

CULTURE & ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE IN SANSKRIT

BA SANSKRIT

VI SEMESTER

CORE COURSE

(2011 Admission)



UNIVERSITY OF CALICUT

SCHOOL OF DISTANCE EDUCATION

CALICUT UNIVERSITY P.O. MALAPPURAM, KERALA, INDIA - 673 635

**UNIVERSITY OF CALICUT
SCHOOL OF DISTANCE EDUCATION**

**STUDY MATERIAL
BA SANSKRIT**

(2011 Admission Onwards)

VI SEMESTER
CORE COURSE

CULTURE & ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE IN SANSKRIT

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B.A DEGREE PROGRAMME SANSKRIT
SEMESTER - VI CORE COURSE - XIV
CULTURE AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE IN SANSKRIT

Credits. 4

Instructional Hours 90

Aim of the course

The course intends for the reintegration of Indian Culture in the light of modern knowledge. The awareness of environmental science helps us to improve and integrate the appreciation of literature.

Objectives of the Course

To enable the students to understand and appreciate currents of world thought, besides the movements of the Indian mind. And to familiarise the ancient Indian environmental principles through literature.

Course Outline:-

Module I

Indian Culture - Indus valley, Harappan Culture, Vedic Culture.

Module II

Reformation movement in India - Buddha, Sankara, Ramanuja Madhwa, Vallabha, Chaitanya, Sri. Ramakrishna, Vivekenanda, Guru Nanak, Rajaram Mohan Roy, Balagangadharathilak, Sree Narayana Guru, Dayananda Sarawathy.

Module III

Environmental Science in Sanskrit

Book for Reference

1. Cultural Heritage of India Vol I to III
 2. Indian Heritage - Dr. V. Raghavan.
 3. The wonder that was India by A.L. Basham
 4. Facets of Indian Culture - A. Sreenivas
 5. Environmental awareness in Sanskrit - V.N. Jha
 6. Environmental Awareness in Ancient India by Dr. C. Rajedran from Indian Scientific traditions by Dr.N.V.P.Unithiri
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MODULE I

INDIAN CULTURE - INDUS VALLEY, HARAPPAN CULTURE, VEDIC CULTURE.

INDIAN CULTURE

1. INDUS VALLEY AND HARAPPAN CULTURE

THE HARAPPAN CIVILIZATION

The people in the prehistoric times used tools and weapons made of stone. Later man started using metals. Copper was the first metal to be used by man for making tools. Gradually several cultures developed in Indian subcontinent which were based on the use of stone and copper tools. They also used bronze, a mixture of copper and tin, for this purpose. This phase in history is known as the Chalcolithic (chalco-Copper; lithic-Stone) period. The brightest chapter in the Chalcolithic period in India is the Harappan civilization.

Harappan civilization was discovered in 1920–22 when two of its most important sites were excavated. These were Harappa on the banks of the river Ravi and Mohenjodaro on the banks of the Indus. The first was excavated by D. R. Sahani and the second by R.D. Bannerji. On the basis of the archaeological findings the Harappan civilization has been dated between 2600 B.C–1900 BC and is one of the oldest civilizations of the world. It is also sometimes referred to as the 'Indus Valley civilization' because in the beginning majority of its settlements discovered were in and around the plains of the river Indus and its tributaries. But today it is termed as the Harappan civilization because Harappa was the first site, which brought to light the presence of this civilization. Besides, recent archaeological findings indicate that this civilization was spread much beyond the Indus Valley. Therefore, it is better it is called as the Harappan civilization. It is the first urban culture of India and is contemporaneous with other ancient civilizations of the world such as those of Mesopotamia and Egypt. Our knowledge of the life and culture of the Harappan people is based only on the archaeological excavations as the script of that period has not been deciphered so far.

The Harappan civilization did not appear all of a sudden. It developed gradually from earlier Neolithic village cultures. It is believed that the better technology to exploit the fertile plains of river Indus might have resulted in increased agricultural production. This led to the production of larger surplus to feed and maintain non-agricultural people such as artisans, administrators, etc. It also helped in the promotion of exchange or trading contacts

with distant regions. It brought prosperity to the Harappan people and they were able to set up cities.

By around 2000 BC several regional cultures developed in different parts of the subcontinent which were also based on the use of stone and copper tools. These Chalcolithic cultures which lay outside the Harappan zone were not so rich and flourishing. These were basically rural in nature. The origin and development of these cultures is placed in the chronological span between circa 2000 BC–700 BC. These are found in Western and Central India and are described as non-Harappan Chalcolithic cultures.

ORIGIN AND EXTENT

The archaeological remains show that before the emergence of Harappan civilization the people lived in small villages. As the time passed, there was the emergence of small towns which ultimately led to full-fledged towns during the Harappan period. The whole period of Harappan civilization is in fact divided into three phases: (i) Early Harappan phase (3500 BC–2600 BC) – it was marked by some town-planning in the form of mud structures, elementary trade, arts and crafts, etc., (ii) Mature Harappan phase (2600 BC–1900 BC) – it was the period in which we notice welldeveloped towns with burnt brick structures, inland and foreign trade, crafts of various types, etc., and (iii) Late Harappan phase (1900 BC–1400 BC) – it was the phase of decline during which many cities were abandoned and the trade disappeared leading to the gradual decay of the significant urban traits.

The archaeological excavations reveal that this culture was spread over a vast area which included not only the present day states of India such as Rajasthan, Punjab, Haryana, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Western Uttar Pradesh but also Pakistan and some parts of Afghanistan. Some important sites of this civilization are: Manda in Jammu and Kashmir; Shortughai in Afghanistan; Harappa in Western Punjab (Pakistan); Mohenjodaro and Chanhudaro in Sind; Kalibangan in Rajasthan; Lothal and Dholavira in Gujarat; Banawali and Rakhigarhi in Haryana; Daimabad in Maharashtra while Sutkagendor on the Makran Coast (near Pakistan-Iran border) is the western most site of the Harappan civilization and Alamgirpur in western Uttar Pradesh marks its eastern most limit.

The location of settlements suggests that the Harappa, Kalibangan (On R Ghaggar-Hakra generally associated with the lost river Saraswati), Mohenjodaro axis was the heartland of this civilization and most of the settlements are located in this region. This area had certain uniform features in terms of the soil type, climate and subsistence pattern. The land was flat and depended on the monsoons and the Himalayan rivers for the supply of water. Due to its distinct geographical feature, agro-pastoral economy was the dominant feature in this region. Besides the urban settlements of the Harappans, there were many sites inhabited by the primitive communities consisting of stone-age hunter-gatherers or pastoral nomads, which existed side by side. Some sites served as ports or trading out-posts. It may be noted that the important determinants of urbanisation are well-planned cities, specialised arts and crafts, trade, taxation, script, etc. In this respect Harappan culture fulfilled all these criteria for being called as an urban culture.

TOWN PLANNING

The most interesting urban feature of Harappan civilization is its town-planning. It is marked by considerable uniformity, though one can notice some regional variations as well. The uniformity is noticed in the lay-out of the towns, streets, structures, brick size, drains etc. Almost all the major sites (Harappa, Mohenjodaro, Kalibangan and others), are divided into two parts—a citadel on higher mound on the western side and a lower town on the eastern side of the settlement. The citadel contain large structures which might have functioned as administrative or ritual centres. The residential buildings are built in the lower town. The streets intersect each other at right angles in a criss-cross pattern. It divides the city in several residential blocks. The main street is connected by narrow lanes. The doors of the houses opened in these lanes and not the main streets.

The houses of common people, however, differed in size from a single-room house in Harappa to bigger structures. The houses were largely built of burnt bricks. The bigger houses had many rooms surrounding a square courtyard. These houses were provided with private wells, kitchens and bathing platforms. The difference in the size of the houses suggests that the rich lived in the larger houses whereas the one-room buildings or barracks might have been intended for the poorer section of the society.

The drainage system of the Harappans was elaborate and well laidout. Every house had drains, which opened into the street drains. These drains were covered with manholes bricks or stone slabs (which could be removed for cleaning) were constructed at regular intervals by the side of the streets for cleaning. This shows that the people were well acquainted with the science of sanitation.

SOME MAJOR STRUCTURAL REMAINS OF THE HARAPPAN TOWNS

At Mohenjodaro the 'Great Bath' is the most important structure. It is surrounded by corridors on all sides and is approached at either end a by a flights of steps in north and south. A thin layer of bitumen was applied to the bed of the Bath to ensure that water did not seep in. Water was supplied by a large well in an adjacent room. There was a drain for the outlet of the water. The bath was surrounded by sets of rooms on sides for changing cloth. Scholars believe that the 'Great Bath' was used for ritual bathing. Another structure here located to the west of the 'Great Bath' is the granary. It consists of several rectangular blocks of brick for storing grains. A granary has also been found at

Harappa. It has the rows of circular brick platforms, which were used for threshing grains. This is known from the finding of chaffs of wheat and barley from here.

At Lothal, a brick structure has been identified as a dockyard meant for berthing ships and handling cargo. This suggests that Lothal was an important port and trading centre of the Harappan people.

ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES

(i) Agriculture

The prosperity of the Harappan civilization was based on its flourishing economic activities such as agriculture, arts and crafts, and trade. The availability of fertile Indus

alluvium contributed to the surplus in agricultural production. It helped the Harappan people to indulge in exchange, both internal and external, with others and also develop crafts and industries.

Agriculture alongwith pastoralism (cattle-rearing) was the base of Harappan economy. The granaries discovered at sites like Harappa, Mohenjodaro and Lothal served as the storehouses for grains. We do not have any clear evidence of the tools used for agriculture. However, the furrows or plough-marks have been observed in a field at Kalibangan. These indicate plough cultivation. A terracotta plough has also been reported from Banawali in Hissar district of Haryana. The irrigation was carried on a small scale by drawing water from wells or by diverting river water into channels.

The chief food crops included wheat, barley, sesasum, mustard, peas, jejupe, etc. The evidence for rice has come from Lothal and Rangpur in the form of husks embedded in pottery. Cotton was another important crop. A piece of woven cloth has been found at Mohenjodaro. Apart from cereals, fish and animal meat also formed a part of the Harappan diet.

(ii) Industries and Crafts

The Harappan people were aware of almost all the metals except iron. They manufactured gold and silver objects. The gold objects include beads, armlets, needles and other ornaments. But the use of silver was more common than gold. A large number of silver ornaments, dishes, etc. have been discovered. A number of copper tools and weapons have also been discovered. The common tools included axe, saws, chisels, knives, spearheads and arrowheads. It is important to note that the weapons produced by the Harappans were mostly defensive in nature as there is no evidence of weapons like swords, etc. Stone tools were also commonly used. Copper was brought mainly from Khetri in Rajasthan. Gold might have been obtained from the Himalayan river-beds and South India, and silver from Mesopotamia. We also have the evidence of the use of the bronze though in limited manner. The most famous specimen in this regard is the bronze 'dancing girl' figurine discovered at Mohenjodaro. It is a nude female figure, with right arm on the hip and left arm hanging in a dancing pose. She is wearing a large number of bangles.

Bead-making also was an important craft. Beads were made of precious and semiprecious stones such as agate and carnelian. Steatite was used for making beads. The evidence of beadmakers' shops have been found at Chanhudaro and Lothal. Gold and silver beads have also been found. Ivory carving and inlaying used in beads, bracelets and other decorations were also in practice. The Harappans thus showed their masterly skill in a variety of arts and crafts.

A well-known piece of art of the Harappan period is a stone sculpture of a bearded man discovered at Mohenjodaro. His eyes are half closed indicating a posture of meditation. Across the left shoulder is an embroidered cloak. In the opinion of some scholars it could be a bust of a priest.

A large number of terracotta figurines of males and females have been discovered from various Harappan sites. The female figurines outnumber those of males and are

believed to represent the worship of mother goddess. Besides these, a variety of models of birds, monkeys, dogs, sheep, cattle, humped and humpless bulls are found. However, the noteworthy specimen in this regard are various models of terracotta carts.

Pottery-making was also an important industry in the Harappan period. These were chiefly wheel-made and were treated with a red coating and had decorations in black. These are found in various sizes and shapes. The painted designs consist of horizontal lines of varied thickness, leaf patterns, palm and pipal trees. Birds, fishes and animals are also depicted on potteries.

The Harappans manufactured seals of various kinds. More than two thousand seals have been discovered from different sites. These were generally square in shape and were made of steatite. It is noteworthy that while the seals depict a number of animals there is no representation of horse on these. It has led many scholars to argue that horse was not known to the Harappan people though there are others who do not accept this argument. Besides various kinds of animals, the Harappan seals contain some signs in the Harappan script which however has not been deciphered so far. The most famous of the seals is the one with a horned male deity represented on it. He has three heads and is sitting in a yogic posture surrounded by four animals viz. elephant, tiger, rhinoceros and a buffalo. He has been identified by many scholars with the ancient form of the god Pashupati (Lord of beasts) though there are others who dispute this identification.

(iii) Trade

Trading network, both internal (within the country) and external (foreign), was a significant feature of the urban economy of the Harappans. As the urban population had to depend on the surrounding countryside for the supply of food and many other necessary products, there emerged a village-town (rural-urban) interrelationship. Similarly, the urban craftsmen needed markets to sell their goods in other areas. It led to the contact between the towns. The traders also established contacts with foreign lands particularly Mesopotamia where these goods were in demand.

It is important to note that various kinds of metals and precious stones were needed by craftsmen to make goods, but as these were not available locally they had to be brought from outside. The presence of such raw material found at sites away from the place of its origin naturally indicates it must have reached there through an exchange activity. Thus Rajasthan region is rich in copper deposits and the Harappans acquired copper mainly from the Khetri mines located here. Kolar gold fields of Karnataka and the river-beds of the Himalayan rivers might have supplied the gold. The source of silver may have been Jwar mines of Rajasthan. It is believed that it must have also come from Mesopotamia in exchange for the Harappan goods.

Among the precious stones used for making beads, the source of lapis-lazuli was located in Badakshan mines in northeast Afghanistan. Turquoise and Jade might have been brought from Central Asia. Western India supplied agate, chalcedony and carnelian. The seashells must have come from Gujarat and neighbouring coastal areas. Timber of good quality and other forest products were perhaps obtained from the northern regions such as Jammu.

The Harappans were engaged in external trade with Mesopotamia. It was largely through Oman and Behrain in the Persian Gulf. It is confirmed by the presence of Harappan artefacts such as beads, seals, dice etc. in these regions. Though the artefacts from those regions are rarely found at the Harappan sites, a seal of West Asian or Persian origin has been discovered at Lothal which confirms this contact. Mesopotamian cities like Susa, Ur, etc. have yielded about two dozen of Harappan seals. Besides seals, other artefacts of Harappan origin which have been discovered include potteries, etched carnelian beads and dices with Harappan features.

The inscriptional evidence from Mesopotamia also provides us with valuable information on Harappan contact with Mesopotamia. These inscriptions refer to trade with Dilmun, Magan and Meluhha. Scholars have identified Meluhha with Harappan region, Magan with the Makran coast, and Dilmun with Bahrain. They indicate that Mesopotamia imported copper, carnelian, ivory, shell, lapis-lazuli, pearls and ebony from Meluhha. The export from Mesopotamia to Harappans included items such as garments, wool, perfumes, leather products and silver. Except silver all these products are perishable. This may be one important reason why we do not find the remains of these goods at Harappan sites.

SOCIAL DIFFERENTIATION

The Harappan society appears to have been matriarchal in nature. This view is based on the popularity of the mother goddess as indicated by the finding of a large number of terracotta female figurines in Punjab and Sind region. As Harappan script has not been deciphered till now, we have to satisfy ourselves with this limited information on this issue.

The Harappan Society comprised of people following diverse professions. These included the priests, the warriors, peasants, traders and artisans (masons, weavers, goldsmith, potters, etc.) The structural remains at sites such as Harappa and Lothal show that different types of buildings that were used as residence by different classes. The presence of a class of workmen is proved by workmen quarters near the granary at Harappa. Similarly, the workshops and houses meant for coppersmiths and beadmakers

have been discovered at Lothal. Infact, we can say that those who lived in larger houses belonged to the rich class whereas those living in the barracks like workmen quarters were from the class of labourers.

Our limited knowledge about their dress styles comes from the terracotta figurines and stone sculptures of the period. Men are mostly shown wearing a dress wrapped round the lower half of the body with one end worn over the left shoulder and under the right arm. The other garment was a skirt like dress to cover the lower portion. They used cotton and woollen clothes. A piece of woven cloth has been found at Mohenjodaro. Spindles and needles discovered at many sites attest to the practice of spinning and weaving.

Harappan people loved to decorate themselves. Hair dressing by both, men and women, is evident from figurines found at different sites. The men as well as women arranged their hair in different styles. The people were also fond of ornaments. These mainly included necklaces, armllets, earrings, beads, bangles, etc., used by both the sexes.

Rich people appear to have used the ornaments of gold, silver and semi-precious stones while the poor satisfied themselves with those of terracotta.

RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND PRACTICES

Our knowledge on the religious beliefs and practices of the Harappans is largely based on the Harappan seals and terracotta figurines available to us. The Harappan religion is normally termed as animism i.e., worship of trees, stones etc. A large number of terracotta figurines discovered at the Harappan sites have been associated with the worship of mother goddess. Many of these represent females adorned with a wide girdle, loin cloth and necklaces. They wear a fan-shaped head dress. In some cases the female is shown with an infant while there is one that shows a plant growing out of the uterus of a woman. The latter type probably symbolizes the goddess of earth. There are many scholars who refer to the worshipping of linga (phallus) and yoni (female sex organ) by the Harappans but some are doubtful about it.

Harappans' belief in a male deity is evident by the seal depicting a deity with a buffalohorned head-dress, sitting in a yogic posture and surrounded by animals. Many scholars identify him with god Pashupati (Lord of beasts) or 'Proto-Shiva' though some dispute it. In another instance, a deity is shown with horns and flowing hair standing nude between the branches of a Pipal tree and a worshipper is kneeling in front. It may represent tree worship. Animal worship also appears to be popular among the Harappans.

The evidence of fire worship has also been found at some sites such as Kalibangan and Lothal. At Kalibangan, a series of raised brick platforms with pits containing ash and animal bones have been discovered. These are identified by many scholars as fire altars.

This also shows that the Harappans living in different areas followed different religious practices as there is no evidence of fire-pits at Harappa or Mohanjodaro.

The burial practices and the rituals related with them have been a very important aspect of religion in any culture. However, in this context Harappan sites have not yielded any monument such as the Pyramids of Egypt or the Royal cemetery at Ur in Mesopotamia. Dead bodies were generally rested in north-south direction with their head towards north and the feet towards south. The dead were buried with a varying number of earthen pots. In some graves the dead were buried along with goods such as bangles, beads, copper mirrors. This may indicate that the Harappans believed in life after death. At Lothal three joint or double burials with male and female bodies together were discovered. Kalibangan has yielded evidence of a symbolic burial along i.e., a burial which contains pots but no bones or skeleton. These different practices in different regions of Harappan civilization may reflect diversity in religious beliefs.

THE SCRIPT

The Harappans were literate people. Harappan seals, are engraved with various signs or characters. Recent studies suggest that the Harappan script consists of about 400 signs and that it was written from right to left. However, the script has not been deciphered as yet. It is believed that they used ideograms i.e., a graphic symbol or character to convey the idea directly. We do not know the language they spoke, though scholars believe that they spoke

“Brahui”, a dialect used by Baluchi people in Pakistan today. However further research alone can unveil the mystery and enable us to know more about the Harappan script.

DECLINE OF THE HARAPPAN CIVILIZATION

The Harappan Civilization flourished till 1900 BC. The period following this is marked by the beginning of the post-urban phase or (Late Harappan phase). This phase was characterised by a gradual disappearance of the major traits such as town-planning, art of writing, uniformity in weights and measures, homogeneity in pottery designs, etc. The regression covered a period from 1900 BC–1400 BC. There was also the shrinkage in the settlement area. For instance, Mohenjodaro was reduced to a small settlement of three hectares from the original eighty five hectares towards the end of the Late phase. The population appears to have shifted to other areas. It is indicated by the large number of new settlements in the outlying areas of Gujarat, east Punjab, Haryana and Upper Doab during the later Harappan period.

Well scholars put forward many theories on the end of Harappan Civilization.

1. It is suggested by some scholars that natural calamities such as floods and earthquakes might have caused the decline of the civilization. It is believed that earthquakes might have raised the level of the flood plains of the lower course of Indus river. It blocked the passage of the river water to the sea and resulted in the floods which might have swallowed the city of Mohenjodaro. However, this only explains the decline of Mohenjodaro and not of the whole civilization.
2. Increased aridity and drying up of the river Ghaggar-Harka on account of the changes in river courses, according to some scholars, might have contributed to the decline. This theory states that there was an increase in arid conditions by around 2000 BC. This might have affected agricultural production, and led to the decline.
3. Aryan invasion theory is also put forward as a cause for the decline. According to this, the Harappan civilization was destroyed by the Aryans who came to India from north-west around 1500 BC. However, on the basis of closer and critical analysis of data, this view is completely negated today.

Thus, there is no single cause that can explain the decline of the civilization in totality. At the maximum these can explain the decay of certain sites or areas only. Hence, each theory has met with criticism. Nevertheless, the archaeological evidence indicates that the Harappan civilization did not collapse all of a sudden but declined gradually and ultimately merged with other local cultures.

