

Sanatana Dharma - Ancient mysticism of India

“Aum is the sound of eternity that echoes undyingly in benign silence”

Jyotikar Pattni

On the ancient Himalayas mountain slopes of great spiritual India (Bharat) echoes the distant sound of AUM across the resonant valleys of Tibet and Nepal. The eternal sound of Vedic Godhead reposes in its final beatitude on the trine Himalayas Mountain peaks. The Atman (soul) is illumined wholesome, when ‘pranna’ (life breath), Purusha (existential sublime spirit of life) and Prakriti (physical and mental being) unite together as ‘form’ with the formless celestial in a grand fusion of oneness, (in AUM).

As antique as 12000 BC, mythological presumptions of the mystical formula one and two believe that, ‘life wisdom’ or ‘composite life wisdom’ or ‘absolute life wisdom’, had been narrated by Brahma (the creator) to Surya Narayana (the Sun God). Fifteen thousand years ago, just before the time of Ramayana (epic), Varuna (the cosmic compassionate proliferator) and Indra (the cosmic pious illuminator) were both attending this divine discourse of Brahma. However, Lord Indra (the cosmic pious illuminator) returned to the Sun abode after the completion of the divine discourse with many puzzling questions and in quintessence, listened over and again. In the process of becoming a perfectionist by transcendental listening, Indra became the soul embodiment cosmic illuminator. Some ten thousand years ago, almost as ancient as 8000 BC, the profoundest sages and the seers of the great Himalayas witnessed an extra ordinary profound dialogue between ‘Surya-narayan’ (the Sun God or Agnee Brahma) and ‘Indra’ (the cosmic illuminator). Amongst the foremost seers were Rishi Vishwamitra, Sage Vyasa, Rishi Vashishthe Valmiki, and Sage Bharadwajj.

The celestial preceptors and the translators of this sacred dialogue of life wisdom (Brahma-vidya) were Brahma (the creator), Vishnu (the preserver) Shiva (the transformer). The seers around 3000 BC referred to it as Veda (eternal wisdom), Ved-purana (encyclopaedia of eternal wisdom) and SHASTRAS (scripture).

It was believed per the Puranas (ancient encyclopaedia) that the Vedas have been orally narrated. Daksha-prajapatti (the king of cosmic deities), Indra (the cosmic illuminator), Ashwinis (the twin messengers), Sanakumaras (the four cosmic creators), Narad (the cosmic communicator), and Lord Brihaspatti (the lord of nine planets) were pioneer reciprocators of Vedas in oral Sanskrit.

From 'insight' comes inspiration. From inspiration comes expression. Shiva' or 'Rudra' is construed as 'param-tattva' guru seer (eternal cosmic guru trinity) that which in mantra is also 'AUM TAT SAT' (Aum is the self-same sound, word, and mantra upon which the beauty of final beatitude of truth illumines forever). Shiva took a divine glimpse (through his insight) at the imperfect self-proclaiming mortal human entity, the mortal human mind (man), the ego (ahamkar), and the human passion (desires). Shiva' shed tears. Every tear that fell on the slopes of the Himalayas transformed into 'RUDRAKSHA'. Shiva puranas (encyclopaedia) states that there will be no end to sufferings and sorrow on the human earth (manushya-loka) created by Brahma. However, moksha (total spiritual liberation) may be attained by fulfilling Karma (act of doing) in progressive stages of self-realisation experience. Shiva is the 'Moksha datta' (liberator of mortal life). Through Shiva's insight (divya-drashtee), this beautiful most extra ordinary wisdom known as 'Brahma-Vidya' (Sun wisdom) and 'Divya-tantras' (Soul guide), became INSPIRATION to the transcendental seers and sages of the Himalayas. 'Sanskrit' the divine language of the cosmic deities was born out of the self-same 'AUM'. From sound, came symbol - expression by hands (mudras). From sound and mudra came holistic body expression ('Shiva tandav' and 'yoga-asanas'). From wholesome expression came the profound holistic mind expression (man-samhita-kavita). From wholesome insight, came inspiration. From inspiration came wholesome expression of lyrics, 'shlokas' (hymns) and composite texts (Surtees). It is from the collective synchronisation of profoundest combinations of the sound of music; mudras, yoga, poetry, and philosophy, the perception of divine wisdom and anthology of the Vedas were formed foremost in 'Sanskrit'.

Sages and seers witnessed these profound classical compilations through their 'divya-drashtee' (divine transcendental insight). It was a dialogue of "DIVINE LIFE" on human earth (manushya-loka).

ATMAN (omnipotent power - Hari) vibrates with AUM to generate ENERGY. The fundamental principles of Ayurveda are known as 'samkhya' (the wholesome absolute infinite knowledge of the true self). This principle according to the Sadhus and sages of Himalayas is the life consciousness and spiritual awareness. 'Jivan-atman' individual soul and 'param-atman' eternal cosmic soul is one infinite existential state. To realise atman (soul) wholesome is to holistically realise param-atman (divine omnipotent cosmic soul of God). To understand the pure **existence** in wholesome, is the science of life (ayush).

