. *Res extensa* fills up such a space. *Cogitans*, on the other hand, is independent of such a space.

Extensa is what Aristotle called the material causes. In the Indian Philosophy this goes by the name of *Upadana Karana*. The efficient cause of Aristotle is what Newton called force. These two together are the mechanistic causes, *Cogitans*, on the other hand, belong to the teleological causes of Aristotle which were further subdivided as the formal cause and the final cause. In the Indian Philosophy the efficient, the formal and the final causes are summarized as the *Nimitta Karana*. What we understand as science is concerned with only the mechanistic causes not with the formal and the final causes. Hence Descartes-Galileo-Newton represents the standard model of Science. Their methodology, alone, is scientific. If someone enquires after the final causes, then it is considered as pseudoscience⁴¹.

The deep impact of Descartes on the Western Philosophy can be summarily observed in the philosophies of Hegel, Marx, Spinoza and Bergson. Hegel held mind (*cogitans*) to be primary. While his pupil, Marx, held matter (*extensa*) to be primary. Mind, for Marx, is just a by-product of matter⁴². Hence History is the unfolding of economic forces. But for Hegel, Absolute Idea is trying to manifest itself through History.

Spinoza held that matter and mind are two independent substances; one defined by extension, the other by thought. The crucial difference with Descartes is that here these two independent substances are under the Divine Omnipotence. If He so willed, He could annihilate both. Descartes had none of such stuff in his philosophy. In Henri Bergson, we again come across a dualism-Life and Matter. These are the opposing forces. Matter is inert and has

the tendency to fall downwards (cf. Epicurean philosophy of atoms) while Life climbs upwards. Ultimately Life triumphs over Matter.

This is the cause of organization found in the living organisms. The diverse forms that we encounter among the living organisms are due to obstruction cause by matter. Evolution is not due to Natural Selection of Darwin but due to Life-Force [*Elan-vital*]. In the animals, evolution has led to the development of instinct and intellect. Mind or intellect is, thus, only an evolutionary product of Life Force.

No such dualism existed in the Greek Philosophy. In Aristotle, for instance, the material-efficient causes [the mechanistic causes] subsisted with the formal final causes [the teleological causes] as 'warp and woof'. It is evident that the teleological causes implicitly assume a mental element. For sake of study, one may separate warp from the woof but in their separateness no cloth can be woven. Matter and forces, by themselves alone, cannot fashion out an organization. This is exemplified in the myriad animal and plant forms, as also their ecological surroundings making delicately balanced ecosystems. Can it all be accounted for by chance?

Aristotle insisted that the Platonic 'forms' or 'ideas' inhered in the organisms they were neither anterior [*ante rem*] nor posterior [*post rem*] to the particulars. Thus 'cowness' of a particular cow is present as an intangible cause in it. With Plato, on the other hand, 'cowness' or 'cow' as an 'Idea' is eternally present in the Divine Mind. All particular cows may, get annihilated but 'cow' as an 'Idea' would persist in the Divine Mind. Such is the basic difference between the master and his disciple.

This problem of the 'universals' continued to be hotly debated throughout the scholastic period. Some sided with the 'pure realism' of Plato while others preferred to be Aristotelian. John the Scot [800-877 AD?] was on the side of Plato because he had a category which 'though created by God' (i.e. Ideas) yet created things in Space and Time. St. Thomas Aquinas [13th century AD] was more Aristotelian with the provision that he tried to fit the above with the Christian faith. Duns Scotus [13th-14th century AD] was again with Plato but with moderation.

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On the other extreme were the 'nominalists' who believed that 'universals' were mere names given to a group of particulars. William Occam [1290-1349 AD] was a famous 'nominalist'. He is known for his dictum that 'Entities are not to be multiplied without necessity'. This is often, called 'Occam's razor'. He is considered a watershed between the scholastic and the modern period of Western Philosophy. Russell considers him as a restorer of 'pure Aristotle, freed from both Augustinian and Arabic influences' [p.462]⁴³. As far as human knowledge is concerned it was '*universale post rem*' but God's knowledge necessarily presupposes '*universale anti rem*' in His Mind. If God didn't have prior knowledge of the 'universals', then how could He create the world? In a sense, therefore, even Occam was somewhat Platonic. But he freed the Western philosophy from the strangle hold of scholasticism.

The Indian thought, on the other hand, did not commit the initial blunder of separating the mind from the matter. The orthodox systems accepted mind-matter to be obverse-reverse of the same substance or more precisely *gunas* or qualities⁴⁴. One, thus, finds *nama-rupa* [name-form]⁴⁵ always together. They have never been called *nama* and *rupa*. This distinction may appear trivial but is as profound as calling Space-Time as Space and Time. If one calls Space and Time, one distinguishes between Space as one category, distinct and different from Time belonging to an altogether separate category of Nature. But calling Space-Time implies a four dimensional reality of which space like perception has three dimensions while Time like perception is unidimensional. Human brain perceives them as events. Thus events are separated by time while things are separated by space. In exactly a similar manner, *nama* (name) implies mind like aspect of the reality (becoming) while *rupa* implies a tri-dimensional reality (becoming). *Nama* does not occupy any physical space but *rupa* occupies a definite physical space.⁴⁶

In the Buddhistic thought one encounters *nama-rupa* among the twelve categories of dependent origination (Pratiya-Samutpad). The *nama-rupa* here has the same connotation as in Vedanta.

There is another major departure. In the western thought there is overlapping between mind and consciousness. Descartes himself considered the soul to be residing in the pineal gland where it came in contact with the 'vital spirits'. This brings about the interaction between the body and the soul. Here the soul and the mind were thought to be one but there were others who considered the mind and the body like two synchronized clocks, so that the two seem to act together. Such synchronization was handiwork of God. On the other extreme, were those who denied, and even now deny, the very existence of mind and consciousness; for them man is but a bundle of behavior!

Nama-rupa belongs to the realm of *Prakriti* of *Sankhya* philosophy. All the twenty four categories of *Prakriti* are but insentient [*Jada*]. Among these categories are *chitta* [mind stuff], *manas* [mind], *buddhi* [intellect] and *ahamkara* [ego sense]. The ten *indriyas* [brain centers i.e. five *gyanindriyas* (sensory) and five *karamendriyas* (motor)] are obviously again, *Jada* and belong to *Prakriti*. The only sentient category - the twenty fifth- is the *Atman* [Self] ⁴⁷. In *Sankhya*, *Atman* is called *Purusha*. Thus *Purusha* and *Prakriti* constitute what we label as the universe.

Purusha alone is sentient - all else is non-sentient. In the *Sankhya*, the *purushas* are innumerable while in the *Advaita Vedanta* there is only One or more precisely a Non Dual Reality. All these terms, are widely found in the *Upanishads*, the *Geeta*, the *Yoga* and other authoritative texts of the *Hindus*. The *Geeta* even speaks of *Para-Prakriti* and *Apara-Prakriti*. The *Purusha* is alone beyond the realm of *Prakriti*. He is the upholder, the redeemer and the be-all and end-all of everything.

That the mind is but a fine state of matter is borne out by an *Upanishadic* mantra [*Chandogya* 6.5.1]. Here the sage says that *anna* [food] a person takes becomes fine and creates the mind while the less fine becomes the flesh etc. The grossest is excreted out. In the *Taittiriya Upanishad* one finds mention of five sheaths [or *kosas*]. The grossest is called *annamaya* or the material. Progressively finer sheaths are: the *pranmaya* [energy], the

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manomaya [mental], the *vijnanmaya* [supramental] ⁴⁸ and the *anandamaya* [delight]. The same Upanishad further says that from Delight the beings arise and live. Finally they melt away into Delight. These sheaths are not mutually exclusive. To man they progressively appear as matter, energy, mind, supermind and finally Delight. According to Vedanta there is but One Existence without a second which only appears as many. To see many is *avidya* [Ignorance]. To see Oneness is *Vidya* [knowledge]. Knowledge is not knowing many facts or theories or remembering or reading many books but the realization of the Oneness of the Universe. This is elsewhere stressed by the Veda which asserts:

ऋते ज्ञान न मुक्ति

[Without Knowledge of the Truth there is no Liberation]

Or

विद्यायां अमृतं अश्नुते [Ishopanisad]

[Through Knowledge one attains Immortality]

In the New Testament one comes across:

'*Truth shall set you free*' [John 8:31]. But unfortunately no one has ever given a correct interpretation of this great statement. Does this statement not tally with what has been declared in the Vedas or the Upanishads?

Srimad Bhagwat Geetasu Upanishadsu

This part of the prayer says that Bhagwad Geeta is not a prosaic composition but a poetic outpouring of the Divine; this is a 'Song Celestial' by the Divine personified as Sri Krishna. In his boyhood days, Krishna revealed Himself more as a flute playing musician than as a fighter or a destroyer of evil though several subsidiary legends are associated with that role as well. He is best known as a playful cowherd [Gopala] sometimes playing pranks, but also as a lonely flute player whose heavenly music transported his playmates

into sublime regions. These playmates were village boys and belles — simple, transparent and guileless; they were not burdened with learning or logical quibbling or with huge data filled intricate books. Such were best suited for the companionship of the Divine Boy. Such persons were the competent repositories of the Divine transportations, known in the Vaishnava spiritual literature as *bhava*, *mahabhava* and *prema*⁴⁹

One finds Jesus revealing himself first to simple fisher folks; also to Mary and Martha or to Centurion. But the then learned of Israel were bogged down by their so-called learning or the religious shibboleths and clichés. They failed to recognize in him, the Son of Man promised in their scriptures. Luke [10:21] says:

'.....Lord of heaven and earth, because You have hidden these things from the wise and the learned and revealed them to little children

Jesus also said *'Unless ye be like these children ye cannot enter the kingdom of Heaven'*

One remarkable fact of human history is that ancient writings, both religious and secular, were in verses. The Vedas, the Upanishads, the Ramayana, the Mahabharata, the Homeric epics etc. were all in verses. Prose is, rather, a more recent phenomenon. Perhaps verse is a more suitable vehicle for sublime thoughts just as mathematics is better adapted to convey the abstract thoughts of Physics. In mathematics, elegance or beauty of a theorem is a powerful criterion of its acceptance, apart from its consistency.

In our recent times, Tagore expressed his sublime thoughts in poetry. His best known work, Geetanjali, is a set of poems dedicated to the Unknown Godhead rather than to a specific god. For Tagore, the Divine was the *'Primal Poet and the teacher-preceptor of poets'*. He also sang *'I listen with wondrous attention how you sing your compositions, Oh! The Talented singer'*. Aurobindo, another genius of recent times, has cast his visions and thoughts in 'Savitri' - in verses.

The Basic Thread of the Geeta

The Geeta is also an Upanishad whose literal meaning is to 'sit near' a realized teacher. There are more than one hundred Upanishads but knowledgeable people consider only eleven or sometimes thirteen as more important. Shankaracharya wrote commentaries on eleven Upanishads. In traditional parlance a realized teacher is called Sat-Guru [True-Teacher]; they are rare to come but the humanity is never bereft of them. Their influence is like the silent dew which falls unseen but nonetheless nourishes plant life. In the Sikh *Panth* [path] copious salutations are offered to the Guru. He is praised in superlative terms. Etymologically the word Sikh is derived from the Sanskrit word, *sishtya* meaning a disciple. A Sikh is thus a disciple of a Guru. The first Sikh Guru was Guru Nanak who founded the *panth*. He is venerated as God Himself. He is believed to have successively manifested himself in nine other gurus. All the gurus are called *Sacche-Badshah* [Real-Emperors] as a token of deep reverence. In a realized-teacher the distinction between God and the Guru disappears. The Upanishads declare that: 'The knower of Brahman becomes Brahman Himself'. The Granth-Sahib also asserts the same - hence God-like veneration to the Gurus and the Granth Sahib. The Granth Sahib is also sung in verses.

The Geeta says that four categories of persons worship the Lord [7:16]⁵⁰ :

(i) The afflicted, (ii) the enquirer, (iii) the success-seeker, (iv) the wise.

It then says [7:18]⁵¹:

'My view is that all of them are high-minded but the wise is akin to My own self, because he is always united with Me and knows Me as the Ultimate Destination'.

The Geeta, therefore, directs [4-34]⁵²:

'Know that Truth through diligent and dedicated service from a Truth-seer;

He shall teach you the Truth'.

Such teaching is not like a lecture given by a professor or an orator or a learned man or even a monk but leading a person from darkness to light. Vivekananda considered such initiation by a True-teacher as palpable, like giving a fruit by someone to another. Thus one finds in the life of Chaitanya and Ramakrishna that they were immediately transported to a higher consciousness when spiritual initiation was given to them. The Katho-Upanishad speaks of a '*Wonderful speaker and a highly efficient receiver*' [1.2.7]⁵³. The Teacher and the Disciple, must, both be wonderful so that the Truth may dawn on the latter.

In the Biblical accounts [Mathew, Mark, Luke] Jesus was baptized by the holy waters of Jordan. As soon as he was baptized, the heaven opened up; the Holy Spirit descended over him as a dove. This was obviously an allegorical way of speaking. By 'heaven' the sky was not meant because we now know that sky is but space, however high or distant one may go from the Earth. The 'heaven' was thus the spiritual realms.

After this baptism or initiation, Jesus went into the wilderness for forty days during which he fasted and defeated the Satan. Only then he returned back to the people. He was then full of 'Holy spirit'. This is as tangible as anything we can think of. In the Biblical accounts one finds crowds of people following him. A nondescript woman, who, it is said, was bleeding for twelve long years, touched the edge of his garment; she was cured immediately. Jesus turned around and said 'who touched me, virtue or power has gone out' What was this 'virtue' or 'power' if not the spiritual power? It is often referred to in the Gospels as 'holy spirit' (earlier translations called it Holy Ghost).

In the life of Sri Chaitanya and Sri Ramakrishna one finds umpteen instances when their respective disciples would forbid others to touch them when they were in a state of *bhava*. They were then surcharged with what Gospels speak as 'holy spirit'. Another notable instance occurs in the life of Vivekananda. He was, as is well known, a votary of Non-Dualism and was in a state of higher consciousness. Many of his other colleagues, though extraordinary,

were not fit aspirants of Non-Dualism. Abhedananda (then called Kali Tapaswi) was touched by Vivekananda (then Narendra). The former got an electric like shock. The Master came to know about it and rebuked Narendra for having spent his spiritual energy before sufficiently acquiring the same and for having changed the attitude of Abhedananda. During his last days of terrestrial life, Ramakrishna passed on his 'spiritual energy' to Vivekananda just by looking at him intently and then entering into Samadhi. Ramakrishna prophesied that by this 'power' Narendra would do enormous work in his later life. History bears testimony to the truth of this prophesy.

In the Chandogya Upanishad one comes across Narada - Sanatkumara episode [7:1-26]. Narada was a highly learned man. The list of subjects that he had mastered is, indeed, extra-ordinary but Narada was still dissatisfied. He wanted a state where there was no trouble, no repentance, no depression, and no worry - absolute peace. Sage Sanathkumara asked what he knew. Narada recounted all that he had studied. He said: All you know is but name [नाम]! Then he gradually leads Narada, to higher and higher generalizations. Ultimately he declares⁵⁴:

'That which is Bhuma is alone Joy

There is no Joy in things limited

Hence Bhuma alone is Joy.

And enquire about Bhuma [7: 23: 1]

But what is Bhuma?

The Sage says:

Where one does not see another

Does hear another and does not know another

That is Bhuma

*Where one sees another, hears another, knows another
that is limited.*

That which is Bhuma is Immortality

That which is limited is mortal' [7.24:1]

Narada, in this way, was led from darkness to light, from mortality to Immortality by Sanatkumara. This episode pithily states how a person, even highly intellectual or learned, is but Ignorant about the knowledge of Brahman.

The Katho Upanisad says:

'This Atman cannot be known by lectures nor by sharp intellect nor even by great learning'. [1:2:23]⁵⁵

Then how does one know it?

As Shankaracharya says: Contact with a *Mahapurusha* [मनुष्यत्व, मुमुक्षुत्व, महापुरुष संस्रय - human birth, yearning for liberation and contact with a Mahapurusha]. Mahapurusha is not a great-man of the English language but a Realized-man, a Truth-seer, one who has crossed the ocean of life, one who has reached the Other Shore.

Brahma-Vidyayam Yoga Shastre

This leads to the great enquiry about the Way, The Truth or the Tao. In the Brahma sutra the first aphorism is:

Athato - Brahmajijnasa [अथातो ब्रह्म-जिज्ञासा]

Unless one has questions, one has an enquirer's mind how can one ever know? *'Seek ye first the Kingdom of Heaven and everything else shall be added unto you'* Jesus said⁵⁶. Agnes Arber (Natural Philosophy of Plant Form-1950) says that the first step for all research is to have questions. Unless one has some problems how can one find answers? And for the Ultimate Truth there must be an all-consuming passion of enquiry. I think the Indian sages, for the first time, distinguished between the enquiry after the mysteries of the visible universe and the enquiry after the Ultimate Reality variously called Brahman, Bodhi, God etc.

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They, thus, called the former as *Aparavidya* (non-supernal knowledge) and the latter as *Para-vidya* (supernal knowledge)⁵⁷. *Para-vidya* alone leads to Immortality while *Aparavidya* leads to partial answers to the great questions of the universe. These have often now been called as secular knowledge and mystic knowledge respectively. But, I suppose, it falls short of the comprehensive requirements of *Vidya*. Secular, after all, has a historical background, going back to the assumption of all powers, from religious to daily conduct of people by the church. The church assumed the powers of religion as well as of the state. Hence, after much struggle, these powers got separated. Matters of the state were called secular while matters concerning God were called religious. Mystic knowledge was so called because it was shrouded in mystery, sacredness and secrecy.

Para-vidya or *Brahma-vidya* assumes that it is a branch of knowledge and can be studied by all who are sufficiently interested in it. Knowledge, after all, is a rigorous mistress and brooks no half-hearted measures. It requires total application by the aspirant. There may be sacredness in the matter but there is no secrecy about it. The Buddha, time and again, declared that regarding the Path or 'Dharma', the Tathagata does not keep anything hidden⁵⁸. It is not like the knowledge of nuclear bombs which the nuclear club states want to keep only among themselves even though it must, side by side, be said that the theory of the 'bomb' is, rather, the simple physics of chain reactions known to any under graduate physics student. The Geeta says [18.68] 'anyone who lovingly teaches this supreme secret to other devotees would ultimately reach Me; there is no doubt about it.'

The Geeta calls this *Para-vidya* as *Adhyatma vidya*⁵⁹. It is **the Knowledge** among all knowledge. Hence the Lord recounts it among the myriad of His Excellences [*bibhuti*]. Earlier *Adhyatma* has been defined as His Essence [chapter VIII]. *Para-vidya* takes precedence over all others because by it one comes to Immortality and also because it asks the great question: 'By knowing what everything else is known?'⁶⁰ [Mundaka 1:1:3]. The answer lies in the *Para-vidya*.

All these may be true, may be sweet to listen; but then how to arrive at it? *Vidya* is the theoretical knowledge. The way to arrive at the truth is *shastra*. It is a form of codified knowledge. *Shastra* is the technical know-how of a theory. One may know everything about the theory of aviation, yet may not be able to manufacture a good passenger airliner. The latter depends upon the technical know-how. In the sciences, therefore, one comes across theoretical studies along with practical courses. Codified *shastra* knowledge is what makes the aspirant reach the destination. Vivekananda has put it succinctly 'An ounce of practice is worth more than tons of theory' One may go on reading books on Yoga for his whole life or listen to such lectures for years together yet may only remain on the doorstep. Yoga is thus a well tested *Shastra* or Science but requires rigorous practice to arrive at some degree of perfection. To achieve fullness is, of course, a difficult proposition. The Geeta itself says: *kalen atmani vindati* [In the fullness of time one knows it within himself].

The Geeta is not a mere discourse or a lecture by the Teacher to his disciple but rather a dialogue between the two. Hence Sri Krishna - Arjuna Samvade. Plato's dialogues are famous because there in the abstract problems of philosophy were put in the form of dialogues between the great Socrates and others. It is easier to follow such flights of abstract thought in the form of a dialogue rather than in a monotonous lecture. The Upanishads are likened to a cow and Sri Krishna as the milkman; Arjuna is likened to a calf whose repeated questions are the strikes at the udder. This brings forth the necessary stimulus for the milk to flow. And the Geeta is the grand ambrosial milk brought out by the Lord Himself to be drunk by the wise⁶¹ [Geeta Mahatmya]

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Notes

1. 'ॐ तत्सदिति श्रीमद्भगवद् गीतासूपनिषत्सु
ब्रह्मविद्यायां योगशास्त्रे श्रीकृष्णार्जुन संवादे'
2. 'अर्जुन विषादयोगो नाम प्रथम अध्याय':
3. 'सांख्य योगो नाम द्वितीय अध्याय':
4. नाद-ब्रह्म ; अनाहत-ध्वनि
5. 'ओमित्येदक्षरमिदं सर्वं तस्योपव्याख्यानं भूतं भदविष्यदिति
सर्वमोङ्कार एव । यच्चान्यात् त्रिकालातीत तदप्योङ्कार एव ॥ १
6. 'सर्वे वेदा यत् पदमामनन्ति
तर्षासि सर्वाणि च यद् वदलि ।
यदिच्छन्तो ब्रह्मचर्यं चरन्ति
तत्ते पदं संग्रहेण ब्रवीम्यमित्येतत्' ॥ [२-२-१५]
7. एतद्धयेवाक्षरं ब्रह्म एतद्धयेवाक्षरं परम् ।
एतद्धयेवाक्षरं ज्ञात्वा यो यदिच्छति तस्य तत् ॥ [१-२-१६]
8. 'एतदालम्बनं श्रेष्ठमेतदालम्बनं परम् ।
एतदालम्बनं ज्ञात्वा ब्रह्मलोके महीयते ॥ [२-२-१७]
9. ओमिति ब्रह्म । ओमितीदं सर्वम् । [१-८]
10. 'ओमित्येदक्षर मुदीथमुपासीत । ओमितिह्युद्रायति तस्योपख्यानम् ॥ [११२-१]
11. 'सर्वह्येतद् ब्रह्मायमत्मा ब्रह्म सोऽयमात्मा चतुष्पात् ॥ [१-२]
12. 'जागरितेस्थानो बहिःप्रज्ञः सप्ताङ्गः, एकोनविंशति मुखः
स्थूलभृगुवैश्वानरः प्रथमः पादः ॥ [२-३]
13. 'स्वप्नस्थानोऽन्तः प्रज्ञः सप्ताङ्गः, एकोनविंशति मुखः
प्रविविक्तभुक् तैजसा द्वितीयः पादः ॥ [२-८]
14. 'यत्र सुप्तो न कञ्चन कामं कामयते न कञ्चन स्वप्नं पश्यति तत्सुप्तम् । सुषुप्तस्थान एकीभूतः
प्रज्ञानघनसर्वानन्दमथो ह्यानन्दभुक्चेतो मुखः प्राप्त तृतीय पादः ॥ [२-८]
15. एष सर्वेश्वर एष सर्वज्ञ एषोऽन्तर्याम्येष योनिः सर्वस्य प्रयावस्ययौ हि भूतानाम् ॥ [२-६]
16. 'नान्तःप्रज्ञं न वहिष्प्रज्ञं नोभयतः प्रज्ञम न प्रज्ञानघनं न प्रज्ञं काल्मप्रत्ययसार प्रपञ्चोपशमं शान्तं

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शिवमद्वैतचतुर्थं मन्यत स अत्मा स विज्ञेय ॥ [१-७]

17. '..... आदेशो नेति नोति'[२-३-६]

ब्रह्मादारण्यकोपनिषद् [Brihadaranyaka Upanisad]

18. 'यतो वाचो निवर्तन्ते अप्राप्य मनसा सह ।

आनन्दं ब्रह्मणो विद्वान् । न विभेति कदाचनेति: ॥ [२-४]

तैत्तिरीय उपनिषद् [Taitteriya Upanisad]]

19. Muladhara [base of the spine]; Swadhisthana [near the genitals]; Manipura [near the navel];Anahata [near the heart]; Vishuddha [near the neck]; Ajna [between the eye brows]; Sahasra [the brain].

20. वैखरी, मध्यमा, पश्यन्ति, परा ।

21. ऋषयो मन्त्रं दृष्ट्वा। **[A rishi is one who has seen a mantra]**

22. विज्ञातारमरे केन विज्ञानियताम्' । **[How can the Knower, be known] Brihad-Aranyakopanisad [2.4-14]**

23. **This is inspite of the valiant effort of Paul Dirac for his brilliant equations of Quantum Electrodynamics (QED).**

24. बहुनि मे व्यतीतानि जन्मानि तव चार्जुन ।

तान्यहं वेद सर्वानि न त्वं वेत्थ परंतप ॥ [४-७]

25. Krishna Das Kaviraj Goswami-Chaitanya Caritamrita.

26. 'तत्-दूरे तत्-अन्तिके' **[He is far ; He is near.]**

27. दिवि सूर्यसहस्रस्य भवेद्युगपदुत्थिता ।

यदि भाः सदृशी सा स्याद्भासस्तस्य महात्मनः [११-१२]

28. अवजानान्ति मां मूढा मानुषीं तनुमाश्रितम् ।

परं भावमजानन्तो मम भूतमहेश्वरम् ॥ [२-:११]

29. ब्रह्मविदाप्रोति परम् [२-२]

30. स यो ह वै तत्परमं ब्रह्मवेद ब्रह्मैव भवति। [३-२-९]

31. वहवो ज्ञानतपसा पूता मद्धावमागताः [४-१०]

32. The English word 'That' seems to have originated from Sanskrit Tat. 'T' in certain European languages is pronounced as त of Sanskrit, making 'That' as 'Tat'.