CHALCOLITHIC COMMUNITIES OF NON-HARAPPAN INDIA

MAJOR CHALCOLITHIC CULTURES AND THEIR CHIEF SITES

The important non-Harappan chalcolithic cultures lay mainly in western India and Deccan. These include Banas culture (2600BC–1900 BC) in south-east Rajasthan, with Ahar near Udaipur and Gilund as its key-sites; Kayatha culture (2100BC–2000 BC) with Kayatha in Chambal as its chief site in Madhya Pradesh; Malwa Culture (1700BC–1400BC) with Navdatoli in Western Madhya Pradesh as an important site, and Jorwe

culture (1400BC–700BC) with Inamgaon and Chandoli near Pune in Maharashtra as its chief centres. The evidence of the chalcolithic cultures also comes from eastern Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Bengal. It may be noted that the non-Harappan Chalcolithic cultures though flourished in different regions they were marked by basic uniformity in various aspects such as their mud structures, farming and hunting activities, use of wheel made pottery etc. The pottery of these chalcolithic cultures included ochre coloured pottery (OCP), black-and-red ware (BRW) and has been found in the shape of various kinds of bowls, basins, spouted jars with concave necks, dishes on stand, etc.

TOOLS, IMPLEMENTS AND OTHER OBJECTS

The chalcolithic cultures are characterised by the use of tools made of copper as well as stone. They used chalcedony, chert etc. for making stone tools. The major tools used were long parallel-sided blades, pen knives, lunates, triangles, and trapezes. Some of the blade tools were used in agriculture. Main copper objects used include flat axes, arrowheads, spearheads, chisels, fishhooks, swords, blades, bangles, rings and beads. Beads made of carnelian, jasper, chalcedony, agate, shell, etc. frequently occur in excavations. In this context, the findings from Daimabad hoard are noteworthy. The discovery includes bronze rhinoceros, elephant, two-wheeled charriot with a rider and a buffalo. These are massive and weigh over sixty kilograms. From Kayatha (Chambal valley) also copper objects with sharp cutting edges have been recovered. These reflect the skills of the craftsmen of the period.

SUBSISTENCE ECONOMY

The people of these settlements subsisted on agriculture and cattle rearing. However, they also practised hunting and fishing. The main crops of the period include, rice, barley, lentils, wheat, jawar, coarse gram, pea, green gram, etc. It is to be noted that the major parts of this culture flourished in the zone of black soil, useful mainly for growing cotton.

Skeletal remains from the sites suggest the presence of domesticated and wild animals in these cultures. The important domesticated animals were cattle, sheep, goat, dog, pig, horse, etc. The wild animals included black buck, antelope, nilgai, barasinga, sambar, cheetah, wild buffalo and one-horn rhino. The bones of fish, water fowl, turtle and rodents were also discovered.

HOUSES AND HABITATIONS

The Chalcolithic cultures were characterised by rural settlements. The people lived in rectangular and circular houses with mud walls and thatched roofs. Most of the houses were single roomed but some had two or three rooms. The floors were made of burnt clay or clay mixed with river gravels. More than 200 sites of Jorwe culture (Maharashtra) have been found. The settlements at Inamgaon (Jorwe culture) suggests that some kind of planning was adopted in laying of the settlement.

CONCLUSION

The Harappan civilization was the first urban civilization of the Indian subcontinent. Archaeological discoveries show that this culture evolved from the earlier rural

communities. Harappa, Mohenjodaro, Chanhudaro, Kalibangan, Lothal, Banawali, Rakhigarhi and Dholavira were some of the important sites of the Harappan civilization. Well-planned towns can be observed at some Harappan centres. These towns were characterised by two broad divisions—a citadel on a higher mound and the lower town. Burnt bricks were used for building houses. The towns had good drainage system. Some major buildings at the Harappan towns were the Great Bath at Mohenjodaro, a granary at Harappa, and a dockyard at Lothal. The Harappans practiced agriculture alongwith pastoralism. Though there were skilled craftsmen who worked in copper and other metals, the stone tools were still in common use. They produced beads, terracotta figurines, potteries and seals of various kinds. The Harappans carried out trade, both internal and external. They had commercial links with Mesopotamian cities through Oman and Bahrain in the Persian Gulf. The merchants traded in various commodities of import and export. The Harappan society seems to have been matriarchal in nature. The people followed different professions such as those of priests, physicians, warriors, peasants, traders and artisans. Though the Harappans wore simple clothes made of cotton and wool, they were fond of decorating themselves with various kinds of ornaments. The Harappans worshipped the mother goddess, Pashupati (Proto-Shiva), trees and animals. They also followed different kinds of burial practices and rituals associated with them. The Harappans were literate and their script is in the form of ideograms. However, the script has not been deciphered so far. Scholars have suggested various factors such as natural calamities, increased aridity, and the Aryan invasion for the decline of the culture. The archaeological evidence suggests that this civilization did not face a sudden collapse but had a gradual decline.

The archaeological sources reflect that the non-Harappan Chalcolithic cultures were characterized by regional variations. The use of stone and copper (Chalcolithic) tools was the distinct feature of these cultures. The distribution pattern of the sites suggests hierarchy of settlements. Some settlements were large in size with elaborate structures, indicating that these were important centres. The Chalcolithic cultures outside the orbit of the Harappan culture did not possess Harappan traits of urbanity and prosperity. These were non-urban cultures with certain elements of their own such as the housing pattern, pottery types, tool types, religious practices, etc. They still subsisted on agriculture and hunting-gathering economy combined with pastoralism.

MODULE II

REFORMATION MOVEMENT IN INDIA

- Buddha, Sankara, Ramanuja Madhwa, Vallabha, Chaitanya,
Sri. Ramakrishna, Vivekenanda, Guru Nanak,
Rajaram Mohan Roy, Balagangadharathilak, Sree Narayana Guru,
Dayananda Sarawathy.

REFORMATION MOVEMENT IN INDIA

India has a rich history of social reformers who have helped to establish the foundations of modern india, and, in some cases, have affected a world wide impact through political action and philosophic teachings.

1. BUDDHA

In the sixth century before the Christian Era, religion was forgotten in India. The lofty teachings of Vedas were thrown to the wind and there was widespread practice of priest craft. The people were duped by the greedy priests in various ways. Innocent animals were killed in the name of meaningless sacrifices. There was utter confusion and chaos due to the lack of proper religious direction. At such a critical juncture there approached on the horizon the Buddha who dispelled the gloom of misery and spread the light of knowledge.

Birth

The young Siddhartha, who became Buddha, by constant striving was born to King Suddhodhana and Maya, the scion of the Sakyas. He was born in B.C. 560 and died at the age of eighty in B.C. 480. The place of his birth was a grove known as Lumbini, near the city of Kapilavastu, at the foot of mount Palpa in the Himalayan ranges within Nepal. The small city of Kapilavastu stood on the bank of the river Rohini, some hundred miles north east of the city Varanasi. As the time drew high for Buddha to enter the world, the Gods themselves proposed the way before him with celestial portents and signs. Flowers bloomed and gentle rains fell, although out of season heavenly music was heard, delicious scents filled the air. The body of the child bore at birth the thirty-two auspicious marks Mahavyanjaraja which indicated his future greatness besides secondary marks Anuvyanjana in large numbers. Maya died some days after his birth. The child was brought up by Maya's sister Mahaprazapati, who became his foster mother.

Astrologer's Prediction

On the birth of Siddhartha astrologers predicted to king Suddhodhana that 'the child on attaining manhood, would either become a universal Monarch or abandoning house and home, would assume the role of a monk and became Buddha, a perfectly enlightened saint, for the salvation of mankind'. Then the king said, 'what shall my son see to make him retire from the world?' The astrologer's replied, 'four signs'. 'What four', asked the king. 'A decrepit old man, a discarded man, a dead man and a monk, these four will make the king retire from the world', replied the astrologers.

Suddhodhanas Precautions

Suddhodhana thought that he might lose his precious son and tried his level best to get him attached to earthly objects. He surrounded him with all kinds of luxury and indulgence, in order to retain his attachment for pleasure of the same and prevent him from understanding a view of solitariness and poverty. He got him married to Yasodhara and put him in a walled palace with gardens, fountains, music, dance, etc. with countless young and charming ladies attending on Siddhartha to make his cheerful and happy. In particular, the king, wanted to keep away from Siddhartha the 'four signs' which would move him to enter into the ascetic life. He issued the order that, 'Let no such person be allowed to come near my son because I wish my son exercising sovereign rule and authority over four great continents and the two thousand attendant isles, and walking through the sides, and walking through the heaven surrounded by a retinue of thirty-six leagues in circumference.' And when he had so spoken, he placed guards for quarter of a league, in each of the four directions, in order that none of the four kinds of men might come within the sight of his son.

Renunciation of the World by Siddhartha

Buddha's original name was Siddhartha. It meant he who had accomplished his aim. At the age of twenty-nine, one day he managed to get out of the security of the palace. The sight of a decrepit old man, a sick man, a corpse and a weak family induced Siddhartha to renounce the world. He felt that he would also fall prey to the old age, disease and death with the passage of time. He was much impressed by the security and dynamic personality of the life of monks and thought within himself, 'Let me also become a monk. Let me go beyond the worries and sorrows. This mundane life, with all its luxuries and comfort, is absolutely worthless. I also am subject to decay and am not free from the effect of old age. Worldly happiness is transitory. Gautama abandoned his home, wealth, dominion, power, parents, wife and the only child. He removed his hairs and beard and put on the yellow robes and marched towards Rajgriha, the capital of the kingdom of Magadh. There were many caves in which hundreds of hermits were dwelling. Siddhartha took Alaro Kalama, a hermit as his teacher. Siddhartha was not satisfied with his teachings and took another teacher named Uddak Ramaputta but soon decided to do his yogic exercises and entered the dense forest of Uruvela, the modern Bodh Gaya. He performed intense Tapa or meditation and did not take any food which adversely affected his health. At that time, several dancing girls were passing that way singing joyfully as they played on their sitar a song :

'Fair goes the dancing when the sitar is tuned
Tune as the sitar neither low nor high
And we will dance away the hearts of men
The spring overstretched breaks, the music dies
The string overslack is dumble and the music dies
Tune as the sitar neither low nor high'

For Buddha, this song was of propound spiritual significance. He realized that he should not go to extremes in torturing the body by starvation and that he should adopt the golden mean or the happy medium of the middle path by avoiding extremes. He abandoned earlier ways and took to the middle path.

Enlightenment

Once Buddha was in a dejected mood because of his failure to achieve salvation through yogic exercise. He was in a fix what to do and where to go. A village girl noticed his sorrowful face. She asked Buddha, 'Reverend Sir, may I bring some food for you? It seems you are very hungry.' Gautama looked at her and said, 'What is your name, my dear sister.' The maiden answered, 'Venerable Sir, my name is Sujata.' Gautama said, 'Sujata, I am very hungry, can you really appease my hunger.' Sujata replied, 'Yes sir, it will appease your hunger. Kindly take it now.' Gautama began to eat the food underneath the shadow of a large tree, thenceforth to be called as the great 'Bo-tree' or the tree of wisdom. Gautama sat in a meditative mood underneath the tree from early morning to sunset, with a fiery determination and an iron resolve. 'Let me die. Let my body perish. Let my flesh dry up. I will not get up from this seat till I get the full illumination' -He plunged himself into deep meditation. At night he entered into deep Samadhi, underneath the sacred Bio-tree. He was tempted by maya in various ways, but he stood adamant, and ultimately the light of true knowledge broke upon him and he attained 'nirvana'. His began to shine with divine splendour and effulgence. He got up from his seat and danced in ecstasy for some days and nights around the sacred Bio-tree. His head was filled with profound mercy and compassion and wanted to share his knowledge with the vast majority of suffering masses. He decided to travel all over India and dispel the gloom of misery and ignorance by his light of knowledge. He became a saviour, deliverer and redeemer.

Buddha told people that, "I thus find my mind released from the defilement of earthly existence, released from the defilement of sensual pleasures, release from the defilement of redeemer. In the emanciated state arose the knowledge", said He, "I am emancipated, Rebirth is exact, the religious work is accomplished, what had to be done is done, and there is no need for the present existence.... I have overcome all fires, I am all wise, I am free from stain in every, I have left everything and have obtained emancipation by the distruction of desire. Myself having gained knowledge, whom should I call my master. I have no teacher. I have gain coolness by the extinction of all passion and have obtained Nirvana. To find the knowledge of the law (dharma) I go to the city of Varanasi. I will beat the dream of immortality in the darkness of this world."

Lord Buddha then went to Varanasi. He entered 'Deer park' one evening he gave his discourses and preached his doctrine. He preached to all without exception to men and women. The high and the low, the ignorant and the learned were all alike. All his first disciples were laymen and two of the very first were women. The first convert was a rich young man named Yasa. The next was Yasa's father, mother and Wife. These were his lay disciples.

Buddha argued and departed with his old disciples who had desecrated him when he was in the Uruvila forest. He brought them round by powerful arguments and persuasive powers. Kondonno an aged hermit was converted first and others followed suit. He made sixty disciples and sent them to different directions to preach his doctrine. Buddha preached that one should not unnecessarily enquire into origin of the world or existence of God, instead one should reason within his inner-self the causes of misery and the ways to remove them so as to obtain 'Nirvana'. The simple solution and suggestion from his analytical mind attracted all, wise and fool, and thus helped to dispel the gloom of misery and ignorance. Everyone was welcomed in his field, irrespective of his birth, caste or status in life.

Teachings of the Buddha

Buddha's teachings have been preserved for us in the books called 'Tripitaka' – meaning the three baskets. The three baskets are-

1. Vinayapitaka-the word means discipline. In Vinayapitaka, the disciplinary rules which must be observed by those who would like spiritual lives.
2. Sutta Pitaka or threads containing Buddha's discourses interpreting the secret of true life.
3. Abhidhamma Pitaka-meaning foundation of the teachings of Buddha.

Buddhism developed as a reform movement in response to the rigidity of the Brahmanical religion. By the 6th Century BC, Brahmanism had developed a rigid code of conduct and hierarchy in the worship of God. The Brahmins were regarded as the sole arbiters of God's wishes and the means of appeasing God. Numerous costly rituals and sacrifices were invented for the purpose of averting God's wrath. The caste system had also become very formalised and a person's status depended on the caste into which he was born rather than merit.

Thus in the caste hierarchy, the Kshatriyas (aristocracy) and the Brahmins emerged as the repositories of power, secular and religious, thereby alienating the rest of the population from access to God and king. Thus by the time of Buddha's enlightenment, disenchantment had already set in among the Vaishyas (merchants) and the Sudras (untouchables). In such a milieu, Buddha's teachings presented a means of worshipping God and realising their religious needs without the necessity of the priest's intervention. Thus the major component of Buddha's followers consisted of the merchants and the lower classes who were now provided with the means to reach God and attain salvation.

Buddha preached an alternative way to achieving salvation from all sorrows. He preached that the means to salvation and happiness lay in following an exemplary life and in devotion to God and not through the enactment of rituals and sacrifices. Further, salvation was not dependent on one's caste status but was open to everyone.

Buddha's teachings included

- Four Noble Truths
- Holy Eightfold Path
- Wheel of Law or Dharma

Four Noble Truths

• Birth, age, sickness and death are sorrows, as is the clinging to earthly things. Suffering is a fact. To be born is to suffer. To live is to suffer.

• Chain of reincarnation is the direct result of attachment to life and of desire. At the back of suffering is ignorance. In this illusion of the 'ego' both men wander from birth to death. In ignorance he moves on, unhappy, a victim to thirst. Trishna due to heart of flesh, lust of eyes and there is the thirst due to pride of life.

• The extinction of desire is essential for the attainment of detachment. The cure of thirst is extinction of Trishna, letting it go; expel desire; renounce attachment. In desire you 'separate' yourself from others, in desire you become a creation of body.

• Desire can only be extinguished by following the Holy Eightfold Path. The way to extinguish desire, Trishna, is the eight-fold path-the path which has 'eight noble steps' aiming at awakening of Maitri and compassion in the heart.

Holy Eightfold Path

The principles are

- Right Understanding
- Right Intention
- Right Speech
- Right Action
- Right Livelihood
- Right Effort
- Right Awareness
- Right Concentration

Wheel of Law or Dharma

Following the Eightfold Path will lead to Nirvana or salvation from the cycle of rebirth.

Buddha's first sermon was delivered in the Deer Park at Sarnath where he preached the Dharma or the Wheel Of Law. Buddha travelled around northern India preaching sermons and teaching his Middle Way to a growing number of disciples for 45 years.

NIRVANA

Buddha went to Sarasvati, the capital of the kingdom of Kosala and made his abode in a forest where he spent many rainy seasons. Making this place his base, he travelled extensively for forty years, teaching, preaching and delivering his discoveries.

2. SANKARA

Biography of Sankara

Introduction

Jagadguru Sri Adi Sankaracharya was the greatest exponent of the doctrine of Advaita Vedanta and a savior of Vedic Dharma. Salutations to Sankara, who is an ever shining star on the sky of Indian philosophy.

The existence of Vedic Dharma in India today is due to Sankara. The forces opposed to Vedic religion were more numerous and powerful at the time of Sankara than they are today. Still, single-handed, within a very short time, Sankara overpowered them all and restored the Vedic Dharma and Advaita Vedanta to its pristine purity in the land pure knowledge and spirituality.

Sankaracharya occupies a very important position in the history of Indian philosophy. It can be affirmed, without any fear of contradiction, that Bharata Varsha would have ceased to be Bharata Varsha several centuries ago and would never have survived the murderous sword, the devastating fire and the religious intolerance of the successive invaders, if Sankara had not lived the life he lived and taught the lessons he taught. And those lessons are still pulsating in every cell and in every protoplasm of the true aspirant and the true Hindu.

Chaos pervaded all through India in the matter of religion and philosophy. Sect after sect, such as Charvakas, Lokayathikas, Kapalikas, Shaktas, Sankhyas, Buddhas and Madhyamikas sprang up. The number of religions rose as high as seventy-two. There was fight amongst sects. There was no peace anywhere. Chaos and confusion reigned supreme. There was superstition and bigotry. Darkness prevailed over the once happy land of Rishis, sages and Yogins. The once glorious land of the Aryans was in a miserable state. Such was the state of the country at the time which just preceded the Avatara (incarnation) of Sankaracharya.

The existence of Vedic Dharma in India today is due to Sankara. The forces opposed to Vedic religion were more numerous and powerful at the time of Sankara than they are today. Still, single-handed, within a very short time, Sankara overpowered them all and restored the Vedic Dharmna and Advaita Vedanta to its pristine purity in the land. The weapon he used was pure knowledge and spirituality. The previous Avataras, like Rama and Krishna, used physical forces because the obstacles to Dharma in those days arose from

the physical obstructions and molestations of the Asuras (demons). The menace to Dharma in the Kali age (age of destruction) arose from obstacles that were more internal than external, more mental than physical. The seeds of Adharma (unrighteousness) were then working in the minds of almost everyone. Hence the evil had to be combated purely by the weapon of knowledge and self-purification. It was in order to forge this weapon and wield it with efficacy that Sankara took birth in the Brahmin Varna (caste) and entered the Sannyasa (renunciate) order early in life. The previous Avatars like Rama and Krishna took birth in the Kshatriya Varna (warrior caste), because in their days they had to wield military weapons in the restoration of Dharma.

All are no doubt aware of the very important position assigned to Sankaracharya in the history of Indian philosophy. It can be affirmed, without any fear of contradiction, that Bharata Varsha would have ceased to be Bharata Varsha several centuries ago and would never have survived the murderous sword, the devastating fire and the religious intolerance of the successive invaders, if Sankara had not lived the life he lived and taught the lessons he taught. And those lessons are still pulsating in every cell and in every protoplasm of the true aspirant and the true Hindu.

Birth

Sankara was born in a very poor family in the year 788 A.D. in a village named Kaladi, six miles to the east of Alwaye, Kerala. Kaladi is a railway station, on the Kochi-Shoranur rail link. Sankara was a Nambudiri Brahmin. Rajasekhara, a Zamindar (a rich landlord), built a Siva temple in Kaladi and formed an Agrahara for Brahmins who were in the service of the temple. Vidyadhiraja was doing Puja (worship) in the temple. He had only a son named Sivaguru. Sivaguru studied the Shastras and married at the proper age. He had no child. He and his wife Aryamba prayed to Lord Siva to bless them with a son. A son was born to them in the Vasanta Ritu or the spring season at noon, in the auspicious Abhijit Muhurta and under the constellation Ardhra. This son was Sankara.

Sivaguru died when Sankara was seven years old. Sankara had none to look after his education. His mother was an extraordinary woman. She took special care to educate her son in all the Shastras. Sankara's Upanayana or thread ceremony was performed in his seventh year, after the death of his father. Sankara exhibited extraordinary intelligence in his boyhood. When he was only sixteen, he became a master of all the philosophies and theologies. He began to write commentaries on the Gita, the Upanishads and the Brahma Sutras when he was only sixteen years old. What a great marvel!

Sankara's mother was consulting astrologers about horoscopes of suitable girls for her son's marriage. But Sankara had a firm resolve to renounce the world and become a Sannyasin. Sankara's mother was very much grieved that there would be no one to perform her funeral rites after her death. Sankara gave full assurance to his mother that he would always be ready to serve her at the death-bed and perform the usual funeral rites. Even then his mother was not satisfied.