‘Atman-Vidya’ or spiritual wisdom is a collective classical composition (samhitas) based on subtle spiritual experience (adhya-atman-anubhaviti).

Experiential and enlightening divine wisdom grows and develops through the seven causative chakras of the individual human form (manush-swaroop). The individual chakras (yoni-coccyx, spleen, solar, heart, throat, third eye, and crown) are co-related like to like with the universal cosmic form (vishwa-swaroop) in seven layers known as ‘bhuh’, ‘bhurvah’, ‘svahr’, ‘maha’, ‘janah’, ‘tappah’ and ‘tat’. Vedic principles and practices are focused upon one truth ‘TAT SAT’. Spiritual experience leads us toward that truth (tat-sat) sublime truth oneness without a second. As Vedas purport the science of the cosmic soul and the eternal divinity, Ayurveda is the spiritual medicine based on the premise of cosmic science and metaphysics of the soul divine in relation to the divinity.

Vedas speak of life and health as satt-ayu (righteous livelihood). Health is firstly meant to be gross physical health that encompasses good healthy food (ANNU). Health secondly is meant to be physical health that encompasses healthy nourishment, vitamins, and healthy lifestyle (SAN-JIVAN). Health thirdly is meant to be mental health free from bad thoughts, fears, phobias, mental worries, anxiety, and worries (‘SAT CHIT ANANDA’). Health fourthly implies emotional health that extends the environment, families, immediate social structures, lifestyles, and karma (SAMNSAHAR). Health fifthly implies spiritual health (ATMAN-BHOG). The spiritual health is a karmic phenomenon whose hypothesis implies that an individual soul is born in karma. In karmic yogs (conditions of life), the soul transmigrates and evolves. The ultimate aim of every life spirit is to attain moksha (spiritual liberation). In other words, the maya (matter) and the kaya (substance) are impermanent features of this swaroop sharir (individual personality). The terrestrial is mortal (karmic, causative energy cycles). The celestial is immortal (sublime primordial energy).

By the close of 3000 BC, the purest nectar of ancient Indian wisdom of the celestial comprising many sacred discourses (Srutee’s) and anthology of divine compositions (Smritis) of ‘life wisdom’ (ayush-gnanna/vidya) were found in fragmentation. The Vedas do not have one author or a claimant. Lord Ganesh and Goddess Saraswatti together gave inspiration to Rishi Vyasa to narrate it. Almost like music compilation, it is divya-gnanna (divine wisdom) of the divya-drashtee (divine insight) that manifests in divya-swaroop (profoundest inspiration). Surtees and Smritis together correlate the individual cosmic personality (jivatman) to the collective cosmic existence.

Vedas are an insight, a composite wholesome guide, and a classical holistic philosophy (samhitas) of altruism of the soul (atman) that encompasses its karmic (experiential) journey in ETERNAL time (Mahakaal). Vedas are composite science of cosmic existence and metaphysical philosophy of human life in relation to this cosmic existence. The Vedas co-relate the INDIVIDUAL HUMAN Prakriti (constitution) as being similar to that of the divine COSMIC Prakriti (whole cosmic constitution), and vice versa. The Vedas describe an ENTITY as PRAKRUTTI. Each divine entity comprises nine cosmic elements namely the FOUR METAPHYSICAL aspects PURUSHA-ATMAN (SOUL); PARAMANAS (CONSCIOUSNESS); AHAMKARA (EGO); MANAS (MIND) AND BUDHEE (INTELECT); and the PANCHAMAHA BHUTAS (five physical or manifested aspects) namely the elements of AKASHA (ETHER), VAYAU (AIR), AGNEE (FIRE), APPA (WATER), and AND PRITHVEE (EARTH).

Around 2500 BC, the Vedas were a compilation of such a sacred insight and classical anthology, of the philosophy and the science of life (Ayush). According to Ved-Puranas (ancient encyclopaedia), there are five classical Vedic Surtees:

- Rig Veda (Hymns and poems) (11000 hymns)
- Yajur Veda (Shukla the bright white mystical formula and Krishna the purple mystical formula of the rites, rituals and ceremony) (11K)
- Saman Veda (Mantras and chanting of the sound of music) (21K)
- Athar Veda (Practical arts and science, charms and medicine, nature and time, life and death, field, survival) (7000 hymns).
- Upa Veda (Limbs of Vedas - the material nature – maya)
 - Ayur-Veda dealing with science of life and medicine
 - Dhanur Veda dealing in military and nuclear technology, information Technology and computers
 - Ghandarva Veda deals with fine arts, music, and dance
- Sthaptya Veda deals with maths, physics, chemistry, engineering, Architecture, sculptures, and fitnesses painting.
- Vedangas are also limbs of the Vedas. Vedangas comprise the following: Jyotisha (science of astrology), Kalpa (rites and rituals), Shiksha (pronunciation), Vyakarna (grammar), Nirukta (etymology), Chandas (metrics)

HINDUISM AND HINDU SCRIPTURES

Hinduism is the oldest of all living religions on this human earth. It has been called Sanatana Dharma - Sanatana means Eternal. It has also been called the Aryan Religion. 'Arya' means noble, and the name was given to a great race, of people who settled in India in ancient times.

