

## 16. Man and God

**F**or the consummation of human evolution, and the realisation by man of his highest goal, religion and spiritual discipline are very essential. Religion is the link between the individual and the Universe, between JIVA and DEVA. If that does not exist, life becomes chaos. A cow caught on a hill, wanting to go to the hill opposite, but confronted with a flooded river in between, needs a bridge between the two. That is what religion is. Between the hill of individual life and the region of the Universal, there is the flooded river of Nature, with all its confusion and complexities. It is difficult to discover where it comes from, how it accumulates all that uproar and where it ultimately ends. But fortunately, we have in every human community bridge-builders, who help people to cross.

We may have more than one bridge, but the purpose of each is the same. The bridge built by the sages and seers

of India is known as the Sanathana Dharma bridge. It is called so because it is an eternal, everlasting bridge based on the ageless foundation of the Vedas, and can be reliably used by all, in all countries, at all times. That is why it is sometimes called the Vedic bridge and the Vedic path, also as the Aryan Path. All attempts to trace those who have laid this path have failed. This is the reason why they have given up the search in despair, characterising the path as “*akartha*” or undesigned. They assured themselves that the Vedas or in other words the Lord himself has been the designer.

All religions and spiritual paths laid through the ages are indeed sacred; for, they have all been designed by Messengers of the Lord, chosen because they are the foremost of men. Buddha, Jesus Christ, Zoroaster, Mohammed—names such as these are known world wide. Their doctrines, ideals, and thoughts, have all become so valid for their followers that their names have been identified with their religions.

Since the ideal religion at that time was believed to be the Message from God and since that Message was communicated and spread by Jesus Christ his name was given to it. So also the Buddhist religion was named after Buddha, since it was intuited and spread through him as the Divine instrument. Mohammed who heard the Message of God laid down doctrines and disciplines and those who follow them are said to belong to Mohammedanism. Therefore it is not wrong to say that all these religions are

products of the foremost among men and the most ideal Messengers of the Lord.

Divine Intelligence is universal and all-comprehensive. Human intelligence is confined within narrow limits. Its range is very poor. The scriptures deal with only one goal, but they indicate different paths to reach it. Each path could be a definite religion and its doctrines and disciplines considered different from the rest. So the statement that Rama, Christ, Zoroaster, Buddha, Mohammed, and others are one, is not valid.

In the Christian religion, it is stated that individual beings were created as they are. It is said that Allah did the same. Even Zoroastrian and Buddhist religions describe creation more or less on the same lines. But Vedic religion has a different version. The individual is as eternal as God. He is a spark of God. If there are no jivis (beings) there is no Deva (God). This is specially emphasised in the Vedas. Followers of other religions are, in recent times, recognising this truth. The present life of each is only an interval between the previous and the future lives. It is but a step towards the next. This is indicated in the Vedas. The Vedas instruct about the relationship between the previous and future births. No other religion however, has revealed so much about previous and future births.

Another point: Among the four objectives of life, Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha, various religions describe the stage of Moksha or liberation in various ways.

Each one lays down some doctrine and insists upon faith in that doctrine. And therefore there is no agreement or identity between the experiences they describe. The Hindu description of the experience can however be gained by followers of all religions. There may be agreement in the details of the descriptions in various religions. But the total experience is not described in the same manner. The reason is: Hindu religion which has come down from the timeless past is really supreme. Other faiths are only based on some of the doctrines of Hinduism selected by them and developed in accordance with the traditions and culture of their own region. Therefore Truths inherent in the Hindu faith often appear in those other faiths. Hinduism and Hindu culture have been flowing as one continuous stream.

In the Hindu religion rituals and ceremonies have been laid down to be observed from sunrise to nightfall without any intermission. Many of them are elaborate *yajnas* (inward-directed sacrifice), *yagas* (outward-directed sacrifice), and sacrificial offering to Divine Powers. Not being content with rituals and dedicatory ceremonies appropriate to the baby growing in the womb until death and the subsequent attainment by the person of higher worlds, elaborate disciplines have been laid down. No other religion has so many and so elaborate rules of living. Therefore, it will not be correct to declare that all religions are the same. They might have adopted a few or many of these from Hinduism since Hinduism has, from the beginning, laid emphasis on them.