One day, Sankara and his mother went to take bath in the river. Sankara plunged into the water and felt that a crocodile was dragging him by the foot. He shouted out to his mother at the top of his voice: "O dear mother! A crocodile is dragging me down. I am lost.

Let me die peacefully as a Sannyasin. Let me have the satisfaction of dying as a Sannyasin. Give me your permission now. Let me take Apath-sannyasa”.

The mother immediately allowed him to take Sannyasa. Sankara took Apath-sannyasa (the adoption of Sannyasa when death is near) at once. The crocodile let him go unharmed. Sankara came out of the water as a nominal Sannyasin. He again repeated his promise to his mother. He left her under the care of his relatives and gave away his little property to them. He then proceeded to find out a Guru with a view to get himself formally initiated into the sacred order of Sannyasa.

In Search of a Guru

Sankara met Swami Govindapada Acharya in a hermitage in Badrikashram (Badrinath) in the Himalayas and he prostrated at the teacher's feet. Govinda asked Sankara who he was. Sankara replied: "O revered Guru! I am neither fire nor air nor earth nor water—none of these, but the Immortal Atma (Self) that is hidden in all names and forms". He also said in the end: "I am the son of Sivaguru, a Brahmin of Kerala. My father died in my childhood. I was brought up by my mother. I have studied the Vedas and the Shastras under a teacher. I took Apath-sannyasa when a crocodile caught my foot while I was taking bath in the river. Kindly initiate me formally into the holy order of Sannyasa".

Swami Govinda was very much pleased with the truthful narration given by Sankara. Having initiated him and invested him with the robe of a Sannyasin, Swami Govinda taught him the philosophy of Advaita which he himself had learnt from his Guru-Gaudapada Acharya. Sankara learnt all the philosophical tenets from his Guru Govindapada. Govinda asked Sankara to go to Kashi. Sankara proceeded to Kashi where he wrote all his famous commentaries on the Brahma Sutras, the Upanishads and the Gita and successfully met all the criticisms levelled against them. He then began to propagate his philosophy. Sankara had the greatest esteem for his Guru Govindapada and his Parama Guru or the teacher's teacher, Gaudapada.

Sankara's Digvijaya

Sankara's philosophical conquests are unique in the world. He had his triumphant tour all over India. He met the leaders of different schools of thought. He convinced them by arguments and established the supremacy and truth of the religion that he expounded in his commentaries. He went to all the celebrated seats of learning. He challenged the learned men to discussion, argued with them and converted them to his opinions and views. He defeated Bhatta Bhaskara and condemned his Bhashya (commentary) on the Vedanta Sutras. He then met Dandi and Mayura and taught them his philosophy. He then defeated in argument Harsha, author of Khandana Khanda Kadya, Abhinavagupta, Murari Misra, Udayanacharya, Dharmagupta, Kumarila and Prabhakara.

Sankara then proceeded to Mahishmati. Mandana Misra was the chief Pundit of the court of Mahishmati. Mandana was brought up in the Karma Mimamsa faith and so he had intense hatred for the Sannyasins. He was performing a Sraaddha ceremony when Sankara somehow dropped down there. Immediately Mandana Misra became very furious. An ugly conversation was started when the Brahmins, who were present there for dinner, interposed

and pacified Mandana Misra. Then Sankara challenged Mandana to a religious controversy. Mandana agreed. Bharati who was the wife of Mandana Misra and who possessed scholarly erudition was appointed as the umpire. It was agreed beforehand that Sankara, if defeated, would become a householder and marry; and that Mandana, if defeated, would become a Sannyasin and receive the robe of a Sannyasin from the hands of his own wife. The controversy began in right earnest and continued for days without any interruption. Bharati did not sit and listen to their controversy. She threw two garlands, one each over the shoulders of each of the disputants, and said: "He whose garland begins to fade first should consider himself defeated". She left the place and began attending to her household duties. The controversy went on for seventeen days. The garland of Mandana Misra began to fade first. Mandana Misra accepted his defeat and offered to become a Sannyasin and follow Sankara.

Bharati was an Avatara of Sarasvati, the Goddess of Learning. Once the sage Durvasa chanted the Vedas before Brahma and his wife in a big assembly. Durvasa committed a small mistake. Sarasvati laughed at it. Durvasa became enraged and gave a curse that she would take birth in the world. Hence Sarasvati had to take birth as Bharati.

Bharati now interposed and said to Sankara: "I am the other half of Mandana. You have defeated only one half of Mandana. Let us have a controversy". Sankara objected to have controversy with a woman. Bharati quoted instances wherein there had been controversies with women. Sankara then agreed and this controversy also went on uninterruptedly for seventeen days. Bharati passed from one Shastra to another. At last she found out that she could not defeat Sankara. She decided to defeat him by means of the science of Kama Shastra.

Sankara asked Bharati to give him an interval of one month for his preparation to hold controversy with her in the science of Kama Shastra. She agreed. Sankara went to Kashi. He separated his astral body from his physical body by means of his Yogic powers and left his physical body in the hole of a big tree and asked his disciples to take care of that physical body. He then entered into the dead body of Raja Amaruka which was about to be cremated. The Raja rose up and all the people rejoiced at the astounding incident.

The ministers and queens soon found out that the revived Raja was a different person, with different qualities and thought. They realised that the soul of a great Mahatma had entered the body of their Raja. Therefore, messengers were sent out to search for a human body hidden somewhere in lonely forests and caves and to burn it when found. They thought that if they did so, the new Raja might remain with them for a long time.

Sankara was acquiring all the experience of love with his queens. Maya is very powerful. In the midst, of those queens, Sankara entirely forgot all about his promises to his disciples about his going back to them. The disciples began to search for him. They heard about the miraculous resurrection of Raja Amaruka. They immediately proceeded to the city and had an interview with the Raja. They sang a few philosophical songs which at once revived the memory of Sankara. The disciples immediately repaired to the place where the physical body of Sankara was kept hidden. By that time the messengers of the queen had found out the physical body and had just begun to set fire to it. The soul of Sankara just

then entered his own body. Sankara prayed to Lord Hari to help him. There was a shower of rain immediately and that extinguished the flames.

Then Sankara returned to the residence of Mandana Misra. He resumed the old controversy and answered all the questions raised by Bharati satisfactorily. Mandana Misra gave all his property as a gift to Sri Sankara and Mandana was made to distribute it to the poor and the deserving. He then became a disciple of Sankara. Sankara initiated him into the holy order of Sannyasa and gave him the name of 'Sureswara Acharya'. Sureswara Acharya was the first Sannyasin who took charge of the Sringeri Mutt. Bharati also accompanied Sankara to Sringeri and there she is worshipped even today.

Sankara ascended the seat of omniscience after inviting Vedic scholars from all parts of India and answering their numerous questions. Sankara, by vanquishing all the religious opponents of his day-and they belonged to no less than seventy-two different schools-and establishing the superiority of the Vedic Dharma, had become the Jagadguru of all.

Sankara's success over the other religious sects was so complete that none of them have since been able to raise their head in the land. Most of them have disappeared altogether. After Sankara's time, although a few Acharyas have appeared, none of them have been able to vanquish those who differed from them as Sankara did and establish unquestioned supremacy.

Mother's Funeral Rites

Sankara received news that his mother was seriously ailing. He left his disciples and proceeded to Kaladi alone. His mother was then bedridden. Sankara touched her feet in reverence. He praised Lord Hari. Hari's messengers came. Sankara's mother gave up her physical body and went along with those messengers to the abode of Hari.

Sankara encountered serious difficulties in performing the funeral rites of his mother. Usually, Sannyasins do not perform any of the rites or ceremonies which are enjoined on the householders. The Nambudiri Brahmins were all against Sankara. Sankara's relatives also did not help him. They did not come forward to assist him even in carrying the dead body to the place of cremation and refused to give fire for igniting the funeral pyre. At last Sankara determined to perform the funeral rites all alone. As he could not carry the entire dead body, he cut it into pieces and removed the pieces one by one to the backyard of the house. He then made a pyre there of stems of plantain trees and set fire to it by his Yogic power. Sankara wanted to teach the Nambudiris a lesson. He then made the local chief issue an edict that a corner should be set apart in each Illam or house of the Nambudiri Brahmins to burn the dead of the family and that they should cut the dead body into parts and then burn the same. This practice continues even today amongst Nambudiri Brahmins.

Sankara then returned to Sringeri. From there he went out on a tour through the eastern coast with a large number of followers. He preached his Advaita philosophy wherever he went. He established the Govardhana Mutt at Puri. He went to Kancheepuram and attacked the Shaktas. He purified the temples. He won over to his side the rulers of the Chola and the Pandya kingdoms. He went to Ujjain and put down the atrocities of the Bhairavas who were shedding human blood. He then proceeded to Dwaraka and established

a Mutt there. He then travelled along the course of the Ganges and held religious controversies with great personages.

Sringeri Mutt

In the north-west of the State of Mysore, nestling in the beautiful foot-hills of the Western Ghats, surrounded by virgin forests, lies the village of Sringeri and here Sankara established his first Mutt. The river Tunga-a branch of the river Tungabhadra-runs through the valley closely touching the walls of the temple; and its pure and limpid waters are as famous for drinking purposes as the waters of the Ganges are for bath (Ganga Snanam, Tunga Panam). Sringeri is a place of great sanctity and its beauty has to be seen to be appreciated. The Mutt is 'still going strong' as the phrase goes. The homage paid to the Mutt by countless aspirants and devotees is as much due to the greatness of illustrious men like Vidyananda who have been at its head ever since its foundation as to the renown of the founder himself.

It may not be out of place to mention here that it took thirty years for the well-known Sanskrit professor Max Muller to translate the commentary on the Rig Veda, written by Vidyananda, also known as Sayana. The learned professor, in his preface, says that not a single day passed in the thirty years without his devoting at least ten minutes on the translation. There is also a little interesting incident that when the manuscript was found to be illegible in some places, he got an authorised transcription from the first original still preserved in the Sringeri Mutt, through the influence of the then Maharaja of Mysore.

The famous holy shrine of Sri Sarada is an equal source of attraction to the devotees. Many are the Mutts and monasteries in India where holy men or their successors sit, and where Hindus from all parts of India gather, but none so great or so famous as Sringeri, the original seat of Adi Sankaracharya. The Sringeri Peetha is one of the oldest monasteries of the world flourishing for over twelve centuries now. It is the first of the four seats of learning established by Sankaracharya, the other three being Puri, Dwaraka and Joshi Mutt, each one of them representing one of the four Vedas of the Hindus.

Sankara placed his four eminent disciples (Sureswara Acharya, Padmapada, Hastamalaka and Trotakacharya) in charge of the Sringeri Mutt, Jagannath Mutt, Dwaraka Mutt and Joshi Mutt respectively. The most famous Sannyasin in the succession of Gurus of the Sringeri Mutt was, of course, Vidyananda, the great commentator on the Vedas and the father of the dynasty of Vijayanagar. He was the Dewan of Vijayanagaram. He became a Sannyasin about 1331 A.D. The eleven Sannyasins before Vidyananda were Sankaracharya, Viswarupa, Nityabodhaghana, Jnanaghana, Jnanottama, Jnana Giri, Simha Girisvara, Isvara Tirtha, Narasimha Tirtha, Vidya Sankara Tirtha and Bharati Krishna Tirtha.

The historic and sacred pontifical throne of the Sringeri Mutt is known as Vyakhyana Simhasana or seat of learning. Tradition has it that this seat was given to the great Sankara by Sarasvati, the Goddess of Learning, in appreciation of the philosopher's vast scholarly erudition. Thirty-five Acharyas had sat on the pontifical throne before his present holiness in regular and uninterrupted succession.

Dasanami Sannyasins

Sankara organized ten definite orders of Sannyasins under the name 'Dasanamis' who add, at the end of their names, any one of the following ten suffixes: Sarasvati, Bharati, Puri (Sringeri Mutt); Tirtha, Asrama (Dwaraka Mutt); Giri, Parvata and Sagar (Joshi Mutt); Vana and Aranya (Govardhana Mutt).

The Paramahansa represents the highest of these grades. It is possible to become a Paramahansa by a long course of Vedantic study, meditation and Self-realisation. The Ativarnashramis are beyond caste and order of life. They dine with all classes of people. Sankara's Sannyasins are to be found all over India.

Some Anecdotes

Sankara was going along the street one day with his pupils to take bath in the Ganges when he met a Chandala who was also passing along the street with his dogs by his side. The disciples of Sankara shouted and asked the Chandala to clear off the road. The Chandala asked Sankara: "O, venerable Guru! You are a preacher of Advaita Vedanta and yet you make a great difference between man and man. How can this be consistent with your teaching of Advaitism? Is Advaita only a theory?". Sankara was very much struck by the intelligent query of the Chandala. He thought within himself, "Lord Siva has assumed this form just to teach me a lesson". He composed then and there five Slokas called the 'Manisha Panchaka'. Every Sloka ends thus: "He who learnt to look on the phenomena in the light of Advaita is my true Guru, be he a Chandala or be he a Brahmin".

In Kashi, a student was cramming the Sutras in Sanskrit grammar. He was repeating again and again "Dukrin karane, Dukrin karane....". Sankara heard it and was struck by the perseverance of the boy. He immediately sang a small poem, the famous Bhaja Govindam song, in order to teach the uselessness of such studies in the matter of the liberation of the soul. The meaning of the song is: "Worship Govinda, worship Govinda, worship Govinda, O fool! When you are about to die, the repetition of these Sanskrit Sutras will not save you".

Once some mischief-mongers offered meat and liquor to Sankara. Sankara touched those items with his right hand. The meat turned into apples and the liquor into milk.

A Kapalika came to Sankara and begged for his head as a gift. Sankara consented and asked the Kapalika to take his head when he was alone and absorbed in meditation. The Kapalika was just aiming with a big sword to sever the head of Sankara. Padmapada, the devoted disciple of Sankara came, caught hold of the arm of the Kapalika and killed him with his knife. Padmapada was a worshipper of Lord Narasimha. Lord Narasimha entered the body of Padmapada and killed the Kapalika.

Sankara's Philosophy

Sankara wrote Bhashyas or commentaries on the Brahma Sutras, the Upanishads and the Gita. The Bhashya on the Brahma Sutras is called Sareerik Bhasya. Sankara wrote commentaries on Sanat Sujatiya and Sahasranama Adhyaya. It is usually said, "For learning logic and metaphysics, go to Sankara's commentaries; for gaining practical knowledge,

which unfolds and strengthens devotion, go to his works such as Viveka Chudamani, Atma Bodha, Aparoksha Anubhuti, Ananda Lahari, Atma-Anatma Viveka, Drik-Drishya Viveka and Upadesa Sahasri". Sankara wrote innumerable original works in verses which are matchless in sweetness, melody and thought.

Sankara's supreme Brahman is Nirguna (without the Gunas), Nirakara (formless), Nirvishesha (without attributes) and Akarta (non-agent). He is above all needs and desires. Sankara says, "This Atman is self-evident. This Atman or Self is not established by proofs of the existence of the Self. It is not possible to deny this Atman, for it is the very essence of he who denies it. The Atman is the basis of all kinds of knowledge. The Self is within, the Self is without, the Self is before and the Self is behind. The Self is on the right hand, the Self is on the left, the Self is above and the Self is below".

Satyam-Jnanam-Anantam-Anandam are not separate attributes. They form the very essence of Brahman. Brahman cannot be described, because description implies distinction. Brahman cannot be distinguished from any other than He.

The objective world-the world of names and forms-has no independent existence. The Atman alone has real existence. The world is only Vyavaharika or phenomenal.

Sankara was the exponent of the Kevala Advaita philosophy. His teachings can be summed up in the following words:

'Brahmasatyam jaganmithya, jeevo brahmaiva Naparah'-Brahman alone is real, this world is unreal; the Jiva is identical with Brahman.

Sankara preached Vivarta Vada. Just as the snake is superimposed on the rope, this world and this body are superimposed on Brahman or the Supreme Self. If you get a knowledge of the rope, the illusion of the snake will vanish. Even so, if you get a knowledge of Brahman, the illusion of the body and the world will vanish.

Sankara is the foremost among the master-minds and the giant souls which Mother India has produced. He was the expounder of the Advaita philosophy. Sankara was a giant metaphysician, a practical philosopher, an infallible logician, a dynamic personality and a stupendous moral and spiritual force. His grasping and elucidating powers knew no bounds. He was a fully developed Yogi, Jnani and Bhakta. He was a Karma Yogin of no mean order. He was a powerful magnet.

There is not one branch of knowledge which Sankara has left unexplored and which has not received the touch, polish and finish of his superhuman intellect. For Sankara and his works, we have a very high reverence. The loftiness, calmness and firmness of his mind, the impartiality with which he deals with various questions, his clearness of expression-all these make us revere the philosopher more and more. His teachings will continue to live as long as the sun shines.

Sankara's scholarly erudition and his masterly way of exposition of intricate philosophical problems have won the admiration of all the philosophical schools of the world at the present moment. Sankara was an intellectual genius, a profound philosopher, an able propagandist, a matchless preacher, a gifted poet and a great religious reformer.

Perhaps, never in the history of any literature, a stupendous writer like him has been found. Even the Western scholars of the present day pay their homage and respects to him. Of all the ancient systems, that of Sankaracharya will be found to be the most congenial and the most easy of acceptance to the modern mind.

Tenets of Advaita Vedanta

1. Brahman (the Absolute) is alone real; this world is unreal; and the Jiva or the individual soul is non-different from Brahman.
2. The Atman is self-evident (Svatah-siddha). It is not established by extraneous proofs. It is not possible to deny the Atman, because It is the very essence of the one who denies It.
3. Brahman is not an object, as It is Adrisya, beyond the reach of senses, mind or intellect. It is not another. It is all-full, infinite, changeless, self-existent, self-delight, self-knowledge and self-bliss. It is Svarupa, essence. It is the essence of the knower. It is the Seer (Drashta), Transcendent (Turiya) and Silent Witness (Sakshi). It is always the Witnessing Subject. It can never become an object as It is beyond the reach of the senses. Brahman is non-dual, one without a second. It has no other beside It.
4. Sat-Chit-Ananda constitute the very essence or Svarupa of Brahman, and not just Its attributes.
5. The world is not an illusion according to Sankara. The world is relatively real (Vyavaharika Satta), while Brahman is absolutely real (Paramarthika Satta). The unchanging Brahman appears as the changing world because of a superimposition of non-Self (objects) on Self (subject - Brahman). This is called Avidya.
6. The Jiva or the individual soul is only relatively real. Its individuality lasts only so long as it is subject to unreal Upadhis or limiting conditions due to Avidya. The Jiva identifies itself with the body, mind and the senses, when it is deluded by Avidya or ignorance. Just as the bubble becomes one with the ocean when it bursts, so also the Jiva or the empirical self becomes one with Brahman when it gets knowledge of Brahman. When knowledge dawns in it through annihilation of Avidya, it is freed from its individuality and finitude and realizes its essential Satchidananda nature. It merges itself in the ocean of bliss. The river of life joins the ocean of existence. This is the Truth.
7. Because samsara (or duality) exists due to ignorance or Avidya, Knowledge (Jnana) alone can make an individual realize his true nature. Karma Yoga, Bhakti Yoga, Raja Yoga etc., are necessary only to purify the individual and to help remove this Avidya. All other paths culminate in Jnana.
8. Brahma Jnana is not about acquiring any external knowledge (as Brahman can't be an object of knowledge), it just about removing the Avidya or Maya.

Sankara's End

Sankara proceeded to Kamarup-the present Guwahati-in Assam and held a controversy with Abhinava Gupta, the Shakta commentator, and won victory over him. Abhinava felt his defeat very keenly. He made Sankara suffer from a severe form of piles through black magic. Padmapada removed the evil effects of the black magic. Sankara became quite alright. He went to the Himalayas, built a Mutt at Joshi and a temple at Badri. He then proceeded to Kedarnath higher up in the Himalayas. He became one with the Linga in 820 A.D. in his thirty-second year.

3. RAMANUJA

In the year 1017 A. D., Ramanuja was born in the village of the Sri Perumbuthur, about twenty-five miles west of Madras. His father was Kesava Somayaji and his mother was Kantimathi, a very pious and virtuous lady. Ramanuja's Tamilian name was Illaya Perumal, Ramanuja lost his father at an early age. However, he pursued his studies at Kanchipuram under one Yadavaprakasha, a teacher of Advaita philosophy.

According to the legend, his parents prayed for a son, and it is said that the Hindu god Vishnu incarnated himself as Ramanuja. As a child, Ramanuja demonstrated an aptitude for philosophy, and his mother sent him to Kanchipuram to study with Yadavaprakasa, a renowned Advaitic scholar who followed the teachings of Shankara. Though Ramanuja excelled as a student of philosophy, he refused to accept the Advaitic assertion that worship of Isvara, or god in personal form, was an inferior path to inner reflection (jnana). He also did not accept Shankara's viewpoint that the material world is an illusion (maya) resulting from ignorance (avidya). Yadavaprakasa was concerned about Ramanuja's preference for bhakti, and according to one tradition, began to view the young Ramanuja as a threat and plotted to kill him. However, it is said that Ramanuja learned of the plot and escaped with the help of another disciple.