33. Saint Hilaire Bartholemy, J - The Buddha and his religion. Bracken Books,

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London, 1996. [Originally published by Kegan Paul, London 1914]

34. सदेव सोम्येदमग्र आसीदेकमेवाद्वितीयम् [६-२-१]

35. कुतस्तु खलु सोम्यैवं स्यादिति होवाच कथमसतः सञ्जायेतेति।

सत्त्वेव सोम्यदमग्र आसीदेकमेवाद्वितीयम् ॥ [६-२-२]

36. What is now called 'matter' was called as 'Form' [रूप] by the Buddha as well as the Vedanta. It is to be distinguished from the Platonic 'Form'. 'Vedana' is of course sensation. 'Sangya' is perception; may also include concepts. 'Sanskara' is a bit complicated. It may mean impressions, predisposition, memory, movement or even energy. 'Vigyana' is obviously consciousness.

37. Henry Stapp "Are Superluminal Connections Necessary" Nuovo Cimento, 40B 1977. (Quoted from Gary Zukav-The Dancing Wu Li Masters, Bantam Books-New York 1980).

38. But in some of the monasteries of Shankaracharya e.g. Govardhan Mutt, Puri, list of the Heads of Monastery maintained from Adi Shankaracharya has 145 names till date. Even if ten years are given to a head, then this comes earlier than 8th century AD.

39. Sri Shankaracharya- BRAHMA-SUTRA-BHASYA. Translated by Swami Gambhirananda - Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta 1965.

40. For instance: A barber shaves all those who do not shave themselves. Does he shave himself? If he does then, he does not shave himself or if he does not, then, he shaves himself! [Russell. B., Principia Mathematica].

41. Morphology, particularly in Botany, has gained the status of science. Morphology, as the name suggests, is the Science of Form (Morph). Form is not merely the external form or the internal structure but is what Plato-Aristotle would call Form or Idea.

42. One finds a curious similarity between the materialism of Marx and of Brihaspati, supposed to be the founder of the Lokayata school of Indian philosophy. Of course Marx's views on History are absent. Often Indian Materialism goes by the name of Charvaka. According to Radhakrishnan, S and Moore, C.A. (1957) Brihaspati sutra 600 B.C. is not available but Indian Materialism can be reconstructed from other authentic sources.

43. Russell. B.,-History of Western Philosophy.

44. Substance-Quality dualism has been a persistent problem in philosophy. Is there a substance behind the qualities apprehended by the senses?

45. This Form has nothing to do with the Aristotelian 'Form's'.

46. In the Indian system, one finds three categories of space or Akash (आकाश). Akash is the Physical Space, chittakash (चित्ताकाश) is the Dream Space or the mental

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space in which dreams occur; Chidakash (चिदाकाश) is the space of deep samadhi. This is also the space where the consciousness remains involved during deep sleep. Now a-days one hears about cyber space. But there is no equivalent to Chittakash or Chidakash in the Western Philosophy.47. Often Atman has been called Soul in English which is a misnomer. What is loosely called Soul is the Sukshama sharira or Linga sharira [fine body]. There is still another, the Karana- sharira [the causal body] which persists even after the sukshama sharira is dissolved in a Mahapralaya (Great Dissolution).

48. Even though vijnanmaya has been translated as the Intellectual, the author prefers supramental in the sense of Sri Aurobindo as detailed in his Life Divine.

49. Ecstasy is, perhaps, the nearest word in the English language for bhava. For mahabhava and prema, no equivalent is to be found. Love is no equivalent to prema because love, as we know, is contaminated by sex. In the Islamic literature one finds a sharp distinction between worldly love — Ishque Mazazi and love for God — Ishque Haquiqui but not equivalent to mahabhava and prema.

50. 'चतुर्विधा भजन्ते मां जनाः सुकृतिनोऽजुन ।

आर्तो जिज्ञासुरर्थार्थी ज्ञानी च भरतर्षभ ॥ '[७-१६]

51. उदाराः सर्व एवैते ज्ञानी त्वात्मैमे मतम् ।

आस्थितः स हि युक्तात्मा मामेवानुत्तमां गतिम् ॥ '[७-१८]

52. 'तद्विद्धि प्रणिपातेन परिप्रश्नेन सेवया ।

उपदेश्यन्ति ते ज्ञानं ज्ञानिनस्तत्त्वदर्शिनः ॥ '[४-३४]

53. आश्चर्यो वक्ता कुशलोऽस्य लब्धा ॥ '[१-१-७]

54. 'यो वै भूमा तत्सुखं नाल्पे सुखमस्ति भूमैव सुखं

भूमा त्वेव विजिज्ञासितव्यं । ॥ ७-२३-१॥

55. 'नायत्मात्मा प्रवचनेन लभ्य

न मेधया न बहुना श्रुतेन ।

..... ॥ १ : २ : २३ ॥

56. Ask and it shall be given, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you. [NewTestament]

57. तस्मै स होवाच द्वे विद्ये वेदितव्ये इति ह स्म यत् ब्रह्मविदो वदन्ति परा चैवापरा च [1:1:4 MundakaUpanisad] ' Hence he thus spake, Two knowledge need to be known. Thus the knower of Brahman have spoken: supernal and non-supernal [1:1:4]

58. No 'closed first ' or 'acharya mushti ' of the teacher wherein he keeps some tips

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only to himself.

59. 'अध्यात्मविद्या विद्यानाम् [१०-३२]

60. '..... कस्मिन्नु भगवो विज्ञाते सर्वमिदं विज्ञातं भवतीति ॥ १:१:३॥

61. 'सर्व उपनिषदो गावो दोग्धा गोपाल नन्दन । .

पार्थ वत्सः सुधीर्भोक्त्रा दुग्धं गीतामृतम महत् ॥

[गीता माहात्म्यम् ६]

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There are seven hundred *slokas* in the Geeta. Sanjay must have had a photographic memory to have reported the dialogue between Sri Krishna and Arjuna to the blind king. He might have written the same at a later date or there might have been writers beside the king who had taken down what Sanjay was saying. It was then incorporated in the corpus of the Mahabharata by Vyasa or Vyasa might as well, have 'heard and seen' the dialogue as due to his prasada Sanjay got that extra-ordinary power. But all this is conjecture. The Geeta or the Mahabharata does not say anything about it. Those were the days when electronic devices for information storage and retrieval didn't seem to exist. But photographic memory, in exceptional persons, is a fact. Persons with photographic memory presumably existed in the distant past as also in the recent past. For instance there were, and are people who can memorize the entire Rk Veda. Among the Islamic societies people are encouraged to remember and to recite the entire Koranic ayats.

As far as the religious records are concerned, Vedas being the oldest, let us first examine this immense heritage.

A. THE VEDAS OR THE SHRUTI

Vedas (vid=to know), as the term itself suggests are books of knowledge. According to the traditional view point, they are also called Shruti (=heard). They were not composed by men or even Rishis (=seers). The seers have only heard or seen the Vedic mantras¹. The mantras are eternal and pre-exist in the Divine Mind. This reminds us of the philosophy of Ideas or Forms propounded by Plato. Muslims believe that the Koranic ayats are a preserve of God or Allah and co-eternal with Him. Moses is supposed to have heard Yahveh's (God) voice from a burning bush on Mount Horeb (also called Mount Sinai). He received the Ten Commandments first orally and then in a written form on a tablet. Thus mantras of the

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Vedas are not creations of men or even qualified men called rishis but only 'seen or heard' by them in Samadhi (super conscious state). A composed stanza, on the other hand, is called a *sloka*.

Vedas are also called Infinite (Anant vai veda). The Buddha is a state of infinite knowledge which Gautama attained under the Bodhi tree (or Bo-tree). Vivekananda says that Vedic mantras or the truths contained therein were discovered by rishis even as the physical laws have been discovered by scientists from time to time. After all, these laws were not created by the scientists but only discovered by them.

These mantras were not discovered at any particular time or place or person but at different places, times and persons. They were preserved in different schools (or gurukuls) of yore. Later they were collected and classified by outstanding persons of different ages. Such persons were called Vyas. Krishna Dvaipayana Veda-Vyas appeared at the end of the Dwapara Yuga. He collected the mantras and classified them in book form. These are the Rk, the Sama, the Yajur and the Atharva Veda.

Vedas are, therefore, also called the Samhitas (compiled or collected ones). They are grouped into Samhitas, Brahmanas (this has nothing to do with the Brahmin caste), Aryanyakas and Upanisads. For instance, Isha Upanishad constitutes the fortieth chapter of the Yajurveda Samhita or the Aitareya Upanishad is a part of the Rk Vedic Aitareya Aryanyaka or the Chandogya Upanishads belongs to Sama Veda. All of these come under *shabda pramana*² (Verbal testimony). Dayananda Saraswati considers only the *Samhita* portion as the true Vedas and self-proved (*swatahpramana*) - it does not require any other proof; but the Brahmanas, the Upanishads, the Aryanyakas are secondarily proved (*paratahpramana*). But all the traditional-orthodox learning called the above four as belonging to *shabda pramana*. They are the most authentic and the most respected of all the Hindu scriptures. Any scripture-be it a Smriti, a Purana or a Sutra, if it goes against or does not conform to the Shrutis must be deemed null and void. The Shruti has precedence over all others. In modern

times any law going against the Constitution is deemed null and void.

Of the Samhitas, Rk-veda is, almost, universally considered as the oldest written record of the humanity. It is older than the Avesta, the Talmud or the Old Testament. When the Europeans came in contact with the Indian people, they found them under the foreign rule of the Moguls. The Indians were already famished and had lost their ancient glory. But Europeans found in Sanskrit an ancient but a very rich literature. This language with its intricate, subtle, grammar, and the people with strange culture and customs, was totally incomprehensible to them. The Europeans came in search of a rich country with which they could do business and to take away their fabulous wealth. Instead, they found a country which was 'rich in resources but inhabited by poor people'. The Europeans were flush with idea of converting such strange 'heathens' to their Christian faith. To further their business and imperial interests, they gradually conquered this land from the decadent Mughal emperors and other warring satraps. They, also, sent missionaries along with their administration and armies.

But there was also a brighter side. It made the European scholars come in contact with this fascinating literature. Poet-visionsaries like Goethe and thinkers like Schopenhauer were overwhelmed by its grandeur. Generally speaking, the German scholarship was more sympathetic to it than the English. But most of them were biased by their Christian beliefs or by their faith in the Greeko-Roman superiority. Most of them wondered: how could such famished, colored people create a literature of such excellence? Their main impediment was the language itself. Some took to learning the same. However it was, rather, impossible for them to fully comprehend it as they came from an entirely different cultural background. Similarities between Sanskrit, Greek and Latin were observed. How to account for all this?

It is not exactly known as to who first mooted the Aryan Invasion Theory (AIT). But it is, generally, agreed that comparative philology gave birth to this concept. William Jones (1790) was the

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first to feel that a proto-Sanskrit type of language was the common mother of Greek, Latin and Sanskrit. Later German, Celtic and Slavonic languages were also believed to have originated from that 'mother' language. Frederich Schelgel (1808) believed that the Tower of Babel mentioned in the Old Testament was actually India. Voltaire, before William Jones, wrote that: I am convinced that everything has come to us from the banks of Ganges; astronomy, astrology, metempsychoses etc. But most European scholars themselves being of fair skin could not digest a situation where India will be considered as the mother or the cradle of civilization. After all most Indian do not have a fair skin.

Hence came into existence an entirely hypothetical Aryan Invasion Theory. An alien, light skinned, nomadic race with conquering instincts, similar to the ancient Romans and their modern European counterpart, but, perhaps, belonging to Central Asia or even Europe and speaking an Indo-European dialect akin to Sanskrit, came on horse-backs or horse driven chariots, with superior iron made weapons and overran an indigenous dark-skinned people. These original inhabitants were driven out of their homes and settlements. Whatever civilization they had were destroyed. These original inhabitants of North India fled to the south of Vindhya range to find a new home there. Many of them were enslaved to be called das or became robbers - Dasyus, in the adjoining forests. The incoming superior race called themselves Arya. The European white races, till the other day, felt they were superior to the dark-skinned Asians and Africans³. The defeated original inhabitants were called Dravidians who spoke and wrote a language akin to Tamil or proto-Tamil. A schism between people of India with a common cultural heritage was created by the 'Aryan Invasion' theory—Aryans of the North and Dravidians of the South. This admirably suited the British imperial interests for it thrived on the well known principle of 'divide and rule'. Aryan Invasion also provided a philosophic justification of the British enslavement of India. If an alien Aryan race could come and rule; if alien Turks, Mughals and Afghans could come, rule, settle and convert the Indian people to their faith, then what was wrong if alien British also

rule India and go on converting the people to their own belief system?

When, however, the epoch making discovery of Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro took place, (Marshall 1921-22) then 'Aryan Invasion' was jolted. 'Indus-valley civilization', as it was called, was found to be an urban based, sophisticated civilization, in contrast to a supposedly agricultural, pastoral-rural civilization of a nomadic war like people. 'Indus-valley' had high quality urban planning with such distinctive features as sanitation, drainage, great public baths, geometrical city patterns, bricks of definite sizes and weights etc., their organization required high level of mathematical knowledge. But where was that mathematics? Such sophisticated urban civilization has not yet been discovered in any of the ancient civilizations. The Egyptian pyramids, the Sphinx or the temples in Abu-Simbel or Karnak etc. are no doubt wondrous but where are the ruins of an urban settlement like Harappa, Mahenjodaro or Lothal? To quote Rajaram (1994), a scientist turned Indologist :

'It is by far the greatest civilization of antiquity. Even technologically, it was far more advanced than any of the ancient civilizations. The world had to wait more than two thousand years-until the rise of the Roman empire for sanitation and town planning to reach comparable level' (p83)⁴.

The 'Aryan Innovationists' soon recovered from the initial shock. But they ingeniously said: Look the Aryans destroyed those Indus settlements by their superior arms, their swift moving horses and horse driven chariots. They of course, forgot that chariots, like modern tanks, are unsuitable for a hilly or mountain terrain. Horses according to them were unknown in India; (again conveniently forgetting or ignoring that horses have been depicted in the cave paintings of Bhim-Bhetka (Bhopal, M.P.) around 20-50 thousand years back). The Dravidians or their prototypes couldn't stand such onslaught. They then, *en masse*, migrated to South India leaving behind these ruins. Thereafter the Aryans created the Sanskrit literature, the acme of which was RK Veda. But essentially, RK Veda was the song of a primitive people whose leader was Indra.

Hence, so many of the Vedic hymns were dedicated to him. The Aryans were overawed by the forces of Nature; they tried to propitiate gods so that they may live in peace and in plenty. The reason why rice (*Oryza sativa*) couldn't be found in the Harappan sites is because this plant's primary centre of origin was Eastern India. It is still the staple diet of the people of Eastern India. The great Russian geneticist, N.I. Vavilov, later harassed by Stalin and his henchman botanist, Lysenko and perhaps, put behind the bars in Siberia, concluded that *Oryza sativa* originated first in India (Vavilov 1951) ⁵. Even now wild rice is found in Orissa and eaten by its *adivasis* (aboriginal tribes). It is, therefore, remarkable to find the mention of rice in RK Veda. But equally, remarkably, wheat (*Triticum* sp) does not find any mention in the Vedas. Vedic rituals are performed by rice and barley (*Hordeum vulgare*) but not by wheat. If the Vedas were created by the invading, nomadic tribes of Central Asia or North Europe, why did they not mention any thing about wheat? The primary centers of origin of wheat are supposed to be North West India, Afghanistan, Iran to Middle East but not the heartland of India. How would the 'Invasionist' explain this anomaly?

Though Frederich Max Mueller was German in origin yet he worked in Great Britain. He was a great linguist. His endeavor to publish RK Veda was sponsored by the East India Company which was actually ruling the then India. Max Mueller was an ardent Christian and fully believed in Genesis, Flood etc. Earlier, an Irish bishop, James Usser (16th - 17th century), calculated the Biblical date of creation in 4004 B.C. and the Flood around 2500 B.C. This may appear to us to be ridiculously low in view of scientific advancements. But in the mid-nineteenth century this was what believers in Christianity took as the Gospel Truth. Charles Darwin and Lyell had not yet come to the scene. People like bishop Usser held the field. Max Mueller must have argued: how could the Indian Vedas be older than the date of Creation or of the Flood? The 'Aryan Invasion' was put around 1500 B.C. and composition of RK Veda around 1200 B.C. Max Mueller's great reputation was now behind the A.I.T, Following him, Sir Mortimer Wheeler and Sir John

Marshall also strongly supported the same.

Thus the 'Invasion' hypothesis took a stronghold among the academic circles of India. It was taken as a 'fact' rather than as a hypothesis⁶. Indian historical scholarship only followed the European scholarship; they didn't follow an independent course of their own. Romila Thaper, a historian of repute believes that the RK Vedic hymns were composed between 1500 B.C. to 1000 B.C. The dates for other three Vedas were put 800 B.C. to 500 B.C. Similarly some Indian historians were biased by their Marxist orientation.

In all fairness to Max Mueller, it must be said that he (1886) revised his earlier conclusions regarding the RK Vedic date. It must also be recorded that not all European scholars believed in Aryan Invasion: They, in fact, admired India.

Will Durant, wrote '*India was the mother land of our race, and Sanskrit the mother of Europe's languages; she was the mother of our philosophy; mother through the Arabs of much of our mathematics; mother through the Buddha, of the ideals embodied in Christianity; mother, through the village community of self government and democracy. Mother India is in many ways is the mother of us all.*'

Mark Twain remarked: '*India is the cradle of human race, the birth place of human speech, the mother of history, the grandmother of legend, and the great grandmother of tradition. Our most valuable and most attractive materials in the history of man are treasured up in India only.*'

Yet another modern Vedic scholar of Santa Fe, David Frawley, noted (p9): '*The modern western academic world is sensitive to criticism of cultural and social biases. For scholars to take a stand against this biased interpretation of the 'Vedas' would indeed cause a re-examination of many of those historical ideas that cannot stand objective scrutiny. But if Hindu are silent or passively accept the interpretation of their own culture, it will undoubtedly continue, but they will have no one to blame but themselves. It is not an issue to be taken lightly, because how a culture is defined historically*

creates perspective from which it is viewed in the modern social and intellectual context. Tolerance is not in allowing a false view of one's culture and religion to be propagated without question. That is merely self-betrayal'.

After Yaska, writer of the Vedic lexicon, *Nirukta*, one comes across Sayanacharya's name as an authoritative commentator of the Vedas. But the western scholarship, and their Indian counterpart, refused to accept his interpretation. Dayananda Saraswati, a nineteenth century Vedic scholar and a social reformer of India, wrote a commentary on the RK Veda. He was a Sanskrit grammarian and a traditional scholar. As mentioned previously he considered only the *Samhita* portion as the Vedas. He believed them to be Uncreated – *Apaurusheya* (Transpersonal) and Eternal. The Vedas, according to him, deal with four subjects:⁷

- (a) *Vijnana* or Supreme Knowledge.
- (b) *Karma* or duties.
- (c) *Upasana* or worship.
- (d) *Jnana* or empirical knowledge.

It is apparent that Dayananda fundamentally differed from the European viewpoint of 'Aryan Invasion' or Vedas being primitive songs of some nomadic tribes.

Bal Gangadhar Tilak's well known book 'The Arctic Home in the Vedas' placed the Aryan home in the Arctic circle. He envisaged Aryan migration to India but no 'Invasion'.

Umesh. C. Vidyaratna was a Calcutta based traditional Sanskrit scholar. He considered that the original home of the Aryans - indeed of all mankind – was Mongolia at the base of the Altai mountain⁸. He believed that India was the second homeland of the Aryans from where they branched off to Iran, Europe etc. Sam-Veda, according to him, was the oldest among the Vedas [(cf. Vedanam Sam Vedo-asmi – Geeta. वेदानां साम वेदोऽस्मि-शीता). This means: Among the Vedas I am the Sam Veda]. The RK was composed in India while the Sam-Veda in Mongolia. He puts Vedic chronology about a hundred thousand years back, which may be

deemed enormous by modern historians. But it must be said that Umesh Chandra also didn't subscribe to any 'Invasion'.

Aurobindo's work entitled 'The Secret of the Veda' appeared serially between 1914-20 in the journal 'Arya'. It appeared in a book form in 1956, after passing away of the seer. Aurobindo departed radically from all earlier approaches whether of Sayana or Dayananda or the European scholarship. The philological-historical approach was totally discarded. The seer himself was a great exponent of the yogic wisdom and entered into many uncharted paths in the inner experience. They throw light on the symbolic but obscure mantras of the Vedic wisdom. His interpretation of the Vedas was psycho-spiritual rather than historico-mundane. He explained (p 5-6):

'The hypothesis I propose is that the Rig-veda is itself the one considerable document that remains to from the early period of human thought of which the historic Eleusinian and Orphic mysteries were the failing remnants, when the spiritual and psychological knowledge of the race was concealed for reasons now difficult to determine, in a veil of concrete and material figures and symbols which protected the sense from the profane and revealed it to the initiated. One of the leading principles of the mystics was the sacredness and secrecy of self knowledge and the true knowledge of Gods. This wisdom, they thought, unfit perhaps dangerous to the ordinary minds or in any case liable to perversion and misuse and loss of virtue if revealed to vulgar and unpurified spirits. Hence they favored the existence of an outer worship, effective but imperfect, for the profane, an inner discipline for the initiate, and clothed their language in words and images which had, equally, a spiritual sense for the elect, a concrete sense for the mass of ordinary worshippers. The Vedic hymns were conceived and constructed on this principle'.

Aurobindo, during his long stay in S. India, couldn't find Aryan-Dravidian divide on the basis of physiognomy especially on the basis of sharp nose of the Aryans and stubby nose (anasa) of Dravidians. He wrote (ibid p 24):

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'But the indications in the Veda on which this theory of a recent Aryan invasion is built, are vary scanty in quantity and uncertain in their significance. There is no actual mention of any such invasion. The distinction between Aryan and Un-Aryan on which so much has been built, seems on the mass of evidence to indicate a cultural rather than a racial difference' Further: 'I could not, however, be long in southern India without being impressed by the general occurrence of northern or "Aryan" types in Tamil race' Also: '..... behind all variations, a unity of physical as well as cultural type throughout India'. (ibid p35)

He again called attention to (ibid p35-36):

'But what then of the sharp distinction between Aryan and Dravidian races created by the philologists? It disappears. If at all an Aryan invasion is admitted, we have either to suppose that it flooded India and determined the physical types of the people, with whatever modification, or that it was the incursion of small bands of a less cultured race who melted away into original population.'

Aurobindo has been extensively quoted here to show that he was perhaps the first among modern thinkers of India to have brought to light some of the basic infirmities in the 'Aryan Invasion' theory. Yet 'official historians' held fast to this theory. Some 'leftist-historians' found in this theory another convenient tool to denigrate the great Indian civilization. History books from these 'elite circles', controlling education in India, emphasized upon the 'Aryan Invasion' so that the young minds are indoctrinated by such a spurious but basically a pernicious theory.

Aurobindo was not a professional historian; his work on the Vedas didn't get the attention it deserved. Nothing worthwhile seems to have come out for the next thirty years on this subject. Meanwhile, Harappa - Mohenjo-Daro were excavated; India also got partitioned and these two sites remained in Pakistan.

S. R. Rao, an archaeologist by profession, took to excavate Gujarat sites where he hoped to find some Harappan remains. He tenaciously worked along with a team of dedicated colleagues, till

luck favored him at Lothal - about 85 km from Ahmadabad near the Arabian Sea. Here he struck gold, so to say. A Harappan site, par-excellence, was discovered with an acropolis, business and industrial quarters, well laid out drainage, planned township and, above all, a sea faring harbor. Even now, the stone anchors of the ships can be seen there. So many remains including huge water storing jars, bricks of definite dimensions, bangles made of shells, seals etc. can be observed in the museum over there. Thanks to such effort, India could, now say with pride, that they too have an archaeological site dating back to about 2500 B.C. Lothal was far away from the Indus valley. Did the Aryans also invade such an arid place far off from the N. W. India? Or did they come by ships from the Arabian Sea? Harappan sites have been found, dotted all over Gujarat. So the 'Indus civilization' was not confined to Indus (Sindhu) river. In Rajasthan, Kalibangan was found. Harappan sites have even been found near Hindon River -a tributary of Yamuna-in the Baleni area of west U. P.

Such 'Aryan Invasion' couldn't have been done by some nomadic forces but only by a huge army. This would put too much strain on our imagination! Could the horse cross the mountainous terrain lying between central Asia and the Indian plains? Could they come across the passes on chariots?

S. R. Rao (1988) did another outstanding work—this time in marine archaeology. He could discover the submerged fortress of Sri Krishna's Dwaraka. It may be recalled that when Krishna was about to depart from this mortal world, he asked Arjuna - his friend and companion – to take away the queens and other noble ladies from the capital city as he knew that the sea would submerge the great township after his departure. This episode is narrated in the Mahabharata. Thus Rao's discovery wonderfully substantiated an episode in the so called 'epic story'. This seems a unique find in favor of Mahabharata's historicity.

A new light on this problem was thrown from a different approach. A. Seidenberg, worked, for about two decades, on the *sulba-sutras*. These sutras, like all others, were aphoristic. The

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sulbas formed a part of *shrauta sutras* which belonged to one of the six *Vedangas* (= appendages of the Vedas). *Sulba* means chord or in modern terms geometry; they were meant to construct Vedic alters of exact dimensions. Seidenberg, therefore, called the *sulbas* 'ritual mathematics' or also Vedic mathematics (this is different from what goes by the name of Vedic mathematics consisting of 16 aphorisms of Bharati Krishna Tirtha). What were the main conclusions of Seidenberg?

