

## 5. Basic Belief

**T**he Sanathana Dharma had to meet the determined opposition from Islam for centuries; political subjection to Muslim dynasties added to the problems. The cry, “Allaho-Akbar” rose to the skies, and challenged the very existence of the Bharathiya Culture that had been fostered since ages by seers. No other nation suffered so long and so deep from such fear. But the eternally fresh and vital Dharma of this land has stood the test and even today, Sanathana Dharma is as potent and valid as ever. It is ready to meet any challenge from any new quarter. From the signs of the times, it is evident that this culture is today dominant and powerful. Why, it is prepared even to march forward and expand its area of constructive influence. Expansion is the sign of “life,” is it not?

This day the principles and practices laid down in Bharathiya Culture and the attitudes and feelings enshrined

in it, are not lying low within the boundaries of this subcontinent. Whether we like it or not, they cross over to other lands and establish themselves there. The main ideas, the essential outlooks, penetrate the literature of those peoples and permeate their thought processes. In some lands, among some peoples, they have won even dominant roles, with no opposition. For, Bharath is offering as its contribution to the peace and prosperity of the World, an invaluable body of spiritual wisdom. This contribution is more elevating than that from any other country. It is more necessary, more basic and more precious than what any other nation can give. This fact is becoming clearer to all mankind.

The ancients of this land were not averse to the examination of other problems too. They tried, like other peoples, to unravel the mysteries of external Nature. And this amazing nation achieved results even in this field, through the exercise of their sharp intellect, which are beyond the fondest dreams of men in other countries.

The supreme end of education, the highest purpose of instruction, is to make man aware of the “universal immanent Impersonal.” This is the truth that is loudly proclaimed in the Vedas. The seers and sages of Bharath courageously entered upon this adventure. The ever-changing aspects of Nature, the appearance and disappearance of its working, may be a fine subject for study. But the ancients of Bharath proclaimed that the science of the Transcendent Principle

that permeates the Universe, the Unchanging Eternal, the Embodiment of Everlasting Ever-full Ananda, the Residence of Unaffected, Undiminished Peace, the Ultimate Refuge for all Time of the Individual Jivi, that science is the highest knowledge that man must gain.

The knowledge of the principles governing objective nature can at best provide man with food and clothing. It teaches man ways and means of gaining them. It leads to the exploitation of the weak by the strong. If the people of Bharath had bent their energies towards the discovery of the secrets of the world, they could have easily acquired mastery.

But very soon, the people of Bharath recognised that this search was but secondary and that the prime position should be assigned to the spiritual. They decided that pursuing the secrets of external nature was not the real sign of Bharathiya. This resolution brought glory to this nation. Others cannot even approach the fringe of this problem. Like Prahlada, of the legends, Indians have been able to survive ordeals of fire and escape unhurt the torture of ages. Those who had no spiritual outlook or aspiration were not reckoned as Bharathiyas. Many in foreign lands believed that Indians were more politically minded, an inference that was misleading. They felt that only a small fraction of Indians were spiritually-oriented. But Bharath always insisted that a spiritually directed way of life was the first and foremost duty of every Indian. Whenever the chance offered itself,

after discharging this duty, Indians felt that they should collect and confirm the spiritual potency that they had. This was exactly what happened in the past.

National integration meant, in those days, the concentration and commingling of all the spiritual forces and urges that were scattered among seekers all over the land. The word, “nation,” meant in India the grouping together of hearts that beat time to the same song and that respond, by similar vibration, to the same spiritual call. The basic truths that this faith expounded were as broad as the sky, as eternal as Creation. Those Truths were described in many subtle ways and commented upon very close and deep. But as a result of the very breadth of the vision that discovered them, and laid them down, it was inevitable that many faiths emanated on the basis of the beliefs they encouraged.

Diversities in attitudes and practices are natural and ought to be welcomed. There is no need for an ironclad hard Faith. Only there is no place for one- overall Faith. Rivalry among those following different paths cannot bring peace and prosperity to any country. Without the freedom to adopt faith, the world cannot progress. India taught that a small group can never command the inexhaustible resources of the world, that for the effective functioning of the community it is necessary to divide the work of the community among sections of the people, and allot the task of contributing its share of the common good to each section

of the community. This gave facilities for diversities and for mutuality. Diversities were approved for the sake of the practical application of spiritual powers and potentialities. So, there is no need for factionalism and fights. The diversities too are but superficial. They are not really real. There is an entrancing sense of mystery that can explore these diversities and discover the key to visualise the ONE that underlies the many. This is what the ancient texts proclaim as the most precious revelation. “*Ekam sath, vipraah bahudha vadanthi*” (The One alone exists; wise men describe It in manifold ways).