Thereafter, Ramanuja traveled around India to spread his philosophical ideas. Yamunacharya, a prominent Visistadvaita scholar, had heard about Ramanuja, and decided he would be a suitable successor as a leader of the Visistadvaita School. Yamunacharya sent his disciple, Makapurna, to bring Ramanuja to him. However Yamunacharya had passed away by the time Makapurna and Ramanuja reached him. Anticipating Ramanuja's arrival, he left Ramanuja with the responsibility of fulfilling three duties: to spread the doctrine of complete surrender to God as the pathway to enlightenment (moksha); to write a commentary on the Brahma-Sutra; and to spread the names of the sages Sathkopa and Parasara, important figures in the Visistadvaita School. Traditionally, Yamunacharya's corpse held three fingers straight to symbolize these three duties, and Yamunacharya's hand is said to have closed when Ramanuja took a vow to fulfill these duties.

Following this vow, Ramanuja renounced the world and began life as an ascetic. He traveled around India to Rameswaram in the south of India, Badrinath and the Ganges in the north, and along the east coast. Ramanuja also traveled to Kashmir to read the Brahma-sutra and wrote a commentary on this work, known as the Sribhasya. It is said that Ramanuja

converted many Jains, and encouraged a return to bhakti (worship) among Hindu philosophers. According to tradition, his former guru, Yadavaprakasa was so impressed with Ramanuja's devotion that he became a disciple and was renamed Govindadasa. Ramanuja can be credited with spreading the doctrine of bhakti, particularly Vaishnavism (worship of Vishnu), and with providing an adroit philosophical basis for the practice of bhakti. During his travels, he also started 74 Visistadvaita centers.

Sri Ramanujacharya is regarded as the father of the Vaishnava philosophy. Sri Ramanujacharya was instrumental in spreading the Vaishnava philosophy extensively throughout India. His philosophy is called as Vishishtadvaita, which is a refined Advaitam of Sri Sankaracharya, a great saint and philosopher of 8th Century A. D. Vishishtadvaita of Sri Ramanujacharya is very popular when compared to the other philosophies because it has revealed many secrets of the Vedantic philosophy.

Teachings

Ramanuja's teachings helped to bolster the Visistadvaita Vedanta School of Hindu philosophy. Many of his arguments were formulated against Shankara's rival school of Advaita Vedanta, with which he disagreed on many levels.

Both Ramanuja and Shankara's systems of Vedanta were predicated on their respective interpretations of the Upanishads and Brahmasutra Bhasya. Since the heterogeneous Upanishads presented inconsistent views on God, containing contradictory passages about the unity and diversity of Brahman, it is not surprising that Ramanuja and Shankara developed different perspectives on Brahman. Whereas Shankara attempted to reconcile the conflicting Upanishadic passages by positing two levels of reality (nirguna and saguna Brahman), Ramanuja, in contrast, postulated three interrelated theories to account for the unity and diversity of Brahman: (1) the "Body of God" doctrine, (2) co-ordinate predication (samanadhikaranya), and (3) the body-inner-controller relationship (sarira-sariri bhava). Each of these theories will be briefly explained below.

Ramanuja boldly stated in his Vedarthasamgraha text, "The scriptures declare the glory of Brahman by saying that Brahman has the whole universe as its body" (Verse 81). According to Ramanuja, the universe is made up of souls (jiva), matter (jagat), and Brahman. He asserted that souls and matter are entirely dependent on Brahman, and qualify Brahman's existence. Thus, the whole universe is the body of God, which consists of two modes: finite souls and matter. The relationship between these two modes is inseparability (aprathaksiddhi). Consequently, Ramanuja's system of thought is called Visistadvaita (qualified non-dualism), because Brahman is allegedly qualified (visesya) by souls (cit) and matter (acit). Such qualities (visesanas) are distinct from God yet constitute interrelated modes of God's body.

Ramanuja used the concept of co-ordinate predication to show how two aspects of Brahman can be distinct from each other yet inseparable. For example, the phrase "green tree" is an example of co-ordinate predication. The latter is a substance while the former is an attribute. In the same way, the universe, while distinct from Brahman, is still a part of Brahman—it is an attribute and not an independent principle capable of functioning on its own. In other words, the universe is dependent on, and inseparable from God.

Ramanuja taught that souls and matter are utterly dependent on Brahman for their existence. Brahman is the supreme Soul who is present in all finite souls and matter. Brahman dwells in the souls unrecognized and unknown until liberation (moksha) is reached. During liberation, the finite souls realize their divine nature but do not become identical with God—Brahman and souls remain distinct yet inseparable.

Both his Vedarthasamgraha and Sri Bhasya writings contain lengthy expositions of the "body-inner-controller" relationship (Sarira-sariri-bhava). Ramanuja focuses on passages in the Upanishads that describe Brahman as the inner-controller of all matter (acit) and finite souls (cit). He states that Brahman is both the inner-controller (sariri) and inner-ruler (antaryamin) present in all souls and matter. The world or matter is not simply an illusion, but is real and a part of Brahman. To deny the separate existence of matter, as Advaita Vedanta does, is to deny the glorious creation of Brahman. However, this concept in Ramanuja's thought accounts for both the transcendence and immanence in the nature of Brahma, for though Brahman is found in every soul as the inner-ruler (antaryamin), Brahman also transcends souls that depend on Him. Thus, Ramanuja asserts the utter dependency of the body and soul on God (the inner-controller).

Finally, Ramanuja taught that God's grace is available to anyone regardless of caste or gender distinctions so long as they fully and genuinely devote themselves to the Lord. He claimed specifically that self-surrender (prapatti) to Vishnu is the key to spiritual liberation. Like Christian theology, Ramanuja insisted that humans are unable to be saved by their own efforts, and they require the grace of God. Such grace becomes available to souls who completely surrender themselves to God acknowledging their full dependence on him. In return, Brahman enables these souls to achieve moksha through his grace. Ramanuja believed that the pathway to enlightenment (moksha) is not realizing the oneness of Atman and Brahman through merging with Brahman, but by complete self-surrender to Brahman through the theistic worship of Lord Vishnu or Isvara where one retains one's distinct identity as lover and beloved.

According to Ramanuja's teachings, Lord Narayana or Bhagavan is the Supreme Being; the individual soul is Chit; matter is Achit. Ramanuja regards the attributes as real and permanent, but subject to the control of Brahman. The attributes are called Prakaras or modes. Lord Narayana is the Ruler and Lord of the universe. The Jiva is His servant and worshipper. The Jiva should completely surrender himself to the Lord. The oneness of God is quite consistent with the existence of attributes, as the attributes or Shaktis depend upon God for their existence.

Ramanuja's Criticisms of Sankara

Ramanuja argued that Sankara's interpretation of the Upanishads had serious errors. His major objections were fourfold: (1) He argued that Brahman was differentiated rather than undifferentiated consciousness; (2) He argued that Sankara's concept of nirguna Brahman was untenable and fallacious; (3) He argued that beginningless karma, rather than superimposition, was the cause of avidya; and (4) He argued that Sankara's view of avidya-maya had seven major inconsistencies and flaws. In particular, Ramanuja did not accept the existence of avidya, because if Brahman were omnipresent and non-dual then it would be

impossible for an opposing force such as avidya to exist. Moreover, if the world and everything in it was truly an illusion, as Sankara contended, then all religious scriptures must also logically be illusionary, which contradicts Shankara's assertion that the Vedic scriptures resonate with truth. For these and other reasons, Ramanuja rejected Sankara's doctrines of maya (illusion) and avidya (ignorance).

Writings

Nine writings have been authoritatively attributed to Ramanuja. His most famous work, the Sribhasya, is a commentary on the Brahma-sutra from the perspective of a bhakti practitioner. He also wrote several works that describe his own philosophy in detail (Vedantasara, Vedantapida, and Vedarthasamgraha), a commentary on the Bhagavad Gita (Gitabhasya), a manual of daily worship (Nityagrantha), and several hymns (Saranagatigadya, Vaikunthagadya, and Srirangagadya).

Impact and Subsequent Schools

Ramanuja has had a great impact on Hinduism and Indian philosophy. His ideas provided a respectful philosophical basis for bhakti, thus aligning philosophy with the form of religion practiced by the majority of Hindus. Ramanuja can also be credited with spreading Vaishnavism (worship of Vishnu) to the Indian population, and in particular for inspiring the emergence of two subsequent schools known as the northern Vadakalai School, and the southern Tenkalai School, founded by Vedanta Deshika and Manavalamamuni, respectively. These two later schools differed on several interpretations of Ramanuja's philosophy. The most significant point of contention concerned the role of prapatti (surrender to God). According to the Vadakalai School, following the rituals prescribed in the Vedas is essential to proper worship. However, the Tenkalai School concerns itself with following the example of the 12 Tamil Vaishnava saints (Alvars), renowned for their devotional poetry dedicated to the Hindu deity, Vishnu. Thus, for the Tenkalai School, the act of devotion itself is considered to be more important than the rituals surrounding it. Additionally, both schools hold that the grace of Brahman is required to achieve liberation. The Vadakalai School believes that grace is conditional, based on the effort of the individual. Therefore, an individual's liberation is a cooperative effort between the individual and Brahman. This school is known as the "monkey school," because as a baby monkey has to make an effort and cling onto its mother to be protected, so must human beings make an effort to attain liberation. The Tenkalai School believes that liberation is dispensed freely at the discretion of Brahman, and it will be granted to an individual when they are ready to receive it. Thus, liberation is solely the responsibility of Brahman. This school is known as the "cat school" because as a kitten is protected by its mother without any effort on the part of the kitten, so Brahman will grant liberation to human beings without effort on the part of the individual.

About the end of the tenth century, the Visishtadvaita system of philosophy was well established in Southern India and the followers of this creed were in charge of important Vaishnavite temples at Kancheepuram, Srirangam, Tirupathi and other important places. The head of the important Vaishnavite institution was Yamunacharya, a great sage and profound scholar; and he was also the head of the Mutt at Srirangam. One of his disciples,

by name Kanchipurna, was serving in the temple at Kancheepuram. Although a Sudra, Kanchipurna was so very pious and good that the people of the place had great respect and reverence for him. At present, there is a temple at Kancheepuram where Kanchipurna's image has been installed and where he is worshipped as a saint.

Young Ramanuja came under Kanchipurna's influence and had such reverence for him that he invited him to dinner in his house. Ramanuja's intention was to attend on Kanchipurna and personally serve him at dinner and himself take meals afterwards. Unfortunately, Kanchipurna came to dinner when Ramanuja was not at home, and took his meals being served by Ramanuja's wife. When Ramanuja returned home, he found the house washed and his wife bathing for having served meals to a Sudra. This irritated Ramanuja very much and turned him against his wife who was an orthodox lady of a different social ideal. After a few incidents of this nature, Ramanuja abandoned the life of a householder and became a Sannyasin.

About this time, Yamunacharya being very old was on the look-out for a young person of good ability and character to take his place as head of the Mutt at Srirangam. He had already heard of Ramanuja through his disciples and made up his mind to instal Ramanuja in his place. He now sent for Ramanuja. By the time Ramanuja reached Srirangam, Yamunacharya was dead; and Ramanuja saw his body being taken by his followers to the cremation ground outside the village. Ramanuja followed them to the cremation ground. There he was informed that Yamunacharya, before his death, had left instructions that he had three wishes which Ramanuja was to be requested to fulfil, viz., that a Visishtadvaita Bhashya should be written for the Brahma Sutras of Vyasa which hitherto had been taught orally to the disciples of the Visishtadvaita philosophy and that the names of Parasara, the author of Vishnu Purana, and saint Sadagopa should be perpetuated. Ramanuja was deeply touched, and in the cremation ground itself, before the dead body of Yamunacharya, he made a solemn promise that, God willing, he would fulfil all the three wishes of Yamunacharya. Ramanuja lived for 120 years, and in the course of his long life, fully redeemed his promise by fulfilling all the three wishes of Yamunacharya.

After the death of Yamuna, his disciples at Srirangam and other places wanted Ramanuja to take Yamuna's place as the head of the Mutt at Srirangam. This was also the expressed wish of Yamuna. Accordingly, Ramanuja took his place and was duly installed with all the attendant ceremonies and celebrations as the head of the Visishtadvaita Mutt at Srirangam.

Ramanuja then proceeded to Thirukottiyur to take initiation from Nambi for Japa of the sacred Mantra of eight letters Om Namō Narayanaya. Somehow, Nambi was not willing to initiate Ramanuja easily. He made Ramanuja travel all the way from Srirangam to Madurai nearly eighteen times before he made up his mind to initiate him, and that too, only after exacting solemn promises of secrecy. Then Nambi duly initiated Ramanuja and said: "Ramanuja! Keep this Mantra a secret. This Mantra is a powerful one. Those who repeat this Mantra will attain salvation. Give it only to a worthy disciple previously tried". But Ramanuja had a very large heart. He was extremely compassionate and his love for humanity was unbounded. He wanted that every man should enjoy the eternal bliss of Lord

Narayana. He realised that the Mantra was very powerful. He immediately called all people, irrespective of caste and creed, to assemble before the temple. He stood on top of the tower above the front gate of the temple, and shouted out the sacred Mantra to all of them at the top of his voice. Nambi, his Guru, came to know of this. He became furious. Ramanuja said: "O my beloved Guru! Please prescribe a suitable punishment for my wrong action". Ramanuja said: "I will gladly suffer the tortures of hell myself if millions of people could get salvation by hearing the Mantra through me". Nambi was very much pleased with Ramanuja and found out that he had a very large heart full of compassion. He embraced Ramanuja and blessed him. Having thus equipped himself with the necessary qualifications, Ramanuja succeeded Yamuna.

By this time, Ramanuja's fame had spread far and wide. He became a good controversialist. Then he wrote his commentary on the Brahma Sutras known as the Sri Bhashya. The Visishtadvaita system is an ancient one. It was expounded by Bodhayana in his Vritti, written about 400 B.C. It is the same as that expounded by Ramanuja; and Ramanuja followed Bodhayana in his interpretations of the Brahma Sutras. Ramanuja's sect of Vaishnavas is called by the name Sri Sampradaya. Ramanuja wrote also three other books--Vedanta Sara (essence of Vedanta), Vedanta Sangraha (a resume of Vedanta) and Vedanta Deepa (the light of Vedanta).

Ramanuja travelled throughout the length and breadth of India to disseminate the path of devotion. He visited all the sacred places throughout India including Kashi, Kashmir and Badrinath. On his way back he visited the Tirupathi hills. There he found the Saivites and the Vaishnavites quarrelling with one another, one party contending that the image of the Lord in the Tirupathi hills was a Saivite one and the other party saying that it was a Vaishnavite one. Ramanuja proposed that they should leave it to the Lord Himself to decide the dispute. So they left the emblems of both Siva and Vishnu at the feet of the Lord, and after locking the door of the temple, both parties stayed outside on guard. In the morning, when they opened the doors, it was found that the image of the Lord was wearing the emblems of Vishnu, while the emblems of Siva were lying at its feet as left there the evening before. This decided that the temple was a Vaishnavite one and it has remained so ever since.

Ramanuja then visited all the Vaishnavite shrines in South India and finally reached Srirangam. Here he settled himself permanently and continued his labours of preaching the Visishtadvaita philosophy and writing books. Thousands of people flocked to him everyday to hear his lectures. He cleansed the temples, settled the rituals to be observed in them, and rectified many social evils which had crept into the community. He had a congregation of 700 Sannyasins, 74 dignitaries who held special offices of ministry, and thousands of holy men and women, who revered him as God. He converted lakhs of people to the path of Bhakti. He gave initiation even to washermen. He was now seventy years old, but was destined to live many more years, establish more Mutts, construct more temples and convert many more thousands of people.

The Chola king about this time was Kulothunga I and he was a staunch Saivite. He ordered Ramanuja to subscribe to his faith in Siva and acknowledge Siva as the Supreme Lord.

Two of the disciples of Ramanuja, Kuresa and Mahapurna, donned the orange robes of Sannyasins and visited the court of Kulothunga I in place of Ramanuja. They argued there for the superiority of Vishnu. The monarch refused to hear them and had their eyes put out.

The two unfortunate people started for Srirangam--their native place. Mahapurna was a very old man, and unable to bear the pain, died on the way. Kuresa alone returned to Srirangam.

Meanwhile, Ramanuja, with a few followers, by rapid marches through day and night, reached the foot-hills of the Western Ghats, about forty miles west of Mysore. There, after great difficulties, he established himself and spent some years in preaching and converting people to the Visishtadvaita philosophy.

The king of the place was Bhatti Deva of the Hoysala dynasty. The Raja's daughter was possessed of some devil and nobody was able to cure her. Ramanuja succeeded in exorcizing the devil and the princess was restored to her former health. The king was very much pleased with Ramanuja and readily became his disciple and he was converted by Ramanuja into a Vaishnavite. Thereafter Ramanuja firmly established himself in the Mysore king's dominions, constructed a temple at Melkote, and created a strong Vaishnavite community there. The Pariahs or depressed classes (now called Harijans) of the place were of great service to Ramanuja; and Ramanuja gave them the right of entry inside the temple which he constructed at Melkote--on some fixed days and with some limited privileges--which they enjoy to this day.

Ramanuja constructed a few more Vishnu temples in and about Mysore, set up a strong Vaishnavite community and put them in charge of his disciples to continue his work and spread the Visishtadvaita philosophy and Vishnu worship throughout the king's dominions. Thus he continued his labours here for nearly twenty years and his followers numbered several thousands.

Meanwhile, Kulothunga Chola I, who persecuted Ramanuja, died. The followers of Ramanuja immediately communicated the news to Ramanuja and requested him to come back to Srirangam. Ramanuja himself longed to go back to his followers in Srirangam and worship in the temple there. But his new disciples and followers at Melkote and other places in Mysore would not let him go. So he constructed a temple for himself, installed therein his own image for worship by his disciples and followers, and left the place for Srirangam. He was welcomed by his friends and disciples at Srirangam. The successor to Kulothunga Chola I was a pro-Vaishnavite and Ramanuja was left undisturbed. Ramanuja continued his labours for thirty years more and closed his long active career after attaining the remarkable age of 120 years.

Ramanuja was the exponent of the Visishtadvaita philosophy or qualified non-dualism. Ramanuja's Brahman is Savishesha Brahman, i.e., Brahman with attributes.

According to Ramanuja's teachings, Lord Narayana or Bhagavan is the Supreme Being; the individual soul is Chit; matter is Achit. Ramanuja regards the attributes as real and permanent, but subject to the control of Brahman. The attributes are called Prakaras or modes. Lord Narayana is the Ruler and Lord of the universe. The Jiva is His servant and worshipper. The Jiva should completely surrender himself to the Lord. The oneness of God is quite consistent with the existence of attributes, as the attributes or Shaktis depend upon God for their existence.

4. MADDHWA

Sri Madhvacharya is the founder of the Dvaita School of Philosophy and Religion. Students of Indian Philosophy know him as the founder of a major school of Vedanta, like Sri Sankaracharya and Sri Ramanujacharya.

Sri Madhvacharya was born in the year 1199 AD at Velali (in the village of Pajaka), a few miles from Udupi (Karnataka State), at the district of South Kanara in South India. He was a Brahmin by birth. His father was an eminent Brahmin named Narayana Naddillaya was tremendously devoted to Lord Vishnu. His mother had a very devout and chaste named Vedavati, who was a virtuous woman. His parents gave him the family name-Vasudeva.

He took up sanyasa at the age of twenty-five from Sri Achyutaprekshacharya, with the Ashramanama of Purnaprajna. Sri Achyutapreksha who belonged to the Advaita (monistic) school of Vedanta, had a hard time convincing his student on the monistic interpretation of the Hindu spiritual classics such as the Upanisads, the Bhagavadgita etc. Purnaprajna impressed his teacher by interpreting Hindu Scriptures along dualistic and theistic lines, and arguing resourcefully with anyone who challenged his ideas. Subsequently, Purnaprajna toured Southern India; debating with monistic scholars wherever he encountered them. Upon his return to Udupi, his guru, gave him the title of "Madhva". Madhva wrote the first of his 40 works, i.e. the commentary on the GIta.

Sri Madhvacharya undertook two major tours of Northern India; winning several monistic scholars over to his dualistic view point. Ultimately, he managed to convert his teacher as well. He met shrI Vedavyasa and Sri Badarayana during his two tours of North India. One significant incident in the life of Sri Madhvacharya was the miraculous obtaining of a Krishna icon on the seashore close to Udupi. He brought it to his monastery and duly consecrated it in Udupi. He personally worshipped the icon for 20 years. Sri Madhvacharya debated with many scholars and won them to his school of thought. The veteran scholar of Andhra region, Shobhana bhatta, and a well-known pandit in the Tulu region, Trivikrama Panditacharya were among the prominent ones. Sri Narayana Panditacharya, the son of Trivikrama Panditacharya, composed Sri Sumadhva vijaya, a contemporary biography of Sri Madhvacharya. Then in 1298 AD, he ordained 8 young boys and appointed them as pontiffs of 8 apostolic institutions (mathas). Madhva asked the 8 pontiffs to undertake the worship of the Krishna icon by a system of rotation, which lasted two months each. Madhva disappeared from mortal sight on the 9th day of the bright half

of the month of Magha in the Hindu cyclic year of Pingala (1317 AD) while lecturing on the Aitareyopanisad, to the first eight pontiffs of Udupi.

Super human

It is believed that he was incarnation of Wind God Vayu. He performed many miracles. A story is related that when a boat containing the image of Lord Krishna capsized, Maddva retrieved the image from the ocean. One Ishvara Deva asked Maddhva to work in dam building and Maddhva got the whole dam constructed.