1. That the mathematics of Old Babylonia and of Egypt was borrowed from the *sulba sutras* which were obviously older than both of them and also of Pythagoras⁹.
2. That the distinctive feature of the *sulba* mathematics (as analyzed by Seidenberg and later clarified by Rao and Rajaram) is the geometric algebra. The problems are stated in geometric form but their solution often lead to algebraic results. The best known example is the so called Pythagorean theorem of right angled triangles 'which can be tested as an independent result in algebra'(Rao and Rajaram p7). The problem of squaring a circle or vice-versa or of creating pyramidal or other geometrical alters keeping their areas and volumes intact were also a subject matter of the *sulbas*.
3. In contrast to such geometrical algebra, the Babylonians or the Egyptians knew only the arithmetical method. They had only a few Pythagorean triples (e.g. $3^2+4^2=5^2$) while the *sulbas* knew about others not known to the former two.

It ought to be stated that way back in 1934, B. B. Dutta came to the conclusion that the Greek geometry was derived from *sulba sutras* but, unfortunately, no one paid much attention to Dutta. Perhaps the intellectual climate of that time was not in favor of a proper appraisal of his findings as is so often the case with many other scientific findings. Text books mainly derive mathematics, especially, geometry, from the Greek sources. Even a great

mathematician like Cantor (of the Set Theory and the Diagonal slash proof about infinities) expressed that he didn't appreciate the idea of the Greeks being students of the Indians in mathematics. Such is the bias against the ancient Indian genius.

The credit of making the first pyramid goes to a Third Dynasty Egyptian monarch, Djoser, between 2700 B.C – 2625 B.C. It was a step-pyramid located at North Saqqara. Its base measured 123.4m X 107.4m. But the real pyramids, with which most people are familiar, were built by Snefru of the Fourth Dynasty on the Giza plateau. The basal square was 144.32 m². The great pyramid of Giza was built by Cheops, again of the Fourth Dynasty. Its basal square was 230.28 m², and attained a height of 146.59 m. The period of the Fourth Dynasty was between 2625 B.C - 2510 B.C.

Though no written or other records are available to conclude as to the method of construction of such mighty and massive structures, it goes without saying, that it must have required mathematical and architectural knowledge of a high order on the part of the Egyptian construction engineers – then called priests. As stated earlier, Seidenberg concluded that this mathematics was the one that is found in the *sulba sutras*. Hence these sutras should have been in existence prior to 2700 B.C.

Rao and Rajaram, therefore, concluded that the sutra period and the Harappan period co-existed in time. Their chronology is:

- End of Vedic Period – 3500 B.C.
- Late Vedic and Brahmana period – 3500 B.C-3000 B.C.
- Harappa-Sutra period – 3000 B.C-1900 B.C.

The Mahabharata war ended around 3100 B.C. Harappan civilization started after about a century. This civilization was destroyed by widespread drought lasting for about three hundred years or so. This drought also destroyed other middle-eastern civilizations. This event took place between 2200 B.C and 1900 B.C.

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Recent satellite images have shown a lost river course in the Thar Desert of Rajasthan which could be none other than the lost Saraswati River of the Hindu lore. The Mahabharata account describes a westerly direction of the Saraswati which used to flow to the Arabian Sea - then called Paschim Sagar (Western Sea) - near Pravasa. Balarama - elder brother of Sri Krishna - conducted a pilgrimage along the numerous settlements or ashrams of the then mighty Saraswati. Indian archaeologist, V.S. Wakankar, led an ambitious expedition from the Adi Badri Narayan region along the lost Saraswati. The expedition could discern many mounds of early settlements along the lost river bed. Together with Kalibangan, Dholavira etc, the numerous Harappan sites in Gujarat, and the satellite imageries, one is apt to agree with the description of the civilization as the Saraswati – Sindhu civilization rather than the Indus Valley civilization of John Marshall. With the Frawley's Paradox¹⁰, if that is to be resolved, one also tends to agree that the so called Vedic and the Harappan civilizations were only the two sides of the same coin. They were neither antagonistic nor anachronistic. The only hurdle that seems to remain is the decipherment of the Indus seals and their markings to the satisfaction of scholars.

Since the Vedas, as we said at the very outset, are only books of knowledge, both spiritual and secular, *para* and *apara vidya*. As per an Upanishadic expression, it has remained an exercise in futility to search for historical records within the Vedic texts. Is it worth the while to search for historical records of England in Newton's 'Principia' or the German history in Kant's 'Critique'? The European scholars brought this historical cum linguistic approach to the study of the Vedas. This was to be followed by many Indian scholars. The result has been a bewildering variety of hypothesis regarding the Vedic people and their civilization. As the Bible is a record, of some sorts, of human origins, of prophets and their preaching or sayings, the European scholarship considered the Vedas as an Indo-Aryan counterpart of the Bible. Hence they took this historical approach to the Vedas¹¹.

It is nobody's case that the Vedic mantras, though

transpersonal, were not 'seen' by different rishis at some specific points of time or place, in some far off days perhaps in 'proto-history or prehistory'; yet to label any period as 'Vedic' would be wide off the mark. It has been, and will remain, a chimerical pursuit.

Such labeling is analogous to call any one period as 'scientific'. It may be a popular perception, sometimes propagated by professional scientists, but does not stand close scrutiny. Simultaneously it must be mentioned that the post Renaissance period of Europe was conducive to the efflorescence of scientific thought and technology. But does that signify absence of science or mathematics in the ancient civilizations? Even the great Plato referred to the lost world of Atlantis, though we modernist consider it to be mythical.

Fritjof Capra's – 'The Tao of Physics' 1991 – is path breaking in the sense that a fully trained physicist of repute has found unquestionable parallelism between the ancient Hindu, the Buddhist and the Chinese thoughts with those of modern physics. Commenting on this book Sir Bernard Lovell says '*The parallels are indeed most striking*'. In the early part of the aforesaid book, Capra quotes from some of the top ranking physicists of the twentieth century (p22-23):

'The general notions about human understanding..... Which are illustrated by discoveries in atomic physics are not in the nature of things wholly unfamiliar, wholly unheard of, or new. Even in our culture they have a history, and in Buddhist and Hindu thought a more considerable and central place. What we shall find is an exemplification, an encouragement, and a refinement of old wisdom' – Robert Oppenheimer¹². 'For a parallel to the lessons of atomic theory....[we must turn] to those kinds of epistemological problems with which already thinkers like the Buddha and Lao Tzu have been confronted, when trying to harmonize our position as spectators and actors in the great drama of existence' – Niels Bohr. Further: 'The great scientific contribution in theoretical physics that has come from Japan since the last war may be an indication of a certain relationship between philosophical ideas in the tradition of

the Fareast and the philosophical substance of quantum theory. –
Werner Heisenberg.

Books of physics start with Galileo, Newton and Copernicus as they are a watershed in the history of science. Newton gave the fundamental cleavage between mass and force [sometimes as body and force]. Galileo showed that laws of mechanics that are valid in one frame of reference are also valid in another frame moving uniformly [without acceleration] in relation to the former. And Copernicus brought about the heliocentric revolution.

Einstein's famous formula, $E=mc^2$, abolished, forever, the Newtonian cleavage. The world now consists only of energy; the Hindus have been calling energy as shakti¹³ for a long time. This energy comes in the form of discrete packets of particles or Quanta [Max Planck]. But one cannot predict with certainty their position and momentum simultaneously [Heisenberg]. This is the Uncertainty Principle. It goes directly against the Newtonian mechanics, called classical mechanics, where everything is predictable if the initial conditions are known. In quantum mechanics only the probabilities are calculable, howsoever one may know the initial conditions.

Einstein moved ahead of Galileo's relativity. He said all laws of physics—not the laws of mechanics only - are valid in all frames of reference moving uniformly in relation to each other. As we have mentioned before, Space and Time are not two entirely different entities but fused into Space-Time - hence a Four Dimensional Space-Time Continuum. Einstein's continuum appeared to be in clash with discreteness of the quantum theory and a fusion of Relativity and Quantum theory was not achieved satisfactorily. Further it was well known, since Thomas Young (1803), that lightshows properties of a wave nature. Almost a hundred year later, Einstein (1905), working on photo-electric effect, showed that light consists of discrete particles (called photons). As mentioned in earlier section of this book, light can be a wave and a particle, - the 'Wave-particle duality'. Later all elementary particles or antiparticles were shown to possess wave nature.

A new approach was called for and what has come is Quantum Electro Dynamics (QED). It is a 'field theory' because all particles are waves. Einstein wrote:

'We may therefore regard matter as being constituted by regions of space in which the field is extremely intense.... There is no place in this new kind of physics both for field and matter, for field is the only reality' [From Capra's 'Tao of Physics' p 233].

But, field is present in a Space-Time Continuum, everywhere, while a particle is localized, discrete. Thus the duality is resolved in the Quantum Electro Dynamics (QED) theory.

Buddhism, in an exactly similar manner, speaks of a duality of Form and Emptiness. In the *Prajnaparamita Hridaya - sutra* one finds the following:

Form is emptiness, and emptiness is indeed form. Emptiness is not different from form; form is not different from emptiness. What is form that is emptiness, what is emptiness that is form'.

In the Vedas, the Upanishads and other Hindu scriptures one finds copious references to Void or Emptiness. Terms such as, *Vyom*, *Shunya* (zero) or *Akashave*, have been used. The alphabet Kha (ख) is equated with void. Similarly *Nirguna Brahman* (Brahman without any qualities or contents) is the source of the entire manifested universe. One comes across a very significant mantra in the Upanishads:

'Om that is Full; this is Full

From that Full this Full is said to come

Yet that Full remains as such

*Even after giving out this Full.'*¹⁴

This prayer is routinely repeated during worship.

Long before Einstein fused Space and Time into a Space-Time Continuum, Shankaracharya (800 A.D) had gone a step ahead by the fusion of *Desh-Kala-Nimitta*¹⁵ (Space-Time-Causality) into a

continuous whole and called it Maya. This Maya is neither existence nor non-existence. It transcends all logical categories-hence called by him *anirvachaniya* (inexpressible). Wave-particle duality also goes beyond logic. How can a localized particle be a spread out wave? Are they not mutually exclusive? Does it not violate the either/or logic and the principle of excluded middle? Quantum theory is also supra-logical very much as Maya is supra-logical. Shankara's Advaita, goes beyond the modern theories of physics. The labeling of modern period as scientific is, therefore, more a popular perception than truly incisive. In the realm of technology the modern period seems to have surpassed the earlier periods but not in terms of thought. People are carried away more by the technological marvels rather than by the thought contents. The present author has avoided discussions on achievements of ancient Hindu sciences such as Yoga, Ayurveda, Plant Ayurveda (Vriksha Ayurveda), Rasayan (or Hindu Chemistry) etc. because that would take us far away from our present enquiry. There are several authoritative works on these subjects.

Leaving aside all these interpretations and controversies as not germane to our present study, the fact remains that the Vedic mantras were 'seen' by Rishis in a state of Samadhi. As described earlier in more recent times, Prophet Mohammad used to 'get' the Koranic 'ayats' when he was in an extra-ordinary state which has not been properly explained in the Islamic literature. All the sayings of the Prophet are not given the status of 'Koran' even though they are treated with deep respect by Islamic followers.

A Vedic mantra has a *devata* (an aspect or a power or a personality of the supreme Godhead); a rishi and a definite *chanda* (rhythm). The mantras are to be chanted and pronounced in a specific manner (meter). It has been repeatedly stressed that wrong pronunciation or wrong chanting will not lead to desired results; it may even lead to contrary results. This reminds us of the celebrated saying of Plato that 'wrong words create evil in the soul'.

The rishi taught his disciples the method of chanting. The tradition has come down, in an unbroken chain, on the excellent

principle of *guru-shishya-parampara* (teacher-disciple chain) ¹⁶. The manner of chanting, [*pada path, jatapath* etc.] is so foolproof that neither a syllable can be added, subtracted or altered in any manner whatsoever. One can, therefore, say with confidence that the Vedas have come down to this day, in their pristine purity. All efforts to the contrary have been unsuccessful. In this context one understands why Sri Krishna, who has time and again, declared Himself as the Supreme Godhead [Purushottama] yet called Himself a *Veda-Vid* (knower of the Vedas) in the Geeta but not a *Veda-Krut* (composer or creator of the Vedas). This aspect has been completely missed by all the European or the Indian scholars even those who were or are sympathetic to this scripture.

Oral transmission, in the aforesaid manner, is of paramount importance for the Vedas, but it should not be concluded that Vedic manuscripts were not present in the Vedic schools. To Max Mueller's credit it must be said that he, for the first time, took the initiative of publishing the Rk Veda, with the unstinted but largely unacknowledged, help from unknown Vedic *acharyas* (teachers) of the *gurukuls*. Max Mueller was also instrumental in the publication of the 'Sacred Books of the East' series. These were, indeed, a signal service to the cause of Indological studies. But oral traditions regarding the Vedas are of paramount importance to its purity rather than the cold print in a book form.

B. THE BUDDHA AND HIS DOCTRINES

Of all the religions of the world, the life of the Buddha and Buddhism, are most authentically known and documented. Even an inveterate critique of the Buddha's religion like J. Barthelemy, Saint Hilare¹⁷ had to accept '....., that at the present day our knowledge of the origins of Buddhism is more thorough than that of most religions, including our own. We are acquainted with the life of the Buddha to the most trifling details, and we possess all the canonical writings which contain his doctrine as collected and settled by the three successive councils' (p17).

The Buddha's life is known through *Lalita-Vistara*, *Buddha-*

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Charita, *Attakatha* (Sinhalese), *Mahavansa*, *Dipavansa* and of course, the *Tripitaka*. Apart from these, Ashoka's edicts, Fa-Hien's account, Huen Tsang's memoirs, Megasthenes travel accounts are other valuable sources from which one can authentically know the life and the teachings of the 'Enlightened One'. *Mahavansa* is a meticulously kept record for centuries that followed. It was initiated by Mahanama who happened to be an uncle of the then king of Sinhala (now Sri Lanka). Legend says that the 'Blessed One' first set his foot on this beautiful island. His foot prints, (*Sri Pada*), are still preserved on the Adam's Peak. The 'Tooth-Relic' of the Buddha is also preserved in the temple of Mahiyangana. All these are held in high esteem by the people of Sri Lanka.

Historically speaking, Buddhism was brought to Sri Lanka by Asoka's son, Mahendra (Mahinda-Pali), and Sanghamittra (Sanghamitta-Pali), his daughter. Fa-Hien is commonly known as the first Chinese pilgrim to visit India, in 399 - 414 A.D. He came in search of the great Master's teachings; but some eighty years earlier, another little known Chinese pilgrim, Chi-Tao-An, visited India for the same purpose. His memoirs seem to have been lost or not yet located. Fa-Hien travelled throughout India and went as far as Sri Lanka.

Huen-Tsang was the next Chinese traveler cum pilgrim to have visited India in search of the Buddhas wisdom. He wrote exhaustively on the religio-political life of India. When Huen-Tsang came to India (623 A.D) it was already about 1200 years since the Buddha had attained mahaparinirvana. Yet Nalanda had not less than ten thousand residential monk-students and around one thousand residential monk-professors. Cunningham's excavations of 10 mounds at Nalanda in 1861, was a signal service to Indian archaeology as also to Indian history. It brought before the world the remains of an university when the world couldn't conceive anything like that. Alexandrian library, though great, was only a library. 'Academy' of Plato or 'Lyceum' of Aristotle were only miniatures. On the other hand, Nalanda housed two multistoried libraries and had innumerable books. All branches of knowledge were taught; they

included Sanskrit-Vedic studies as well as Buddhist studies. The university was abuzz with academic activities. There used to be *Dwar Pundits* (equivalent to screening committees for academics) who would test the aptitude of incoming students. Only then, they would be given entrance to the university. When Huen-Tsang came, Sheel Bhadra was the head of the university. This learning centre was financed by liberal grants from the king's treasury.

Huen-Tsang carried with him huge quantities of books/mss to China which have been a most valuable source of Buddhist studies (Later Bakhtiar Khilji - a fanatic invader- destroyed this great university). There are around one hundred more mounds which remain to be excavated. Unfortunately, nothing worthwhile has been done by the Indian government, even though the alien British government took the initiative to unearth India's past glory. Huen-Tsang went to South India, as far as Kanchipuram but didn't go to Sri Lanka.

We will not enter into the details of the Bodhisattva's birth. His mother died within seven days after giving birth to the child. He was brought up by his aunt (mother's sister) - Mahaprajapati Gotami. It is said that he possessed thirty two primary characteristics of a Mahapurusha (Superhuman?). An ascetic, *Asit muni*, came at the time of his birth (reminding us of the three wise men of the East coming at the birth of Jesus). He predicted that the new born one (jataka) would be a Buddha if he takes to an ascetic's life or would be an emperor (chakravarty raja) if he becomes a house holder.

The boy, Siddhartha, developed a contemplative nature coupled with compassion for all living creatures. He also mastered all branches of the studies as well as martial arts, archery etc. His father was worried; and tried his level best to keep his son away from all sorrowful aspects of life. He was provided with all forms of luxuries; also married to a beautiful maiden of the Sakya clan so as to keep him diverted.

But neither wealth, pelf, power and luxuries of life, nor the feminine charms could tempt the born *sanyasin*. It is said that he came face to face with such sad facts of life as disease, death and

old age during some of his outings in the town of Kapilvastu. These are inevitable concomitants of all life—even those of the rich, the powerful and the beautiful. How to overcome the same is a big question before all thoughtful men. The Geeta echoes the same: अनित्यम् असुखं लोकं (a life of sorrow, a life that is transitory). Siddhartha was possessed by this thought. He wanted a way out of human predicament.

In the Brahad-Aryanyaka Upanishad one finds Maitreyi asking the very same question to her philosopher husband-Yagnyavalka. He was about to leave the householder's life and asked his two wives to take their share of his property. Katyayani was satisfied with the arrangement. But Maitreyi asked: If all the wealth of the world becomes mine, can I become immortal? Yagnyavalka gives a pointed answer: No, wealth cannot bring in Immortality. Your life will be like any other wealthy person. Then Maitreyi also pointedly replies: What shall I do with that by which I cannot become Immortal? [2-4-2,3] ¹⁸.

Siddhartha Gautama was twenty nine years old and had a son – Rahul. In the dead of night, he left the palace when Yashodhara/Gopa – his wife was sleeping; this is known as *maha-abhi-nishkramana* (or great departure) in the Buddhist circles. He visited Alara-Kalama and Udraka-Rama-Putra¹⁹ – well known yogic masters of those days with sizeable following. But he feels dissatisfied with such psychological attainments as *Akash-anant-ayatana* (infinity of space) and *Vijnana-anant-ayatana* (infinity of consciousness), in the company of these masters. They even invite him to be at par with them; but the Bodhisattva had his eyes fixed on the Ultimate Realization. He refused these coveted positions.

Siddhartha, then, underwent severe austerities. His frame became emaciated after six long years of practice. He heard a few ladies, passing nearby, saying that the strings of *Veena* (a form of string instrument) shouldn't be tightened too much or they may snap. The monk got a cue from their conversation and found wisdom in the 'middle path'. He later expounded the 'middle path' in his discourses. Now he took some nourishing food through the good

offices of Sujata. His five co-aspirants, parted company with him thinking that the young monk had fallen from the high path. But the Bodhisattva was not daunted by such desertion. Regaining health and vigor, he sat under a *pipal* or *Bodhi-drum* or Bo-tree (*Ficus religiosa*) with firm resolve not to relinquish his asana (seat) till he got the Ultimate Realization or Bodhi. At the Bodhi mandapam (Bodhimanda-Pali) he attained Bodhi on the Full Moon night of Vesakha. He was then thirty five years old. The Bodhisattva became the Buddha after vanquishing the Evil One (or Mara) - (reminding us of Jesus fasting for forty days and finally defeating the Satan).

Bodhi is fundamentally different from *buddhi* whose English equivalent is intellect. *Buddhi*, in the Indian system of psychology, is a faculty of *chitta* or the mind stuff. *Buddhi* is determinative in action. *Manas* or the mind produces various alternatives called *sankalpa-vikalpa*. It is the *buddhi* that selects one of these, hence determinative. One wonders, if ever, such a distinction has been made in the western psychological concepts. *Buddhi* may be sharp, dull, incisive, analytical etc. but in any case it is limited even in its highest manifestation. Rational thinking is the highest form of *buddhi* or intellect. Scientists, even mathematicians are, however, beginning to accept intuition as a higher faculty of mind than mere rational thought.

But *Bodhi* is All-Encompassing Awareness. It is infinite and illimitable. One fails to find such a concept in the classical Greek philosophy or in the western philosophy. Hence there is no equivalent term for Bodhi in the European languages; at best one comes across gnosis, which is but a derivative of the Greek *gnostikos*. This, in turn, is derived from Sanskrit *Jnanam* meaning knowledge. Gnosis is, thus, knowledge or mystical knowledge or at best Divine wisdom. Islamic Sufism is, perhaps, derived from Greek Gnosticism or Christian Gnostics. They believed in knowledge as the way to salvation. Sufis, in Islam, were very negligible in number or influence. Some Sufi saints are to be found in the middle ages but, as of now, they are almost negligible in number.

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In this way Buddhahood was a state which *Sakhya Muni* attained on the banks of Niranjana (Falgu) near Bodh-Gaya on that fateful night. The Buddha, on the threshold of *mahaparinirvana*, resting between Sal trees (*Shorea robusta*), radiating brilliance from his body, called his shadow-like attendant, Ananda, by his side, took a few leaves of Sal and enquired:

- ‘How many are they?’
- ‘Only a few’. Uttered Ananda
- ‘How many are there on the trees?’
- ‘Countless’. Said Ananda

So too Ananda, the truths that the Tathagata has preached to the world are only a few, a handful. But knowledge of Truths that the Tathagata has is illimitable, immeasurable. Why so? Because they are not conducive to the welfare of the humanity (from - Digha Nikaya - Mahaparibban Sutta). It is well known that the Buddha’s watchword was:

- For the welfare of many (वहुजन हिताय)
- For the happiness of many (वहुजन सुखाय)

In fact, in the history of religions, such an expression was never earlier uttered by any prophet or messenger. The only exception is the Geeta’s expression ‘engaged in the welfare of all beings’ [5/25]²⁰. The Buddha’s advent was not for his own liberation but for the entire humanity - nay all living beings.

Regarding the Infinity of Knowledge, there a significant parable of Sri Ramakrishna. He said:

‘In the countryside (of Bengal), there are two persons who measure paddy. One who actually measures on the scale saying Rama 1, 2, 3, etc. while the other goes on constantly supplying the same from the storehouse. Similarly I go on measuring, while my Mother (meaning the Divine) goes on supplying the same from Her illimitable storehouse of knowledge’.

This is a wonderful parable. The Incarnations of God, whom the west knows as Messiahs, are the front office of an organization but behind their back is the entire establishment full of Divine Wisdom and Power.

The life and teachings of the Blessed One are known in more authentic manner, because in India of those days, there was no concept of heresy regarding religion, philosophy or science. No one was ever burnt at the stakes because he/she held geocentric or heliocentric views or because he/she was an atheist, agnostic, atomist, Vedic Karmakandis (Vedic ritualist) or an Absolutist. Wars were fought on economic or other grounds but not on philosophy or religion. The RK Veda speaks:

*'Existence is one but sages call Him
Variously as Indra, Mitra, Varuna,
Agni, Matarishwa, Yama etc'. [1-164-46]²¹*

In the Yajur Veda also there is a similar expression:

'He is verily Agni, He is Aditya, He is Vayu, He is the Moon, He is Brahman, He is water, He is the Creator' [XXXII-1]²².

The Geeta preaches the same thing:

Whosoever worships Me in whatever form I approach him accordingly

Because O Arjuna! Men follow Me in all manner. [4-11]²³

As in physics, we find different forms of energy e.g. heat, light, electricity, magnetism, nuclear etc. but essentially they are all Energy so also the Vedic gods/goddesses are only different aspects of One Existence. That is what the RK and other scriptures teach. But, unfortunately, the western intelligentsia took it to be polytheistic, pagan idolatry. The Islamists also followed them.

Nowhere in the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Geeta or other authentic Hindu scriptures, can one come across such expressions as: *'My God alone is the true God and all others are false gods'* or *'I*

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am a jealous God etc. Such expressions have caused enormous confusion; it has caused untold misery to the mankind.

In the Buddha's time, thus, one finds different teachers preaching different philosophies and religious systems ranging from theism, atheism, agnosticism and even materialism. In the Jain system there is no scope of a Supreme God (Ishwara). Only liberated souls called Tirthankaras. Mahavira was a Tirthankara; twenty three preceded him in prehistory. Even in the Samkhya system, there is no Supreme God but only numerous souls. In the Charvaka system there is only matter-not even a soul. All of these systems flourished side by side in India.

Both the Buddha and Mahavira were simultaneously preaching in the Magadha region without any fuss or confrontation between them or their followers. Even Charvaks or Lokayats were also preaching their view points. Ajit-Kesh-Kambli, for instance, was preaching materialism. In Rk Veda there are distinct mantras which suggest agnosticism but no fuss, no book burning took place for that reason²⁴. The Buddha himself (*Digh Nikaya-Brahma Jal sutta*) has referred to sixty two different schools of thought present in his time. But he steered clear of all speculative philosophies as not conducive to nirvana which was the highest good for the ailing mankind. He compared himself to a physician who has come to heal an ailing person and not to lecture him about the physiology, the anatomy and the pathology of a disease. Hence he didn't meddle about such questions as to the origin of the universe or whether it is finite or infinite etc. They were fruitless, he felt. Ramakrishna used to tell his audience that: '*Man has come to a mango grove to eat mangoes to his full and not to count its branches and leaves.*' Jesus Christ, also, always preached about the Kingdom of Heaven and how to reach the same.