Therefore, it can be asserted that the Faith of the Bharathiyas is the one Faith that accepts and reveres all Faiths. When we shelter factionalism and fanaticism in our hearts, in relation to our own specific faith or the faith of others, we, as descendants of those fathers are bringing disgrace on ourselves. Whether we are adhering to the classical Vedantic faiths or whether we are adopting recent trends in that Vedantic thought, we have to bear in mind certain basic universally accepted truths. All those who bear the name, Hindu, have to believe in them and shape their lives accordingly. May they have the will to do so.

1. The first of these is: “Bharathiyas do not insist that everyone has to be bound to one attitude, or that everyone must abide by one interpretation or commentary only, to the exclusion of other possible explanations or points of view, or that the way of life

with all its implications has to be the one approved by some one individual or group.” The Bharathiya culture lays down that it is a heinous sin to exercise force upon anyone, in matters of the spirit.

2. Next: The Eternal Universal Dharma or Religion is taught by the Vedas. The sacred body of teachings, referred to as Vedic, is coeval with Creation, without ascertainable beginning or end. With it, all inquiry into the spirit and the ramifications of faith have to find fulfilment and close. One cannot escape this conclusion if he studies and practises the Vedas. For all problems involving differences in spiritual attitudes and aspirations, we can get solutions that are convincing from the Vedic texts themselves. The viewpoints differ about what portions of the Vedas are authoritative for each. Persons affiliated to one sect might regard some portions of the Vedas as holier and more sacrosanct than others. In spite of this, all are brothers and co-sharers of the teachings and the lessons imparted by the Vedas. All that is elevating and beneficial for us today, all that is holy and sacred to us, all that is pure and ennobling, have been made available to us from and through these wondrous texts of old. So long as we hold to this latter belief and proclaim it aloud, what can little differences of opinion over matters of minor importance do to cause rifts? For this reason, we have to announce these lessons and principles so that they spread beyond all horizons.

3. The Vedas are concerned with and they expound the Supreme Person, the Easwara who created this Universe, who fosters It, in whom It merges in accordance with the process of time, and in whom is again manifest as His Form this amazing Universe. We might have diverse beliefs about the nature and characteristics of this Easwara. One person might picture Him as having human nature and characteristics. Another might believe that He is the embodiment of non-human attributes, formless, Easwara. Every one of these can find in the Vedas declarations supporting his viewpoints. It is a fact that, though they hold diverse views, they all have faith in Easwara, the Godhead. That is to say, they believe that there is undoubtedly One transcendent eternal Power, and that all this has originated from It, and that all this has to merge in It again. This belief is the hallmark of a Bharathiya. He who has not acquired this belief is not entitled to the name, Bharathiya. He does not deserve to be called a Hindu.

Of what nature, with what characteristics is the Easwara you teach? This question is irrelevant to us. It is not so important. Let us not dispute about the various points of view that divide persons. Enough for us if Easwara is accepted and emphasised. For even though one description and delineation might be better and clearer than another, no delineation and description can be “bad.” One declaration would be “good,” the second one would be “better” and the third one, “best.” But in the stream of Bharathiya spiritual adventure, no

- description or picturization can be pronounced “bad and unacceptable.” That is the reason why Easwara confers Grace on all those who teach any Name and any Form that can attract and inspire man, as sacred and valid. May this faith grow from more to more. For, it brings more spiritual progress, the more it is acted upon. Only, the aspiration must be related to God or Easwara.
4. For spiritual exploration and discovery, there can be no qualification like wealth or disqualification like poverty. This truth has to be handed down to the children by Bharathiya parents. They have to grow up with this broad feeling.
5. Bharathiyas do not accept the belief, held by persons belonging to other countries, that the Universe was manifested a few thousand years ago and that it will be destroyed finally and forever, at some future date. Bharathiyas will not accept the theory that the Universe arose out of Nothing. They believe the Universe or this objective Creation is beginningless and endless, and that, according to the laws of evolution in time, it will recede from the gross into the subtle stage, and after being in that stage for some period, it will again recede into the causal stage from which It emerged. From the One into which it merges, it will gradually manifest itself as Many, through the subtle and the gross stages of expression.