Hindu religion is the TOTAL VEDIC way of life. It has produced many great men - great teachers, great writers, great sages, great saints, great kings, great warriors, great statesmen, great benefactors and great patriots. Hinduism has no founder. It is not founded by any single person. It is not based on a set of dogmas set by few persons.

Hinduism is a COSMIC SCIENCE of the Vedas and the Upanishads and a profound composition of cosmic philosophy. These composite findings and insight were ascended in a divine form by inspirational works by great Sages, Rishis, Seers, and Saints. The strong foundation on which it is based is called 'Sruti'. Sruti means that which has been heard, the walls are called 'Smriti' - Smriti means that which has been remembered.

The Sruti has been given through wise men, who heard it and received it from Devas; these sacred teachings were not written down till comparatively modern times, but were learnt by heart and constantly repeated like mantras, hymns and holy recitals.

Scriptures or Shastras are religious books. They contain knowledge that tells us about our HINDU OR SANATAN DHARMA OR religion. By reading these books we widen our knowledge and purify our mind, and we are able to differentiate right from wrong. Therefore we should devote time to the study of the Shastras or Scriptures. We should put into practice what we learn from Shastras.

The Sruti consists of the four Vedas. The Vedas are our most important Scriptures. It is the root of the Hindu religion. Hinduism has developed on the teachings contained in the Vedas. There are four in number and are the oldest books in the world. The word 'Veda' means "knowledge" or that which is known. The Vedas contain true knowledge and when we study them we learn the truth.

The Vedas have not been created by men. In the very beginning God revealed unto the Rishis (seers) the knowledge of the Vedas. Therefore the Vedas are said to be Divine knowledge, the knowledge of the divine cosmic being, the knowledge of the karma, the knowledge of the cosmic science, the wisdom of the ancient seers.

The four Rishis who gave us the Vedas were:

1. RIGVEDA - taught by Palita

'Rigveda Samhita' - earliest available book of the world. A collection of nearly 10,500 verses which divided into 1,017 hymns, grouped into 10 'Mandalas' or Chapters address the different deities and primarily deals with Gnan or knowledge. It is mainly poetry.

2. SAMVEDA - taught by Jaimini

'Samveda' contains 1,875 'Mantras' - many of which are also in Rigveda and Yajurveda. Samveda deals mainly with 'Upasana' or worship. It is written in songs which are sung in praise of God.

3. YAJURVEDA - taught by Vaisampayana

'Yajurveda' contains 1,975 verses in 40 chapters. It deals with 'Karma' or action. Yajurveda is written in prose and is divided into 2 parts namely Krishna Yajurveda' and 'Shukla Yajurveda'.

4. ATHARVAVEDA - taught by Sumanta

'Atharvaveda' is the latest Veda where is described worship of higher Gods and compiled at a later stage and is miscellaneous composition. It contains 5,987 'Mantras' which are for knowledge of man.

Each Veda is divided into 4 parts and these are meant to be studied particularly in the four different Ashrams: Brahmacharya, Grihastha, Vanaprastha, and Sannyasa.

These four parts are:

1. MANTRA OR SAMHITA OR HYMNS - a mantra is an embodiment in sound of a sacred word of holistic communion. Mantra has a deity, a seer, a body and sound.
2. BRAHMANAS - explanations of mantras and deal with sacrificial rites to please gods. Rites and Rituals of Homam, sacred sacrifices, holy sacrifices, and exchanges.
3. ARANYAKAS - internal contemplation of the external rituals.
4. UPANISHADS and VEDANTA - are mystical utterances and philosophical thoughts of the ancients revealing profound truths.

Mantra and Brahmana are called Karma Kanda (rituals) and Aranyaka and Upanishads as Upasana Kanda (worship or meditation) and Gnan Kanda (highest knowledge). Both these have to be accomplished in fullest to be able to be a pure Brahmin priest.

ONLY A BRAHMIN who is initiated at the threading ceremony to undertake priesthood can practice the karmic rites of being a HINDU PRIEST.

According to the Vedas and in particular Upanishads, it is confirmed that any HUMAN person other than the one that is blessed by the VEDAACHARYA (seer, sage, rishi, saint, or brahmin ved-vidyaguni (one who has been blessed by deities) CAN NOT become a brahmin priest and as such anyone performing the rites and rituals in the capacity of a brahmin priest in particular and in specific when this person is firstly NOT born into the “kull”(the dynasty) or the family hood of Sat-Brahmins (traditions) is a sinner. Furthermore, the Vedas specifically state that the right cannot have a dual purpose or a dual meaning. Each one of us here on this human earth has a purpose to fulfil and a reason to live for karmic causes. We have to fulfil our individual karmic causes and accomplish our karmic fates in accordance with our individual constitutions (Prakriti) and in accordance with our individual birth charts (karma-nitya). The Vedas strongly refuse to acknowledge conversions from one religion to another religion. When one converts from one’s birthright religion into another religion, this is regarded as VIKARMA (wrongful act) and a punishment to the individual person’s ancestors.