The 'Enlightened One' remained in the supreme state of felicity or Bodhi for forty nine days; seven days at a stretch for seven successive periods. It is during this time that he performed the famous *bhumi-sparsh-mudra* (or touching the Mother Earth) or *animesh-lochana-mudra* (staring without blinking). During this

period also he 'saw' the world with Buddha *chakshu* or Divine Eyes (cf. Divya Chakshu of Bhagwad Geeta 11th Chapter) ²⁵. During Buddha's time the men at large, were groping in darkness. So he was in double mind whether to lay bare his 'realization' or his 'profound teachings', beyond the ken of ratiocination or analytical skill, before the ordinary mankind. But, finally, he decided to open up his heart. He stepped out of his retreat at Uruvela village (now Bodh-Gaya) which had abundant supply of clear waters of Niranjana as also charitable men and women, to fulfill his meager wants.

He went to Varanasi, famed as an eternal city. Varanasi was the great centre of Sanskrit learning. At the grove of Sarnath (Saranganath) he found his old time five companions. They had resolved not to show any respect to him. But his compelling presence, his divine personality, was so overpowering that their adverse resolve melted away. They fell at the feet of the Buddha and asked for the 'way'. He preached to them his doctrines, simple but profound and highly practical. These have, often, been called the First Sermon, drawing the analogy from the Sermon on the Mount. They were:

- Four *Arya-satya* (Noble Truths);
- *Arya* eight-fold path (Noble eight-fold path).

They lead to Nirvana-the Un-decaying and Deathless state if any one practices them diligently.

He went on preaching for the next forty five years, perhaps throughout India, but mostly in Magadha (present day Bihar) and Kosala (east U.P). He used the colloquial Pali, instead of Sanskrit so as to reach the common man. He did away with all privileges associated with castes. Into his fold, called Sangha, came saints and sinners, noble men and commoners, the rich and the poor. Even dreaded criminals, like Angulimal and fallen women like Amrapali, came under the refuge of the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha. These have, since, come to be known as Tri-ratna (Three Jewels). For the first time, the caste conscious Hindu society

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saw the breaking up of caste barriers. The Sangha had not only such learned men like Sariputta, Mogllayana and Mahakashyapa but such men of humble origin as Upali - a barber.

It is well to remember that Upali was given the charge of compiling the *vinaya-pitaka* in the first council of Buddhism. Thus high and low, prince and pariah, men and women enjoyed equal status under the Buddha's dispensation. Verily, he turned the 'Wheel of Law' (Dharma-Chakra Pravartana) when he preached his message to the world. Vivekananda has well pointed out: 'The Lord came to practice what he preached in the Geeta.' One remembers Jesus, who also broke down the insurmountable barrier between the Jews and the Gentiles, as he drank water from the hands of a Samaritan girl or when he pardoned a fallen woman whom the then Jewish law was intent on stoning to death. After all who, among men, does not transgress in one manner or the other? So, 'Judge not that ye may not be judged.'

The Tathagata entered Mahaparinirvana at the ripe old age of eighty [in 543 B.C] at Kusinagara (Kusinara-Pali). The last words uttered to the monks assembled there, as also to the world at large, were '*Atma-Deepo-Bhava Dharma-Deepo-Bhava* (let you be your own light, let Dharma be your light) ²⁶. This was an immense message of self reliance to all. None can release you from the bondages that you have put upon yourself. None can throw away the fetters that you have put on yourself. The Teachers can show you the path; but travelling is to be done by none other than your own self.

Immediately after his final departure, the First Buddhist Council was held at Raja-Griha (present day Raj Gir) under the patronage of Ajatashatru who was now the king of Magadha. He had met the Tathagata, years earlier, and heard one of his long discourses (cf. Digh Nikaya). He was now one of his votaries. He provided all amenities to the assembled monks and nuns for proper deliberations of the Council. It was presided over by none other than the illustrious Mahakashyapa.

Ananda, the shadow like attendant of the Buddha, was given

the charge of compiling and reciting the sayings of the great Master. This constitutes the *Sutta-Pitaka* (Sutra-Pitaka in Sanskrit). These sutras are the basic foundation on which the edifice of Buddhism rests.

As stated earlier, Upali recited the monastic and other rules governing the smooth conduct of the Sangha. This was the *Vinaya-Pitaka*.

Mahakashyapa kept for himself the more onerous task of compiling the metaphysical portions of the Doctrine. This constitutes the *Abhi-Dharma-Pitaka*. The deliberations continued for months together (six months?). The text was finally adopted by the Council. Thus three boxes or baskets were filled up by the written matter. Hence the name *Tri-Pitaka*. This is the basic canonical work which has come down to the present day, in Pali version, for the last two and a half thousand years without distortion. Since, as far as religion, philosophy and sciences are concerned, India was an open society and there was no such concept as heresy or authoritarianism, hence the Buddhist Council went unhindered for months together. A vast religio-philosophical literature came up which was authentic in every manner.

To get a perspective of the then Indian ethos, consider the famous Edicts of Asoka. For instance in the seventh Edict at Girnar, also reproduced in other places like Dhauli or Kapur-di-Giri, the emperor declares:

'That the ascetics of all beliefs shall be permitted to dwell where they will'. Further: 'King Piyadasi (King Priyadarshi) honors every belief, and honors both mendicants and householders'. Also 'Each man must only honor his own belief, but he must not cast blame on that of others; thus will no one be injured. There are even circumstances in which the belief of another should be honored, and by acting in this manner our own belief is strengthened as well as that of others. Whoever acts differently lowers his personal belief and injures that of another.....May men of all beliefs abound in wisdom and prosper in virtue.....' (Asiatic Soc. of Bengal, VI, VII).

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I think, what the great Emperor decreed is the fountainhead of modern secularism and is the corner stone of *Sarva-Dharma-Samabhava*²⁷ enshrined in the Indian Constitution of 1950.

Contrast this with what happened to early Christianity, Jesus was not only put to a most brutal form of death by Sanhedrin's orders²⁸ though actual killing was done by the brutal Roman soldiers. Jesus was questioned by a Jewish high priest (Caiaphas); he was also pilloried and humiliated before the Sanhedrin. He was charged with blasphemy (equivalent to waging of war against the king or treason in a modern society) only because he felt that he was the 'Son of Man' (or the Son of God?) and declared it so.

The persecution by the Jewish authorities, along with those by the Roman rulers, made Christ's disciples meet secretly. No one can say with confidence when exactly the four Gospels and other parts of the New Testament came to be written and to come out into open. Perhaps, only when Constantine (313 A.D) became the Emperor of Rome and was converted to Christianity, did Christians feel safe to proclaim their faith. Thereafter, the bishops started gaining power and wealth. They were instrumental in persecuting the Jews; the Pagan religion was gradually eliminated. Bertrand Russell²⁹ writes (p326):

'The attitude of Christians to contemporary Jews early became hostile'. Further: 'As soon as the State became Christian, anti-Semitism, in its medieval form, began, nominally as a manifestation of Christian zeal. How far the economic motives, by which it was inflamed in later times, operated in the Christian Empire, it seems impossible to ascertain'.

At another place Russell remarks:

'The Christians for the most part, believed that they alone would go to heaven, and the most awful punishments would, in the next world, fall upon the heathens.'(ibid p330)

Such fanaticism resulted in Emperor Theodosius [391 A.D] ordering the destruction of all non-Christian books and the destruction of the famed Library of Alexandria. It was a tragedy of

utmost dimensions. Is it any wonder that Europe sank into Dark Ages in the succeeding centuries from which free thought had to come out with great sacrifice and effort?

Coming back to the original theme, one finds the second Buddhist Council at Vaishali after about a hundred years of the Parinirvana i.e. around 443 B.C.

Kala-Asoka was then the king. The Council was presided over by Revata; its deliberations were spread over eight months. The laxities that had crept into the Sangha were removed. The monks who were lax were ex-communicated. The Vinaya was put on a firm foundation. It is said that around 700 monks took part in the deliberations.

The Third Council was held under the patronage of Emperor 'Asoka – the great' who ascended the throne in 325 B.C. Asoka waged wars in his early career, but after the Kalinga war, he was converted to the path of the Tathagata. He renounced his earlier ways and engaged himself in progressive measures so that his kingdom and the subjects prospered. The Edicts, in far off places, are a testimony to his wide vision.

The Third Council was held at Pataliputra (present day Patna) where two thousand monks deliberated on the texts for many months. Finally the canonical work was confirmed. These monks had come to Pataliputra from far and wide. Tissa was the chairman of this Council.

The Fourth Council, held during the reign of Kanishka, is distinguished by the fact that here, for the first time, Buddhism branched off into the Hinayana (Smaller Vehicle) and the Mahayana (Greater Vehicle). But both the schools owed their allegiance to *Tripitaka* and *Tri-ratna*. In Islam there are two main sects – the Shia and the Sunni - and both owe their allegiance to the Prophet, the Koran and Allah. In Christianity there are now many sects but all of them are bound by the Divinity of Jesus Christ.

Gradually many philosophical schools developed within the Buddhism, which though interesting, are at present, not the subject

matter of our enquiry. Suffice it to conclude that the Buddha and his Dharma are the most authentically known of the world religions of today.

C. THE OLD TESTAMENT

The Old Testament or the Torah is a scripture common to both the Jews and the Christians. The devout among these religious groups take it literally as the word of God. Basically, the Old Testament consists of the five books. [Pentateuch - Greek]. They are: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. This order is common to Torah and Old Testament. Further, there are the accounts of the prophets, kings etc. till we come down to Jesus Christ. Then starts the New Testament.

Genesis, as every Jewish-Christian child knows, deals with the story of creation. The entire creation was completed in six days - (perhaps in six stages). Afterwards Lord God took rest on the seventh day which is considered hallowed. Hence no man should work on the seventh day; it is considered a holiday. Why this day was called Sunday, associated with the Sun, is not clear. Adam, the first man, was created 'in the image of God'—who is thus conceived to be anthropomorphic even though, it has been emphasized time and again, that He is Non-Corporeal, Everlasting etc. Are not non-corporeality and Monotheism the two basic points of difference with Paganism?

Adam, on the advice of his woman companion, Eve, disobeyed God's injunction not to taste the 'fruits of Knowledge' and was banished from the Garden of Eden for this 'Original Sin'.

Once they became knowledgeable, they felt ashamed of their nakedness and tried to cover it with 'fig leaves'. Their child-like simplicity was gone. Hence forth they were condemned to hard labor to earn their livelihood. He procreates. The offspring, all of them, fill up the Earth. In Urdu they are called Admi (آدمی) - coming from Adam (آدم). In English they are called Man reminding us of *Manu*. We have seen earlier Bishop Usser calculated the events of

Genesis in 4004 B.C.(roughly 6000 years back).

However, the Egyptian civilization – a highly researched subject – has shown prehistoric cultures dating back to c 50000 – 30000 B.C. (Nicolas Grimal 1997). Transition to agriculture took place around c6000. The Old Pre-dynastic (Naquada) period has been put to 4500 B.C. The well known 'Dancer', painted terracotta statue from 'Ma amariya', (de Morgan 1884) is given a date c3650–3300 B.C.

Even though Max Mueller initially put the RK Vedas at 1500 BC (which he later revised), further researches have revealed that the sutra period of Vedas must be placed at 3000 B.C. and the Vedas (samhita portion) immediately after the last ice-age i.e. 8000 B.C. The Harappan sites corresponded to the sutra period (Rao, S. R. and N. S. Rajaram).

Human (*Homo sapiens*) fossils date back to not less than 100,000 years may be 350,000 years. *Homo erectus* was, of course, earlier to *H. sapiens*. *Ramapithecus* and *Sivapithecus* fossils are dated to some 5 million years back. The Hindus had calculated the age of the Earth at about 2 billion years. This was looked down upon with derision as a heathen superstitious belief. But, now, the Earth's age is believed to be 4.5 billion years! Scientific calculations and Hindu Puranic estimates show some similarities. Usser's estimate appears to be fantastically childish but well meaning faithful, even scholars of the mid-Nineteenth century, ardently believed in the story of Genesis. Even now there are people, perhaps a good number of them, who think that every word in these Books has come straight from the God Almighty. Kenneth Davis (1998) has quoted a letter in May/June 1997 issue of Biblical Archaeological Review where a writer asserts:

'This year [1997] marks approximately 6000 years since the world's history began, when God created the heaven and the earth (Genesis 1:1). The terms "prehistory" and "Neolithic" are a mockery of God's word, the Bible.' (p46)

But thinking people of the West, as well as of the East, do not

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literally believe in such accounts. That is the gift of 'scientific temper' after centuries of struggle and sacrifice. Priests, in every society, have tried to put fetters on man's soaring spirit of enquiry. This made Vivekananda cry 'Kick out priesthood'. But somehow this bane continues in all cultures to the detriment of the mankind. We see the horrendous consequences of fanatic teachings of the clergy in the form of terrorism of today.

The story of 'flood' is another aspect deserving consideration. 'Flood' story is present in other ancient civilizations. Among the Hindus the persona involved was Manu. Could he be Nuh of the Muslims and Noah of the Bible? Egyptian list of kings starts with Menes or Meni who heads the successive thirty dynasties. This, again, sounds so similar to Manu of the Hindus.

Noah was considered a righteous man in the eyes of the Lord. But other people had become wicked in His judgment. Hence he decided to eliminate them! Noah and his progeny were to be saved. He knew that He would soon cause a catastrophic flood where all would perish. He directed Noah to build an ark or a ship of specific dimensions which seem to be woefully inadequate to accommodate a pair of all types of living species. This is now a million; the Hindus estimated it as 8.4 million. How could a ship, or any ship for that matter, accommodate all these million species? The writer (s?), however, didn't bother about such problems or about carnivore vs. herbivore or their food requirements etc.

Noah, it is said, was six hundred years old when floods came. It lasted for a full one year; then it receded. The duration of a year has not been clarified. The earth was flooded for 150 days; it took another 150 days for it to subside. On the seventeenth day of the seventh month the ark came to a standstill on Mount Ararat. The water continued to recede until the tenth month. After forty days, Noah opened a window and let out a raven. It flew back and forth because it couldn't find any dry place. Noah now sent out a dove which also came back to him because it also didn't find any dry place except the ark. He then, waited for seven more days and let out the dove which came back this time, with a fresh olive leaf

signifying that land plants were sprouting. Noah again waited for another seven days and let the dove fly out; this time it didn't come back. This Scripture says:

'By the first day of the first month of Noah's six hundred and first years, the water had dried up from the earth' (8:13 NIV).

The whole thing seems confusing. Who maintained all these records? Did Noah or his sons knew reading, writing and calendar maintenance? When it was raining heavily, how did they know about the days? What is the significance of seventeenth day of seventh month? What was the total duration of the flood - 300 days (150+150 days)? Was it a lunar year or a solar year? Lunar year is *in vogue* among certain religious groups. The modern Christian calendar system was devised by Pope Gregory XIII and goes by the name of Gregorian calendar. Hindus have solar year and lunar months of 30 days. They have, thus, to resort to an additional month after a few years interval to meet the shortfall between 360 days of a lunar year and 365 1/4 days of a solar year.

Noah found the land dry after 356 days: (150+150+40+7+7) = 356 days. Now, does this correspond to the 1st day of the 1st month of Noah's 601st year? What were the length of the months and that of one year?

The Scripture further adds:

'By the twenty seventh day of the second month the earth was completely dry'. (8:14 NIV)

Here is another dimension to the calendar; which narration is to be followed? Apparently, the writer(s) messed up the matter.

The Dead Sea Scrolls

In the Judean wilderness, Mohammad Dib - a Bedouin - was grazing his flocks. It was near Dead Sea; so called because no aquatic form can survive in the high concentration of salts in the sea-water. The density is high enough to support a floating man. The young man accidentally threw a stone in a nearby cave and heard an unusual sound. He decided to investigate the matter. He

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found burnt clay jars containing scrolls of leather with written matter. Presumably he was unlettered; moreover the script was unfamiliar, coming as it did, from some ancient days.

The incident happened in 1947 and thus began the story of the famed 'Dead Sea Scrolls'. The state of Israel had not yet come into existence and the area was controlled by the British authorities. Soon scholars and authorities got scent of the matter. They started scouring the area known as Qumran caves. These are located in uninhabited hills that are extremely uninviting because of salinity and aridity.

The 'Dead Sea Scrolls' are anonymous but they deal with the same faith as found in the Old Testament. Obviously the narrations are by different scribes, the style of presentation is different from the Testament writers. One comes across Pharisees and Saducees in the New Testament but seldom, if ever, one hears about the Essenes. This was the third sect of the Jews. They were recluses' living a life of celibacy and didn't belong to the main stream of the Jewish people. According to some scholars, the Essenes recluses, perhaps, lived in these caves away from the hum-drum of human habitation. They seem to have written down the scrolls during centuries prior to the advent of Jesus. His name does not appear in the scrolls. John the Baptist, in all likelihood, was an Essene. This sect believed in the final showdown between the forces of Light and Darkness in the near future. So they remained prepared for the same.

Since in 1947, the British Government controlled the territory in question, the scrolls of Cave I were deposited with the British authorities. Later the state of Israel came into existence. Now the scrolls became the property of the West Jerusalem Museum of Israel. In 1952, copper scrolls were recovered from Cave 3. In 1954 a Cave 4 was found. The scrolls therein came under the Jordanian authorities, as by then, Palestine was partitioned.

For scholars it was an uphill task to gain access to these documents. The written matter was in ancient Hebrew and Aramaic; deciphering them was another problem. Aramaic was the lingua

franca of the times of Jesus. He used to give his discourses in Aramaic.

The matter was further complicated due to the usual rivalry among the scholars. No one wanted to part with the material in his possession. The authorities concerned also didn't co-operate. Ultimately, Eisenman and Wise could publish their book 'The Dead Sea Scrolls Uncovered' in 1992 – forty five years after their accidental discovery. The Oxford University Press, also, serially threw open the 'Discoveries of Judean Deserts'.

Eisenman and Wise state (p7):

'About 580 separate manuscripts can be identified, of these some 380 are non-Biblical or 'Sectarian' as they are referred to in the field, the rest Biblical.'

One outstanding impression obtained from the 'Scrolls' is that the Qumran sects were not as enthusiastic about Moses and the Pentateuch as were the mainstream Jewish sects. They showed more enthusiasm about Messianic advent. But strangely, they do not mention anything about Jesus Christ. Isaiah had prophesied 'Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel' (7:14 NIV). This is the root of the Christian belief 'in the virgin birth of Jesus Christ' as propagated by St. Paul.

There was a controversy between the Jews and the Christians regarding the term 'virgin'. The Jews thought it was 'young woman' but the Christians thought it was 'immaculate conception of a virgin'. Russell (1996) thinks *'What we have as the Book of Isaiah is the work of two different prophets, one before the exile and one after. The second of these who is called by Biblical students Deutero Isaiah, is the most remarkable of prophets'*. (p 315)

There is also divergence in the flood story. The scroll writers seem to have been aware of the priestly record of the flood story and its inherent contradictions, Eisenman and Wise remark (p78):

'For instance, he attempts to set forth a proper chronology of

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the flood story, coming up with a 364 day calendar of the Jubilee type: Contradictory elements are either harmonized, passed over or deleted in the interest of rationalizing a coherent calendar and explaining its intrinsic applicability of the flood story'. They further urge the reader to note '.....an inherent contradiction in the narrative as it has come down to us, namely why God cursed Cannan, son of Ham, when it was Ham who had actually 'uncovered his father's nakedness' [ibidp79].

There are other divergences between the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Old Testament. Relevant literature may be consulted by enquiring readers. Old Testament as a narrative, from Adam's days, must have come down as oral version as *'The early history of the Israelites cannot be confirmed from any source outside the Old Testament, and it is impossible to know at what point it ceases to be purely legendary. David and Solomon³⁰ may be accepted as kings who probably had a real existence.....'* (Russell, p312).

In all the Five Books, except Genesis, Moses is the prime figure about whom it is said in Deuteronomy (34.10) *'.....no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses whom the Lord knew face to face, who did all those miraculous signs and wonders the Lord sent him to do in Egypt—to Pharaoh and to all his officials and to his whole land. For no one has ever shown the mighty power or performed the awesome deeds that Moses did in the sight of all Israel' [NIV].*

In the Islamic Koran, Moses is known as Musa. They hold him in high esteem and refer to him around 500 times in their holy Book. In the Hebrew language he is pronounced Moshe. He is miraculously saved after his birth and grows up in the Pharaoh's palace under the care of his daughter. Later he is married and had two children. At the age of forty he goes to Mount Horeb (are Mount Sinai and Mount Horeb identical?) and comes face to face with Lord God or Yaveh ['I Am That I Am'] where he is told about the Ten Commandments – written on a stone tablet. He comes down along with his elder brother, Aaron, (who was perhaps more eloquent than Moses) and shows numerous miracles before the Pharaoh. Ultimately the Pharaoh was compelled to release the Jewish

people.

He wanders for forty years in the wilderness with his numerous people but is fed by heavenly manna and honey due to Lord's grace. During the early part of this period, he again goes up to Mount Sinai. He prepares two stone tablets under the instructions of the Lord. (Where the Ten Commandments were again written down by the Lord or, at times by Moses himself as the first tablet was already broken). He remains on the Mount for forty days and nights without eating or drinking (cf. Jesus also remains in the wilderness for forty days in a fasting state as the Satan tempts him. Muhammad becomes a prophet at the age of forty).

When Moses comes down, his face radiated brilliance; He was, however, oblivious of the same. He had to cover it with a veil before confronting his people as they were scared of this brilliance³¹. The Ten Commandments are found in the Exodus as also in the Deuteronomy. Such repetition has neither been properly explained nor understood by Biblical scholars. Moses died at the ripe old age of one hundred twenty years even 'though his eyesight had not dimmed nor his strength diminished'. He was called to Moab at the behest of the Lord, where he breathed his last. His grave has not so far been found out. He seems to have been a contemporary of Ramses II, but there is no reference to this name in the scripture nor is there any reference to this name in the massive Pyramids. Moses is often placed at about 1200 B.C.

One general impression formed, after going through these scriptural accounts, is that they were written down by someone other than Moses or even Aaron. If Moses wrote it down himself why is he always mentioned in the third person? How could he write that he was dead? Scholars, therefore, believe that his teachings or the laws given by him were transmitted orally before being finally put down in writing – perhaps during the days of David and Solomon and thereafter. The belief that it was the 'Word of God' coming straight from Him is, at best, a devout belief [And a belief is always beyond the ken of questioning].

D. THE NEW TESTAMENT

The core of the New Testament is the four well known Gospels. These nowhere mention that Jesus was born at mid-night of December 24/25. Yet this date is celebrated throughout the Christian world as his birthday. The only mention is a star which the Magi, from the east, saw after Jesus was born during the reign of Herod [Mathew]. In Luke, there is no mention of the Magi or the star; only shepherds, keeping watch over their flocks in the night, see an angel of the Lord. The angel informs them about the birth of a savior. The shepherds then hurry and found Mary and Joseph and the baby who was lying in the manger. In Mark and John, the birth episode has been skipped over. John philosophically says: 'The word was made flesh' but is not explicit as to where and when the word was made into flesh i.e. became physically apparent. There is nothing about 'virgin birth' or about 'immaculate conception'. We have seen earlier Isaiah prophesying 'the virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.'

The year of birth is again ambiguous. He was born during Herod's life time but Herod died in 4 B.C. Herod had ordered that all male children (of Jews?) of two years or less were to be killed³². Joseph and Mary escaped with baby Jesus to Egypt to avoid such a calamity. They return to Nazareth after Herod was dead; his son was then ruling over the Jews.

A star is mentioned in the Gospels. Could it be Halley's Comet of 12 B.C? The Chinese astronomical records show that a supernova explosion seems to have occurred in 5 B.C, when Herod was still alive. Jupiter along with Venus arose together in 3 B.C but by then Herod had died. So what was that star? The matter is, thus, only conjectural. Such an important event in the history of mankind remains shrouded in ambiguity even though popular belief of the faithful and others is the mid-night of Christmas.

Christ's life is also very sketchily known. We know about his visit to the Temple when he was twelve years old. The boy gets separated from his parents but later he is found engaged in

discussion with the Temple priests regarding the Jewish scriptures. He presumably knew every bit of those scriptures or how could he discuss such things with the well-read priests³³? Between his birth and the Temple incident nothing particular is known; for instance, about his education? The Gospels are mute-no help from their side.

Next we find him being baptized by John-the Baptist. John was slightly senior, perhaps only nominally so. Baptism was a Jewish custom; circumcision is also a Jewish custom which was later taken up by the Muslims. John used to baptize with the holy waters of Jordan. His theme was 'Repent for the kingdom of heaven is near'. 'Also I baptize you with water, but after me will come one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not fit to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire' [Mathew, NIV]³⁴.

John, initially, objects as he felt 'he was not fit to unloose the latchet of His shoes' but Jesus says 'Suffer it to be so'. John baptizes with Jordan's holy water. It was an old custom which he was following because 'I have come not to destroy but to fulfill.' *Guru-shishya-parampara* (teacher-disciple continuity) is one such hallowed custom among the Hindus. All great spiritual personalities of India [e.g. Shri Rama, Shri Krishna, the Buddha, Shankaracharya, Shri Chaitanya and Shri Ramakrishna Paramahansa) have followed this principle. It is like lighting one lamp from the other [which is symbolically performed in Catholic churches even today]. In the classical Indian music or dance or martial arts such a system is *sin-qua-non*. Anyone who has done something worthwhile in such arts is always a product of a *gharana* (in house schooling) system.