Contributions of Madhva to Indian Philosophy and religion

Sri Madhvacharya made several important contributions to Indian Philosophy. The most important contribution was his approach in treating all the Hindu scriptures as an integral entity. Unlike other commentators who treat differentiate between Vedas and Upanishads, treating the former as "lower knowledge" (apara vidya), he treated both of them as an integral entity. He may be regarded as the greatest "Samanvayacharya" of Indian Philosophy.

He was the first philosopher to formulate an Adhyatmic (philosophical) interpretation of the Rigveda. To illustrate his point, he interpreted forty suktas as an example. Recent philosophers like Sri Arabindo have continued on this path.

He gave a fresh doctrine of the validity of knowledge with special reference to the principle of "sakshi". Though sakshi concept can be traced to earlier sources, it was Sri Madhvacharya who developed the concepts and used them in the right places in his philosophy. He introduced the concept of "vishesha", in the relationship between a substance and its attributes.

There are several other concepts like svatantra-paratantra, bimba-pratibimba bhava (relation between Jivas and brahman) which he developed and used in his works.

He also influenced the bhakti movement in India. He wrote dvadasha stotra, a devotional poem having his "amkita" or signature. This was a precursor to the famous "Haridasa" movement of Karnataka, which has enriched the devotional literature of the entire country.

Exponent of Dvaita School of Philosophy

Maddhvacharya is considered exponent of Dvaita philosophy and his Vaishnavism is called Sad Vishnavism, so as to distinguish it from Sri Vaishnavism of Sri Ramanujacharya. According to his philosophy, the Supreme being is Vishnu or Narayan. Every follower of Maddhva was expected to have faith in Pancha-bheda, five real and eternal distinctions. They are:

1. The distinction between Supreme being and the individual soul.
2. Between spirit and matter.
3. Between one piece of matter and another.
4. Between real and unreal.
5. Between one Jiva and another Jivas.

He held that the worship of Vishnu consists in:

1. Ankana: making his body with his symbols.
2. Namakarana: Giving the names of Lord to children.
3. Bhajana: Serving his glories. Maddhva laid much emphasis on constant smarana on his name.

5. VALLABHA

Vallabhacharya (devotional philosopher), the founder of the Vaishnavite cult of Rajasthan and Gujarat, was born of Lakshman Bhatt and Illama in 1479 A. D. at Champurauya Raipur, in Madhya Pradesh. He was a Telugu Brahmin and was contemporary of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. He is regarded as an Avatar of Agni.

The ancestors of Vallabhacharya lived in Andhra Pradesh and belonged to a long line of Telugu Vaidiki Brahmins known as Vellanadu or Vellanatiya following the Vishnu Swami school of thought. According to devotional accounts, Krishna commanded his ancestor Yagnanarayana Bhatta that He would take birth in their family after completion of 100 Somayagnas (fire sacrifices). By the time of Yagnanarayana's descendant Lakshmana Bhatta who migrated to the holy town of Varanasi, the family had completed 100 Somayagnas.

The period surrounding Vallabhacharya's birth was a tumultuous one and most of northern and central India was being influenced by Muslim invaders. It was common for populations to migrate in order to flee from religious persecution and conversion. On one such occasion, Lakshmana Bhatta had to urgently move out of Varanasi with his pregnant wife. Due to terror and physical strain of the flight suffered by the mother, there was a premature birth of the child, two months in advance. As the child did not show signs of life, the parents placed it under a tree wrapped in a piece of cloth. It is believed that Krishna appeared in a dream before the parents of Vallabhacharya and signified that He Himself had taken birth as the child. According to popular accounts, the parents rushed to the spot and were amazed to find their baby alive and protected by a circle of divine fire. The blessed mother extended her arms into the fire unscathed; she received from the fire the divine baby, gleefully to her bosom. The child was named Vallabha (meaning "dear one" in Sanskrit).

Early Education

Vallabha lost his father when he was eleven years of age. However, he completed his study of Vedas, the darsanas and the eighteen Puranas at Varanasi. Subsequently from Varanasi, he went to Brindavana and from there proceeded for onward journey of all sacred places.

Vallabha married Mahalakshmi at Varanasi and he had two sons.

Extensive Travels

Vallabha visited the court of Raja Krishna Deva at Vijayanagar and defeated all the Pandits of the Court. The Raja was very much pleased with Vallabha's genius in learning, that he showered on him gifts of gold and other wealth, and invested him with the title of 'Vaishnavacharya'. Vallabha's fame and influence quickly spread all over and he visited one religious congregation after another.

The important works of Vallabha are Vyasasutrabhasya (Anubhashya), Jaiminisutrabhasya, Bhagavata tika Subodhini, Pushtipravalamaryada and Siddhartarahasya. All these books are in Sanskrit. Vallabha has written many books in Braj bhasha as well.

Vallabha's teachings

Vallabha was the exponent of pure monism or the Shuddhadvaita (pure non-dualism) school of philosophy. According to his philosophy Lord Krishna is the highest Brahma and his body consists of Sarchidananda. He is called Purushottama. Vallabha's disciples worship Bhala Krishna (Vatsalya Bhava).

Vallabha laid great stress at Partiti grace and Bhatati devotion. Mahapustita is the highest grace of Anagsaha, which helps the aspirant to attain Godhead. Things came out of Akshara-Sacchidananda like sparks from fire. These are his salient teachings.

Pushtimarg

Vallabhacharya represented the culmination of philosophical thought during the Bhakti Movement in the Middle Ages. The sect established by him is unique in its facets of devotion to Krishna, especially his child manifestation, and is enriched with the use of traditions, music and festivals. Today, most of the followers of this sect reside in western and northern India.

Nirvana

Vallabha spent his last days at Varanasi. He thought that his life's mission had been accomplished. He went to bath in the Ganges at Hanuman Ghat. There the people say a brilliant light ascending the sky from the earth. In the presence of host of spectators, he ascended the sky and disappeared into Ultimate in 1531 A. D. in his fifty-second year.

His disciples built a temple on the spot of his birth Champaranya. This temple is very popular and is much visited by them as a place of pilgrimage.

6. CHAITANYA

Chaitanya Mahaprabhu (1486–1534) was a saint in eastern India in the 16th century A. D., worshipped by followers of Gaudiya Vaishnavism as the full incarnation of Lord Krishna. Sri Krishna Chaitanya was a notable proponent for the Vaishnava school of Bhakti yoga, based on the philosophy of the Bhagavata Purana and Bhagavad Gita. Specifically, he worshipped the forms of Krishna, popularised the chanting of the Hare Krishna maha mantra and composed the Siksastakam in Sanskrit. His line of followers,

known as Gaudiya Vaishnavas, revere him as an Avatar of Krishna in the mood of Radharani who was prophesied to appear in the later verses of the Bhagavata Purana.

His father Jagannath Misra was a poor Brahmin of the Vedic order, and His mother Sachi Devi was a model good woman, both descended from Brahmin stocks originally residing in Sylhet. Mahaprabhu was a beautiful Child and the ladies of the town came to see Him with presents. His mother's father, Pandit Nilambar Chakravarti, a renowned astrologer, foretold that the Child -would be a great Personage in time; and he therefore, gave Him the name Visvambhar. The ladies of the neighborhood styled Him Gaur Hari on account of His golden complexion, and His mother called Him Nimai on account of the Nim tree near which He was born. Beautiful as the lad was every one heartily loved to see Him everyday. As He grew up, He became a whimsical and frolicsome Lad. After His fifth year, He was admitted into a Pathsala where He picked up Bengali in a very short time.

He is well known to be an incarnation of Lord Sri Krishna according to the Bhavishya Purana. He was also referred to by the names Gaura (golden), due to his fair complexion, and Nimai due to his being born underneath a Neem tree. There are numerous biographies available from the time giving details of Chaitanya's life, the most prominent ones being the Chaitanya Charitamrita of Krishnadasa Kaviraja Goswami, the earlier Chaitanya Bhagavata of Vrindavana Dasa, and the Chaitanya Mangala, written by Lochana Dasa. These works are in Bengali with some Sanskrit verses interspersed. In addition to these there are other Sanskrit biographies composed by his contemporaries. Chief among them are the literary masterpiece, Sri Chaitanya Charitamritam Mahakavyam (written in 20 sargas and 1911 shlokas) by Kavi Karnapura and Sri Krishna Chaitanya Charitamritam by Murari Gupta.

Chaitanya's life

Chaitanya Mahaprabhu is revered by devotees as an incarnation of Krishna and Radharani as avatars of the Parmatma, or Supreme Godhead. He was born in an Bengali Hindu family. According to Chaitanya Charitamruta, Nimai was born on the full moon night of 18 February 1486, at the time of a lunar eclipse. His parents named him 'Vishvambhar'. Sri Chaitanya was the second son of Jagannath Misra and his wife Sachi Devi who lived in the town of Nabadwip in Nadia, West Bengal. Shree Chaitanya having family roots in Shrihatta (now Sylhet, Bangladesh), from where his grandfather, Madhukar Mishra had emigrated to Navadweep, Bengal.

In his youth, Chaitanya Mahaprabhu was primarily known as an erudite scholar, whose learning and skills in argumentation in his locality were second to none. Kashinath Mukhopadhyay was his private tutor during those days. A number of stories also exist telling of Chaitanya's apparent attraction to the chanting and singing of Krishna's names from a very young age, but largely this was perceived as being secondary to his interest in acquiring knowledge and studying Sanskrit. When travelling to Gaya to perform the shraddha ceremony for his departed father Chaitanya met his guru, the ascetic Ishvara Puri, from whom he received initiation with the Gopala Krishna mantra. This meeting was to mark a significant change in Mahaprabhu's outlook and upon his return to Bengal the local Vaishnavas, headed by Advaita Acharya, were stunned at his external sudden 'change of

heart' (from 'scholar' to 'devotee') and soon Chaitanya became the eminent leader of their Vaishnava group within Nadia.

After leaving Bengal and receiving entrance into the sannyasa order by Keshava Bharati, Chaitanya journeyed throughout the length and breadth of India for several years, chanting the divine Names of Krishna constantly. He spent the last 24 years of his life in Puri, Odisha, the great temple city of Jagannath. The Suryavanshi Hindu emperor of Odisha, Gajapati Maharaja Prataparudra Dev, regarded the Lord as Krishna's incarnation and was an enthusiastic patron and devotee of Chaitanya's sankeertan gatherings. It was during these years that Lord Chaitanya is believed by His followers to have sank deep into various Divine-Love (sam dhi) and performed pastimes of divine ecstasy (bhakti).

Teachings

Chaitanya has left one written record in Sanskrit called Siksastakam. Chaitanya's epistemological, theological and ontological teachings are summarised as ten roots or maxims (dasa mula). The statements of amnaya (scripture) are the chief proof. By these statements the following ten topics are taught.

1. Krishna is the Supreme Absolute Truth.
2. Krishna is endowed with all energies.
3. Krishna is the ocean of rasa (theology).
4. The jivas (individual souls) are all separated parts of the Lord.
5. In bound state the jivas are under the influence of matter, due to their tatastha nature.
6. In the liberated state the jivas are free from the influence of matter, due to their tatastha nature.
7. The jivas and the material world are both different from and identical to the Lord.
8. Pure devotion is the practice of the jivas.
9. Pure love of Krishna is the ultimate goal.
10. Hare krishna hare krishna krishna krishna hare hare hare ram hare ram ram ram hare hare Krishna is the only lovable blessing to be received.

7. SRI RAMAKRISHNA

Sri Ramakrishna was born on 18 February 1836 in the village of Kamarpukur about sixty miles northwest of Kolkata. His parents, Kshudiram Chattopadhyaya and Chandramani Devi, were poor but very pious and virtuous. As a child, Ramakrishna (his childhood name was Gadadhar) was dearly loved by the villagers. From early days, he was disinclined towards formal education and worldly affairs. He was, however, a talented boy, and could sing and paint well. He was fond of serving holy men and listening to their discourses. He was also very often found to be absorbed in spiritual moods. At the age of six, he experienced the first ecstasy while watching a flight of white cranes moving against the background of black clouds. This tendency to enter into ecstasy intensified with age. His

father's death when he was seven years old served only to deepen his introspection and increase his detachment from the world.

When Sri Ramakrishna was sixteen, his brother Ramkumar took him to Kolkata to assist him in his priestly profession. In 1855 the Kali Temple at Dakshineswar built by Rani Rasmani was consecrated and Ramkumar became the chief priest in that temple. When he died a few months later, Ramakrishna was appointed the priest. Ramakrishna developed intense devotion to Mother Kali and spent hours in loving adoration of her image, forgetting the rituals of priestly duties. His intense longing culminated in the vision of Mother Kali as boundless effulgence engulfing everything around him.

Intense Spiritual Practices

Sri Ramakrishna's God-intoxicated state alarmed his relatives in Kamarpukur and they got him married to Saradamani, a girl from the neighbouring village of Jayrambati. Unaffected by the marriage, Sri Ramakrishna plunged into even more intense spiritual practices. Impelled by a strong inner urge to experience different aspects of God he followed, with the help of a series of Gurus, the various paths described in the Hindu scriptures, and realized God through each of them. The first teacher to appear at Dakshineswar (in 1861) was a remarkable woman known as Bhairavi Brahmani who was an advanced spiritual adept, well versed in scriptures. With her help Sri Ramakrishna practised various difficult disciplines of the Tantrik path, and attained success in all of them. Three years later came a wandering monk by name Totapuri, under whose guidance Sri Ramakrishna attained Nirvikalpa Samadhi, the highest spiritual experience mentioned in the Hindu scriptures. He remained in that state of non-dual existence for six months without the least awareness of even his own body. In this way, Sri Ramakrishna relived the entire range of spiritual experiences of more than three thousand years of Hindu religion.

Following Other Faiths

With his unquenchable thirst for God, Sri Ramakrishna broke the frontiers of Hinduism, glided through the paths of Islam and Christianity, and attained the highest realization through each of them in a short span of time. He looked upon Jesus and Buddha as incarnations of God, and venerated the ten Sikh Gurus. He expressed the quintessence of his twelve-year-long spiritual realizations in a simple dictum: Yato mat, tato path "As many faiths, so many paths." He now habitually lived in an exalted state of consciousness in which he saw God in all beings.

Worshipping His Wife

In 1872, his wife Sarada, now nineteen years old, came from the village to meet him. He received her cordially, and taught her how to attend to household duties and at the same time lead an intensely spiritual life. One night he worshipped her as the Divine Mother in his room at the Dakshineswar temple. Although Sarada continued to stay with him, they lived immaculately pure lives, and their marital relationship was purely spiritual. It should be mentioned here that Sri Ramakrishna had been ordained a Sannyasin (Hindu monk), and he observed the basic vows of a monk to perfection. But outwardly he lived like a lay man, humble, loving and with childlike simplicity. During Sri Ramakrishna's stay at

Dakshineswar, Rani Rasmani first acted as his patron. After her death, her son-in-law Mathur Nath Biswas took care of his needs.

Contact with Some Notables

Sri Ramakrishna's name as an illumined saint began to spread. Mathur once convened an assembly of scholars, and they declared him to be not an ordinary human being but the Avatar of the Modern Age. In those days the socio-religious movement known as Brahma Samaj, founded by Raja Ram Mohan Roy, was at the height of popularity in Bengal. Sri Ramakrishna came into contact with several leaders and members of Brahma Samaj and exerted much influence on them. His teaching on harmony of religions attracted people belonging to different denominations, and Dakshineswar became a veritable Parliament of Religions.

Coming of the Devotees

As bees swarm around a fully blossomed flower, devotees now started coming to Sri Ramakrishna. He divided them into two categories. The first one consisted of householders. He taught them how to realize God while living in the world and discharging their family duties. The other more important category was a band of educated youths, mostly from the middle class families of Bengal, whom he trained to become monks and to be the torchbearers of his message to mankind. The foremost among them was Narendranath, who years later, as Swami Vivekananda, carried the universal message of Vedanta to different parts of the world, revitalized Hinduism, and awakened the soul of India.

The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna

Sri Ramakrishna did not write any book, nor did he deliver public lectures. Instead, he chose to speak in a simple language using parables and metaphors by way of illustration, drawn from the observation of nature and ordinary things of daily use. His conversations were charming and attracted the cultural elite of Bengal. These conversations were noted down by his disciple Mahendranath Gupta who published them in the form of a book, Sri Sri Ramakrishna Kathamrita in Bengali. Its English rendering, The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna, was released in 1942; it continues to be increasingly popular to this day on account of its universal appeal and relevance.

Last Days

The intensity of his spiritual life and untiring spiritual ministration to the endless stream of seekers told on Sri Ramakrishna's health. He developed cancer of the throat in 1885. He was shifted to a spacious suburban villa where his young disciples nursed him day and night. He instilled in them love for one another, and thus laid the foundation for the future monastic brotherhood known as Ramakrishna Math. In the small hours of 16 August 1886 Sri Ramakrishna gave up his physical body, uttering the name of the Divine Mother, and passed into Eternity.

Message of Sri Ramakrishna

The message of Sri Ramakrishna to the modern world, which he gave through his life and through his recorded conversations, may be briefly stated as follows:

1. The **goal of human life** is the realization of the Ultimate Reality which alone can give man supreme fulfilment and everlasting peace. This is the essence of all religions.
2. The **Ultimate Reality** is one; but it is personal as well as impersonal, and is indicated by different names (such as God, Ishvar, etc) in different religions.
3. The Ultimate Reality can be realized through various paths taught in world religions. **All religions are true** in so far as they lead to the same ultimate Goal.
4. **Purity of mind** is an essential condition for the attainment of the Ultimate Reality; real purity is freedom from lust and greed. External observances are only of secondary importance.
5. Through **spiritual practices** man can overcome his evil tendencies, and **divine grace** can redeem even the worst sinner. Therefore one should not brood over the past mistakes, but should develop a positive outlook on life by **depending on God**.
6. **God realization** is possible for all. The householders need not renounce the world; but they should pray sincerely, practise discrimination between the Eternal and the temporal and remain unattached. God listens to sincere prayer. **Intense longing** (vyakulata) is the secret of success in spiritual life.
7. **God dwells in all people** but the manifestation of this inner Divinity varies from person to person. In saintly people there is greater manifestation of God. Women are special manifestations of Divine Mother of the Universe, and so are to be treated with respect.
8. Since God dwells in all people, **helping the needy** should be done not out of compassion (which is an attitude of condescension) but **as humble service to God**.
9. **Egoism**, caused by ignorance, is the **root-cause of all suffering**.
10. Life is an expression of the spontaneous creativity (Lila) of God. Pleasure and pain, success and failure, etc are to be borne with patience, and **one should resign oneself to God's will** under all circumstances.

Contributions of Sri Ramakrishna to World Culture

1. **Spiritual Ideal** : One of the important contributions of Sri Ramakrishna is the reestablishment of the ideal of God realization in the modern world. In a world in which people's faith in traditional religions has been considerably reduced by the relentless attack of the forces of atheism, materialism and scientific thinking, Sri Ramakrishna established the possibility of having direct experience of transcendent Reality. His life has enabled thousands of people to gain or regain faith in God and in the eternal verities of religion. As Mahatma Gandhi has stated: "His (Ramakrishna's) life enables us to see God face to face. No one can read the story of his life without being convinced that God alone is real and that all else is an illusion."

2. **Harmony of Religions:** Sri Ramakrishna, however, is more well known all over the world as the Prophet of Harmony of Religions. He did not say that all the religions are the same. He recognized differences among religions but showed that, in spite of these differences, all religions lead to the same ultimate goal, and hence they are all valid and true. This view is nowadays known as “Pluralism”: Sri Ramakrishna is its primary originator. The uniqueness of Sri Ramakrishna’s view is that it was based, not on speculation, but on direct experience gained through actual practice. Since conflicts among religions and the rise of religious fundamentalism are a major threat to the peace, prosperity and progress of humanity, Sri Ramakrishna’s doctrine of harmony of religions has immense importance in the modern world. Regarding this, the distinguished British historian Arnold Toynbee has written: “... Mahatma Gandhi’s principle of non-violence and Sri Ramakrishna’s testimony to the harmony of religions: here we have the attitude and the spirit that can make it possible for the human race to grow together into a single family – and in the Atomic Age, this is the only alternative to destroying ourselves.”
3. **Bridge between the ancient and the modern:** Sri Ramakrishna is the real link between the ancient and the modern. He showed how the ancient ideals and experiences could be realized even while following the normal modern way of life.
4. **Boost to moral life:** Sri Ramakrishna’s emphasis on truthfulness and renunciation of lust and greed has given a great boost to moral life in modern times. He also cleansed religious life of immoral practices, external pomp, miracle mongering, etc.
5. **Divinization of love:** Sri Ramakrishna elevated love from the level of emotions to the level of the unity of all Selves in God. Although the principle of oneness of the Supreme Self and its immanence in all beings is a central point in the Upanishads, it was seldom applied in practical life. Sri Ramakrishna saw the Divine in his wife, in his disciples, in others, even in fallen women, and treated them all with respect. The famous dictum of the New Testament, “God is Love”, found its verification in Sri Ramakrishna. Divinization of love and human relationships is another contribution of Sri Ramakrishna which has immense significance for the welfare of humanity.

Some sayings of Sri Ramakrishna:

1. He is born in vain who, having attained the human birth, so difficult to get, does not attempt to realize God in this very life.
2. You see many stars in the sky at night, but not when the sun rises. Can you therefore say that there are no stars in the heavens during the day? O man, because you cannot find God in the days of your ignorance, say not that there is no God.
3. One cannot have the vision of God as long as one has these three – shame, hatred, and fear.