UPANISHADS

The Upanishad is made of two words. 'Upa' meaning near, 'ni' meaning very and the word 'shad' means to sit. So Upanishad means 'come and sit near'. Devotees sat near the Rishis to listen to discourses. By attaining divine knowledge a devotee sits nearer to God by meditation. These are mainly essays of philosophy. There are 250 Upanishads, both ancient and modern and of these 108 Upanishads were recorded since about 200 B.C. The most important and authoritative are the ten Upanishads: Isha, Katha, Kena, Prashna, Mundaka, Mandukya, Aitareya, Taithiriya, Chhandogya, Brihadaranyak. Upanishads were written to make the understanding of the Vedas easily. They are the gist, the goal of Vedas. They form the very foundation of Hinduism. The Upanishads deal with God, Soul and the Universe and their relationship and reveal the spiritual truths. The Upanishads tell us that the soul or self exists in all. The soul is in the physical body and all the time trying to progress with the aim or being on with the Supreme Being. Maya - illusion makes it to lose sight of its aim. The soul is eternal everlasting, cannot be killed or destroyed. The physical body it lives in may die, perish but the soul is eternal so it lives on through repeated rebirths till it finds salvation or Moksha. These and other philosophies are contained in the Upanishads.

The content of the Upanishads

The Upanishads contain some of the most important ideas and topics of the Hindu religion:

- The individual soul (atma) and the universal soul (Brahman) are the same in quality.
- The visible world is an illusion (maya).
- The total effect of actions (karma) decides the next existence of the soul.
- The soul exists through cycle of successive births and deaths (samsara).
- The soul is capable of breaking the cycle of successive lives and deaths and achieving liberation (moksha).
- The individual soul (atma) is never born and never dies.

The Upanishads also deal with: the nature of the soul; the relationship between the body, mind and senses; the various means of liberation; worship and meditation; and duties of a student. **The wisdom of Upanishads is primordial antecedent to the Vedas in that they were in the form of heard wisdom. Only one contemplating the Brahmana purusha (divine cosmic god) can become the Brahmana here on earth through divine experiences.**

VEDANGAS

After Upanishads come the Vedangas. Veda means scripture and 'Anga' means a limb. So Vedangas mean limbs of the Veda body. They have knowledge of 64 arts and sciences. Vedangas are meant for proper cultivation and understanding of the Vedic texts and their application in rituals. The six auxiliaries of Vedas are:

1. SHIKSHA - (Phonetics) the science of proper pronunciation and articulation
2. CHANANDA - (Prosody) the science of compiling poetry
3. VYAKARANA - (Grammar)
4. NIRUKTA - (Etymology) explanations of difficult Vedic words
5. JYOTISHA - (Astronomy)
6. KALPA - (Rituals)

Kalpa is the most important as it states and explains the personal duties of both individual as well as the institutions as in a family and in society. The Kalpa are also called the Sutras.

There are three Sutras namely:

1. SHARUTA SUTRA - explain all about rituals
2. GRIHYA SUTRAS - explain all about the 16 Sanskaras from before birth to death.
3. DHARMA SUTRA - explain social relationships and social duties of people and Ashrama System.

Then come the four Upavedas namely:

1. AYURVEDA - medicine
2. DHANURVEDA - military science
3. GANDHARVAVEDA - music
4. SHILPA OR STHAPATYAVEDA – Astrology, mechanics or architecture

MANUSMRITI

As mentioned earlier 'Smriti' is that which is remembered, that is tradition. It collectively means the secondary scriptures. They derive their authority from the Sruti. The law book of manu firmly upholds varnaashrama-dharma and the four aims of human life. It deals with religious practice, law, custom and politics, and stresses that the varna divisions are based on natural talents and on the ability to do certain types of job. Manu states that women should be honoured and made happy in their husband's families, and that a woman need not marry if a suitable husband is not found for her. The Code of Manu gives divine sanction to the caste system. It is revered by the Brahmins, but it is rejected by other castes. They expand and exemplify the Vedas. They consist of:

- 1 SIDHANTHA SHASHTRA/GRANTH - codes of law
- 2 ITIHASAS - Historic Epics
- 3 PURANAS - Chronicle/Mythology
- 3 AGAMAS - Mysterious Vedic scriptures
- 5 DHARSHANAS - Philosophy/Observation

Manusmriti is famous amongst such scriptures (Smritis) and its author is Manu. Manusmriti plays a major role in the structure of the Hindu society. The rules of religious, political and social regulations governing the structure or organisation of a society. The object is to purify the heart of man and take him gradually to the supreme abode of immortality and make him perfect and free.

It also has laws for the punishment of criminals offenders. There are 18 codes of law or Dharma Shastras. The four stages of life (ashrams) and class system (Varna Vyavastha) are also elaborated in detail in the Manusmriti.