After baptism, Jesus goes into wilderness, fasts for forty days during which the Satan tempts him (cf. Siddhartha Gautama being tempted by Mara). How much time elapsed between the Temple episode and baptism? It is generally believed that eighteen years passed between these two episodes. It would mean that Jesus was around thirty years when he was baptized. The Sermon on the Mount was also delivered around that time.

The Lost Years

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What was Jesus doing or where was he during these eighteen years? The Bible does not throw any light on such an issue! In the Ladakh region of Jammu and Kashmir (India), there is a Buddhist monastery called Hemis Gumpha. Here only monks reside. It is arduous to go there. A Russian traveler, Nicolas Notovitch, visited India around in 1887, after passing through the Balkan, the Caucasus and Central Asia. This was just after the Turkish war of 1877-78. His main purpose was to study the Indian people, their culture and heritage. He also wanted to visit Tibet, till then a mysterious land. Being a Russian, he was suspect in the eyes of the British authorities. He came to Leh (capital of Ladakh) so as to give the impression that he was leaving India. He had a nasty fall from the horse back and broke one of his legs. He went back to the Gumpha for medical care. The head lama of the monastery was favorably inclined towards Nicolas and acceded to his request of showing him the manuscripts containing the life of Jesus in India. The manuscripts were in the Tibetan language. With the help of an interpreter, the matter was translated into English. It was then transferred to his note book. The original manuscript in Pali was preserved in a monastery at Lhasa.

It is believed that the Pali version was written immediately after the momentous crucifixion event. The Tibetan narration refers Jesus as Issa while Moses is called Mossa. Jesus was nearing thirteen when he mingled with some trade caravan coming to India. He entered the country via the Sind route. He went to Rajputana, now Rajasthan, and then to Jaganath Puri (Orissa). Westerners have been calling it Joggernaut. Notovitch also refers to it as such. Issa learnt Sanskrit and Pali and studied the Hindu and the Buddhist scriptures. He seems to have been impressed by the Buddha's teachings.

It is also stated that Saint Issa (that is how he is referred to in the Hemis scrolls) started denouncing the rigid caste system of the then India. He preached among the *shudras* (the labor class) and the *Vaisyas* (the business class). This was resented by the Brahmins and the Kshatriyas. Issa then moved over to Varanasi - a renowned centre of Sanskrit learning. The Buddha also started his

sermons from there. Then Issa went to Nepal and to Kashmir. He encountered opposition as he denounced caste barriers and idol worship. From Kashmir he seems to have gone to Persia where Zoroaster was criticized by Issa. Finally he reached Jerusalem when he was around 29-30 years old. At this stage we again meet him in the Gospels.

The teachings of Issa in the Hemis scrolls and those in the Gospels are basically same excepting that Christianity emphasizes upon 'virgin birth'; he being 'the only begotten son of God' and his 'Resurrection three days after his physical death upon the cross'. The Hemis scrolls do not mention about these three beliefs. It, on the other hand, lays strong emphasis on the theme of an Indivisible Eternal Spirit (or God) manifesting Himself in a human form as a Buddha in successive times. Innumerable such Buddhas have appeared in the past and innumerable of them are yet come. In historical times, according to Notovitch book, the first to appear was Sakya Muni, about 3000 years back. Then came Gautama the Buddha about 2500 years back. The Eternal Spirit again manifested Himself as Issa to show mankind the Right Path. He was the new Buddha.

From the Pali canonical literature, one knows that Sakya Muni and Gautama Buddha are one and the same person as the latter was born in a Sakya clan. The Hemis scroll, thus, makes a fundamental departure from the Tripitaka. Secondly, one also knows that the Buddha never preached about an Eternal Spirit nor about the same incarnating Himself from time to time. He preached about the Four Noble Truths, the Eight Fold Path and Nirvana. He said that 'All is transitory' (सर्वअनित्यं). We have dealt with, at some length, in our discussion of Buddhism about these issues. The Eternal Spirit manifesting Himself, from time to time, or from age to age, is a special doctrine first fully enunciated in the Geeta and then in the Puranas. In the Upanishads, the idea is only in a seed form. The Hemis manuscript, as presented by Notovitch, therefore, makes a fundamental departure from the Buddhist canonical literature as well as from the orthodox Christian belief. It leans more towards the Hindu viewpoint.

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Notovitch is cured of his fracture and departs to Russia. He wanted to publish his discovery but almost everyone he asked dissuaded him from doing so because that would offend the official Christian standpoint. He then, contacted a Cardinal of Rome supposed to be near the Pope; but he also advised him not to publish his work. Cardinal Rotelli of Paris also didn't favor the idea of publication. After a few years, Notovitch published his book under the title '*The Unknown Life of Jesus Christ*' (1894).

This elicited immediate notice from none other than Max Mueller. He questioned Notovitch's supposed expedition to Hemis. He was instrumental in sending Prof. J. A. Douglas of Agra to Hemis so as to enquire about the manuscript. Douglas met the chief Lama who completely denied the existence of any such material. Then Fr. B. Shawe of the Moravian missionary went to Hemis. Needless to say, Shawe also got a negative answer. The reasons are not difficult to fathom. The British authorities were very suspicious about any other European presence in India, particularly of the Russians due to geopolitical considerations. (Anglo-American authorities were then and even now, are very touchy about the Russian presence in many areas). The Joint Commissioner of the Kashmir region, thus, asked the Hemis monastery to clarify:

- Whether the lamas had violated the order to inform the authorities regarding any injury/sickness of a western visitor and to bring him to Leh for proper medication;
- Whether the lamas had assisted any Russian traveler or not.

The lamas, obviously, wouldn't risk British displeasure. The easiest way was to deny any such incident and the existence of any such document. Hence Notovitch book was shown as pure concoction. Soon it went into oblivion.

The matter remained in hibernation for a number of years but such things have dynamism of their own. They tend to crop up again and again. In 1922 Swami Abhedananda - a brother monk of Swami Vivekananda - took interest in Notovitch narration and

decided to visit Hemis.

He wanted to see for himself if any such document existed. Being a Hindu monk and a non-political person, he gained the confidence of the lamas. They agreed to show him the manuscript which Notovitch had seen. Abhedananda had taken with him an expert interpreter from Leh. He could thus understand the contents of the scroll. He had no hesitation in supporting Notovitch. Abhedananda later published his findings in Bengali under the caption '*Kashmir-O-Tibbate*'. The English version of the same has now been published by Ramakrishna Vivekananda Math, Vedanta Press, Hollywood, C.A. 1987.

Other visitors to Hemis were Elizabeth Caspari (1939), Edward. F. Noack and Robert Ravicz - the last named was a professor in California State University, Northridge. He visited Hemis as late as 1957. J. L. Nehru, in his Letters to his Daughter-Indira- had also alluded to Jesus having gone to Kashmir, Ladakh, Tibet and even farther North. People of these places believe that Jesus/Isa travelled to these places. Nicolas Roerich- a famous Russian painter who made Himalayas his abode - also visited Hemis (1975).

More recently Holger Kersten - a German scholar - researched on Christ's life before and after his crucifixion. His work was based upon Notovitch's work as also other sources. His book '*Jesus Lived in India*' was published in 1986 and then in 1994. The Penguin edition came in 2001. Holger asserts 'It is not possible to disprove that Christ went to India'. Ramesh Manocha and Anna Potts, who have reviewed the book write: '*This German book is a thorough, methodical and authoritative examination of the evidence of Christ's life beyond the Middle East before crucifixion and in India and elsewhere after it*' (From [hppt://www.sol.com.au/kor/7](http://www.sol.com.au/kor/7)).

In *Bhavisya Mahapurana* (verses 18-33) of the *Khanda of Pratisarga Parvan* one reads ".....One day Shalivahan, the chief of Sakyas, went up to the Himalayas. There in the land of Huns (Ladakh - a part of Kusan empire), the powerful king saw a man sitting on a mountain, who seemed to promise auspiciousness. His skin was fair and he wore white garments" This account is

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supposed to refer to Issa.

In Afghanistan, Jesus is pronounced as Juz Asaf. Mulla Nadiri (1413), a Muslim historian, described a stone monument near Srinagar, Kashmir, bearing the inscription:

'At this time Yuz Asaf proclaimed his prophet hood. Year fifty and four [in the rein of Gopadutta] and He is Jesus, Prophet of the children of Israel.'

It is not understandable why someone should put up a Jesus like figure in Bhavisya Purana in the first century A.D. and that too in Sanskrit or why should there be an inscription referring to Juz Asaf. In the Islamic history there is no prophet with the name Juz Asaf. Issa, of course, is recognized as a genuine prophet of God appearing prior to Prophet Muhammad. O. M. Burke has reported that in the city of Herat (Afghanistan) he has come across about a thousand people who were the devotees of Juz Asaf. In Fatehpur Sikri, near Agra, there is an inscription on the wall of the fort which reads:

'So said Jesus on whom be peace! The world is a bridge; pass over it; build no houses upon it.'

On the road from Rawalpindi to Kashmir, there is a hill station called Muree. There one finds a tomb of Mary on a hill top just outside the town. The grave is called *Mai Mari da Asthan* (Mother Mary's place). The tomb faces E-W direction as is found in the Jewish tradition rather than N-S direction of the Islamic tradition (www.tiresearch.info/legends).

Fida Hasnain (1994) has tried to pinpoint the historic Jesus apart from a purely religious 'Son of God' envisaged by the orthodox Biblical school. The Testament's silence regarding Jesus for a long period of eighteen years or so would strongly suggest that he was, at least, not in Israel for all these years. The balance of evidence, from all sources, would tend to justify the conclusion that he must have travelled to other countries, most likely India, because that was, in those days, a centre of spiritual-yogic pursuit. The Buddha had, only a few centuries back, unleashed a spiritual

revolution which we know as turning the 'Wheel of Law' (Dharma Chakra Pravartana). Jesus only came to give further push to the process. May be he was a new Buddha promised in the holy books of Buddhism.

On the basis of the famous painting 'The Last Supper', a different sequence has lately been presented catching the imagination of many. Till further proof is provided, suspended judgment is more desirable. Jesus was a person of very high spiritual nature, far removed from the pursuit of physical procreation or sense enjoyment. It is, indeed, most improbable that he would have succumbed to feminine seductions or to leave behind him physical trail.

Jesus seems to have preached for about three to four years but nothing is there in the Gospels about the same. At what age his crucifixion took place? The entire New Testament is, again, silent on such a momentous event! Any contemporary writer should have had the historical perspective to record such an epoch making occasion which was going to shape the world for the succeeding centuries. But again there is no indication, whatsoever, in the New Testament except of the mention of a 'darkness come all over the land.' [Mathew]. In Luke and Mark the appearance of darkness from the sixth to the ninth hour is also mentioned.

Why this 'darkens at noon'? Was it a total solar eclipse? One can only conjecture. A common belief is that Jesus was crucified on a Friday in the month of March-April. This is now observed as Good Friday by the faithful. Thus the age at which Jesus departed from this world is purely conjectural!

The 'resurrection' on the following Monday is again a matter of belief. No comments on a belief. Was it a physical or a spiritual resurrection? The Gnostic sects of Christianity held that it was a spiritual resurrection – not physical. The Muslims hold that a phantom was put on the cross, as according to their belief, no messiah of the Almighty can come to such an end. They do believe that Jesus was a messiah but not the 'Son of God.'

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The conclusion is, thus, inevitable that the New Testament, though only a recent phenomenon as compared to the Vedas, the Avesta, the Old Testament, the Tripitaka or the Geeta, is punctuated by severe problems.

Jesus lived during the Roman rule whose history is well documented. He is mentioned only in the writings of Josephus Flavus (this is a Romanized name; his original name was Joseph Ben Mathias as he was of Jewish origin). He took such a name so as to avoid the persecutions by the Romans. All the four Gospels began as oral tradition as Christ's followers had to meet in secrecy due to the dual fear of the Jewish authorities and the Roman rulers. It is believed that St. Paul's letters began to be collected around 100 A.D. After about a hundred years bound volumes on leather or papyrus started appearing, again secretly. The present forms of the sayings of Jesus were the edited ones. This is the conclusion of the investigators of the Biblical lore. The sayings were collected from different sources.

Jesus was not considered a potential threat to the mighty Roman Empire. When the Pharisees wanted to trap him, they pointedly asked:

'.....Is it proper to pay taxes to Caesar or not?' He knew their evil intentions and replied:

'Give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's'.
[Mathew]

The contemporary historians and the Roman officialdom didn't take much note of him. He was, at best, considered a God intoxicated man who was calling his fellow Jews to the path of rectitude and to God. What was the harm in that? It was but an internal matter of the Jews. One recollects that Pontius Pilate considered him innocent. He washed off his hands saying '*I am innocent of this man's blood. It is your responsibility'.* [Mathew]

But for the Jewish hierarchy of priests, he was neither a 'Son of Man' much less 'The only Son of God'. He was a threat to their vested interests. They kept the ordinary Jewish people under truck-

load of oppressive laws, rules and taxes. They made the Temple a place for money changing, as Jesus had so severely observed³⁵. The Jewish priests, thus, thought it advisable to do away with this greatest of all Jews on a flimsy but grave charge of 'blasphemy'. This could be the greatest charge against a Jew after the charge of rebellion against the Roman Caesar.

The Gnostic Gospels

The recent discovery of Gnostic Gospels [Pagels, 1979] in Nag Hammadi of Egypt has added further problems to the 'Four Gospels'. This discovery was as accidental as the 'Dead Sea Scrolls'. Muhammad Ali-al-Samman, a peasant by profession, went to dig some soft soil of the Nile. He wanted to fertilize his crops. While digging, he came across, almost a meter high, earthen jar. He was astonished. Initially he was afraid that it might contain some jinn (ghost). But it could also contain some valuable treasure. He was in double mind but ultimately decided to break it open. To his utter surprise he found thirteen leather bound volumes and some loose papyri. He brought all of these to his residence. His mother, being more ignorant than he, burnt some of the loose papyri to ignite her oven. Fortunately all the leather volumes were intact.

Now, Muhammad Ali was involved in a revenge murder of a fellow Egyptian who himself had murdered the former's father. The local police was on the trail of the murderer. Fearing a raid on his house, Muhammad Ali hid the volumes with a local friend. Later all the thirteen volumes were sold in black market to a Cairo antique dealer. Such things do not remain hidden. Cairo officials purchased one volume from the dealer and later confiscated ten and half other volumes. These were deposited with the Cairo Museum. However the thirteenth volume, containing five texts, was smuggled out of Egypt to America. Professor Quispel of Netherlands could get hold of this thirteenth volume. He also went to the Cairo Museum in 1955 and could get some photographic reproduction of other texts.

Gospel of Thomas, in fragmentary condition, was earlier discovered in 1890. It was written in Greek. Later it was deciphered

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by some French scholars. Now Quispel, with the help of the earlier work, could understand what was written in the Nag Hammadi volumes. These were written in the Coptic language. Often these texts are called codices. There were some fifty texts of which one was the Gospel of Thomas. There were others e.g. Gospel of Truth, Gospel of Phillips, Gospel of Egyptians etc.

For quite some time such a sensational discovery didn't get necessary world attention due to intra-scholarly rivalry. Elaine Pagels, after considerable research on the subject, including one visit to the Cairo Museum, produced a landmark study - 'The Gnostic Gospels' (1979, 1989). The work was given recognition by the National Book Award and the National Book Critics Circle Award. This brought to focus the role of Gnosticism in Christianity vis-à-vis the role of the traditional four Gospels believed by the faithful as the only 'true Word of God'.

The Hammadi texts have thrown open a number of questions: Who was this Thomas who wrote the 'Gospel of Thomas'? Was he the same Thomas who is supposed to have visited the Kerala coast and made known the message of Jesus Christ? Was he the well known 'Doubting Thomas'? Was he a twin of Jesus? Why were the Gnostic Gospels suppressed as heresies? Why were these brought to Egypt and hidden in the deserts? What was the influence of Hinduism and Buddhism on the Hellenic Gnosticism and then on the Christian Gnostics?

Pokoke, in his book 'India in Greece' (quoted from Umesh Chandra's 'The Original Abode of Mankind') wrote: '*The primitive history of Greece is the primitive history of India*'. (p30) Again '*A considerable portion of this people was of Buddhistic faith*'. (p 238)

Edward Conze, a British scholar of Buddhism, has pointed out: "Buddhists were in contact with the Thomas Christians (that is Christians who knew and used such writings as the Gospel of Thomas) in South India" (from Pagels - Introduction p xxi). Pagels further notes that Hippolytus, who was a Greek speaking Christian of Rome (c 225) knew about Indian Brahmins. She quotes Hippolytus:

'There is among the Indians a heresy of those who philosophize among the Brahmins, who live a self sufficient life abstaining from (eating) living creatures and all cooked food.They say that God is light not like the light one sees, not like the which sun nor fire, but to them God is discourse, not that which finds expression in articulate sounds, but that of knowledge (gnosis) through which the secret mysteries of nature are perceived by the wise'. (ibid p xxi)

She asks 'could the title of the Gospel of Thomas - named for the disciple who, tradition tells us, went to India - suggest the influence of Indian tradition?'

We have already mentioned the possible visit of Jesus to India during the eighteen years of his unknown life.

As mentioned earlier 'Gnosis' (knowledge or mystic knowledge) is similar to Sanskrit *Jnanam* [ज्ञानं which also means knowledge). In the Geeta, as also in all sacred literature of the Hindus [e.g., the Veda, the Upanishads, the Puranas] *Jnanam* (knowledge) has always been talked about in superlative terms.

For instance the Geeta says:

'There is nothing so purifying in this world as knowledge'.....³⁶ 'The learned call them wise who have burnt up all their karmas [accumulated effect of the actions] by the fire of knowledge.'³⁷

The Veda says:

'Without knowledge of Truth there is no liberation [Salvation]'³⁸

'Through Knowledge one attains to Immortality'³⁹

In the Bible one finds:

'And Truth shall set you free'

The Greeks had 'Gnostic sects' who believed that the sensible

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world was created by a lesser god who rebelled against Sophia [Divine Wisdom] .The early Christianity was also sharply divided into the path of gnosis (knowledge) and the path of pistic (faith).

The Hammadi texts have brought into open the Gnostic aspect of Christ's teachings. This aspect was, somehow, deeply frowned upon by early Christian fathers. Bishop Irenaeus [c180 A.D], for instance, calls the Gospel of Truth as blasphemous. By the time of Constantine [312-337 A.D], Christianity had become the state religion of the Romans. The Church and its fathers wielded enormous powers. It had by that time, adopted the four Gospels as official. St. Paul's interpretation of Jesus became the central teaching of the New Testament. The charge of blasphemy could now lead to social ostracism or even to death. What the Jewish hierarchy did to Jesus or to his disciples was now being repeated by the church hierarchy The 'Gnostic gospels' were, most likely, taken away from the Christian dominated areas to far off Egyptian deserts and buried there with the hope that some succeeding generations would be able to get hold of the same and would then be able to understand Christ's message in a fuller sense.

Summarizing the discussion, it would be fair to assume that the authorship of the officially sponsored four Gospels is not what has been propagated so far; it bears the stamp of St. Paul everywhere. Even St. Peter, closest of all of the apostles of Jesus, has been relegated to an obscure region. It is no wonder then that Christianity has often been labeled as Pauline Christianity. It can also be safely said that the words therein are not the 'only word of God' and the path 'the only path of human salvation'.

Ramakrishna Paramahansa, as is well known, repeatedly taught that God can be realized by many paths. His dictum was '*as many systems, so many paths*'⁴⁰.He is the only known saint who practiced, in his own life, different paths, all the known systems of Hinduism, Islam and Christianity. After this he came to the above conclusion. Ramakrishna had a wonderful experience of Jesus Christ. He once visited the garden house of one Jadu Mullick, adjacent to the Dakshineswar temple. There he saw a beautiful

picture of the Madonna and the Child. He was looking intently at the picture when he felt as if the picture was becoming alive. Rays of light emanated from the picture and entered into his being. In the words of Romain Rolland:

"It covered his entire soul, breaking down all barriers. Hindu ideas were swept away. In terror Ramakrishna cried out, 'Oh! Mother what are you doing? Help me!' It was in vain. The tidal race swept everything before it. The Spirit of the Hindu was changed. He had no room for anything but Christ" [p50]⁴¹ Rolland further writes:

"Then one afternoon, in the grove of Dakshineswar he saw coming towards him a person with beautiful large eyes, a serene regard and a fair skin. Although he did not know who it was, he succumbed to the charm of his unknown guest. He drew near and a voice sang in the depths of Ramakrishna's soul:

'Behold the Christ, who shed his heart's blood for the redemption of the world, who suffered a sea of anguish for the love of man. It is He the master Yogi, who is in eternal union with God. It is Jesus, Love incarnate'. [ibid p 50]

E. ISLAM

Islam is a major religion of the world whose followers, more than a billion, are mainly spread out in the Middle-East, parts of North Africa, and some isolated pockets of Europe, some other parts of Asia as far as Sinkiang, Malaysia, Indonesia, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Bangladesh, The last two are almost entirely Islamic born out of an undivided India. Present political India also has a sizeable Muslim population (about 150 - 200 million).

The religion originated in Arabia. Abraham or Ibrahim had two sons. The elder-Ishmael, born out of Haagar (or Hagra) -was banished to Arabia along with his mother. From Ishmael, the Arabic tribes are supposed to have originated while Isaac (or Ishaq) was the originator of the twelve Jewish tribes through his son Jacob (or Yaqub). Thus the prophets of Judaism and Islam are common along

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with those of Christianity. The Jewish faith centered round Moses; those of Christians around Jesus Christ and Moslems around Muhammad. They are all called Semitic religions. But strangely, all these three are at loggerheads with one another. Judaism was never, nor is even now, proselytizing. But its two offshoots are strongly so. May be, this is one of the many reasons of their perpetual conflict. History bears testimony to this.

Islam holds that Koran is the latest revelation of the Almighty whom it calls Allah (Al-Elahi). Prophet Muhammad is the final messenger of Allah. In Arabic he is called *Nabi* or *Rasul*. With Prophet Muhammad, *nabi hood* (or *nabubat*) is believed to have come to an end - at least for this cycle of creation.

Muhammad was born in 670 A.D. in a, rather, ordinary family of an Arabic tribe and was orphaned at a very early age. His father, Abdullah, died leaving him and his mother, Aminah, to the care of his uncle, Abu Talib. He was brought up by him. He got married to a wealthy widow- Khadija begum - at the age of 25. She bore him six children. Fatima, a daughter, survived. Later Fatima was married to Ali. Muhammad was engaged in the flourishing business of his wife; he was truthful and trustworthy so as to earn the laudatory epithet of al-Amin. But basically he was of a contemplative nature. He would, often, go to a cave of mount Heera, near the city of Mecca, and ponder over the problems of the then Arabic society. Mecca was inhabited by rich businessmen of the Quraish tribe as well as by poor people. Long back, it is said, the shrine of Kaaba was established by none other than prophet Ibrahim and Ishmael. It is dedicated to God Almighty. But due to the passage of time it had become abode of many gods and goddesses. The tribes of Arabia would venerate Kaaba along with other deities. Polytheism was obviously rampant at that time in the Meccan society. Undercurrents of tension between tribes often resulted in violent manifestation. These deeply affected the sensitive persona of Hazrat Muhammad.

It is narrated that during one occasion, on the Mount of Heera, Hazrat Muhammad, perhaps, fell into reverie. Gabriel (or Jibrael) an important angel of Allah, came in a human form to Muhammad. He

insisted that Muhammad should recite what was being said to him. Muhammad resisted saying that he didn't know reading or writing. But Gabriel was so very insistent that Muhammad felt compelled to recite, in Arabic, the first *ayat* of Koran:

'Recite in the name of the Lord who createth

Man from a clot

Recite: And thy Lord is the Most Bounteous who teacheth by the pen

Teacheth man that which he knew not'.

The literal meaning of Koran is Recitation. Muhammad would have ended his life due to such an overwhelming visitation of Gabriel but again the said angel saved him from doing so. From that day Muhammad became a prophet of Allah. Hence Moslems always declare:

'Allah-o-Akbar' (Allah is the supreme)

'Muhammad Rasul Allah' (Muhammad is the messenger of Allah)

Thus from an ordinary person engaged in his day-to-day business, he became a Prophet of the Almighty God. Initially he was reluctant to convert people into this new faith called Islam. This means total submission to the will of Allah. Only his very close friends and relatives became his converts. The distinction of being the *numero uno* goes to his wife Khadija begum. Slowly he came out in the open and wanted the people to put their faith into the new revelation. A Moslem would thus, be a person who has full faith in Allah, in Prophet Muhammad and in Koran.

His own clansmen, the Bani Hashims and the influential Qurraish, were rather reluctant to accept him as a new Prophet of the Almighty. He was to them, the son of Abdullah and Aminah giving credence to the saying that ' a prophet is not honored in his own country' The Qurraish were more hostile to this new religion being propounded in their own homeland. They pressurized the

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Prophet and his followers. But the new Prophet won't bend; neither his followers would desert him. People from Yathrib, later renamed al-Madina, came to meet the Prophet. Some were impressed by his convictions and invited him along with his small band of followers to come to Madina, settle there peacefully and to preach his new religion.

Prophet Muhammad had to flee from Mecca to avoid being assassinated by the hostile tribes. This fleeing (or Hejira) from Mecca to Madina is the starting point of the Islamic calendar. It neither starts with the Prophet's birth nor with the very important day of Koranic revelation during the days of Ramadan (or Ramzan). These days are considered holy - Ramadan being the holiest month of fasting when Moslems fast, pray and ordained to behave with rectitude. Madina had a mixed population of Jews, Christians and others. The people over there were not hostile to the Prophet. Many got converted to the new religion. Madina was his new home. Many Koranic *ayats* were revealed there. These revelations were spread out over twenty two years, starting at Mecca in 610 A.D. Scholars of Islamic religion and history have discovered that the *ayats* revealed at Mecca and at Madina have different flavors - one more spiritual while the other pragmatic. The Prophet passed away in 632 A.D. when he was only 62 years old.