4. Be not a traitor in your thoughts. Be sincere; act according to your thoughts; and you shall surely succeed. Pray with a sincere and simple heart, and your prayers will be heard.
5. Do not let worldly thoughts and anxieties disturb your mind. Do everything that is necessary in the proper time, and let your mind be always fixed on God.
6. You should remember that the heart of the devotee is the abode of God. He dwells, no doubt, in all beings, but He especially manifests Himself in the heart of the devotee. The heart of the devotee is the drawing room of God.
7. Pure knowledge and pure love are one and the same thing. Both lead the aspirants to the same goal. The path of love is much easier.
8. Who is the best devotee of God? It is he who sees, after the realization of Brahman that God alone has become all living beings, the universe, and the twenty-four cosmic principles. One must discriminate at first, saying 'Not this, not this', and reach the roof. After that one realizes that the steps are made of the same materials as the roof, namely, brick, lime, and brick-dust. The devotee realizes that it is Brahman alone that has become all these — the living beings, the universe, and so on.
9. Live in the world like a waterfowl. The water clings to the bird, but the bird shakes it off. Live in the world like a mudfish. The fish lives in the mud, but its skin is always bright and shiny.
10. I tell you the truth: there is nothing wrong in your being in the world. But you must direct your mind toward God; otherwise you will not succeed. Do your duty with one hand and with the other hold to God. After the duty is over you will hold to God with both hands.
11. The breeze of His grace is blowing day and night over your head. Unfurl the sails of your boat (mind), if you want to make rapid progress through the ocean of life.
12. One should constantly repeat the name of God. The name of God is highly effective in the Kaliyuga. The practice of yoga is not possible in this age, for the life of a man depends on food. Clap your hands while repeating God's name, and the birds of your sins will fly away.

8. VIVEKANANDA

Swami Vivekananda (January 12, 1863-July 4, 1902) was the founder of Ramakrishna Mission. Swami Vivekananda was also known as a great scholar. His real name was Narendra Nath Dutta. Vivekananda is considered to be a major force in the revival of Hinduism in modern India. He was considered a key figure in the introduction of Vedanta and Yoga in Europe and America. He introduced Hinduism at the Parliament of the World's Religions at Chicago in 1893.

Swami Vivekananda, known in his pre-monastic life as Narendranath Datta, was born in an affluent family in Kolkata on 12 January 1863. His father, Vishwanath Datta,

was a successful attorney with interests in a wide range of subjects, and his mother, Bhuvaneshwari Devi, was endowed with deep devotion, strong character and other qualities. A precocious boy, Narendra excelled in music, gymnastics and studies. By the time he graduated from Calcutta University, he had acquired a vast knowledge of different subjects, especially Western philosophy and history. Born with a yogic temperament, he used to practise meditation even from his boyhood, and was associated with Brahma Movement for some time.

With Sri Ramakrishna

At the threshold of youth Narendra had to pass through a period of spiritual crisis when he was assailed by doubts about the existence of God. It was at that time he first heard about Sri Ramakrishna from one of his English professors at college. One day in November 1881, Narendra went to meet Sri Ramakrishna who was staying at the Kali Temple in Dakshineswar. He straightaway asked the Master a question which he had put to several others but had received no satisfactory answer: “Sir, have you seen God?” Without a moment’s hesitation, Sri Ramakrishna replied: “Yes, I have. I see Him as clearly as I see you, only in a much intenser sense.”

Apart from removing doubts from the mind of Narendra, Sri Ramakrishna won him over through his pure, unselfish love. Thus began a guru-disciple relationship which is quite unique in the history of spiritual masters. Narendra now became a frequent visitor to Dakshineswar and, under the guidance of the Master, made rapid strides on the spiritual path. At Dakshineswar, Narendra also met several young men who were devoted to Sri Ramakrishna, and they all became close friends.

Difficult Situations

After a few years two events took place which caused Narendra considerable distress. One was the sudden death of his father in 1884. This left the family penniless, and Narendra had to bear the burden of supporting his mother, brothers and sisters. The second event was the illness of Sri Ramakrishna which was diagnosed to be cancer of the throat. In September 1885 Sri Ramakrishna was moved to a house at Shyampukur, and a few months later to a rented villa at Cossipore. In these two places the young disciples nursed the Master with devoted care. In spite of poverty at home and inability to find a job for himself, Narendra joined the group as its leader.

Beginnings of a Monastic Brotherhood

Sri Ramakrishna instilled in these young men the spirit of renunciation and brotherly love for one another. One day he distributed ochre robes among them and sent them out to beg food. In this way he himself laid the foundation for a new monastic order. He gave specific instructions to Narendra about the formation of the new monastic Order. In the small hours of 16 August 1886 Sri Ramakrishna gave up his mortal body.

After the Master’s passing, fifteen of his young disciples (one more joined them later) began to live together in a dilapidated building at Baranagar in North Kolkata. Under the leadership of Narendra, they formed a new monastic brotherhood, and in 1887 they took

the formal vows of sannyasa, thereby assuming new names. Narendra now became Swami Vivekananda (although this name was actually assumed much later.)

Awareness of Life's Mission

After establishing the new monastic order, Vivekananda heard the inner call for a greater mission in his life. While most of the followers of Sri Ramakrishna thought of him in relation to their own personal lives, Vivekananda thought of the Master in relation to India and the rest of the world. As the prophet of the present age, what was Sri Ramakrishna's message to the modern world and to India in particular? This question and the awareness of his own inherent powers urged Swamiji to go out alone into the wide world. So in the middle of 1890, after receiving the blessings of Sri Sarada Devi, the divine consort of Sri Ramakrishna, known to the world as Holy Mother, who was then staying in Kolkata, Swamiji left Baranagar Math and embarked on a long journey of exploration and discovery of India.

Discovery of Real India

During his travels all over India, Swami Vivekananda was deeply moved to see the appalling poverty and backwardness of the masses. He was the first religious leader in India to understand and openly declare that the real cause of India's downfall was the neglect of the masses. The immediate need was to provide food and other bare necessities of life to the hungry millions. For this they should be taught improved methods of agriculture, village industries, etc. It was in this context that Vivekananda grasped the crux of the problem of poverty in India (which had escaped the attention of social reformers of his days): owing to centuries of oppression, the downtrodden masses had lost faith in their capacity to improve their lot. It was first of all necessary to infuse into their minds faith in themselves. For this they needed a life-giving, inspiring message. Swamiji found this message in the principle of the Atman, the doctrine of the potential divinity of the soul, taught in Vedanta, the ancient system of religious philosophy of India. He saw that, in spite of poverty, the masses clung to religion, but they had never been taught the life-giving, ennobling principles of Vedanta and how to apply them in practical life.

Thus the masses needed two kinds of knowledge: secular knowledge to improve their economic condition, and spiritual knowledge to infuse in them faith in themselves and strengthen their moral sense. The next question was, how to spread these two kinds of knowledge among the masses? Through education – this was the answer that Swamiji found.

Need for an Organization

One thing became clear to Swamiji: to carry out his plans for the spread of education and for the uplift of the poor masses, and also of women, an efficient organization of dedicated people was needed. As he said later on, he wanted “to set in motion a machinery which will bring noblest ideas to the doorstep of even the poorest and the meanest.” It was to serve as this ‘machinery’ that Swamiji founded the Ramakrishna Mission a few years later.

Decision to attend the Parliament of Religions

It was when these ideas were taking shape in his mind in the course of his wanderings that Swami Vivekananda heard about the World's Parliament of Religions to be held in Chicago in 1893. His friends and admirers in India wanted him to attend the Parliament. He too felt that the Parliament would provide the right forum to present his Master's message to the world, and so he decided to go to America. Another reason which prompted Swamiji to go to America was to seek financial help for his project of uplifting the masses.

Swamiji, however, wanted to have an inner certitude and divine call regarding his mission. Both of these he got while he sat in deep meditation on the rock-island at Kanyakumari. With the funds partly collected by his Chennai disciples and partly provided by the Raja of Khetri, Swami Vivekananda left for America from Mumbai on 31 May 1893.

The Parliament of Religions and After

His speeches at the World's Parliament of Religions held in September 1893 made him famous as an 'orator by divine right' and as a 'Messenger of Indian wisdom to the Western world'. After the Parliament, Swamiji spent nearly three and a half years spreading Vedanta as lived and taught by Sri Ramakrishna, mostly in the eastern parts of USA and also in London.

Awakening His Countrymen

He returned to India in January 1897. In response to the enthusiastic welcome that he received everywhere, he delivered a series of lectures in different parts of India, which created a great stir all over the country. Through these inspiring and profoundly significant lectures Swamiji attempted to do the following:

1. To rouse the religious consciousness of the people and create in them pride in their cultural heritage;
2. To bring about unification of Hinduism by pointing out the common bases of its sects;
3. To focus the attention of educated people on the plight of the downtrodden masses, and to expound his plan for their uplift by the application of the principles of Practical Vedanta.

Founding of Ramakrishna Mission

Soon after his return to Kolkata, Swami Vivekananda accomplished another important task of his mission on earth. He founded on 1 May 1897 a unique type of organization known as Ramakrishna Mission, in which monks and lay people would jointly undertake propagation of Practical Vedanta, and various forms of social service, such as running hospitals, schools, colleges, hostels, rural development centres etc, and conducting massive relief and rehabilitation work for victims of earthquakes, cyclones and other calamities, in different parts of India and other countries.

Belur Math

In early 1898 Swami Vivekananda acquired a big plot of land on the western bank of the Ganga at a place called Belur to have a permanent abode for the monastery and monastic Order originally started at Baranagar, and got it registered as Ramakrishna Math after a couple of years. Here Swamiji established a new, universal pattern of monastic life which adapts ancient monastic ideals to the conditions of modern life, which gives equal importance to personal illumination and social service, and which is open to all men without any distinction of religion, race or caste.

Disciples

It may be mentioned here that in the West many people were influenced by Swami Vivekananda's life and message. Some of them became his disciples or devoted friends. Among them the names of Margaret Noble (later known as Sister Nivedita), Captain and Mrs Sevier, Josephine McLeod and Sara Ole Bull, deserve special mention. Nivedita dedicated her life to educating girls in Kolkata. Swamiji had many Indian disciples also, some of whom joined Ramakrishna Math and became sannyasins.

Last Days

In June 1899 he went to the West on a second visit. This time he spent most of his time in the West coast of USA. After delivering many lectures there, he returned to Belur Math in December 1900. The rest of his life was spent in India, inspiring and guiding people, both monastic and lay. Incessant work, especially giving lectures and inspiring people, told upon Swamiji's health. His health deteriorated and the end came quietly on the night of 4 July 1902. Before his Mahasamadhi he had written to a Western follower: "It may be that I shall find it good to get outside my body, to cast it off like a worn out garment. But I shall not cease to work. I shall inspire men everywhere until the whole world shall know that it is one with God."

Vivekananda's contributions to World Culture

Making an objective assessment of Swami Vivekananda's contributions to world culture, the eminent British historian A L Basham stated that "in centuries to come, he will be remembered as one of the main moulders of the modern world..." Some of the main contributions that Swamiji made to the modern world are mentioned below:

1. **New Understanding of Religion:** One of the most significant contributions of Swami Vivekananda to the modern world is his interpretation of religion as a universal experience of transcendent Reality, common to all humanity. Swamiji met the challenge of modern science by showing that religion is as scientific as science itself; religion is the 'science of consciousness'. As such, religion and science are not contradictory to each other but are complementary. This universal conception frees religion from the hold of superstitions, dogmatism, priestcraft and intolerance, and makes religion the highest and noblest pursuit – the pursuit of supreme Freedom, supreme Knowledge, supreme Happiness.

2. **New View of Man:** Vivekananda's concept of 'potential divinity of the soul' gives a new, ennobling concept of man. The present age is the age of humanism which holds that man should be the chief concern and centre of all activities and thinking. Through science and technology man has attained great prosperity and power, and modern methods of communication and travel have converted human society into a 'global village'. But the degradation of man has also been going on apace, as witnessed by the enormous increase in broken homes, immorality, violence, crime, etc. in modern society. Vivekananda's concept of potential divinity of the soul prevents this degradation, divinizes human relationships, and makes life meaningful and worth living. Swamiji has laid the foundation for 'spiritual humanism', which is manifesting itself through several neo-humanistic movements and the current interest in meditation, Zen etc all over the world.
3. **New Principle of Morality and Ethics:** The prevalent morality, in both individual life and social life, is mostly based on fear – fear of the police, fear of public ridicule, fear of God's punishment, fear of Karma, and so on. The current theories of ethics also do not explain why a person should be moral and be good to others. Vivekananda has given a new theory of ethics and new principle of morality based on the intrinsic purity and oneness of the Atman. We should be pure because purity is our real nature, our true divine Self or Atman. Similarly, we should love and serve our neighbours because we are all one in the Supreme Spirit known as Paramatman or Brahman.
4. **Bridge between the East and the West:** Another great contribution of Swami Vivekananda was to build a bridge between Indian culture and Western culture. He did it by interpreting Hindu scriptures and philosophy and the Hindu way of life and institutions to the Western people in an idiom which they could understand. He made the Western people realize that they had to learn much from Indian spirituality for their own well-being. He showed that, in spite of her poverty and backwardness, India had a great contribution to make to world culture. In this way he was instrumental in ending India's cultural isolation from the rest of the world. He was India's first great cultural ambassador to the West. On the other hand, Swamiji's interpretation of ancient Hindu scriptures, philosophy, institutions, etc prepared the mind of Indians to accept and apply in practical life two best elements of Western culture, namely science and technology and humanism. Swamiji has taught Indians how to master Western science and technology and at the same time develop spiritually. Swamiji has also taught Indians how to adapt Western humanism (especially the ideas of individual freedom, social equality and justice and respect for women) to Indian ethos.

Swamiji's Contributions to India

In spite of her innumerable linguistic, ethnic, historical and regional diversities, India has had from time immemorial a strong sense of cultural unity. It was, however, Swami Vivekananda who revealed the true foundations of this culture and thus clearly defined and

strengthened the sense of unity as a nation. Swamiji gave Indians proper understanding of their country's great spiritual heritage and thus gave them pride in their past. Furthermore, he pointed out to Indians the drawbacks of Western culture and the need for India's contribution to overcome these drawbacks. In this way Swamiji made India a nation with a global mission.

Sense of unity, pride in the past, sense of mission – these were the factors which gave real strength and purpose to India's nationalist movement. Several eminent leaders of India's freedom movement have acknowledged their indebtedness to Swamiji. Free India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru wrote: "Rooted in the past, full of pride in India's prestige, Vivekananda was yet modern in his approach to life's problems, and was a kind of bridge between the past of India and her present ... he came as a tonic to the depressed and demoralized Hindu mind and gave it self-reliance and some roots in the past." Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose wrote: "Swamiji harmonized the East and the West, religion and science, past and present. And that is why he is great. Our countrymen have gained unprecedented self-respect, self-reliance and self-assertion from his teachings."

Swamiji's most unique contribution to the creation of new India was to open the minds of Indians to their duty to the downtrodden masses. Long before the ideas of Karl Marx were known in India, Swamiji spoke about the role of the labouring classes in the production of the country's wealth. Swamiji was the first religious leader in India to speak for the masses, formulate a definite philosophy of service, and organize large-scale social service.

Swamiji's Contributions to Hinduism

1. **Identity:** It was Swami Vivekananda who gave to Hinduism as a whole a clear-cut identity, a distinct profile. Before Swamiji came Hinduism was a loose confederation of many different sects. Swamiji was the first religious leader to speak about the common bases of Hinduism and the common ground of all sects. He was the first person, as guided by his Master Sri Ramakrishna, to accept all Hindu doctrines and the views of all Hindu philosophers and sects as different aspects of one total view of Reality and way of life known as Hinduism. Speaking about Swamiji's role in giving Hinduism its distinct identity, Sister Nivedita wrote: "... it may be said that when he began to speak it was of 'the religious ideas of the Hindus', but when he ended, Hinduism had been created."
2. **Unification:** Before Swamiji came, there was a lot of quarrel and competition among the various sects of Hinduism. Similarly, the protagonists of different systems and schools of philosophy were claiming their views to be the only true and valid ones. By applying Sri Ramakrishna's doctrine of Harmony (Samanvaya) Swamiji brought about an overall unification of Hinduism on the basis of the principle of unity in diversity. Speaking about Swamiji's role in this field K M Pannikar, the eminent historian and diplomat, wrote: "This new Shankaracharya may well be claimed to be a unifier of Hindu ideology."
3. **Defence:** Another important service rendered by Swamiji was to raise his voice in defence of Hinduism. In fact, this was one of the main types of work he did in

the West. Christian missionary propaganda had given a wrong understanding of Hinduism and India in Western minds. Swamiji had to face a lot of opposition in his attempts to defend Hinduism.

4. **Meeting the Challenges:** At the end of the 19th century, India in general, and Hinduism in particular, faced grave challenges from Western materialistic life, the ideas of Western free society, and the proselytizing activities of Christians. Vivekananda met these challenges by integrating the best elements of Western culture in Hindu culture.
5. **New Ideal of Monasticism:** A major contribution of Vivekananda to Hinduism is the rejuvenation and modernization of monasticism. In this new monastic ideal, followed in the Ramakrishna Order, the ancient principles of renunciation and God realization are combined with service to God in man (Shiva jnane jiva seva). Vivekananda elevated social service to the status of divine service.
6. **Refurbishing of Hindu Philosophy and Religious Doctrines:** Vivekananda did not merely interpret ancient Hindu scriptures and philosophical ideas in terms of modern thought. He also added several illuminating original concepts based on his own transcendental experiences and vision of the future. This, however, needs a detailed study of Hindu philosophy which cannot be attempted here.

9. GURU NANAK

Nanak, the Khatri mystic and poet and founder of the Sikh religion, was born in 1469 A.D. in the village of Talwandi on the Ravi, in the Lahore district of Punjab. On one side of the house in which Guru Nanak was born, there stands now the famous shrine called 'Nankana Sahib'. Nanak has been called the 'Prophet of the Punjab and Sind'. Nanak's father was Mehta Kalu Chand, known popularly as Kalu. He was the accountant of the village. He was an agriculturist also. Nanak's mother was Tripta. Even in his childhood, Nanak had a mystic disposition and he used to talk about God with Sadhus. He had a contemplative mind and a pious nature. He began to spend his time in meditation and spiritual practices. He was, by habit, reserved in nature. He would eat but little.

Nanak's education

When Nanak was a boy of seven, he was sent to Gopal Pandha to learn Hindi. The teacher told Nanak to read a book. Nanak replied, "What will it avail to know all and not have a knowledge of God?" Then the teacher wrote the Hindi alphabets for him on a wooden slate. Nanak said to the teacher, "Please tell me, sir, what books have you studied? What is the extent of your knowledge?" Gopal Pandha replied, "I know mathematics and the accounts necessary for shopkeeping". Nanak replied, "This knowledge will not in any way help you in obtaining freedom". The teacher was very much astonished at the words of the boy. He told him, "Nanak, tell me something which could help me in the attainment of salvation". Nanak said, "O teacher! Burn worldly love, make its ashes into ink and make the intellect into a fine paper. Now make the love of God your pen, and your heart the writer, and under the instructions of your Guru, write and meditate. Write the Name of the Lord

and His praises and write, 'He has no limit this side or the other'. O teacher! Learn to write this account". The teacher was struck with wonder.

Then Kalu sent his son to Pundit Brij Nath to learn Sanskrit. The Pundit wrote for him 'Om'. Nanak asked the teacher the meaning of 'Om'. The teacher replied, "You have no business to know the meaning of 'Om' now. I cannot explain to you the meaning". Nanak said, "O teacher! What is the use of reading without knowing the meaning? I shall explain to you the meaning of 'Om'". Then Nanak gave an elaborate explanation of the significance of 'Om'. The Sanskrit Pundit was struck with amazement.

Nanak's occupation

Then Kalu tried his level best to turn Nanak's mind towards worldly matters. He put Nanak in the work of looking after the cultivation of the land. Nanak did not pay any attention to his work. He meditated even in the fields. He went out to tend the cattle, but centred his mind on the worship of God. The cattle trespassed into a neighbour's field. Kalu rebuked Nanak for his idleness. Nanak replied, "I am not idle, but am busy in guarding my own fields". Kalu asked him, "Where are your fields?" Nanak replied, "My body is a field. The mind is the ploughman. Righteousness is the cultivation. Modesty is water for irrigation. I have sown the field with the seed of the sacred Name of the Lord. Contentment is my field's harrow. Humility is its hedge. The seeds will germinate into a good crop with love and devotion. Fortunate is the house in which such a crop is brought! O sir, mammon will not accompany us to the next world. It has infatuated the whole world, but there are few who understand its delusive nature".

Then Kalu put him in charge of a small shop. Nanak distributed the things to Sadhus and poor people. He would give away in charity whatever he could lay hands on in his father's house and in the shop. Nanak said, "My shop is made of time and space. Its store consists of the commodities of truth and self-control. I am always dealing with my customers, the Sadhus and Mahatmas, contact with whom is very profitable indeed".