“BHAGAVAD GITA”

The Bhagavad Gita is a part of the great epic, Mahabharata, The Gita is tremendously influential and its significance is so great in Indian literature that it stands out as scripture in itself. Commentaries on the Vedas, the holy books of Hindus are found un the Upanishads and the cream of Vedas, While the essence of the Upanishads are contained in the Gita, Saints, scholars and philosophers have paid the highest tributes to it. It is said to be "the greatest gospel of spiritual works ever yet given to the human race and the most perfect system of Karma Yoga known to man in the past is to be found in the Bhagavad Gita". The Gita consists of 700 slokas (couplets) and contains the teachings of Shri Krishna, synthesising the various spiritual approaches and disciplines. At the Battle of Mahabharata the armies of the Kauravas and Pandavas faced each other on the battlefield. The principal warrior on the side of Pandavas was Arjuna, whose chariot was driven by Lord Krishna. At that moment Arjuna was not able to determine his righteous duty. It was on this occasion that Krishna imparted to Arjuna true religious knowledge and enlightened him on his course of action. Arjuna raised questions to which Krishna responded with appropriate answers. his words of wisdom that were of a philosophical nature became teachings of the Gita.

“TIRUKKURAL”

The literary masterpiece of the Tamil language is Tirukkural which was written by a celebrated Tamil scholar, Tiruballuvar, who was a kindhearted and compassionate weaver by occupation. Tiruballuvar amassed a wealth of experience of life by traveling extensively in the country. It is contended that he was prompted to compose verses to instruct the sons of wealthy merchants on ethics. These small verses, each containing only three lines, were composed in the Kural metre. Therefore his analogy of verses is known as Tirukkural. Tirukkural is a text in which idealistic forms of behaviour, conduct and ethics are spontaneously expressed in poetic language. Great ideas are recorded in its small verses. Scholars have become so inspired through reading this anthology that they have named it the Tamil Veda. Tirukkural's profound ideas and views on ethical behaviour, social obligations and religious ideals are translated in superb verses.

“THIRUMURAI”

To the Tamil speaking Saivates, the Tirumurai is the most important scripture. In fact it is regarded as the Dravidian Vedas by staunch Saivates. The Tirumurais are twelve in number. The first eleven were completed by Nambiyandar Nambi and the 12th is the Periapuranam by Skkilar. The first three Thirumurais are "padigams" (a padigam is 10 verses) by Saint Sambandar, the next three are by Saint Thirunabukarasa (Appar), the seventh by Saint Sundaramoorthy, the eighth by Saint Manuckavasagar, the ninth by many authors, the tenth by Saint Thirumoolar, and the eleventh by some variety of authors. In all these, Lord Shiva is adored, extolled and raised to the highest pinnacle of the Hindu Pantheon - often at the expenses of Vishnu and Brahman. The devotional hymns of Sambandar, Appar and Sundarar are called "Thevaram" and those of Manickavasagar are called "Thiruvacakam" and "Thirukkovai". The Tirumurai is highly devotional and those versed in Tamil should try to memorise at least some of the hymns.

“ITHIHASAS”

The Ithihasas have a historical background and are the counterparts of epics of other countries, with the important difference that they emphasise, again and again, mortality, ethics, conduct, righteousness and religion. They are thus a guide to humanity as to how to live in this world. They cover the four phases of life - studentship (Brahmacharya), married life (Grihastha), retired life (Vanaprastha) and renunciation (Sannyasa); the four aspects of life are given their due importance virtue and righteous (Dharma), acquisition of wealth and property (Artha), enjoyment of pleasures (Kama), and spiritual salvation (Moksha). They have a divine incarnation as the central figure. Pursuit happiness and prosperity is always kept within the bounds of righteousness and virtue and devotion to a Personal God - which is both practical and ideal. The ideal becomes realistic. The twin ithihasas Ramayana and Mahabharata should be treated as complementary to each other. Both portray brotherly relations at their best and their worst. The former is more idealistic while the latter is more realistic. The former teaches Virtue directly, the latter more indirectly. So each anthological epic has its own greatness.

RAMAYANA

The Ramayana is the first great composition of literature dated to the end of the Treta Yuga (2nd Age), was originally composed under divine inspiration, in about 24000 verses, in Sanskrit by the sage Valmiki in North India.

Later Tulsidas wrote it in a Hindi dialect and in the 12th century. The Ramayana has 7 kandas (divisions). The Ramayana portrays a picture of Hindu

Society in the Vedic and Upanishadic ages. Religious principles of the Vedas and Upanishads were not just found in theory but practiced in real life. Together with the above the Ramayana contains historical details about those times, as well as religious teachings that guided man to live an ideal life. The Ramayana depict life led by the Aryas of Northern India with the chief characters being Rama and Sita. Rama is the ideal son, king, brother, husband, warrior and even ideal enemy. On the unique feature is that he is steadfast to the doctrine of "One man for one woman", that is, man should also practice one hundred percent chastity. Sita is the epitome of chastity and is perhaps the highest paragon of feminine virtue. According to Swami Vivekananda "Indian womanhood must be built on the ideal of Sita". Other prominent lessons are: the brotherhood of man (not only Bharata's and Laxmana's devotion to Rama but also others - Guha a hunter, sugreeva Hanumanji (personification of devotion and knowledge) and Vibeeshana a rakshasa full embraced into Rama's brotherly fold in spite of their social differences, the destruction that will inevitably follow lust for women (Ravana's abduction of Sita).