With his adversaries the Prophet had to fight many battles. The battle of Badr was a decisive one where with a small force he defeated a much larger Meccan force. He was then given the right to perform Haj pilgrimage along with his followers. Finally a day came when Prophet Muhammad could enter Mecca triumphantly with his dedicated Islamic followers. He abhorred idol worship and ordered the destruction of all idols in the shrine of Kaaba. Only the black stone symbolizing Almighty Allah was left in the shrine. One recalls that prophet Abraham, much earlier, had also broken all idols to prove that they are powerless to defend themselves. How, then, could they defend their worshippers? Judaism and Islam are alike as they both abhor idol worship. Throughout its history, Islamic conquerors had made it a point to destroy temples or its idols.

Kaaba is held in the highest esteem. All Haj pilgrimage is centered around this venerated shrine. A pillar, supposed to represent the Satan, is stoned during the pilgrimage. Likewise, in the days of Moses and Aaron, the tabernacle containing the stone tablet of the Ten Commandments, was worshipped as holy of holies. The Temple built by David and Solomon was the centre of Jewish pilgrimage till the time of Jesus. Even now the place is considered hallowed by all people of Semitic origin. The question boils down to: can man as he is constituted, do away with symbolism? Why countries venerate their flags and are ready to lay down their lives for its sake? After all a flag is a piece of cloth but is venerated because it symbolizes a whole nation or a state.

The sanctity of the Temple mound of Jerusalem can be gauged by the fact that, initially, Prophet Muhammad used to turn his face (*quibla*) towards Jerusalem when doing his *namaz* (prayer). But during one such occasion he was ordained to turn his *quibla* towards Mecca. During the fabled night journey (*Isra*) on the mythical animal, *Buraq*, the Prophet is believed to have gone from Mecca to Jerusalem Temple mound. Thereafter he is believed to have ascended (*miraaj*), successively, to different heavens till he reached the seventh heaven. He is believed to have come, face to face, with Almighty Allah — perhaps hidden beneath a veil. The famed Golden Dome mosque or Al-Aqsa mosque stands on the hallowed temple mound of Jerusalem from where the Prophet is believed to have ascended towards the heaven. On the way, he met such great earlier prophets as Moses etc. Thus Al-Aqsa is held in very high esteem only next to Kaaba and Madina by the faithful. Jerusalem is still a great centre of pilgrimage for the Jews, the Christians and the Moslems. But the tragic part of the story is that there is perpetual violence in this land of prophets.

After the Prophet changed his *quibla* from Jerusalem to Mecca, his followers also changed their *quibla*. Now all Moslems turn their faces towards Mecca while offering their *namaz*. The dead are buried in N-S direction with their faces turned towards Mecca. Interestingly, the Hindus have, from time immemorial, been putting

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their dead person's head towards the North. While alive, they are prohibited to lie with their head in the northerly direction. The legend of Lord Ganesha is associated with this practice. The human head is considered by the Hindus as its north. Is it also not strange that the geographical north is always pointed in an upward direction? Has it anything to do with the concept of human head to be the north? Has all these practices something to do with the Earth's magnetic field?

Five primary duties are a must for all Moslems. They are: *Iman*, *Namaz*, *Roza*, *Zakat* and *Haj*.

1. *Iman* is full faith in Allah, His final Prophet and His final revelation - Koran.
2. *Namaz* is prayer, in a prescribed manner; at least, five times a day. This number was a concession allowed by the Almighty Allah at the intercession of Moses.
3. *Roza* is fasting, moderation and rectitude during the holy month of Ramadan (generally pronounced as Ramzan (e.g. even as Dhyana of Buddhism has become Zen). During this holy month, Koran was first revealed unto the Prophet.
4. *Zakat* is basically sharing ones earning or wealth with the poor, the needy and the orphans. Zakat may be in cash or in kind. This was the Prophet's dispensation so that the wealth of the individual or the society may be more equitably distributed.
5. *Haj* pilgrimage was an ancient Arabic practice around the shrine of Kaaba even before Islam, as a religion, was revealed to the Prophet. It is believed that Abraham or Ibrahim established the shrine in the prehistoric past. Prophet Muhammad gave a great push to Haj by participating in this practice. All Moslems cherish to visit Mecca, at least, once in their life time. This is contingent upon the finances available to the faithful. To perform Haj one has to incur huge expenses especially if one comes

from another country. Yet hundreds of thousands annually, perform this rite in the valley of Mecca. Only a Moslem can enter Mecca as it is considered a holy city by the faithful.

The Koranic revelations, spread over twenty two years, couldn't have been written down by the Prophet as he didn't know reading or writing. Some of the letters written by him to the neighboring rulers didn't bear his signature but his palm-print. But Allah, in His wisdom, chose a person who was not formally educated, to reveal Koran instead to the learned men of the times. Almost a similar situation is found in case of Ramakrishna Paramahansa. He was also not formally educated but out of his lips came such wisdom which confounded the learned and the wise of the nineteenth century Bengal. Some of the finest minds sat at his feet to learn about the ancient wisdom of the Upanishads. Many who 'came to scoff remained to pray'. Simplicity of his parables reminds one to those of the New Testament.

The Prophet, at the time of revelation, would cover himself with a shroud and would enter into an extra-ordinary state of consciousness. Only then the *ayats* came unto him. The time and place of such revelation was not fixed.

Hence his companions had to be alert either to memorize or to write them down on whatever material that was at hand. Paper was not yet invented, at least in Arabia nor was papyrus present there. Hence *ayats* were written down on dried bladder, leather or stone. This matter is, thus, of devout belief.

Immediately after the Prophet's passing away there was some confusion among the followers as to who would lead them. Abu-Baker was made the first Khalifa (Caliph). He was a father-in-law of the Prophet. Abu Baker was a seasoned leader – both in administrative and military matters and with him started the Islamic expansion. But his reign was rather short. He was succeeded by Omar as the second Khalifa. Then came Uthman or Osman and finally Ali - Prophet's son-in-law- became the fourth Khalifa. Under the gifted leadership of Omar and Uthman, Islamic expansion continued. Iran and Egypt came under the Islamic banner. They

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also undertook the onerous and responsible task of compiling the Koran Sharif. The assorted *ayats* were collected, collated, prepared chapter wise, in a book form. This appeared, according to scholars, almost two and a half decades after the passing away of the Prophet. Such a rendering had the official approval of the reigning Khalifas. All other rendering, not in accordance with the official version, were eliminated. That version has come down to the present day, in an uncorrupted form - both in terms of its text or its manner of recitation. The faithful were encouraged to memorize and to recite the entire text in the prescribed form. Thus from a tradition has arisen the written-cum-oral version that is believed by the faithful as the final word of Allah both for their temporal and religious guidance.

Moslem religious schools or madras's started developing. Side by side calligraphy developed in the Islamic countries. Interpretations on the Holy Book also started appearing. Different schools, within the system, evolved. After Ali's passing away, Islam saw two main sects: the Sunnis and the Shias. The Prophet's grandson, Imam Hussein, died under very tragic circumstances at Karbala, now in Iraq. The Shias, ever since, deeply mourn the tragic demise of Hussein. Deep distrust between the two sects persist often finding violent manifestation.

Koran declares that the Almighty has sent his messengers to all nations (Kaum). The number of such messengers are enormous (124,000?). God's guidance has thus been delivered to all people so that they may tread the path of rectitude. The Holy Book also says that in matters of faith (*deen*), there is no scope of compulsion. It is, then, not fathomable why other people not speaking Arabic or not following Koranic injunctions be deemed infidels (*Kafirs*). This term has originated from Arabic *Kufr* which means denial. Why should a non-muslim be, then, considered a kafir? It, therefore, appears to this writer that the Holy Book's intention is not to consider other people as *kafirs*. A confusion regarding the meaning of this word has caused immense damage.

Jihad or holy war is another term which deserves close

attention. Originally it meant a Moslem's right of self defense in case of individual or collective aggression against his faith. This is perfectly understandable as Moslems were then surrounded by aggressive tribes bent upon their destruction or their faith or their way of life. But somehow, its connotation has now enormously changed so as to mean 'waging war against non-believers'. This is all the more difficult to understand because the Holy Book says that to kill one person unjustly is equivalent to killing of the entire humanity. After all life is a priceless gift of the Almighty which he alone is capable of giving. To destroy others thoughtlessly or to annihilate someone is an unpardonable sin in the universal scheme of things. The merit of Islam was that in matters of religion it abolished the distinction between the high and the low. The social background or the vocations were of no consequence before the Faith. All were equally entitled to pray in the same mosque. It was due to such a sense of religious equality that Vivekananda envisaged an ideal society having an Islamic body with a Hindu mind. During their pilgrimage in Mecca or elsewhere the prince and the commoner come together. The sanctum sanctorum at Kaaba is open to all Islamic people. Islam does not like religious privileges. It tries to foster brotherhood among its followers. The Prophet, in his system, tried to avoid the intercession of priests or mullahs between man and his God. In his system, a man is left alone to say his prayers to the Almighty even though congregational prayers were encouraged. But somehow priests have come to occupy a very important place in the Muslim societies. All aspects of Muslim's life - from his birth to his burial - are now governed by the clerics. They are, thus, enormously powerful. Their effect can be observed everywhere among the faithful.

Initially the Arab Moslems were not rigid. They studied sciences and mathematics. Arab scholars came over to India to study its mathematics and sciences. They took advanced mathematics of India including algebra⁴², its numerals (0-9), its decimal system, its geometry to their own country. From the Muslim world the system went to Europe along with Islamic conquest and trade. Otherwise neither Greece nor Rome knew anything about zero or about

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natural numbers, verging on infinity. The irrational numbers were known to the Indians but not to others.

Islamic conquest of Persia was completed by 650 A.D. A Persian mathematician, Abu Jafar Mohammed Ibn-Musa-al Khowarizm, translated Sanskrit works on mathematics and astronomy. He authored a book entitled '*Kitab-al-Jabar wal Muquabla*' around 830 A.D. This book was translated into Latin with the title '*Algorithmi de numero Indurum*' in the 12th Century A.D. From this Latin work, the European world came to know of Algebra and the so called Arabic numerals. Bertrand Russell (1961) had rightly commented "what we call 'Arabic numerals' which ought to be called 'Indian' [p416]. Further that Abu Jafar's book on algebra 'was used in the West as a text book until the sixteenth century' [ibidp416]. 'Algorithm', now regularly used in computational mathematics, is derived from Abu Jafar's name – 'al Khowarizm'.

Al-Beruni (born in 973 A.D. in the territory of Kiva) was taken a hostage by Mahmud of Ghazni around 1017 A.D. It seems, he worked under his tutelage but after Mahmud's death he worked under his son, Masud, He was sent by Mahmud to India to learn about the Hindus and their civilization. Al-Beruni produced a massive work entitled '*Ivoica*' or 'India' regarding the religion, philosophy, culture, customs and astronomy of the Hindus.

Ibn Sina, known in the west as Avicenna, was born in Bokhara in 980 A.D. He is better known as a man of medicine rather than of other sciences or philosophy. His contribution to the science of medicine has made him immortal in the annals of history. In today's Arab world (e.g. Libya) medical universities are often named after him.

Ibn Rushd, known in the West as Averroes, is another famous name of medieval Islam. He belonged to Spain which was conquered by the Moslems around 1126 A.D. He is more remembered as a philosopher than a scientist. He was an unorthodox philosopher of the Muslim world.

But, slowly, Muslim societies started becoming priest oriented

and rigid. Some of their religious authorities felt that Koran being a revelation from the Supreme Allah, there was no need of studying other books including those on sciences, mathematics and philosophy. Some felt that the Holy Book could be interpreted in 7 or 70 or even 700 different ways. Where was then the scope of other books? Thus rigidity started creeping into the system. Its fearful concomitants were a natural corollary.

Priests, in general, have been a stumbling block to progress in all societies. Vivekananda, in his characteristic forthright manner, exhorted to do away with such a system. The priests are more prone to be ritual bound, entangled in clichés and shibboleths. Again and again, they have been found to block human progress. Can anyone forget that it was the priesthood of Israel which put Jesus to the cross or that Prophet Mohammad had to flee Mecca because of the then orthodoxy of the Qurraish tribes of Arabia? The mission of the Prophet was no less than a revolution in a messy Arab world of the seventh century. Monotheism and equality were writ large on the banner of the Prophet. Men of Arabia were, thus, attracted to this new message.

Before we leave the subject of Islam, reference ought to be made of Ramakrishna Paramahansa's *sadhana* (spiritual discipline) of Islam. He is the only non-Muslim spiritual personality who actually practiced Islamic *sadhana*. He did this under the guidance of a Sufi saint - Govinda Rai. He forgot everything about the Hindu gods and goddesses or other higher Hindu concepts and plunged headlong into this path. He had a very exalted realization through this path and came to the conclusion that Islam, like Christianity, is also a path of God realization.

F. ZOROASTRIANISM OR THE PERSIAN RELIGION

At present Iran is almost totally Islamic excepting for a few pockets like Sharifabad where the ancient Persian religion is still practiced, Professor Mary Boyce, known for her path breaking work 'History of Zoroastrianism' (1989) lived among the Parsee community of Sharifabad so as to get a first hand information of their

history and religious practices. The Islamic conquest of Iran took place during 637-651 A.D, particularly under the reign of the second Khalifa Omar. Those clinging to their ancient faith ran away and found a niche in the western parts of India –Gujarat and Bombay - thanks to the liberal and tolerant attitude of the Hindus who constitute the bulk of the population.

Work on Avesta

Like other branches of the Oriental studies,, the European scholars' interest has brought to light the Avestan literature before the modern world. In 1700, Thomas Hyde, first made a systematic study of the Persian religion. George Boucher (1718) could get a copy of *Vendidad Sada* from Gujarat (India). It was, however, brought to England in 1723 by Richard Cobe. This sealed book was deposited in the Bodleian library; but it remained a curiosity rather than a subject of study. For about thirty years, the matter remained in hibernation. In 1754 a French young man, Anquetil Du Perron, took pains to visit Gujarat. He encountered much distrust but finally succeeded in getting a copy of Zend-Avesta. It was brought to Paris and deposited in Bibliothèque Royale. With the publication of its French translation (1771), the European scholarship got some inkling of the ancient religion of the Parsees.

Du Perron's work attracted controversial comments from certain scholars of England and Germany. They tried to show that Avesta was of recent origin and had Arabic influence in it. William Jones (1746-1794), who later founded the Royal Asiatic Society, took a leading role in countering Du Perron's thesis. Jones, however, seems to have revised his earlier views, for in a discourse before the Asiatic Society he said:

When I perused Zend glossary, I was inexpressibly surprised to find that six or seven words in ten are pure Sanskrit and some of their inflexions formed by the rules of Vyacharan (Sanskrit grammar) as 'yushmacam, the genitive plural of yushmad' He further said '..... it follows that the language of Zend was at least a dialect of Sanskrit, approaching perhaps as nearly to it as

Prakrit.....' (Asiatic Researches II: 3).

Avesta found a champion in Johann Friedrich Kleuker (1749 - 1827). He vindicated the authenticity of Zend. He couldn't find any Arabic element in Zend. John Leyden also came to the conclusion that Zend was a Prakrit of Sanskrit parallel to Pali. Peter von Bohlen (1831) echoed the same views saying that Zend was a Prakrit of Sanskrit. The controversy was finally laid to rest with the deciphering of the inscriptions at Persepolis and Behistum by Sir Henry Rawlinson in Persia and Lassen in Bonn. The Persian tradition has it that the library containing the Avestan literature was burnt down by the invading army of Alexander. It is said that Avestan writings of Zarasthura were inscribed on 12000 bullock hides. From the memory of the priests, the present day Zend Avesta was reconstructed during the reign of Pahlavi rulers.

Another important contribution to the cause of Avesta was by Abraham Rask (1820) who could collect several texts of Avesta. Rask's translations were deposited in the University of Copenhagen. Others were given to India House (London) and to the Bodleian library. Much earlier to all these European efforts, Parsi Neriosengh (15th century) translated Yasna into Sanskrit. Avestan *Vendidad* was translated into English by James Darmesteter (1880). It formed a part of the famous Sacred Books of the East series edited by none other than Max Mueller (Oxford University Press). The American edition appeared in 1898. In more recent times, Jatindra Mohan Chatterji wrote a book entitled 'The Hymns of Atharvan Zarasthura' (1969). As late as 1993, Khorda Avesta has been translated into English by Kavasiji Edulji Kanga under the trusteeship of Parsi Panchayat Fund and Properties. M. N. Dhalla's works (1921, 1938) were also of immense value.

Zarasthura

Zarasthura or Zartusht (in Pahlavi) or Zardusht (in the modern Persian language) has been wrongly pronounced as Zoroaster. He is a legendary figure but not a mythical character. He was a prophet and like other prophets used to communicate with the Almighty. It is

rather difficult to correctly ascertain the exact period of his ministration. Mary Boyce (1989) would like to place him between 1400 B.C to 1000 B.C - the period of the supposed Aryan Invasion and of the composition of Rk Veda. Nyborg (1938) put him around 458 B.C. Bundahisn, an important Parsi text, places him around 258 years before Alexander's invasion of Persia (330 B.C). That would be 588 B.C. The Buddha was put around 563 B.C. Hence according to this Parsee tradition, Zarasthura, the Buddha and Mahavira were contemporaries along with Confucius, Laotse and Socrates. The western scholars tend to adhere to this time frame. But orthodox Parsees believe that he existed much earlier to Moses. Some would like to place him around 8000 years back when the Aryans were supposed to have migrated from the fabled Airyana Vaejo – the Parsee holy land. This was supposed to be located near the North Pole. The last glaciations occurred around 10,000 years back. According to these theorists, the migrating Aryans branched off – one going to India and the other to Persia. It may be recalled that Bal Gangadhar Tilak, (Chapter II), also tried to locate the Aryan homeland near the North Pole. The issue has been discussed at some length earlier.

The date of Zarasthura may be controversial but it seems non-controversial that he was a prophet of the Almighty whom he called Ahura - Mazda. At this point of time it is impossible to envisage as to how his message was recorded. Our only source is the tradition of the Parsees and their literature.

Avesta

Gatha is the sacred text uttered by Zarasthura, The language in which Gathas were written is termed as Gathic Avesta. This bears a strong affinity, as Jones had noted, with the Vedic Sanskrit. The Gathas were uttered by Zarasthura when he was meditating on a mountain whereas other Avestas were written by his disciples in East Iran.

Avesta, as we know today, is divided into five sections:

1. Yasna - this includes Gathas.

2. Visperad
3. Yashts
4. Vendidad
5. Minor-texts.

Visperad and *Vendidad* were written in an early period of Iranian history, perhaps, before the period of Darius (591 B.C). Alexander's invasion took place around 330 B.C. This destroyed Persepolis and Behistun. Inscriptions have been found from these places. It needs to be clarified that the term Zend-Avesta is due to a mistaken notion of the western scholars. Zend means a commentary or a translation or a language or even a script while Avesta is the sacred text.

According to Avesta: Vendidad, Fargard I (Darmesteter 1880)

Ahura Mazda spoke to Spitama Zarathustra:

1. *The first good land and countries which I, Ahura Mazda created was Airayana- Vaejo by Vanghui-Daitya.*
2. *There are 10 winter months, two summer months.*
3. *The second good lands and countries which I, Ahura-Mazda created was the plain which Sughdhas inhabit.*
4. *The third good lands and countries which I, Ahura-Mazda created was the strong, holy Mouru.*
5. *The fourth good lands and countries which I, Ahura-Mazda created was Bakhdhi with high lifted banner.*
6. *The fifth good lands and countries which I, Ahura-Mazda created was Nisaya that lies between Mouru and Bakhdhi.*
7. *The sixth good lands and countries which I, Ahura-Mazda created was Horayu abounding in water (or houses).*
8. *The seventh good lands and countries which I, Ahura-*

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Mazda created was Vaekrata of evil shadows.

9. *The eighth good lands and countries which I, Ahura-Mazda created was Urva of rich pastures.*
10. *The ninth good lands and countries which I, Ahura-Mazda created was Khenta which Vehrkanas inhabit.*
11. *The tenth good lands and countries I, Ahura-Mazda created was Harahvaiti.*
12. *The eleventh good lands and countries which I, Ahura-Mazda created was the bright, glorious Haetunant.*
13. *The twelfth good lands and countries which I, Ahura-Mazda created was Ragha of three races.*
14. *The thirteenth good lands and countries which I, Ahura-Mazda created was the strong holy Chakra (or Kahkra?)*
15. *The fourteenth good lands and countries which I, Ahura-Mazda created was the four cornered Varena for which was born Thraetaona who smote Aziz Dhaka (zohak).*
16. *The fifteenth good lands and countries which I, Ahura-Mazda created was Hapta-Hindava (seven rivers).*
17. *The sixteenth good lands and countries which I, Ahura-Mazda created was the land by the sources of Rangha where live people who have no chiefs'.*

The meaning of Airayana-Vaejo or its location need not detain us, for it had in the past, attracted considerable attention and discussion. What is interesting to us, at present, is that the Parsee holy book has mentioned Airayana-Vaejo as the original homeland of the mankind `somewhat comparable to Garden of Eden. Airayana's connection with the word Arya is obvious. The Parsees, thus, tried to link themselves with the Aryans - not as a superior race in the sense of Wheeler-Marshall but as a better culture and civilization. The erstwhile Emperor of Iran (now deposed) took *Arya-Mihir* as his title which he thought befitted his exalted status. *Mihir* is a Sanskrit word meaning the Sun. Emperor Reza Shah was, of

course, Islamic by faith - far removed from Aryan/Hindu and Sanskrit traditions. The bulk of the Iranian population is Islamic. Then where was the need to take an Aryan epithet? The only plausible answer is that Iran sees itself as an offshoot of the Aryans.

What is further interesting in the long quotation from Vendidad is that if only, sound of H is replaced by S, then most of them become familiar Sanskrit words found in the Vedic ethos. The conclusion of Wiliam Jones, Leyden, Bohlen etc. seems justified that Avesta was but a Prakrit of Sanskrit akin to Pali. In this light we may read:

Haraivaiti — Sarasvati — Saraswati (famed river in the Vedas).

Hapta Hindava — Hapta-Hendu — Sapta - Sindhu (seven rivers).

Horayu — Sarayu — Saraju (the river associated with Sri Rama).

Mouru — Meru (the famed mountain in the Hindu texts).

Vivahant — Vivashant — Vivashwan (Manu/Vivashwan). He is supposed to have been born out of the Sun. He is also the first king from whom the Surya-Vansh or the Solar Dynasty originated.

Thus the 'Sun Dynasty' would be: Vivashwan — Manu — Ikshaku..... Rama. Ikshaku could have been variously known as Isaac or Ishaq in other religious systems. The Egyptian legend has Menes as the first king of the Pharaohs. They derived their origin from the Sun. Ramses I, II, III etc were all derived from Menes who was presumably none other than Manu of the Indian system. Ramses bear an uncanny similarity to legendary Rama of India.

Similarly *Yima* of Avesta could be the *Yama* of the Veda. Yima has now become *Jamshed* in modern Persian. There are, of course, some scholars who have tried to trace these places of Vendidad in Afghanistan or in Central Asia which seem to be rather farfetched.

The Assamese people call themselves Ahoms as there is no pronunciation of 'S' in the Assamese language. Similarly the

invaders who came to India had to cross the mighty Sindhu (Indus) river. They couldn't pronounce 'S' and started calling it Hindu or Hendu; the Latin version is Indus. Henceforth, the extensive plains thereafter and the people living there were called Hindu. In the Italian language there is no pronunciation of T; only त् of Sanskrit can be expressed. On the contrary, in the English language there is no त् but only T. In Tamil there is no त् but only थ (th). The Tamils would pronounce Malati (मालती) as Malathi (मालथी). There are numerous such examples in other world languages.

The Religion of Zarasthura

The Parsee religion, like Judaism, Christianity and Islam, proceeds from a single prophet. Zarasthura is their Prophet but it must also be said that they trace it back to Vivahant's son Yima. Zarasthura gave the ancient religion a new direction and push even as Moses had done for Judaism; Jesus for Christianity and Muhammad for Islam. Jesus was born in a Jewish family and never considered himself as creating a new religion; He declared 'I have come to fulfill and not to destroy'. He quoted the ancient Jewish scriptures to rebut Satan's temptations. Similarly Islam extensively mentions Musa in Koran. Moslems still practice Bakr Id as Ibrahim is believed to have done thousands of years back. It is well known that the Buddha called his four Noble Truths as Arya Satya and his Eight Fold path as Ashtangic Marg. He reiterated that he was treading an Ancient Path followed by earlier Buddhas.