When Nanak was fifteen years of age, his father gave him twenty rupees and said, "Nanak, go to the market and purchase some profitable commodity". Kalu sent his servant Bala also to accompany Nanak. Nanak and Bala reached Chuhar Kana, a village about twenty miles from Talwandi. Nanak met a party of Fakirs. He thought within himself: "Let me feed these Fakirs now. This is the most profitable bargain I can make". He purchased provisions immediately and fed them sumptuously. Then he came back to his house. The servant informed his master of his son's bargain. Kalu was very much annoyed. He gave a slap on Nanak's face.

The father thought that Nanak did not like sedentary work. Therefore he said to Nanak, "O dear son! Ride on a horse and do travelling business. This will suit you nicely". Nanak replied, "Revered father! My trade is divine knowledge. The profits are the purseful of good deeds with which I can certainly reach the domain of the Lord".

Then Kalu Chand told Nanak: "If you do not like trade or business, you may serve in some office". Nanak replied, "I am already a servant of God. I am endeavouring to do my duty honestly and whole-heartedly in the service of my Lord. I carry out His behests

implicitly. I desire fervently to get the reward of divine grace from the Lord by serving Him untiringly and incessantly". On hearing this, the father became silent and retired from there.

Nanak's marriage

Guru Nanak had only one sister named Nanaki. She was married to Jai Ram, a Dewan in the service of Nawab Daulat Khan Lodi, who was a relative of Sultan Bahlol, the then Emperor of Delhi. The Nawab had an extensive Jagir in Sultanpur near Kapurthala. Nanak also married soon after his sister's marriage. His wife was Sulakhani, daughter of Mula, a resident of Batala, in the district of Gurdaspur. Marriage and the birth of two children did not, in any way, stop Nanak's spiritual pursuits. He went even then to forests and lonely places for meditation.

Nanaki and Jai Ram loved and respected Nanak much. Rai Bular, the Zamindar of Talwandi, also had great regard for Nanak. Rai Bular and Jai Ram thought that Nanak should be fixed in some job at Sultanpur. Jai Ram took Nanak to the Nawab, who put Nanak in charge of his storehouse. Nanak discharged his duties very satisfactorily. Everybody was very much pleased with his work. In those days the salary was given in kind and so Nanak received provisions. He spent a small portion for his own maintenance and distributed the rest to the poor.

Nanak had two sons named Srichand (born in 1494 A.D.) and Lakshnichand (born in 1497 A.D.). Srichand renounced the world and founded a sect of ascetics called Udasis. The Udasis grew long beards and long hair. The application of razor to any part of the body was strictly prohibited. Lakshnichand became a man of the world. He married and had two sons. Nanak gave up his service and distributed his goods amongst the poor. He lived in the jungles and put on the garb of a Fakir. He practised severe austerities and intense meditation. He sang inspired songs. These are all collected and preserved in the Adi Granth—the sacred book of the Sikhs.

The minstrel Mardana came from Talwandi and became Nanak's servant and faithful devotee. When Nanak sang songs, Mardana used to accompany Nanak on the rebeck. Mardana was an expert musician. He sang Nanak's songs always to the accompaniment of the rebeck. Nanak became a public preacher at the age of thirty-four. He began to preach his mission. His preaching produced a deep impression on the minds of the public. He left Sultanpur and toured about in Northern India.

Rai Bular, the Zamindar of Talwandi, became very old. He wanted to see Nanak and so he sent a messenger to Nanak. Nanak at once proceeded to Talwandi and saw Rai Bular and his own parents and relatives. All his relatives began to explain to Nanak how they stood towards him in relationship and persuaded him to give up his mission and stay at home comfortably. Nanak replied: "'Forgiveness' is my mother and 'contentment' my father. 'Truth' is my uncle and 'love' my brother. 'Affection' is my cousin and 'patience' my daughter. 'Peace' is my constant female companion and 'intelligence' my handmaid. Thus is composed my whole family whose members are my constant associates. The only one God—the Creator of the whole universe—is my husband. He who forsakes Him will be caught up in the round of births and deaths and will suffer in various ways".

Guru Nanak had great influence over Babar, who had very great regard for Nanak. Babar offered valuable presents to Nanak. Nanak, having declined them, asked Babar to release the captives of Eminabad and restore their properties. Babar at once carried out the wishes of Guru Nanak and implored Guru Nanak to give him some religious instructions. Guru Nanak said, "Worship God. Repeat His Name. Give up wine and gambling. Be just. Revere saints and pious men. Be kind to all. Be merciful towards the vanquished".

Guru Nanak's Tapas and meditation

Nanak practised rigorous meditation in order to realise God quickly. He was always in a deep meditative mood. He did not care for his body. The parents thought that Nanak was ailing seriously and so they sent for a physician. Nanak said to the doctor: "You have come to diagnose my ailment and prescribe medicine. You take my hand and feel the pulse. Poor ignorant doctor, you do not know that the pain is in my mind. O doctor! Go back to your house. I am under God-intoxication. Your medicine is of no use to me. Few know my disease. The Lord, who gave me this pain, will remove it. I feel the pain of separation from God. I feel the pain which death may inflict. O ignorant doctor! Do not give me any medicine. I feel the pain that my body will perish by disease. I forgot God and indulged in sensual pleasures. Then I had this pain. The wicked heart is punished. If a man repeats even a portion of the Name of the Lord, his body will become like gold and his soul will be rendered pure. All his pain and disease will be annihilated. Nanak will be saved by the true Name of the Lord. O physician! Go back to your house. Do not take my curse with you. Leave me alone now".

Nanak gave up food and drink for some days. He became wholly absorbed in divine contemplation. He observed perfect silence. He concealed himself in the forests for days together.

Guru Nanak's wanderings

Nanak lived in this world for a period of seventy years. He wandered from place to place. He went to Sayyidpur in the district of Gujranwala. He then proceeded to Kurukshetra, Hardwar, Brindavan, Varanasi, Agra, Kanpur, Ayodhya, Prayag, Patna, Rajgir, Gaya and Puri. He travelled throughout India. He made four extensive tours. He went to Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Mecca and Medina also. He travelled to Bengal, the Deccan, Sri Lanka, Turkey, Arabia, Baghdad, Kabul, Kandahar and Siam. He held controversies with Pundits and Mohammedan priests. He debated with the Pandas of Gaya, Hardwar and other places of pilgrimage. He dispelled the clouds of ignorance and doubts of many people. He enjoined on all people to live righteously and with brotherly love and hospitality. He preached and taught: "Do Nama Smarana. Love God. Be devoted to one God. Serve your fellow beings. God is all-in-all. Pray. Praise Him always. Attain the bliss of union with Him". Nanak succeeded remarkably in changing the minds of men and winning their love and confidence and in directing them along the path of righteousness and devotion. He tried his best to unite the Hindus and the Muslims.

Guru Nanak proceeded to Multan. He halted by the side of a river. Multan was a place filled with Fakirs always. Prahlad was born at Multan. Shams Tabriez and Mansoor also lived there. The Pirs came to know that Guru Nanak had come to Multan. They sent

him milk in a cup, filled to the very brim. Nanak put inside the cup some Batashas—small hollow lumps of sugar—and a flower above them and returned the milk. Mardana told his master that a thing like milk should not be returned and should be drunk by him. Guru Nanak replied, "Look here, Mardana. You are a simpleton. The Pirs have played a small trick. They have not sent this milk for my use. There is deep philosophy at the back of it. There is profound significance. The meaning is that Multan is already full of Pirs and Fakirs, just like the cup that is filled with milk to the very brim, and that there is no room for another religious teacher. I have also paid them in the same coin. My answer is that I will mix with them like the Batashah and would predominate over them like the flower placed in the cup of milk". The Pirs and the Fakirs then came to see Guru Nanak. Nanak sang a song. The proud and arrogant Pirs came to their senses now. They became very humble. They said to Guru Nanak: "Pardon us, O revered Guru! We were surely self-conceited. Kindly give us spiritual instructions and bless us". Guru Nanak blessed them and gave them instructions.

Two miracles

There is a remarkable incident in connection with Nanak's visit to Mecca. At Mecca, Nanak was found sleeping with his feet towards the Kaaba, before which the Mohammedans prostrated themselves when performing their prayer. Kazi Rukan-ud-din, who observed this, angrily remarked: "Infidel! How dare you dishonour God's place by turning your feet towards Him?" He also kicked Nanak. Nanak silently replied, "I am tired. Turn my feet in any direction where the place of God is not". Kazi Rukan-ud-din took hold of Nanak's feet angrily and moved them towards the opposite direction. The mosque also began to move. The Kazi was struck with wonder. He then recognised the glory of Guru Nanak.

Guru Nanak visited Hassan Abdal in the Attock district in the North Western Frontier in 1520 A.D. He sat under a Peepul tree at the foot of a hillock. On top of the hill, there lived a Mohammedan saint named Vali Quandhari. There was then a spring of water on top of the hill. Mardana used to get water from the spring. Guru Nanak became very popular in a short time. The Mohammedan saint became jealous. He forbade Mardana from taking water out of the spring. Mardana informed Guru Nanak of the conduct of the Mohammedan saint. Guru Nanak said to Mardana, "O Mardana! Do not be afraid. God will send water down to us soon". The spring that was on the top of the hill dried up immediately. There arose a spring at the foot of the hill where Guru Nanak halted. The saint was very much enraged. He hurled a big rock from the top of the hill down to the spot where Nanak was sitting. Guru Nanak stopped the rock by his open hand. The impression of his hand on the rock exists even now. Then the saint came to the Guru, prostrated at his feet and asked for pardon. Guru Nanak smiled and pardoned the arrogant saint. There now stands a beautiful shrine by the side of the spring which is called: "Punja Sahib".

Teachings of Guru Nanak

Guru Nanak felt that it would be improper to postpone Nama Smarana or remembering the Name of the Lord, even by a single breath, because no one could tell whether the breath that had gone in would come out or not. Nanak says, "We are men of

one breath. I know not a longer time-limit". Guru Nanak calls him alone a true saint who remembers the Name of the Lord with every incoming and outgoing breath. The ideal is practical and within the reach of every man. He tells the people not to lose any time but to begin at once. He also says that there are no barriers of race, class, caste, creed or colour which check the progress of any in reaching the goal. He realised the great truth of the brotherhood of religions. He preached the universal brotherhood of man and the fatherhood of God to all people.

Guru Nanak was a reformer. He attacked the corruptions in society. He strongly protested against formalism and ritualism. He carried the message of peace and of love for everybody. He was very liberal in his views. He did not observe the rules of caste. He tried his level best to remove the superstitions of the people. He preached purity, justice, goodness and the love of God. He endeavoured to remove the moral putrefaction that was prevalent amongst the people and to infuse real spirit in the worship of God and true faith in religion and God. He introduced the singing of God's praise, along with music, as a means of linking the soul of man with God. Wherever he moved, he took Mardana with him to play on the rebeck while he sang. He said, "Serve God. Serve humanity. Only service to humanity shall secure for us a place in heaven". Guru Nanak had great reverence for women. He allowed them to join all religious gatherings and conferences and to sing the praises of God. He gave them their full share in religious functions.

Guru Nanak clearly says: "The road to the abode of God is long and arduous. There are no short cuts for rich people. Everyone must undergo the same discipline. Everyone must purify his mind through service of humanity and Nama Smarana. Everyone must live according to the will of the Lord without grumbling or murmuring. How to find Him? There is one way. Make His will your own. Be in tune with the Infinite. There is no other way". The first stage in making the divine will one's own is attained through prayer for divine grace or favour—Ardas for Guru Prasad. Guru Nanak attaches very great importance to prayer. He says that nothing can be achieved by man without divine favour. He says: "Approach God with perfect humility. Throw yourself on His mercy. Give up pride, show and egoism. Beg for His kindness and favour. Do not think of your own merits, abilities, faculties and capacities. Be prepared to die in the pursuit of His love and union with Him. Love God as a woman loves her husband. Make absolute unreserved self-surrender. You can get divine favour and love".

The beautiful composition of mystic poems uttered by Nanak is contained in 'Japji'. It is sung by every Sikh at daybreak. The 'Sohila' contains the evening prayers. In 'Japji', Guru Nanak has given a vivid and concise description of the stages through which man must pass in order to reach the final resting place or abode of eternal bliss. There are five stages or Khandas. The first is called Dharm Khand or "The Realm of Duty". Everyone must do this duty properly. Everyone must tread the path of righteousness. Everyone will be judged according to his actions.

The next stage is Gyan Khand or "The Realm of Knowledge" where the spirit of divine knowledge reigns. The aspirant does his duty with intense faith and sincerity. He has

the knowledge now, that only by doing his duty in a perfect manner, he can reach the abode of bliss or the goal of life.

The third stage is Sharam Khand. This is "The Realm of Ecstasy". There is the spiritual rapture here. There is beauty. The Dharma has become a part of one's own nature. It has become an ingrained habit. It is no more a mere matter of duty or knowledge.

The fourth stage is Karam Khand or "The Realm of Power". The God of power rules over this realm. The aspirant acquires power. He becomes a mighty hero. He becomes invincible. The fear of death vanishes.

The fifth or the final stage is Sach Khand or "The Realm of Truth". The formless One reigns here. Here the aspirant becomes one with God. He has attained Godhead. He has transmuted himself into Divinity. He has attained the goal of his life. He has found out his permanent resting place. Now ends the arduous journey of the soul.

Guru Nanak again and again insists thus: "Realise your unity with all. Love God. Love God in man. Sing the love of God. Repeat God's Name. Sing His glory. Love God as the lotus loves water, as the bird Chatak loves rain, as the wife loves her husband. Make divine love thy pen and thy heart the writer. If you repeat the Name, you live; if you forget it, you die. Open your heart to Him. Enter into communion with Him. Sink into His arms and feel the divine embrace".

The Granth Sahib

Guru Nanak invented the Gurumukhi characters by simplifying the Sanskrit characters. The holy Granth of the Sikhs is in Gurumukhi. It is worshipped by the Sikhs and the Sindhis. Every Gurudwara has a Granth Sahib. The holy Granth, popularly known as Adi Granth, contains the hymns of the first five Gurus. They were all collected, arranged and formed into one volume called Guru Granth Sahib by the fifth Guru. It contains a few selections from the hymns of Kabir and other contemporary Vaishnavite saints. Later on, the hymns of the ninth Guru were incorporated in the holy Granth by the tenth Guru. The compositions of Guru Nanak are very extensive.

A simple breakdown of his teaching is:

1. There is only one God.
2. We should worship and pray to the one God and no-one else.
3. Work hard and help others.
4. Be honest
5. Everyone is equal in the eyes of God, there is no rich, poor, male, female, black nor white. The only difference between people is in their actions.
6. Be kind to all; birds, animals and people.
7. Fear nothing, pray for the good of all.
8. Be simple and honest in your daily life.

Guru Nanak's last days

Nanak settled down at Khartarpur towards the close of his life. His whole family lived there together for the first time. Houses for the dwelling of Nanak's family and a Dharmashala were also built. Mardana also lived with the Guru. Every day the 'Japji' and 'Sohila'—the morning and the evening prayers composed by Guru Nanak—were recited in his presence. Guru Nanak died in the year 1538 A.D. at the age of sixty-nine. Guru Angad succeeded Guru Nanak. The other Gurus are: Guru Amardas, Guru Ramdas, Guru Arjun Dev, Guru Hargovind, Guru Har Rai, Guru Har Krishan, Guru Tej Bahadur and Guru Gobind Singh.

10. RAJARAM MOHAN ROY

The central figure in the socio-cultural awakening of 19th century was Raja Rammohan Roy. He has been regarded as the morning star of renaissance India. He was the first great leader of modern India.

His Life:

Raja Rammohan Roy was born on 22nd May, 1772 in an orthodox, well-to-do brahmin family of village Radhanagar in Burdhaman district of West Bengal. The name of his father was Ramakanta Roy and mother was Tarini Devi. His father was working as a Zamindar under Nawab of Murshidabad.

The childhood of Rammohan passed amidst the environment of social orthodoxy and blind belief. At the tender age of nine, he had been forced to marry two times and was required to marry a third time after sometime. He had also the tragic horrifying experience in his childhood how the widow of his brother was burnt alive as a sati on the funeral pyre of her dead husband.

These experiences of childhood had a deep impact on him and made him a crusader against all social vices. Exceptionally intelligent in the very childhood he had learnt Parsi, Arabic and Sanskrit.

The travel helped him to move to Patna, Banaras and Tibet and enough knowledge on Tibettian, English, Italy and Greek language. It also provided him golden opportunity to study different religious belief and philosophy. He also made an in-depth study of Veda, Upanishad, Bible, Koran, Zend Avesta and different Buddhist texts. Rammohan published a book called the "percepts of Jesus" where he rejected the divinity of Jesus but was impressed by his ethical teachings. On the death of his father in 1503, he moved to Murshidabad and wrote a treatise entitled "Tuhabat -ul- Muwahidin" or a gift to monotheist, a work protesting against idolatries and superstitions of all creeds. From 1805 to 1814 Rammohan served an English concern which managed Zamindari system on behalf of District collectors.

After the death of his father the Nawab of Murshidabad in 1809 appointed him as Sheristadar and Rammohan discharged that responsibility till 1814. In 1814 Rammohan resigned from the service of the company, purchased a Zamindari from which he had annual

income of Rs. 10,000 and settled permanently at Calcutta. The rest twenty years of his life were dedicated to the cause of socio-cultural awakening of India which provided him great fame in history of modern India. In 1815 he founded Atmiya Sabha and a college for the dissemination of Vedic knowledge. In 1819 he defeated a great scholar named Subramaniam Sastri on the question of idol worship.

In 1821 William Adam, a Christian missionary began to have faith in the doctrine of Advaita being influenced by Rammohan. As a result of this William Adam founded the Calcutta Unitarian Committee that led to bitter relationship between Ramohan and Christian missionaries who earlier were encouraged by his attack against idolatry. In 1828 Rammohan Roy founded the Brahma Samaj. In 1831 he went to England on a special mission to champion the cause of Mughal Emperor of Delhi where he died on 27th September, 1833. He was given the title of Raja by the Mughal emperor.

Philosophy and Reforms:

Raja Ramohan Roy was aware of country's weakness and conscious of her strength. He had great admiration and respect for the traditional philosophic system of the East; but at the same time believed firmly that modern culture alone would help to regenerate Indian society. Rammohan Roy represented a synthesis of the thought of East and west.

Rationalism, scientific temper, humanism and the basic principle of social democracy moulded the philosophical vision of Rammohan Roy. Rammohan Roy relied ultimately on the power of human reason which was in his view the final touchstone of the truth of any doctrine, eastern or western.

Raja Rammohan Roy was not a utopian dreamer. He believed in execution of his ideas. There was hardly any aspect of nation-building which he left untouched. As a social reformer he undertook relentless crusade against all social evils to purge traditional social order with a view to meet the challenge of the age.

His crusade against sati, child marriage, the prohibition of widow remarriage brought a new sensation. Ramohan Roy vehemently stood for liberation of women and their rightful place in the society. Rammohan Roy also propagated for the introduction for modern western education which in his opinion could be a major instrument for social transformation. He gave wholehearted cooperation to David Hare when he later founded the famous Hindu college at Calcutta. In the field of journalism Rammohan Roy was a pioneer. He was the editor of a Bengali journal "Sambad Kaumudi" and Urdu daily "Mirat-ul-Akhbar".

Rammohan Roy represented the first glimmering of the rise of national consciousness in India. He became the pioneer of public agitation on political question in the country. Rammohan Roy also enkindled the spirit of internationalism and free cooperation between nations. For all practical purposes Raja Rammohan Roy was the first great leader of modern India.

Rabindranath Tagore has rightly remarked, "Rammohan was the only person in his time, in the whole world of men, to realise completely the significance of the Modern Age. He knew that the ideal of human civilisation does not lie in the isolation of independence,

but in the brotherhood of interdependence of individuals as well as nations in all spheres of thought and activity." Rammohan Roy was also a prolific writer.

His famous works are texts on Vedanta, Vedentasar, Kathopanishad, Ishopanishad, the precepts of Jesus, the guide to peace and happiness." Raja Rammohan Roy by his multi dimensional creativity inaugurated the modern age in India. He has also been regarded as the father of Indian Renaissance and the prophet of indian nationalism.

Raja Rammohan Roy felt the necessity of an institution to translate his dreams into practice. On 20th August 1828 he founded the Brahma Sabha which became famous as Brahma Samaj in 1830. It was the culmination of his earlier Atmiya Sabha of 1814.

The purpose of the establishment of Brahma Samaj became evident in the Trust Deed of Samaj by Rammohan in 1830. He made it clear that he aspired only to establish a strict monolatrous worship of the Supreme Being, worship of the heart and not of the hand, a sacrifice of self and not of the possession of the self.

The Brahma Samaj championed the worship of one God and the brotherhood of men. It advocated the respect for all religions and their scriptures. To love human beings and to have love towards them is the supreme religion. There is no place for idol worship, animal sacrifice offering Bhog and ritualism in the Brahma Samaj.

The evils like sati system, child marriage, infanticide, Pardah System, caste system and untouchability were opposed by the Brahma Samajists. Owing to the preachings of the founder of Brahma Samaj Widow Remarriage and intercast marriage began to take place.

The reformative and rational approach of Brahma Samaj created a great sensation. The conservative and orthodox elements in the society sharply reacted to the progressive views of Rammohan. The orthodox citizens of Calcutta started a rival organization named Dharma Sabha with its organ, the Samachar Chandrika which opposed Ramohan Roys' Bengali Weekly "Samvada Kaumudi." Undeterred by the critics Ramamohan spread his message and attracted many progressive Indians to the fold of Brahma Samaj.