Apart from the interesting story, the literacy excellence, and the morals and lessons, The Ramayana has another soul-elevating aspect; Rama personifies the Universal Soul (God) and Sita the individual soul (Jivatma) who gets separated from the Paramatma (Rama) due to illusion (Maya, personified by Mareecha) the false golden deer, and due to the bondage of the three qualities of lethargy, passion and goodness (Tamas, Rajas, Sattwa personified by the brothers Kuhmbakarna, Ravana and Vibeeshana respectively). Finally, by unswerving longing to be united with the Paramatma (God), and by the help of steadfast devotion and knowledge (personified by Hanuman), the bondage to Tamas and Rajas is severed (destruction of Kuhmbakarna and Ravana) and the individual soul is reunited with the Universal Soul. Thus, the Ramayana can be interpreted in terms of the highest teachings of the Vedanta philosophy especially by sceptics who find the epic too fantastic for historical acceptances, Laxmana portrays Saguna bhakti (devotion to a Personal God) and Bharata portrays Nirgun bhakti (meditation on the Impersonal God). Rama was human perfection, though the human and the divine qualities seem to have been equally distributed in him. The story of the Ramayana has been translated in every Indian language. The Tulsi Ramayana in Hindi and Kambana Ramayana (which excludes the last Kandam) with some alternations to suit the better cultural heritage of the Tamils. The Kambana also gives Rama, the hero, the status of an incarnation of Vishnu, the Preserver aspect of God.

MAHABHARATA

Mahabharata literally means "Great India". The Mahabharata , which took place (or otherwise was dreamt) at the end of Dwapara Yuga (3rd Age), was composed by Veda Vyasa. Lord Ganesha wrote down the verses at Vyasa's dictation as soon as each of the 96,000 verses was composed by Vyasa. The Mahabharata is a complete encyclopedia of life. In it we find every type of character found in this world, and every problem of life possible is presented as well as the solution to it. Every lesson worth learning is taught. It contains philosophy, political science, law religion; in fact everything about Indian life. Devotion to a personal God also pervades the epic and though Krishna is central figure, Shiva is elevated too, showing that Shiva and Vishnu are One and they are like the two eyes of Hinduism.

The Mahabharata is the story of the Pandavas and Kauravas who were cousins. The preaching of Lord Krishna and his lofty teaching as contained in the Bhagavad Gita are also part of Mahabharata. A detailed and interesting description of the battle of the Mahabharata, which was the greatest battle fought in ancient India, takes up a large part of the book.

- Krishna personifies the Paramatma (God), Arjuna the individual soul (Jivatma).
- Yudisthira personifies righteousness, the most virtuous and pure (sattwic), Bhima strength and power (rajasic).
- Arjuna personifies as having a balance of purity and strength, of sattwic and rajas. (He was chosen by the Lord as His chief instrument in the great war which was to determine as world cycle and as a disciple to whom was delivered the divine message which was to lead humanity to its destined goal of Immortality on earth.
- Karna represents gratitude, chivalry and giving without expectation of rewards.
- Bhisma is the ideal Karma Yogi who sacrifices his life for the sake of his father.
- Sahadeva personifies single-minded devotion to a personal god.
- Duryodhana greed, arrogance and envy under the influence of evil counsel (Shakuni).
- Dhritrashtra and Gandhari the danger of excessive attachment (to children).
- Draupadi represents fire and the earthly wife while the Pandavas represent the other forces of nature. All six represent righteousness which must inevitably have the backing of God (Krishna) and triumph over all vicissitudes (change of fortune).
- Vidur represents wisdom and loyalty.

Dharma means righteousness, righteousness leads to divine thoughts, divinity leads to light of delight, that which ends in truth.

The main theme is "Where there is Dharma there is Krishna, where there is Krishna there is victory". The Mahabharata has also been interpreted to symbolise the eternal struggle in man between the few good qualities in man (5 Pandavas) and the many evil qualities (100 Kauravas). All these qualities are embodied in one human constitution and when the human being destroys all the 100 evil qualities the individual human being becomes Krishna's ARJUN.

The objective of Vyasa Muni was to show that ultimately war and violence are harmful and meaningless to mankind.

“PURANAS”

The Puranas were compiled by Veda Vyasa and contain chronicles and legends and genealogies of kings and sometimes contain historical matter. They generally deal with ideal truth and there is myth, legend, history and prophecy.

The Puranas are meant for popularizing religious ideas among the people. There are 18 main Puranas equally distributed for the glorification of Shiva, Vishnu and Brahma. These are:

those glorifying Brahma	those glorifying Vishnu	those glorifying Shiva
*Brahma	*Vishnu	*Matsya
*Brahmanda	*Naradiya	*Kurma
*Brahma-vaivarta	*Padma	*Linga
*Markandeya	*Bhagavata	*Vayu
*Bhavishya	*Garuda	*Skanda
*Vamana	*Varaha	*Agni

There are also 18 subsidiary or Upa-puranas. Sanatkumara, narasimha, Skanda, Sivardha, Aascharya, Naradya, Kapila, Vamana, Dusanasa, Brahmanda, Varuna, Kalika, Maheshwara, Samba, Soura, Parasana, Mareecha, Bhargava.