Parsees have been popularly presented as Fire-worshippers. Fire is considered as pure and purifying. In that way Vedic followers may also be considered as Fire worshippers because in all Vedic Yajnas clarified butter from cow milk is used for oblations in fire so as to invoke gods/goddesses. The very first mantra of Rk Veda (1.1.1) invokes Agni or Fire. A closer look, however, would reveal that Agni is not fire but a comprehensive term equivalent to what physics knows as Energy (**E**). Now **E** is an abstract term which can be defined only terms of work (**W**). In spite of all its mutations, the sum total of Energy of the universe remains constant. The Conservation Law states that Energy can neither be created nor

destroyed. Einstein's equation, $E = mc^2$ simply means that mass and energy are equivalent terms. Mass can be converted to Energy and vice-versa. Max Planck's equation ($E = hv$) shows another relationship of Energy. in terms of radiation. Where 'h' is the Planck's constant (6.62×10^{-34} joule/second) and 'v' is the frequency. The Vedic Yajnas are, thus, only symbolic in value. The idea enshrined in Rk Veda is much deeper and wider. So Fire worship of Parsees is only symbolic. Essentially Vedas including the Upanishads are Monistic - even beyond the concept of Monotheism. All gods/goddesses are but different aspects or powers of One Being (तदेकं = That One) who is also the Becoming (सर्वं खलु इदं ब्रह्म = All this is but Brahman). Thus the Vedas propound the निर्गुण ब्रह्म (NirgunaBrahman) beyond all qualities and qualifications as also सगुण ब्रह्म (SagunaBrahman) which includes all qualities and qualifications. The Nasadiya Sukta of Rk Veda (X. 129) has even been interpreted as propounding an Unknown and Unknowable Godhead. Some have found in it Agnosticism (Nehru, J.L. – Discovery of India). The early effort of the western scholars was to interpret the Vedas as hymns propitiating the leaders of the invading groups of Aryans. Hence there are hymns addressed to Indra, Agni, Varuna etc. Later efforts saw in these hymns Nature worship. They were overawed by the Natural Powers and tried to propitiate them. Such puerile interpretations do not square up with the lofty ideas in the Purusha Sukta (Rk X. Mandala) or with the Nasadiya Sukta (Rk X. 129) not to speak of the main Upanishads which constitute an integral part of the Vedas or the Shruti. It will be like incorporating infant's babble, the Classical Physics, Quantum Mechanics and Relativity in the same book of physics. Does it sound plausible?

Another common view of the lay and the learned is that Zoroastrianism preached a sort of dualism by positing Ahura Mazda and Angra Mainyu/ Ahriman essentially two primal principles which are at loggerheads with each other. Ahura-Mazda is the Wise Lord - fountainhead of Light and Goodness. But Ahriman is just the opposite - representing Darkness, Evil, Death and Destruction. In Semitism, God is the counterpart of Ahura-Mazda while Satan is

like Ahriman. In the Old Testament the serpent represents Satan. It is the Tempter and tempts Eve. Perhaps they felt that 'frailty thy name is woman'. In Islam, Iblis is the counterpart of Satan. Originally Iblis was an angel of Allah and like other angels, was made up of fire. Adam was, of course, made from clay. Allah ordered all angels to bow down (*sajda*) before Adam. All angels obeyed Him but Iblis objected because he thought he was superior to Adam. He disobeyed Allah; henceforth he was cast out of the heaven. In this way Iblis became the Satan to be stoned during Haj pilgrimage by the faithful. Was Satan created by God? Was he sempiternal with God? In that way there would be dualism as is supposed to be embedded in the religion of Zarasthura.

Such dualism is, perhaps, a part of certain Gathas where the Holy Spirit and the Evil spirit are stated as twins (Zahner 1988). If they are twins, they must have originated from a common Father. Who was this Father or Originator? Some followers of Zarasthura understood this problem and posited a higher principle than Ahura Mazda and Ahriman. It was something like 'Infinite Time' comparable to *Mahakal* of the Hindus or Akal of the Sikhs. This Higher Principle gave birth to Ohrmazd and Ahriman. Thus some scholars believe that Zoroastrianism conceived of a Higher Unity than the commonly believed dualism.

The problem of Evil has been a knotty one for all religions, philosophies and thinking men. That in this world of ours, in human societies, in individual lives there is unmitigated suffering and evil none can deny. If the Almighty is absolutely benevolent and if He/She is the Creator, then why does all this evil exist? Why suffering? Why does He/She tolerate all this? Or is it that 'He would but could not or He could but would not'? The Buddha, as is well known, made Suffering the First Truth in his system. He thought it unwise to go into such fruitless questions: as the origin of the universe, its dimensions - finite or infinite etc. Rather he asked men to get out of such a suffering system. The way was to attain *Nirvana* or Eternal Peace. A Benevolent Creator – Father/Mother and its suffering Children are anachronistic. A futuristic hope of a Golden Jerusalem or Eternal Life here itself or hereafter in an imaginary

Heaven are mental mirages. The doctrine of *Sayoshyant* of later Zoroastrianism is akin to the aforesaid concept of Everlasting Life where 'the material world will become immortal forever and ever'. Ahriman will be cast into hell where he will be annihilated or incapacitated. Does it not sound somewhat like New Testament where '*Then I saw a new heaven and anew earth: for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, the New Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband*'. (Rev, 21:1-2)? And in Rev, 20 we find '*.....He seized the dragon that ancient serpent, who is the devil or Satan and bound him for a thousand years. He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him*'

The Parsee community of India, though a microscopic minority among the India, has lived in peace and prosperity. In fact, many Parsees have done extremely well in industry, finance, science and technology, politics and even in the military. During the freedom movement of India some, as Dadabhoy Nauroji, gained national stature. India has given shelter to many alien religious groups including the Jews, the Christians and the Moslems. Even as recently as the mid-twentieth century, the persecuted Tibetans found refuge in India. His Holiness Dalai Lama, along with his Tibetan followers, had to flee the Potala Palace (Lhasa) due to totalitarian excesses of the communist Chinese regime. Earlier the sovereign state of Tibet was annexed by them claiming it to be one of its provinces. The Indian government played no mean part in the outrage by remaining a mute spectator. They accepted Tibet as an integral part of China. Dharamsala (H.P. India) is now the headquarters of the exiled government of Rev. Dalai Lama. The Indian state had to bear a lot of anger and animosity from the Chinese authorities for giving shelter to Rev. Dalai Lama. The Tibetans are now practicing their systems of Buddhism in peace in India.

Respect for other's belief system, sometimes considered a weakness, is the foundation of a civilized life. Strangely, still many

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dream of converting the whole world to their own belief systems. In such a scenario, the alternative is the 'clash of civilizations', History knows the horrendous consequences of religious intolerance during the ancient and the medieval times. But during this much extolled period of 'reason and science', it has raised its ugliest head. In the recent past, millions of Indians were uprooted from their ancestral moorings and thousands were massacred due to a most diabolical plan of Partition of India by the British authorities. The Jewish Exodus pales into insignificance before such a massive Exodus⁴³. Even now exodus of Kashmiri pundits has taken place due to terror tactics. They are still living in exile - away from their ancestral homes. Mahatma Gandhi, who had earlier vowed that Partition would take place over his dead body, somehow accepted this disastrous plan. He gave vent to his feelings by exclaiming 'a total disaster has happened' (सर्वनाश होगया). Gandhi didn't participate in the 'freedom celebrations' amid the ruins of the people but preferred to go to Noakhali (E. Bengal) to give a healing balm to the massacred people over there. The aftereffects of that 'disaster' are still being experienced in the form continued hostility by India's neighbors. Already three major conflagrations between India and Pakistan have taken place. Now that nuclear weapons are present there, any further escalation between these two would indeed be a total disaster. Kashmir is the bone of contention and has become a 'hot-spot.' Pakistan's claim to Kashmir is because it is a Muslim majority state. Not a day passes without some form of violence in that idyllic land-rightly called a 'heaven on the earth'.

There are other hot-spots in Europe and Mid-East due to racial/religious fanaticism of the people. Even within a religious group, there are chilling reports of bloodshed. Thus the sway of intolerance is much deeper and wider vis-à-vis the soft approach of 'reason and science'. A man or even a group may be eliminated by brute force but can thought be eliminated by book-burning or oppression? All ruthless measures, in all regimes, have so far, failed to contain the march of human thought. History bears testimony to the truth of the prophetic words of Jesus, '*Those who take to the sword shall perish by the sword.*' Yet man seems to

have put more faith in the 'sword', than in the Buddha or in Jesus Christ. Napoleon, a man of war, is reputed to have said '*There are only two powers in the world - the spirit and the sword and in the long run the sword will always be conquered by the spirit*'. Let the humanity hope that with further evolution of man the '*spirit shall triumph over the sword*'. History of man is the history of wars and pillage but visionaries like Tagore and Aurobindo counsel fellow mortals not to lose hope in Man - perhaps one day 'matter shall reveal spirit's face'.

G. JAINISM

There are twenty four *Tirthankaras* in the Jain pantheon. Of them, Rishavadeva or Adinatha was the first while Vardhamana Mahavira (6th century B.C.) was the last and the twenty fourth. He is said to have systematized the earlier teachings of Rishavadeva, Aristanemi, Parasnatha etc. In Jainism one does not come across any literature comparable to Tripitaka of Buddhism; nor does one find any mention of council of monks as is found in Buddhist history. Perhaps, the earliest manuscript is of Sri Umasvati Acharya's *Tattvarthadhigama Sutra* dated around 3rd century A.D. Other reliable texts are *Syadvadmanjari* of Mallisena and *Anyayoga - Vyavaccheda Dvatrimiska* of Hemchandra. But these texts are of later date around 11th -13th century A.D.

Mahavira Vardhamana was born as a prince in Vaishali. The town was so named because it was *vishal* or big. One comes across the name of Vaishali in the Tripitaka. *Tirthankara* Mahavira was about fifteen years senior to Gautama Buddha. It is a tribute to India's catholic and liberal spirit that they or their followers neither clashed with each other nor any acrimony took place. Followers of Mahavira are often called Jains because they believe that a *Tirthankara* is one who has extinguished all passions of the flesh and has transcended all mundane limitations. He has conquered himself and thus conquered the world. He is a *Jina* - a veritable holy man even while alive. He has attained to *Kevala Jnana* or Absolute Knowledge. Mahavira left his princely life of comfort and plenty and chose the difficult life of an ascetic. He performed severe austerities

and ultimately became a *Jina*.

Jainism believes that knowledge is of five kinds:

1. *Mati* - Ordinary knowledge including memory, cognition etc.
2. *Shruti* - Knowledge derived through signs, symbols etc.
3. *Avadhi* - Direct knowledge at a distance in space or in time. This is what is now called clairvoyance and clairaudience.
4. *Mahaparyaya* - Direct sensing of the thoughts of others.
5. *Kevala* - Absolute knowledge. This is the supreme knowledge which a Tirthankara like Mahavira had attained.

Jains are found only in India. They are scattered throughout the country but mostly located in central and western India. Their presence elsewhere is not very prominent. A very well known shrine on the top of the Parasnath hills is mainly dedicated to Tirthankara Parasnath who antedated Mahavira. During the medieval period, the Jains created some of the finest temples of India. But, unlike Buddhism; Jainism religion remained confined to within the borders of India. Initially Jainism started as a new religion but due to inter-marriage with the Vaisya community of the Hindus there is hardly any distinction left now. Side by side it must also be said that Jains do not worship any of Hindu gods/goddesses e.g. Vishnu, Shiva, Krishna, Durga, Rama and others. They worship only their Tirthankaras and venerate only their saints.

The Jain system of philosophy denies the existence of any Supreme Being who creates, maintains and dissolves the universe; nor does it believe in the Transpersonal nature of the Vedic revelation. Therefore, the orthodox system of the Indian philosophies regard Jainism as heterodox or *Nastikya - darshan* (atheistic - philosophy). Shankaracharya treated it in this way. Jainism believes in the plurality of *Jivas* (souls) which are *chetan* (sentient) while *Ajivas* (non-souls) are *Jada* (non-sentient). It believes in karma (action-reaction chain) and rebirth. Good, beneficial, pious, karma makes the soul pure while the reverse - bad, impious, violent actions make the soul impure. To get rid of the

impurity, clinging to the souls, they must undertake penance or mortification of the body. The source of human bondage is his /her body. Jain monks and nuns have to undergo austerities, sometimes severe, to get rid of the impurities. Though apparently similar because both the Buddha and the Tirthankara are shown in *dhyana-mudra*, (meditative posture), the differences between the two religions are fundamental. In Buddhism there are no permanent souls as everything is momentary (cf. Heraclitus). *Sarvam Anityam* (all are impermanent) so said the Tathagata. Karma is common to both along with other orthodox systems of Indian philosophy. The Indian materialists or *Lokayats*, of course, have nothing to do with Karma for they hold that with the end of body everything comes to an end; there is only here no hereafter, no rebirth. The Buddha prescribed the *Madhyama marga* (the middle path) while Jainism believes in mortification of the body. The innumerable permanent souls of Jains seem to have been taken from the *Sankhya darshan* of Kapila who appeared much before Mahavira, even earlier to Bhagwat Geeta for we find him being mentioned there (सिद्धानां कपिलो मुनिः). But we do not find the name of Mahavira or even of Rishavadeva in the Geeta. The Buddha is also not mentioned there.

The *Sankhya* does not believe in a Supreme Soul or *Paramatman*; that way Jainism resembles Sankhya. But Sankhya belongs to the orthodox school because it holds that the Vedas are *apaurusheya* (transpersonal) and revelatory. *Sankhya's Kevala* (absolute) state takes place when the soul discerns that it is fundamentally different and aloof from the actions of the *Prakriti* (Nature). Such a concept of *Prakriti* is totally absent in Jainism. The aloofness or *kaivalya* of a soul is somewhat similar to concept of Monads of Leibniz but there are basic differences between the two. In *Sankhya*, the soul is the twenty fifth category and alone is sentient. All other twenty four categories, including the mind or even the intellect are non-sentient. Jainism does not make such distinctions in detail but only makes two categories — the *Jivas* (souls) as sentient and all non-Jivas (non souls) as *Jada* (non-sentient).

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Since all sentient creatures have souls, Jainism has laid extreme emphasis on ahimsa (non-violence). *Ahimsa paramo-dharma* (non-violence is the ultimate religion) is the guiding principle of Jainism. Gandhi's non-violence, at times impractical, owes much to this religion. Gandhi, born and brought up in Kathiawar (Gujarat) seems to have been influenced by Jain teachings. Gujarat has a strong base of this religion. Animal sacrifice and meat eating are unthinkable to Jains. They would not like to kill even a worm or an insect. To avoid such a contingency, many of them keep their mouths and noses covered by cloth pieces. This is also one reason why they do not eat after sunset. They always drink filtered water. Buddhism also prescribes ahimsa but Tathagata laid more emphasis on four Divine feelings (Brahma-bhava) e.g. *maitri* (friendly), *karuna* (compassion), *mudita* (joy, devoid of boisterousness or inwardly joyful) and *upeksha* (serene indifference). His ahimsa was, thus, not merely non injury or non-killing but a positive feeling of friendliness and compassion towards all beings. Ahimsa in Buddhism is more psychological than ritualistic. In *Manav-Dharma-Samhita* or *Manu-Smriti* (Manu's code), Ahimsa figures among the ten codes of conduct which men in general rather than only the Hindus should follow. Ahimsa is again found in the Geeta and also in the Yoga-sutras of Patanjali.

After Mahavira Swami's passing away at Pawa-Puri, the Jains bifurcated into two major sects' viz. the *Swetambaras* (those wearing white clothes) and the *Digambaras* (those who are naked as the sky). The householders Jains, of course, always wear clothes; only *Digambara* monks remain naked, away from the public gaze. *Digambara* nuns wear clothes. Such monks rarely come into public. They are like the Naga sects of Hindu monks who remain-naked but seldom come in the public view. During the Kumbh pilgrimage, which occurs once in twelve years, or Ardh Kumbh (half Kumbh) which happens once in six years, they can be seen. Our sensibilities may be disturbed by such nudity but let us remember that in the West there are Nudist clubs where adult male and female and also children remain totally nude, of course, in the club premises.

Modern Scientific thought and Jain system of Logic

Jain logical system is mainly found in *Syadmanjari*. This is a commentary by Mallisena (13th century A.D.) on the famous work of Hem Chandra (1088-1172A.D). This logical system is innovative and interesting than the general Jain philosophy. Jain logical system is known as *Anekantavad* and *Syadvad*. *Anekantavad* literally means many-sidedness. Truth is conceived of as many-sided rather than one-sided (*ekantvad*). A truth or a statement arises from a stand point or *naya*. *Anekantavad* is, therefore, relativism of a statement. Hence a statement must be qualified by a prefix 'may be' or 'somehow' or 'perhaps'. This in short is called *Syad*. *Anekantavad* leads to *Syadvad*. *Naya* (standpoints) have been condensed into seven modes:

- a) *Syadasti* - A thing **is**.
- b) *Syad nasti* - A thing **is not**.
- c) *Syad avaktavya* - A thing **not certain**.
- d) *Syad asti-nasti* - A thing **is, yet is not**.
- e) *Syad asti avaktavya* - A thing **is, yet not certain**.
- f) *Syad nasti avaktavya* - A thing **is not, yet not certain**.
- g) *Syad asti-nasti avaktavya* - A thing is and **is not, yet also uncertain**.

Syadasti is understandable. *Syad nasti* is also easily understandable. *Syad avaktavya* is what comes under probability. If a thing-like a coin-having two aspects, is tossed; there is always a 50:50 probability of one aspect coming to existence; but it can never be predicted with certainty as to which side is going to fall. At the start it is always uncertain [*avaktavya*].

But consider the fourth statement i.e. *Syadasti nasti* [a thing is, and is not]. This is illogical. How can it be: is and yet is not? They are antithetical. One excludes the other. It goes against the principle of 'excluded middle'. All logic moves on the principle of 'either'- 'or' mode. It cannot be both. They are as antithetical as light and

darkness – they cannot be both together. That would constitute elementary logical fallacy.

Shankaracharya's *Brahma Sutra Bhashya* has examined the Jain theories critically and has brought out the inherent contradictions in them. This, of course, has been done from strict logical stand point.

In what way, then, the modern scientific thought is related to *Syadvad and Anekantavad*? By scientific thought. I mean those of Physics because Physics lies at the base of all sciences, including the Life Sciences. Physics is derived from the Greek word *Physikos* or *Physis* whose original connotation was the study of the nature of things. Though Aristotle wrote a book on Physics, yet as a branch of Science, one can say, it arose only with Galileo and Newton. In reality these two can be called the Fathers of Physics as they brought quantification and mathematics unto Physics.

Isaac Newton's views regarding Space and Time were: 'Absolute space, in its own nature, without regard to anything, external, remains always similar and immovable' [Quoted from 'The Tao of Physics', Capra, F]. 'Absolute, true and mathematical time, of itself and by its true nature, flows uniformly without regard to anything external' [ibid]⁴⁴.

We are accustomed to think, like Newton, that we move in a 'space' which is external to us and which remains unmoved while we move in it. The whole universe moves in an 'unmoved space' which though intangible to our senses, nonetheless is 'out there'. It permeates us and everything else but remains unaffected by our actions or of the activities of the molecules, the atoms or even the elementary particles - now of bewildering varieties. Hence 'space' is at 'absolute rest' - therefore a reliable fixed point - in an otherwise restless, ever moving, universe⁴⁵. Now all motion can only be determined with reference to a fixed reference point. Newtonian mechanics and dynamics, thus, found in the 'absolute space' an absolute fixed point.

Earlier, Galileo had shown that one cannot distinguish between

a thing at rest or 'moving uniformly in a straight line'. The two can be easily transformed into each other. This is the essence of Galilean relativity.

Similarly events take place, successively, in 'Time' which seems to flow uniformly and unidirectionally. This is often referred to as the 'Arrow of Time'. Events are affected by 'Time' but 'Time' itself remains unaffected by events. It is 'absolute, true and mathematical' as Newton had put it succinctly and crisply. Further Newtonian 'Space' and 'Time' belong to entirely different categories of Nature. As described earlier 'Space' has three dimensions- length, breadth and height, or three co-ordinates, Y, Z, while 'Time' is unidirectional; it has only one co-ordinate - 't'. Newton's Law's of Motion were rooted in such scientific concepts of 'Space' and 'Time'. The Newtonian world-view dominated the scientific thought ever since he appeared on the horizon in the second half of the seventeenth century⁴⁶. This domination continued till the end of the nineteenth century when, shortly afterwards, another towering genius took over the world stage.

Albert Einstein [1879-1955] was of Jewish origin regarding whom Haldane remarked as the 'greatest Jew since Jesus' [Calder]⁴⁷. During his school days he didn't outshine his classmates; rather his teachers took an unpromising view about him. Newton, it may be recalled, wrote a book on Optics [1704] wherein he proposed the 'corpuscular theory' of light-meaning thereby that light was composed of very tiny particles or corpuscles. But slightly earlier, Christian Huygens [1678] had proposed that light consisted of waves. However, Newton was so imposing a figure in physics, that this 'Wave theory' was completely overshadowed by the 'corpuscular theory'. This continued throughout the eighteenth century till Thomas Young [1803] performed clinching experiments with interference, to show forever, that light consisted of waves.

So when Einstein was a boy, physicists were discussing about light waves. If sound was due to waves in the air, - air being the medium through which the waves were propagated - then, through what medium light was being propagated? It was obvious that light

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was coming to the Earth from the vast distances of the interstellar space where there was no air. What was this medium? The obvious answer was intangible Ether. Waves in the Ether were the light waves.

What was the velocity of light? Obviously it was much faster than sound, as when, a gun was fired at a distance, its light was instantly seen but its sound came after sometime. So physicists were also concerned about the correct velocity of light. Experiments suggested that light travelled at about 3×10^5 km/sec [186,000 miles/sec]. James Clerk Maxwell's famous equations regarding electromagnetism also predicted the aforesaid value. But experiments were needed to verify the same. Light velocity was so high that it could circumnavigate the Earth more than seven times in a second! This was the problem with its experimentations.

In 1887 Michelson and Morley devised an instrument called Interferometer which could detect very small differences that light might take if it was simultaneously sent in two different paths at right angles to each other. The experiment was so designed that light might travel in the direction of the Earth's motion around the sun or in the opposite direction. In all cases, the velocity of light (in vacuum) was 3×10^5 km/sec. Michelson-Morley experiment has since become one of the most famous experiments in physics because it presented a big puzzle for the scientific community who were groomed under the Ether theory. The Earth was moving in an 'absolute space', permeated with ether, at a velocity of 30 km/sec⁴⁸ round the sun, then it ought to create an ether wind or ether current moving in the opposite direction. Imagine a car moving at the staggering velocity of 30 km/sec and the air current being produced by it (present day airliners move less than 900 km/hr. Even at that velocity it moves only 0.25 km/sec). 30 km/sec is, at present, only theoretically possible. Light velocity must decrease by 60 km/sec when it is flashed in the direction of the Earth's motion (30 km/sec of Earth's motion + 30 km/sec of Ether current). But when it goes in the opposite direction, light velocity must gain 60 km/sec. When flashed at 90° , light should not register any variation at all. This is rather simple. As when going upstream, a boat slows down; the

oarsman has to put more power to row. While on the downstream a boat moves swiftly-the oarsman requires less power to row. The puzzle was that the value of c was always 3×10^5 km/sec. How to explain it? Repeated experiments showed that Michelson-Morley were correct.

The physicists desperately wanted to save the situation. Various suggestions were put forward. One put by Fitzgerald, and later in a mathematical form by Lorentz, was that everything against the ether current contracted because of 'pressure by the ether current'. The measuring rod, the apparatus etc. all contracted! How could, then, the reduction be measured? This was Lorentz-Fitzgerald transformations. Scientists, somehow, wanted to keep their pet theory of Ether. Such is the power of dogma even in sciences and labeled as theory! What then is the power of dogma in other fields of human thought particularly in religion?

In religion one is asked to believe; otherwise one is branded a non-believer. Rare is the soul who has dared to ask questions in religion. Is God just a matter of belief or a matter of experience? Should we believe in a Being only because our forefathers have believed in an Entity and have conditioned us to believe in Him? Gautama Buddha was one such soul who dared to ask questions about accepted religions of his days⁵¹. He didn't worship any imaginary Deity but attained to the pinnacle of realization that goes by the name of Bodhi. He became a godly man worshipped by millions. Even while passing away from this world system, he exhorted his disciple - monks not to worship his physical frame but hold fast to Truth and workout their own Nirvana (Salvation).

Clerk Maxwell's electromagnetic fields also posed a serious problem to Newton's force-body concept because a field is a spread out phenomenon while force-body concept requires one-to-one action; it is antithetical to the field concept. These two concepts do not square up with each other. Magnetic lines of forces are just visible representation of a magnetic field or an electrical field. Basically both are same and called electromagnetic fields. Maxwell's genius lay in uniting both these fields. All radiations,

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including the visible spectrum, are but electromagnetic waves. That was, indeed, a piece of genuine inspiration.

Physics was, therefore, in the throes of a crisis when a towering genius in the form of Albert Einstein arrived on the scene. What did he do? What were his main contributions?

(A) Einstein abolished Ether. He saw that there was no need of an intangible Ether permeating the 'absolute space' of Newton. His child-like, unencumbered, mind saw that 'the emperor was not wearing any clothes' so to say. The Earth, the Sun, the Moon, the galaxies in the vast space or the elementary particles, were not permeated by any Ether-intangible but real. If there was any Ether, then, where was the ether wind or ether current? What was the necessity of Fitzgerald-Lorentz transformations if there was to be no ether wind?

(B) Then how to account for $c=3 \times 10^5$ km/sec (in vacuum) in all frames of references moving uniformly, may be, with different velocities? It was obvious that here also Newton's Laws of motion was not being followed by light. If a body is moving, say, at 1×10^5 km/sec and light is moving at 3×10^5 km/sec, and goes along with it, what should be light's velocity with reference to that body? Obviously it would be 3×10^5 km/sec - 1×10^5 km/sec = 2×10^5 km/sec i.e. 200000 km/sec. But no! Light still has the same old velocity i.e. 300000 km/sec. That was the big puzzle, the paradox. Einstein said: It was no puzzle, no paradox. There is no universal fixed reference point - there is no absolute space. There are only different 'reference frames' moving uniformly, may be, at different velocities with reference to 'other frames'. The value of c is fixed; it is the farthest limit of velocity. The concept of absolute space which Newton posited stands abolished; along with it stands cancelled the concept of an universal fixed point.