In order to carry out this heavy schedule of Karma or ritual, man must have Bhakthi, Jnana and Yoga—Faith, Understanding and SELF-CONTROL. Dharma is the tap root of the great tree, religion. It is the eternal source of its strength. It is fed by waters of Bhakthi. The leaves and flowers are renunciation and other virtues, and the fruit is Jnana.

In these stages of growth, if there is any interruption or deficiency, that is to say even if any regulation is missed the fruit of wisdom or Jnana which the tree yields will be affected adversely.

Such strict plans for spiritual progress can be found only in Hinduism and not in any other faith. For Hinduism is the nectar churned and prepared by the ancient Rishis out of their own genuine experience. It is not put together from things available in books.

It is not proper for anyone to adopt whichever faith or code that pleases him most. For they believe that life is a matter of just three days, and so they need morality and self-control. Life is a long journey through time, and religion confers peace for the present and encouragement for the future. We must believe that we are at present undergoing the consequences of our own activities in the past.

It is a great source of peace that people can be content with their present conditions because they know they themselves were the cause and know that if one does good

and meritorious deeds now, it is possible to build a happy future. This is great encouragement. It is only when life is run on these two lines that morality and self-control can have a place in life. The power to adhere to these two ideals consists in the encouragement and the enthusiasm given by religion.

We cannot determine the origin of religion or its end. So also it is difficult to declare the origin and the end of the individual or the Jiva. According to Hinduism a Jivi is timeless, the present life is but the latest of the series brought about by its own thoughts and acts. The Jivi has not come now, as a result of either the anger or the grace of God. They are not the cause of this present existence. This is the declaration made by the Sanathana Dharma.

Religion cannot be, at any time, a mere personal affair. It may be possible to assert so, since each one's faith is rooted in himself and since each one expresses that faith in his own behaviour and actions. But how far is that statement valid? It is not valid to assert that there is no God or religion or *Varna* (caste), as many intelligent people do to their own satisfaction. We find a large number of people proclaiming the non-existence of God and declaring that the directives to guide and sublimate one's activities laid down in all religions are superstitions. These persons are not ignoramuses. They are not without education. When such individuals characterise spiritual beliefs and practices as superstition, what importance can we attach to their

statements! If they entertain such convictions in hearts, society need not complain, for it suffers no harm. But they do not stay quiet. For example, intoxicating drinks like toddy, brandy, etc., are indulged in by others. Can this be dealt with as if it is a personal affair? Do others feel happy over it? However emphatically the matter is declared “personal,” this evil habit does affect society subtly and openly in various ways. It demonstrates its nefarious effects, in spite of everything. When ordinary persons indulge in such harmful habits, the danger is not so considerable. But when elders who have won a name in society do so, the common man too follows the evil path.

The works of Vyasa and Valmiki are very ancient. Such writings of past ages are aptly called Puranas. But though centuries have flown by since they were born, age is powerless to affect them. Had it been otherwise, they would not be loved and demanded even today by people residing all over the land from the Himalayas to Sethu. The texts are so young and fresh. They are unaffected by the passage of time. Whoever desires Ananda at whatever place, whenever he needs, can get himself immersed in it.

The *Manu Dharma Sastra* is unique. We have no text to compare with it in any country throughout history. Can anyone create a book of the same type at any time? The doctrines of the Hindu faith and the Sastras which enshrine them do not offer homage to material sciences. These do, of course progress from day to day but the theories honoured

one day are condemned the next day and new theories are brought up to explain the same phenomenon. How then can the eternal and ever-valid truths of the spirit honour the material sciences? The scientists of today call this attitude “blind faith.” They want it to be discarded. They want every subjective and objective fact to be examined and put to rigorous tests. They confuse themselves when they consider this as an independent path to the discovery of reality. But it is not correct. There is no need to dig up and lay bare new doctrines. Every principle and path is readily available. Understanding is the only thing we need aspire to.

Western philosophers from Kant to Spencer have, in fact, only dwelt upon some facets of the Dwaitha, Adwaitha and Visishtadwaitha schools of thought. Hindus have long ago delved into these matters and reduced their understandings into doctrines and principles.