Different Puranas are popular among the followers of different sects.

Together with epics such as the Ramayana and Mahabharata, the Puranas comprise what is taken to be the fifth Veda. The sage Vyasa imparted the teaching of the Puranas to his disciples Roma Harshana who belonged to the Suta community. Roma Harshana imparted the teaching to Vishvampayana, and his son Sauti who in turn imparted this teaching to Shaunaka and others in holy place of Naimisharanya.

Ardent Vaishnavaites regard the Bhagavatam as the holiest scriptures. It extols and glorifies Vishnu as the highest in the Hindu pantheon. It consists of 12 cantos (divisions) and the most voluminous and important canto is the tenth where Krishna's life and exploits are glorified and He is adored as synonymous with the Absolute. The Bhagavatam was compiled by Veda Vyasa and was given to the world by his son Suka who narrated it to king Parikshit (grandson of Arjuna), just before his death.

They also contain psalms and hymns of devotion and of worldly detachment. The stories of the Puranas throw much light on the ancient history and geography of India. From this we also get a glimpse of how the various sects within the Hindu society developed.

“AGAMAS”

These deal with the worship of a particular aspect of God and prescribe detailed courses of discipline for the worshipper. All Agamas describe knowledge (Gnan), concentration (yoga), esoteric ritual (kriya) and esoteric worship (charyai). The Vaishnava Agamas glorify Vishnu, the Shakti Agamas glorify the Female Deity; the 28 Saiva Agamas glorify Shiva and have given rise to an important school of philosophy known as Saiva Sidhanta.

“DARSHANAS”

Darshana literally means 'insight' or 'vision' and in a broader term means observation and a detailed examination. There are six schools (or orthodox systems) of Hindu philosophy based on the Vedas. The Vedas and the Upanishads explain the relationship between God, Soul and matter. Their teachings lead us to our goal of God-realisation. The Darshanas have been written for the purpose of realising the true knowledge, hence their name. They elucidate the method of finding the truth, of dispelling ignorance of liberation from sufferings, and of God-realisation.

The six Darshanas and their respective authors are:

1. Nyaya by Gautama Muni.

2. Vaisheshika by Kannad Muni.

The Nyaya and Vaisheshika have much in common and can be classified under one group. They analyse the world of experience and explain how God has made all this material world out of atoms and molecules. They both believe in a Personal God, a plurality of souls, and an atomic universe.

3. Sankhya by Kapila Muni.

The Sankhya is a theory of evolution and according to this, the universe consists of two eternal realities, once conscious (the Purusha) and the other unconscious (Prakriti i.e. matter). Prakriti is universal matter or universal energy. It has three gunas (qualities) - purity (Sattwa), activity (Rajas) and dullness (Tamas). When the equilibrium is disturbed by the nearness of souls (Purusha), the Purusha exerts on Prakriti a force and the gunas begin to act on one another leading evolution of the 25 principles found in man - sense and motor organs, the gross elements, mind, intellect, ego etc. The Sankhya is atheistic and does not believe in a Personal God. Bondage belong to Prakriti but is attributed to Purusha which is eternally free.

4. Yoga by Patanjali Muni.

The Yoga philosophy deals with the discipline of the mind and its psychic powers. It is system of practical discipline laying emphasis upon concentration and will power. Hatha Yoga treats of the methods of bodily control and regulation of breath and leads to Raja Yoga. There are 8 limbs in Raja Yoga - restraint, observance, posture, control of breath, withdrawal of the senses, concentration, meditation, and the super conscious state (samadhi). The goal of life is the absolute separation of Purusha from Prakriti.

5. Purva Mimamsa by Jaimini Muni

The Purva Mimamsa is a system of Vedic interpretation. Its aim is to investigate into the nature of Dharma. God is ignored but not denied; and the central theme is concerned with rituals. The cause of bondage is the performance of prohibited actions. Souls are countless and the soul is the doer and enjoyer. Creation of the world is not believed. There are grades of happiness in heaven.

6. Vedanta (or Uttara Mimamsa) by Vyasa Muni

The Vedanta teaches that religion is the science of the soul.

The soul is divine and we must become conscious of our Divine nature and become perfect by manifesting divinity in and through all the actions of our everyday life, by various methods-work, devotion, concentration, contemplation, meditation and the highest wisdom. It is based upon the doctrine of evolution and that each soul is bound to become perfect sooner or later through karma and reincarnation. The Vedanta conforms closely to the doctrines propounded in the Upanishads. There are three authoritative texts according to Vedanta: Brahmasutras, the Upanishads and the Bhagavad Gita. The Vedanta considers three entities Brahma (God), Maya (illusion) and Jiva (Soul)

Significance of ancient scriptures:

The Scriptures of the Hindu religion informs the followers of the faith about the higher verities, as well as their duties and codes of conduct. They serve to increase our faith in God and to take us away from the mundane and material world - at least for a time. The Scriptures profoundly influence the life of the people and keep the religious ideas alive in the society. The characters in our Epic and Puranas may appear too fantastic to be true but the ideal and perfect are implanted in our minds and a target for us to aspire.