(C) If there is no 'absolute space', what, then, is space? Earlier another German philosophical genius, Emmanuel Kant (1724-1804), said that Space is 'a priori' category of the mind. We have no other way than to think or to see things arranged in space. Thus, according to Kant, space is an in-built, subjective, a priori, mental

construct. Apart from the mind, space does not have any objective reality. Kant, in a sense, had already debunked the 'absolute space' concept of Newton. A thousand years before Kant, Advaitist philosopher of India, Shankaracharya, had said Space-Time-Causality was one whole and given it the name Maya.

Einstein took a position in between Newton and Kant-between the extremes of 'absolute space' and a priori category of mind. Space can only be viewed as a reference frame in relation to motion. Space has three co-ordinates X, Y, Z (the length, the breadth, the height). One cannot view any motion without its reference frame of space. Conversely there is no space without motion. Space is thus a relative concept.

(D) There is also, no 'Absolute Time'. Newton posited the concept of 'Absolute Time' ('Absolute, true and mathematical'). If 'Absolute Space' is a fixed reference frame for motion, then, 'Absolute Time' is a fixed reference point of events. This 'Absolute Time' concept was debunked by Einstein. Events are also related to motion. In fact motion is an event. Hence time is also a relative concept. Simultaneity everywhere is a meaningless concept. Events have to be seen from 'different frames of references'. Events in one 'frame' may be simultaneous but from another 'reference frame' they may appear to be one after another. This is relativity of time.

Herman Minkowski (1908), who had been one of the teachers of Einstein in Zurich Polytecnic, said '*Hereafter space by itself, and time by itself, are doomed to fade away into mere shadows, and only a kind of union of the two will preserve an independent entity*' (from Penrose – Emperors New Mind p 193). Capra quotes from a Buddhist text: '*It was taught by the Buddha, oh, monks that.....the past, the future, physical space.....individuals are nothing but names, forms of thought, words of common usage merely superficial realities*'. (Capra – 'The Tao of Physics' p179). He further quotes Ashwaghosa -a Buddhist philosopher: '*Be it clearly understood that space is nothing but a mode of particularization and that it has no real existence of its own....Space exists only, in relation to our particularizing consciousness*' (p180). We have

already referred to the concept of Maya. Now Maya is Space-Time-Causality (*Desh-Kala-Nimitta*) all fused together so as to appear as Name-Form (Name-Rupa नाम-रूप) in an otherwise Absolute Existence called Brahman (ब्रह्म). Maya can neither be categorized as Existence nor non-Existence. Hence *Anirvachaniya* (अनिर्वचनीय) - that which cannot be expressed properly in words. Maya is thus supralogical. Logic always moves in either-or mode, it can always be expressed symbolically in one manner or the other. Vivekananda, for the first time, brought out this aspect of Advaita philosophy and the real meaning of Maya, before the modern world [Vivekananda Swami - Complete Works Vol. I 1991, (Harvard lecture 1896)].

(E) 'Space' and 'Time' both being relative, needed to be fused together into one reality called 'Space-Time' instead of Space and Time. Such a reality was four dimensional-three of space (x,y,z) and one of Time (t). Mind observes motion or events in Space-Time. No motion can be meaningfully described without stating where it occurred and when it occurred. In short what four dimensional frame of reference the event happened. What we casually call as things, are actually events. Even the tiniest particle is actually a conglomeration of events. These events are causally connected, predictable or unpredictable; calculable or incalculable; certain or probable. Thus the Universe has incalculable number of events happening in a four-dimensional reality-all causally connected. This entire gamut has been called by Shankara as *Desh-Kala-Nimitta* or *Nama-Rupa* or Maya. Einstein's four dimensional reality would, thus, inexorably lead to Maya. Being a scientist, he fell short of it. His Special Theory of Relativity (1905) was indeed, a marvel-a great achievement of human thought.

(F) 'Laws' of physics were same in all frames of references [moving uniformly]. Thus Einstein went a step ahead of Galileo whose relativity principle stated that only Laws of Mechanics were same in all uniformly moving frames of reference or those at rest.

(G) The famous mass-energy equivalence equation [$E=mc^2$] was just a natural corollary of this Special Theory of Relativity.

This was, indeed, a revolutionary work which upset the foundations of mankind's [including physicist's] age old concepts of space and time. It took some time for physicists to comprehend this new concept. It appeared so removed from our everyday experience. The four-dimensional reality is beyond our experience. Simultaneity is what we experience because our Earth's velocity [30km/sec] is just very-very tardy in comparison to 3×10^5 km/sec of light. Special Theory of Relativity thus appeared bizarre.

This, perhaps, was one of the reasons why the Nobel Committee did not consider it important enough to recommend Einstein for their Prize. They seemed to have overlooked the tremendous theoretical and practical importance of the equation: $E=mc^2$. This opened up, as everyone knows, the immense possibilities of using atomic energy for peaceful as well as for military purposes. During World War II, Einstein, in a letter to President Roosevelt, urged him to expedite atomic research so as not to fall behind the Nazi Germany in making an atom bomb. The result was the Manhattan Project under the charge of Oppenheimer which ultimately resulted in the creation of nuclear bombs. The tragic consequences of those bombs are well known. If Einstein had not discovered mass – energy equation those bombs could never have been made. Did he regret about his findings? But he did regret that he had ever urged the U.S. President to make the Bomb. When Germany was on the verge of surrender, Einstein, along with some colleagues, did urge the President not to use the Bomb. By then Roosevelt had gone and Harry. S. Truman had become the President. He treated the appeal with scant respect and the two Bombs were used with disastrous effect.

The Nobel Prize for physics of 1921 was awarded to Einstein for his work on photo-electric effect (1905)⁵⁰. This work was to substantiate the Quantum theory of Max Planck (1900). Photons were the light particles-a modern version of corpuscles of Newton. A quantum has the energy, $E=h\nu$, where h is Planck's constant and ν is the frequency of radiation. Thus higher the frequency, the greater is the energy because h is an universal constant. Cosmic rays, γ rays, x-rays, U.V. rays have higher frequencies than the

visible light while infrared, micro-waves and radio waves have lower frequencies. All these are, of course, electro-magnetic waves.

Physics was now, confronted with another paradox. Is light a wave or a particle? A wave is a spread out phenomenon while a particle is localized-like a point. This is true for all other radiations. Elementary particles, like electrons, also behave like waves; otherwise there couldn't be an Electron microscope. The Jain theory of *Naya* (or Stand points) comes to the rescue of Physics. Wave-Particle duality is mutually exclusive. According to ordinary logic, if one is true the other is not. *Naya* would say that from one stand point Particle is true, from another standpoint Wave is true. Thus from Thomas Young's experiments light is a wave but from Einstein's Photoelectric effect light is a particle. Both are true, *astinasti*. Truth is supra logical-many sided, *Anekanta* (Jain theory).

Einstein's other major contributions were the analysis of the Brownian motion which dealt with Boltzmann constant and the General Theory of Relativity (1915) which combined Space-Time with Universal Gravitation. He, however, could not complete Unified Field concept. His Relativity couldn't be reconciled with Bohr-Heisenberg's Quantum Mechanics. The two still have not been fully unified.

What were the consequences of the Special Theory of Relativity apart from $E=mc^2$? One couldn't now talk about sizes in absolute fixed terms irrespective of their frames of references.

Thus if a rod measures x meters [when placed in the direction of motion] in a frame of reference (I) moving with a certain uniform velocity and the same rod is kept in another frame of reference (II) moving uniformly [again in the direction of motion] with a higher velocity, then its size will become $[x-l]$, in length, if viewed and measured from the reference frame (I). The important thing is that it will not only appear to be shorter but be actually shorter depending upon the velocity of frame (II) in relation to frame (I). One should consider that there are no fixed points anywhere in the universe-all are in motion in relation to all others. Fixed points of geometry are all mental constructs, all illusions created by the mind.

But observers within the reference frame (II) will measure the rod as x meters. A fast moving train, a plane, or a rocket, therefore, becomes shorter in length from the view point of a person standing still on the ground. Then why do we not encounter such differences? Because, these velocities are, extremely small in comparison to 'c' - the velocity of light. Further we are still governed by the absolute space concept of Newton.

According to Jain logic, the rod is X meters in length [*asti*] from one *naya* [standpoint] but from another reference frame it is not X meter in length [*nasti*]. It is $[x-l]$ meters. It is totally meaningless to ask which is correct. Thus *syad asti* and *syad nasti* are both correct. There is no logical fallacy. Excluded middle need not always be excluded!

Similarly one couldn't now talk about 'events' in fixed terms without referring to their 'frames of references'. Time had become relative which was even more difficult to digest. Our everyday experience has taught us that a time gap - say a minute - is same throughout the universe. What is 'now' here must be 'now' elsewhere – everywhere. Consider it in some details.

Let two events, say two flares, occur one after another in one 'frame of reference'(I) moving uniformly with a velocity of X km/sec; and let an observer, in the same frame(I) measure the time interval as 60 seconds. Now let the same two events [two flares] be observed by another, observer from another 'frame of reference(II), again moving uniformly, with a velocity Y km/sec which is greater than X . Let also frame (II) move in the opposite direction to frame (I). From the point of view of frame (II), the frame (I) whizzes past it with a velocity of $X+Y$ km/sec. Similarly frame (I) observer sees frame (II) passing by it with the same velocity $X+Y$ km/sec.

Observers, in both frames, would consider themselves stationary while thinking the other moving because there is no other fixed frame of reference in sight. Such things are rather common [as while travelling in a train, a plane or a boat, we consider ourselves stationary while feeling the other moving if we do not look to a third fixed point-say the ground].

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Another classic example is our mother Earth. In fact, it is a huge space-ship in which we humans, animals, plants, hills, oceans etc. are fellow space travelers. The Earth has dual movement - rotational and revolutionary. The third movement is with the Sun in the Milky Way galaxy⁵¹. At present we are in one of its spiral arms. These motions are rather fast. But does anyone feel anything about such staggering speeds? We rather, feel ourselves and the Earth as fixed while all else is found to be moving. This is one big reason why geocentric concept was held so long and so fast. Men didn't want to part with the fixed Earth concept. Those who propagated a 'moving Earth concept' were ridiculed or hounded out or burnt at the stakes. The Church orthodoxy played a dominant part in it.

Coming back to the main issue the question is: how much time interval would the observer in frame (II) measure, if watches, in both frames, are perfectly correct and synchronized? Our common sense is 60 seconds as everyone thinks that 'Time' flows at equal rate in every frame of reference, everywhere. Relativistic physics would, however, say an emphatic 'No'. With increase in 'velocity' time dilation takes place-time flows more slowly. The observer in frame (II) will find the two flares taking place more than 60 seconds apart. This depends upon the velocity $X+Y$ km/sec. Watches slow down with higher velocities. There is nothing like 'simultaneous events' in frames of references moving with different velocities but uniformly. Events that appear simultaneous may appear [actually be] taking place one after the other from another frame of reference moving with a different velocity.

Here again comes the Jain theory of *nayas* or standpoints. From one standpoint [frame of reference] the flares are 60 seconds apart. From another standpoint [frame] the flares are more than 60 seconds apart. However each frame has its own 'proper time' and each is correct from its own point of view. There is nothing like 'universal time' for all frames of references.

Then, why do we not find such discrepancies in our everyday experience? Does 'time' flows slowly in a plane travel or even in a train travel? Yes, but such differences are so very small that they

are not registered in our watches.

We are now in a position to study the famous 'twin paradox' of the Special Theory of Relativity'. Assume that twin brothers/sisters-identical or fraternal does not matter-are born in a hospital. Their timings are meticulously recorded. While one of the two is nurtured at home, the other is immediately taken to a space- ship [with all necessary facilities] which darts off the Earth towards the nearest star-Alpha Centauri. Now light takes around 4 years [4.3 years to be precise] to reach this star from the Earth⁵². Assume further that the space-ship travels at 80 percent of the value of 'c'. Thus the space-ship would arrive at the star after 5 years [$4 \times 100/80$] years. Let us, further assume that the space-ship immediately takes off on its return journey, again, at 80 percent of the value of 'c'. Thus according to Earth's timings when the space-ship lands here, 10 years have passed. The twin here would be 10 years old. The question is: how old would the twin of the space-ship be? It has been calculated that at 80% of 'c', the time dilation is about 1.7 times. That makes the twin in the space-ship about 6 years old, $[10 \times 1/1.7] = [100/17] = \text{approx. } 6 \text{ years}$.

This is shocking to our common sense notion of time. Clocks in a space-ship, the circadian or the endogenous rhythm of the body, the atomic vibrations, have slowed down due to such high velocities. Such high velocities may not be technically feasible now, but it is theoretically possible⁵³. Who could earlier imagine that man may, one day, reach the moon or the mars or go beyond the farthest limit of the solar system by defying the Earth's gravitational pull? In Srimad Bhagwat⁵⁴, one finds Brahma (one of the Hindu Triads) stealing the cows and cowherd companions of Krishna and taking them to his region-the Brahmaloka. When, after a moment, Brahma returns back, he finds to his chagrin that Krishna, in the meanwhile, has created another set of cows and cowherd boys and playing with them as usual. But during that short duration of Brahma, one full year has passed on the Earth. Such was the concept of relativity of 'time' in Puranas. Other similar accounts can be found in other ancient tales. A king of Orissa, for instance, goes to the Brahmaloka just for a day. On his return, he finds that thousands of years have passed on this planet. His subjects, relatives, friends have, meanwhile, died long ago. No one recognizes him as a king at all. A

new era has come into existence!!

Such Puranic tales were considered purely mythological born out of the minds of some semi-civilized men. What would modern minds say of Einstein's 'twin-paradox'- science or science fiction? Is there any possibility of 'time-travel'⁵⁵? A faster-than light particle [e.g. tachyon]⁵⁸ would start travelling backward in time. But let us confine ourselves to the present day science but not forget about its immense possibilities. Rest may be kept for fiction writers. *Anekanta-vad* is, therefore, not a fallacy but very much relevant today. Modern thought seems to have given a new lease to a little appreciated logical system of Jainism.

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NOTES

1. 'Rishayo mantra drasta' such is the definition of a Rishi (Rishi is a seer of a mantra). There is no English equivalent to mantra; hymn has a different connotation.
2. The Nyaya philosophy of the Hindus, have gone into a detailed discussion of *pramana* or proofs; what are the proofs of a valid knowledge? (a) *Pratyaksha* (Sensory or direct); (b) *Anumana* (inference based upon deductive and inductive logic); (c) *Upamana* (Comparison based upon similarities / dissimilarities and (d) *shabda* (Shruti or Verbal testimony).
3. South Africa & Rhodesia practiced apartheid only very recently. Gandhi and Nelson Mandela were the glaring victims of such an obnoxious practice. Colonial enslavement of Asia and Africa by the Europeans ended only after India's independence from the British yoke. Winston Churchill publicly stated that the British, like the alien Aryans, have every right to rule India.
4. Rajaram, N.S. Saraswati River in Science, History and Myth. Qly. J. of the Mythic Soc. Vol. XXXV Sept. 1994
5. Vavilon N.I. Geographical Origins of Cultivated Plants (1951)
6. For instance in their 'A Source Book in Indian Philosophy' Ed. S. Radhakrishnan and C. A. Moore, 1957, [Princeton University Press, Princeton, N.J.] one finds ' The Vedic Period is dimmed by obscurity but it may be placed approximately between 2500 and 600 B.C. This is the period during which the Aryans, having come down to India from central Asia, settled their new homeland..... [xvii].
7. Satya Prakash Saraswati - A critical Study of the Philosophy of Dayananda. Swami Satya Prakash Pratisthana, Lakhimpur 1985.
8. According to him, Altai has been derived from Sanskrit Ila-Sthayi [ईला-स्थायी]. His book in Bengali, - Manaver Adi Janma Bhoomi [Original Abode of Mankind] was published from Calcutta way back in 1912 [Bengali Era 1319]
9. J. D. Bernal writes 'The theorem of Pythagoras was known many thousands of years before Pythagoras. In fact, there were complete lists in ancient Babylonian tablets of all so called Pythagorean right angled triangles..... (p76) [A History of Classical Physics – Barns & Noble 1997]
10. David Frawley pointed out that the Vedic civilization left behind copious literature but no archaeological remains while the Harappan or Indus Valley civilization has left behind wonderful archaeological remains but no literature! This is 'Frawley's, Paradox'. How is this to be resolved?

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11. Even Upanishads, also called Vedanta, (Crest Jewel of the Vedas or the Conclusion of the Vedas), deal exclusively with Brahman or Para Vidya but not with history. Why should Vedas then deal with history? For history there are the Itihas - Purana. The historical approach is, thus, *ab-initio*, faulty.
12. Oppenheimer, one may point out, was the guiding figure of the Manhattan Project which led to the making of the atom bomb blasted during World War II.
13. 'या देवी सर्व भूतेषु शक्ति रूपेण संस्थिता' [The Goddess that resides in every becoming as Energy] - Durga Saptasti of Markandey Purana. In Rk Veda energy is referred to as Agni.
14. ॐ पूर्णमदः पूर्णमिदं पूर्णात् पूर्णमुदच्युते।
पूर्णस्य पूर्णमादाय पूर्णमेवावशिष्यते॥ ईशावास्योपनिषद्
15. See also the 'Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda' regarding Maya and Desh-Kala-Nimitta especially the Jnana-Yoga.
16. Even though Jesus was an Incarnation or 'the son of Man' yet he got himself initiated or 'baptized' by John the Baptist. John objected to such a proposal as he was not 'fit to unloose the latchet of the shoes' of the former. Respecting the sacred tradition, Jesus insisted on the procedure saying 'suffer it to be so'.
17. J. Barthelemy Saint-Hilare-The Buddha and His Religion. First Published - Kegan Paul, Trench 1914. Later published by Bracken Books, London 1996.
18. '.....येनाह नामृता स्यां किमहं तेन कुर्यां.....' [२-४-३] (वृहदारण्यकोपनिषद्)
19. The name Rama-Putra establishes that the legend of Rama was already common during the Buddha's time.
20. 'सर्व भूत हिते रताः' (५/२५)
21. इन्द्र मित्र वरुण अग्निमाहुरथो दिव्य स सुपर्णो गरुत्मान। एकं सदिप्रा बहुधा वदन्तयग्नि यम मातरिखानमाहु॥
(ऋग १-१६४-४६)
2२. तदेवाग्निस्तदादित्य स्तद् वायुस्तद् चन्द्रमा । तदेव शुक्रं तद्ब्रह्म ताऽपः स प्रजापतिः॥ (यजु ३२-१)
23. ये यथा माम् प्रपद्यान्ते तांस्तथैव भजाम्यहम्।
मम वर्त्मानुवर्तन्ते मनुष्याः पार्थ सर्वशः॥ (गीता ४-११)
24. Who knows for certain? Who shall here declare it? Whence was it born, and whence come this creation? The gods were born after this world's

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creation; Then who can know from whence it has arisen? None knoweth whence creation has arisen; And whether he has or has not produced it ; He who surveys it in the highest heaven, He only knows, or haply he may not know. (.....Rk Veda X 129, Mandala Tr. by A.A. Macdonell).

25. There is the concept of 'minds eye' in the West but such a concept of 'Divine Eye', either acquired or bestowed by the Lord, is alien to it. In the Hindu Puranas the great God Shiva or the goddess Durga has been shown to have the 'Third Eye' or the 'Divine Eye' of Knowledge. But where is such a things in the Greek gods, or the goddess Isis of Egypt?
26. उद्धरेत आत्मा आत्मानम् न आत्मानम् अवसादयेत्। आत्मा एव हि आत्मनः बन्धु आत्मा एव रिपुः आत्मनः॥ (गीता ६-५). Raise yourself by yourself and never let it be depressed. For self is friend of self and self is the enemy of the self. (The Geeta 6-5)
27. Equality of all religions before the State.
28. This part of Christ's life is rather ambiguous.
29. Bertrand Russell – History of Western Philosophy. 1946. George Allen & Unwin Ltd. Reprinted in 1996 by Routledge, London.
30. King David and Solomon are given the status of historical figures because their names figure in a Judeo-Christian scripture. Why the same concession be not given to Krishna, Arjuna or Rama etc. only because of some bias?
31. In the Chandogya Upanisad it is narrated that Satya Kama Jabala showed brilliance after he realized Brahman in the forest. The Buddha radiated brilliance when he attained Buddha hood. RamaKrishna also radiated brilliance after his realization of the Godhead.
32. Kamsa, King of Mathura, had also ordered all children born of his cousin sister, Devaki, be killed. But Krishna escaped miraculously from the prison where he was born.
33. Such things are not impossible. Shankaracharya is said to have mastered all the Vedic scriptures at the tender age of only eight. There are other instances of precocious children in different fields, with extraordinary abilities. Mozart could play violin and organ even at the tender age of four. Beethoven became deaf but still created great music.
34. Baptism was purported to be a spiritual ritual. Deuteronomy [10:16] speaks of 'Circumcise your hearts, therefore, and do not be stiff necked any longer' Circumcision, (of the genitals) is but external and secondary. The Hindu system of *Deeksha* by a guru is also a spiritual affair comparable to baptism. Also holy water is used before the ceremony.
35. This reminds us of the modern Hindu temples where the priests and

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'pandas' always pester the pilgrims for money. Dayananda rebelled against such malpractices and was led to the creation of 'Arya Samaj' movement.

36. 'न हि ज्ञानेन सदृशं पवित्रं इह विद्यत'
37. 'ज्ञानग्निं दग्ध कर्मणां तमाहु पण्डितं बुधः'
38. 'ऋते ज्ञानन मुक्ति'
39. 'विद्यायां अमृतं अश्नुत'
40. He expressed in Bengali 'Yato mat, tato path' यतो मत ततो पथ
41. Rolland Romain – The Life of Ramkrishna-Advaita Ashram, Calcutta-14. Originally published in 1929. Sixteenth impression. May 2000. Also see p. 338-339 Sri Ramakrishna the Great Master. Translated into English by Swami Jagadananda (from the original Bengali version by Swami Saradananda) Sri Ramakrishna Mutt. Mylapore, Madras/Chennai (India) 1978.\
42. In fact algebra owes its name to Al-Jabar. Cipher is the Arabic term for Zero (*shunya* of the Hindus). Thus both algebra and numerals 0-9, though commonly called Arabic due to false perception, went to Europe via Arabic countries from India itself.
43. It has been estimated that not less than 14.5 million people got uprooted in such an Exodus and around 0.5 million men perished due to massacre, disease and hunger.
44. Capra. F – 'The Tao of Physics'. 3rd Ed. Flamingo, London. 1982.
45. The Sanskrit equivalent of universe is Jagat [जगत्] which means that which is ever moving.
46. It is interesting to recall that Isaac Newton was born in 1642 when Galileo Galilei died. Newton's '*Philosophie Naturalis Principia Mathematica*' appeared in 1687.
47. Calder Nigel-Einstein's Universe (1979, 1982) p1.
48. In contrast to the revolutionary movement of the Earth, its rotatory motion is just 0.46 km/sec.
49. As a young man, Vivekananda used to ask every saint and every well known religious leader 'Have you seen God'.
50. For instance, when light falls on such metals as Selenium or Silicon, electrons are knocked off immediately from the metal. Thus electricity may be harnessed from it. Such solar panels are now routinely used in many devices. Photosynthesis is another example of photo-electric

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effect which green plants are routinely using to harness solar energy to form chemical energy. In fact, fossil fuel is all due to solar energy harnessed by plants, now extinct.

51. The Milky Way is a moderate sized spiral galaxy with billions of stars. Sun is one of the stars. It is fuelled by the fusion of Hydrogen atoms into Helium. The characteristic yellowish color of its light is due this Helium. Such a fusion releases energy per Einstein's formula. The diameter of this galaxy is approx. 100000 light years. Galaxies are further structured into super clusters. All are in motion.
52. Light takes about 8.5 minutes to reach us from the Sun. Some galaxies are millions, some even billions of light years away. The Sun that we view everyday is about 8.5 minutes older than our vision time. Some galaxies may be in their infancy when we are viewing them.
53. A space-ship travelling at 60km/sec (i.e. $1/5000$ h of c) would take 20,000 years to reach Alpha Centauri, and another 20000 years to return back. Thus after 40,000 years the present civilization, with all its trappings, would be in a prehistoric past. Perhaps some future archaeologists would, then, lay us bare. Meanwhile we may have annihilated ourselves by atomic warfare or by ecological disaster. The mankind would be in a stone age or a new race of Superman (of Aurobindo or G.B.S or Neitze) may overtake this unwise race.
54. Srimad Bhagwat is one of the Puranas supposed to have been composed by Vyaṣa and narrated by Suk Deva (his son) to Parikshit (the only grandson of Arjuna).
55. Idea of 'Time travel' was first mooted by Mark Twain way back in 1889. But H.G. Wells (1894-95) serially published this concept in his famous 'Time Machine'. Heinemann published the same in a book form in 1895. This has, since, caught the imagination of many. Numerous T.V. serials and cinema based on Wells book have come out. When Wells wrote his book, Einstein's Relativity has not yet been published.
56. Tachyons are theoretical particles hypothesized by George Sudarshan (1962). The name, tachyon, was, however, not given by him. This particle has not, yet, been isolated but is believed to exist. Sudarshan's particle would travel backward in 'time'. It may generate the 'Grandfather Paradox'. Sudarshan is of Indian origin (Kerala) but worked in the University of Texas, Austin. His seminal work attracted learned attention. But he was overlooked for Nobel Prize even though others in the field were awarded the Prize. Sudarshan has been decorated with Padma Vibhushan but not Bharat Ratna by the Govt. of India. He is a recipient of other International Awards.

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