HINDUISM AND SANATAN DHARMA

Hinduism is the Sanatana Dharma, the eternal religion which has been perfected by countless Rishis, Seers, Sages, and 'Avatara' (incarnate human form of God), to uplift the ALL TOGETHER humanity in all together collections of true divine wisdom. From Sanatana Dharma the Indians arise, it is for the world and not for themselves that Indians are rising to serve and to nurture the mother earth.

Anticipating the discoveries of many cosmic sciences and the evolution of human karmic philosophy make Sanatana Dharma a guide from the higher order. It is the one religion which impresses on humankind the closeness of God without oblique surrender.

That trespasser who trespasses our rightful spiritual paths (as ordained by the nature and the higher order at birth) and that power holding politician who claims to be a holy leader and forms followers of his individual institutions in systems and bureaucracy is firstly an imperialist, secondly an intruder, thirdly a manipulator of the laws of nature and fourthly a wrong doer. A person born into a family that traditionally followed the roots of one's traditional religion should not, cannot, and

must not convert oneself into another religion for personal convenience. This is what the world has suffered in the history of mankind.

Brief historical account of Indian Heritage

The harappa civilisation (2500 BC)

Around 2500 BC, Ayurveda, in its fragmented compilations and transliterations began its karmic journey on the inspirational land of Bharat – divine nectar (mother India). ‘Mohenjodaro’ and ‘Harappa’ are foremost underground cities with wealthy royal and noble dynasty of Rajasthani, Sindhi, and Punjabi kings.

Aryan invasion of the Ganges and the Indus valley (1500 BC to 1000 BC)

The Aryans invaded India around 1500 BC. They spread and took the nectar of Vedic wisdom from the slopes of Indus valley (known as the Himalayas) to Afghanistan, Tibet, across Iran into the Middle East and Europe. Taken away from Indus valley, Ayurveda rapidly came to Europe and the first translation of Charak Samhita in German language.

Mahabharat epic (900 BC)

Srimad bhagwattam, Mahabharatas, and Gita were compiled.

Spread of Buddhism and Lord Buddha’s nirvana (544BC)

Between 500 BC and 600 AD, there was also an intense spread of Buddhism by Buddhist monks into Tibet, China, North India, Southern India and Sri Lanka. In awakening Buddhism, most Buddhist monks were Ayurvedic scholars and thus spread Ayurveda.

- Composition and compilation of the Upanishads (550 BC)
- Invasion of Alexander (327 BC)
- Reign of Ashoka (272 BC)

Indian Vedic heritage flourished for nearly 500 years building various foundations.

- Rise of Islam and suppression of Vedic heritage and temples (700 AD)
- Colonisation by Europe and British (1288 AD to 1930 AD) and the decline of Indian royal dynasty, Indian heritage and culture and Indian wealth. Spread of Indian heritage into Spain and Germany.
- Pre-independent India and Hindu-Muslim wars (1500 AD to 1950’s) – destruction of Ayurvedic schools and hospitals.
- Independent India (1950’s) Ayurveda awakens across India in many foremost schools in Gujarat, Banares, Calcutta, Bombay, Poona, Sri-Lanka, Ceylon, and South India.
- India-China war (1962) Spread of Ayurveda to Burma and China

- India-Pakistan war (1965-1971) Formation of various councils of Ayurveda across India.
- 1971 to date - Increase in Universities and Scientific researches.

Understanding history of India is like a gospel of man made historical events, none of which will sustain justification.

One true historical fact emanates from the transpiring India is that it has suffered karmic adversities over the last 5000 years in conflict of constant invasions, ruin of royal and noble Indian dynasty, and political epiphanies.

Indian history brings deep sombreness and moving emotions. Astonishing and amazing is one set of emotions that feels the suffering and pain of all that has been taken from Mother India through invasions, Islamic camouflage, colonisation, and foreign anguish.

Courageously, serene is yet another set of emotions that gathers a momentum of divine integrity, reaching out to the very lands of Himalayas almost like a crying child wanting to suck a mother's breast milk.

This inner voice is the hunger of a spirit of life that perches on true divine nectar of Ganges. Such is Bharat's laps (India's laps) 'Himalayas' – It is a land of sovereignty that never ceases to give divinity. 'Maa' (mother) gives endlessly, selflessly and divinely.

The future

Last 60 years have been the awakening of Indian Heritage.

Hope can only emanate if each of the segregated separated distanced relative unites together in forming a communion of one universal dharma without personal greed, personal selfish ambitions, personal individual umbrellas, personal desires, personal motives and personal intentions. Our intentions are centrifugal to the future of our heritage.

Jyotikar Pattni

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