After his death Maharsi Dwarakanath Tagore, Devendranath Tagore and Keshab Chandra Sen became the real spirit behind the movement. Though towards the close of the 19th century, the Brahma movement lost much of its newness, retained its social and educational mission.

Rajaram Mohan Roy (May22, 1771-September 27, 1833) was a founder of the Brahma Sabha in 1828 which engendered the Brahma Samaj, an influential Indian socio-religious reform movement. He is best known for his efforts to abolish the practice of 'sati'. It was he who first introduced the word 'Hinduism' in to the English language in 1816. Rajaram Mohan Roy is regarded as one of the most important figures in Indian renaissance. Rajaram Mohan Roy's impact on modern Indian history was a revival of the pure and ethical principles. Raja Ram Mohan Roy is known as the 'Maker of Modern India'.

Raja Ram Mohan Roy was against idol worship and orthodox Hindu rituals. He stood firmly against all sort of social bigotry, conservatism and superstitions. But his father

was an orthodox Hindu Brahmin. This led to differences between Raja Ram Mohan Roy and his father. Following differences he left the house . He wandered around Himalayas and went to Tibet. He traveled widely before returning home.

After his return Raja Ram Mohan Roy's family married him in the hope that he would change. But this did not have any effect on him. Raja Ram Mohan Roy went to Varanasi and studied the Vedas, the Upanishads and Hindu philosophy deeply. When his father died in 1803 he returned to Murshidabad. He then worked as a moneylender in Calcutta, and from 1809 to 1814, he served in the Revenue Department of the East India Company.

In 1814, Raja Ram Mohan Roy formed Atmiya Sabha. Atmiya Sabha tried to initiate social and religious reforms in the society. Raja Ram Mohan Roy campaigned for rights for women, including the right for widows to remarry, and the right for women to hold property. He actively opposed Sati system and the practice of polygamy.

He also supported education, particularly education of women. He believed that English-language education was superior to the traditional Indian education system, and he opposed the use of government funds to support schools teaching Sanskrit. In 1822, he founded a school based on English education.

In 1828, Raja Ram Mohan Roy founded the 'Brahma Samaj'. Through 'Brahma Samaj, he wanted to expose the religious hypocrisies and check the growing influence of Christianity on the Hindu society. Raja Ram Mohan Roy's efforts bore fruit when in 1829, the Sati system was abolished.

In November 1830 Ram Mohan Roy traveled to the United Kingdom as an ambassador of the Mughal emperor to plead for his pension and allowances. Raja Ram Mohan Roy passed away on September 27, 1833 at Stapleton near Bristol due to meningitis.

11. BALAGANGADHARA TILAK

Achievements: Considered as Father of Indian National Movement; Founded “Deccan Education Society” to impart quality education to India’s youth; was a member of the Municipal Council of Pune, Bombay Legislature, and an elected 'Fellow' of the Bombay University; formed Home Rule League in 1916 to attain the goal of Swaraj.

Bal Gangadhar Tilak is considered as Father of Indian National Movement. Bal Gangadhar Tilak was a multifaceted personality. He was a social reformer, freedom fighter, national leader, and a scholar of Indian history, Sanskrit, Hinduism, mathematics and astronomy. Bal Gangadhar Tilak was popularly called as Lokmanya (Beloved of the people). During freedom struggle, his slogan “Swaraj is my birthright and I shall have it” inspired millions of Indians.

Bal Gangadhar Tilak was born on July 23, 1856 in Ratnagiri, Maharashtra. He was a Chitpavan Brahmin by caste. His father Gangadhar Ramachandra Tilak was a Sanskrit scholar and a famous teacher. Tilak was a brilliant student and he was very good in mathematics. Since childhood Tilak had an intolerant attitude towards injustice and he was

truthful and straightforward in nature. He was among India's first generation of youth to receive a modern, college education.

When Tilak was ten his father was transferred to Pune from Ratnagiri. This brought sea change in Tilak's life. He joined the Anglo-Vernacular School in Pune and got education from some of the well known teachers. Soon after coming to Pune Tilak lost his mother and by the time he was sixteen he lost his father too. While Tilak was studying in Matriculation he was married to a 10-year-old girl called Satyabhama.

While Tilak was studying in Matriculation he was married to a 10-year-old girl called Satyabhama. After passing the Matriculation Examination Tilak joined the Deccan College. In 1877, Bal Gangadhar Tilak got his B.A. degree with a first class in mathematics. He continued his studies and got the LL.B. degree too.

After graduation, Tilak began teaching mathematics in a private school in Pune and later became a journalist. He became a strong critic of the Western education system, feeling it demeaning to Indian students and disrespectful to India's heritage. He came to the conclusion that good citizens can be moulded only through good education. He believed that every Indian had to be taught about Indian culture and national ideals. Along with his classmate Agarkar and great social reformer Vishnushastry Chiplunkar, Bal Gangadhar Tilak founded "Deccan Education Society" to impart quality education to India's youth.

The very next year after the Deccan Education Society was founded; Tilak started two weeklies, 'Kesari' and 'Maharatta'. 'Kesari' was Marathi weekly while 'Maharatta' was English weekly. Soon both the newspapers became very popular. In his newspapers, Tilak highlighted the plight of Indians. He gave a vivid picture of the people's sufferings and of actual happenings. Tilak called upon every Indian to fight for his right. Bal Gangadhar Tilak used fiery language to arouse the sleeping Indians.

Bal Gangadhar Tilak joined the Indian National Congress in 1890. He was a member of the Municipal Council of Pune, Bombay Legislature, and an elected 'Fellow' of the Bombay University. Tilak was a great social reformer. He issued a call for the banning of child marriage and welcomed widow remarriage. Through the celebrations of Ganapati Festival and the birthday of the Shivaji he organized people.

In 1897, Bal Gangadhar Tilak was charged with writing articles instigating people to rise against the government and to break the laws and disturb the peace. He was sentenced to rigorous imprisonment for one and a half year. Tilak was released in 1898. After release Tilak launched Swadeshi Movement. Through newspapers and lectures, Tilak spread the message to each and every village in Maharashtra.

A big 'Swadeshi Market' was opened in front of Tilak's house. Meanwhile, Congress was split into two camps-Moderates and Extremists. Extremists led by Bal Gangadhar Tilak opposed the moderate faction led by Gopal Krishna. Extremists were in the favour of self rule while the moderate thought that time is not yet ripe for such an eventuality. This rift finally led to a split in the Congress.

Tilak was arrested on the charges of sedition in 1906. After the trial, Tilak was sentenced to six years of imprisonment in Mandalay (Burma). Tilak spent his time in prison

by reading and writing. He wrote the book 'Gita-Rahasya' while he was in prison. Tilak was released on June 8, 1914. After his release, Bal Gangadhar Tilak tried to bring the two factions of Congress together. But his efforts did not bear much fruit. In 1916, Tilak decided to build a separate organization called the 'Home Rule League'. Its goal was swaraj. Tilak went from village to village, and explained the aim of his league to the farmers and won their hearts. He traveled constantly in order to organize the people. While fighting for people's cause Bal Gangadhar Tilak died on August 1, 1920.

Bal Gangadhar Tilak, widely acclaimed as 'the father of Indian Unrest'. His forefathers were Khots or petty landlords. His great-grandfather, Kesavarao, was an expert horseman and an accurate marksman. He held a high position under the Government of the Peshwas, but he resigned his office in 1818 as soon as the British took over the administration of the country. Tilak's grandfather, Ramchandrapanth, was a talented man and died in Benares as a Sannyasi.

Tilak's father, Gangadhar Shastri, was a good Sanskrit scholar and a friend of Ramakrishna Bhandarkar. Tilak's mother's name was Paravti Bai Gangadhar. Tilak's father, Gangadharpanth, started his career as a school teacher at Ratnagiri. In 1886 he was transferred to Poona as an Assistant Deputy Education Inspector for Primary Schools. In spite of the ancient aristocratic heritage, the family belonged to the lower-middle class when Bal Gangadhar Tilak was born. In 1871 Tilak married Tapibai. After marriage her name was changed to Satyabhamabai. She belonged to the Ballal Val Chitpavan family of Ladghar village near Dapoli in Ratnagiri district.

Tilak received most of his education at Poona. A brilliant student, Tilak was known even in his childhood for his fierce self-respect, regard for truth and his intense reaction to injustice. He passed his B.A. in the first class with Mathematics and Sanskrit (1876) and completed his education with a Law degree in 1879. While he was a student at the Deccan College, Poona, he was much influenced by the teaching of Professor Wordsworth and Professor Shoot. The former taught him English Literature and the latter taught him History and Political Economy which helped him to appreciate English ideas.

Tilak, in spite of his Hindu conservatism, was much influenced by Western thought on Politics and Metaphysics. He was particularly fond of Hegel, Kant, Spencer, Mill, Bentham, Voltaire and Rousseau. As he himself expressed it in the 'Gita Rahasya' : "To a certain extent my line of argument runs parallel to the line of thinking followed by Green in his book on Ethics."

After completing his education, Tilak spurned the lucrative offers of Government service and decided to devote himself to the larger cause of national awakening. He firmly believed that modern education had to be taken to the masses by the Indians themselves if they were to grow in stature to overcome the pathetic acceptance of the concept of the rulers and the ruled which the Britishers wanted to preserve so assiduously.

He joined Agarkar, Chiplunkar and Namjoshi in starting the New English School and later in founding the Deccan Education Society and the Fergusson College in 1885. He, however, parted company with them in 1890, following serious differences about the fundamental commitments of the members of the Society.

In a way it could be said that Tilak's true public life started only after his dissociation from the Deccan Education Society in 1890, by which time he had acquired complete control over the Kesari and the Mahratta, the two newspapers unfold before the reader the many facets of Tilak's complex but captivating personality, many of them inexplicably contradictory. A radical so far as his political views were concerned, Tilak was a conservative so far as the question of social reforms was concerned.

Social reforms did not receive a high priority in his programme of opposition to the Age of Consent Bill. Once he took tea in a Christian Missionary School and underwent a penance for it. On 24 March 1918 an All India Depressed Classes Conference was held under the Presidentship of Sayajirao Gaikwad, the Maharaja of Baroda. Although Tilak spoke for the removal of untouchability, he refused to sign a manifesto declaring that the signatories would not observe untouchability in their day-to-day life.

Through his writings and speeches, he led the radicals in rousing public indignation against the ways of the British administration, their callous indifference to the sufferings and indignities which the Indian people were made to suffer at the hands of the British officers. The famine of 1896 and the subsequent plague epidemic in the Bombay Province brought Tilak into conflict with the Government.

Through the columns of the Kesari and the Mahratta he roused the people to demand from the Government what was due to them and demand it not as a favour but as a right. Tilak built up a new spirit of popular resistance against foreign rule and made the masses aware of their strength.

On the national plane also, Tilak's impact was equally forceful and revolutionary. He came on the national scene as a symbol of radical youth. During the 1896-97 plague in Maharashtra, Tilak bitterly criticised the Government for the plague measures taken and for the harassment to the public. The dissatisfaction among the Maharastrians led to the murder of Mr. Rand on 22 June 1897 at Poona. Tilak was accused of sedition and tried. On 14 September 1897 he was sentenced to eighteen months' imprisonment.

But for a long time he was nowhere near the 'inner circle' which evolved the policies of the Congress. His concept of a political party was radically different from that of the other leaders. He wanted the Indian National Congress to be a rallying point for all classes and communities in India. He primarily strove to create a social sanction for the political ideals of the generation which was oppressed by an alien rule.

Tilak essentially aimed at building up a militant mass movement in support of the political objectives which he had in mind. These extreme political views of Tilak alarmed the moderates in the Congress Party. Tilak expressed his views on Swaraj strongly at the Calcutta session of the Congress in 1906.

But it was not long before Tilak's ideology appealed to a people who were completely disillusioned by the indifference of the Government to their sufferings. His thesis of national education, Swadeshi and Boycott leading to Swarajya was revolutionary in concept and it fired the imagination of the people.

While addressing an audience at Calcutta in January 1907, Tilak said : “Your future rests entirely in your hands. If you mean to be free you can be free. If you have not the power of active resistance, have you not the power of self-denial and self-abstinence in such a way as not to assist this boycott. We shall not give the Government assistance to collect revenue and keep peace. We shall not assist them in fighting beyond our frontiers ; we shall not assist them in carrying on the administration of justice and when time comes we shall not pay taxes. If you can do that by your united efforts, you are free tomorrow. The point is to have the entire control in our hands. I want to have the key of my house and not merely one stranger turned out. Self-government is our goal” (Bal Gangadhar Tilak-‘Writings and Speeches’).

This was unusual language which exuded self-confidence which was contagious. It infused a new spirit of defiance into the people. Tilak’s uniqueness lies in the fact that at a time when British imperialism was at its zenith, he aroused a desperate people to demand ‘Swarajya’ as a matter of right.

The partition of Bengal gave a sharper edge to the struggle for freedom. Tilak, as a gifted general with a clear political vision, used this tension to create unrest all over India through his speeches and writings. He was also in close touch with the revolutionaries of his time and was not unresponsive to their plan to open another front for the freedom struggle. In 1907, when the Indian National Congress was held at Surat, there was an open split between the Moderates and the Extremists.

The Extremists were supposed to be followers of Tilak and were mostly members of the Revolutionary Party in Bengal led by Aurobindo Ghose. Tilak wrote two articles in the Kesari. “The Country’s Misfortune” and “These Remedies Are Not Lasting”. He pleaded with the Government to try to appreciate the changed psychology of the people. On 22 July 1908 Tilak was charged for bringing into people hatred and contempt and exciting disloyalty and feelings of enmity towards His Majesty and the Government established by Law in British India and was sentenced to transportation. Tilak spent six years in the Mandalay Jail, Burma, and was released on 17 June 1914.

After his release from Jail, Tilak soon returned to the arena of battle. Along with Annie Besant, he launched the Home Rule agitation for obtaining autonomy within the Empire in 1916. In the whirlwind campaign (1917), Tilak carried the message of Home Rule to the farthest corners of the country. It was because of the untiring efforts of Tilak and his band of dedicated colleagues that the Home Rule Movement spread like wildfire and forced the Government to come out with the declaration that the goal of British Policy was the realisation of responsible government in India.

This was not enough to meet the aspirations of Tilak. But while he declared the Indian Reforms Act of 1919 as inadequate, unsatisfactory and disappointing, he was too much of a pragmatist to let go whatever little gains it represented. He wanted to use the Act to gather more strength to demand more. He wanted to use the Act so as to organise the people to fight elections and to demonstrate effectively the intensity of the popular support for the freedom movement. He was confident of reaching in his lifetime. In April 1920 he

started the Congress Democratic Party to carry on an agitation for Swarajya. Death, unfortunately, overtook him and he died in Bombay on 1 August 1920.

Tilak filed a law suit against Sit Valentine Chirol in 1918 for defaming him in his book 'Indian Unrest'. Tilak left Bombay on 19 September 1918 and reached London on 30 October 1918. He lost the Chirol Libel Case. But he started the activities of the Home Rule League in England. He returned to Bombay on 27 November 1919. During his stay in England Tilak established good relations with George Lansbury, the Socialist leader, Edgar Wallace, the well known journalist and author, and Ramsay Macdonald of the Labour Party. Tilak established such a friendly relationship with the Labour Party that from then on India became one of the major planks in the Labour Party's Programme.

Tilak had a remarkable personality . He was dark of complexion, of medium height and medium build. The forehead was broad, the eyes large and piercing, and the face was stern and had a grave look. The dress-toga-like upper garment, *uttariya* or loose cloth round the shoulder, *dhoti*, red shoes and red *pugree*- which was common when his public life began in 1880, he wore throughout his life, except when he visited England. His diet was simple ; the only luxuries he allowed himself were tea and *betelnut*.

He bought the Gaikwad Wada in 1904, lived in a part of it and accommodated the printing press for his journals and his office in the rest. His office boasted of only a few pieces of furniture, a Victorian type of table, full of drawers and pigeonholes, a low chair from which he dictated his articles and cupboards and shelves stacked with books and journals. All his time was taken up in reading, writing, and discussions with his colleagues and public speeches. Not a week passed when he did not address a public meeting in one or another part of the country. His speeches and writings are marked by a vigorous and aggressive style which reflected his rugged personality.

Tilak's entire life was a "Karma Yajna". He worked, ceaselessly and selflessly, to rouse a nation out of its slumber. With a dominant will power and tenacity, unique organising ability, and above all else an implicit faith in himself and his ideal of 'Sampoorna Swarajya', he refused to accept defeat. With a remarkable degree of resilience Tilak always took setbacks to his activities philosophically and began to build up the edifice anew. Undaunted by the public hostility that he roused in England, he carried his message of freedom right up to Whitehall.

The composition of a treatise like 'Gita Rahasya', while undergoing a prison sentence at Mandalay, is another index of Tilak's ceaselessly working mind. As was only to be expected, his interpretation of the Gita is based on an activist philosophy. He was in the true sense of the word a 'Karma Yogi'.

When we come to assess the contribution of Tilak, we are faced with a difficult problem. His was a complex personality. Radical in political outlook and demands, Tilak was a conservative so far as social and religious reforms were concerned. He had his own views about social change. He has said : "a true nationalist desires to build on old foundations...but without detriment to progress and reform needed for our national conflict." For him, there was no question that was not dependent on Swaraj.

As Gandhiji had said, Tilak knew no other religion but love of the country. With his fearlessness and burning love for the country, he challenged both the westernised social reformer as well as the spirit of orthodoxy. Tilak, being a political realist, was aware that spiritualisation of politics could as well bring his dream of Swaraj nearer. Although an ardent Hindu, he believed in the fundamentals of secularism and tried to divorce the public life of the society from religious precepts.

He believed in Hindu-Muslim unity and was keenly aware that the yoke of foreign domination could not be thrown off unless the country stood united as one man. These contradictions make Tilak possibly the most controversial personality in recent Indian history. From his friends and followers he received the highest adulation ; they called him 'Lokmanya'. To his opponents he was a social reactionary, a rabble-rouser.

But nothing can detract from the monumental contribution that he made towards the Indian freedom struggle by rousing the political consciousness of the common people and by drawing them into the freedom struggle. He was perhaps the first leader who realised the strength of the masses-even unarmed, uneducated masses-in the fight against foreign domination. He had a rare insight into the working of society.

He evolved programmes, such as Shivaji Jayanti and Ganesh Pooja with the sole motive of bringing people together to ensure their awakening and involvement in the freedom struggle. He has been aptly described as the 'Father of Indian Unrest', because it was he who made people the moral courage to exert themselves to secure them.

His demand for 'Sampoorna Swarajya' as his birthright was radically and refreshingly different from what the moderate leaders of the Congress had been seeking. His speeches and writings had a new, vigorous and aggressive quality which electrified the country. It would not be wrong to say that Tilak laid the foundations on which, after him, Gandhiji built the edifice of the independence movement.

The emergence of Tilak on the political horizon of the country was thus truly watershed in the life of the country. In a period of Indian history when the intellectual aristocracy was perhaps at its best, he brought to the political arena a new kind of leadership which was highly intellectual, had a clear vision and an intense patriotism but at the same time had its roots and strength in the vast illiterate and poor masses.

The Tilak era, is therefore, of special significance . The transformation of the Congress Party from a political platform of the sophisticated, westernised and educated few to a mass movement drawing strength from the millions of the poor and downtrodden was possible because of the new orientation given to the freedom struggle by Tilak. The 'Tilak Era' constitutes a significant landmark in our struggle for independence. It was essentially in this period that a moral strength was imparted to this movement and a new political strategy for the struggle came to be accepted.

Social contributions

In 1894, Tilak transformed the household worshipping of Ganesha into a public event (Sarvajanik Ganeshotsav).

In 1895, Tilak founded the Shri Shivaji Fund Committee for celebration of "Shiv Jayanti" or the birth anniversary of Shivaji Maharaj, the founder of 17th century Maratha Empire. The project also had the objective of funding the reconstruction of the tomb (Samadhi) of Shivaji Maharaj at Fort Raigad. For this second objective, Tilak established the Shri Shivaji Raigad Smarak Mandal along with Senapati Khanderao Dabhade II of Talegaon Dabhade, who became the Founder President of the Mandal.

Tilak started the Marathi weekly, Kesari in 1880-81 with Gopal Ganesh Agarkar as the first editor. Kesari later became a daily and continues publication to this day.

Philosophical and social contribution

Although he was basically a proponent of Advaita Vedanta, he differed from the classical Advaitin view that jnana (knowledge) alone brings release. Tilak added a measure of karma yoga (the yoga of activity) to this, not as subordinate to jnana yoga, but as equal and complementary to it. Tilak proposed various social reforms, such as a minimum age for marriage, and was especially keen to see a prohibition placed on the sale of alcohol. His thoughts on education and Indian political life have remained highly influential — he was the first Congress leader to suggest that Hindi, written in the devanagari script, should be accepted as the sole national language of India, a policy that was later strongly endorsed by Mahatma Gandhi. However, English, which Tilak wished to remove completely from the Indian mind, remains an important means of communication in India. But the usage of Hindi (and other Indian languages) has been reinforced and widely encouraged since the days of the British Raj, and Tilak's legacy is often credited with this resurgence.

Another of the major contributions relates to the propagation of Sarvajanik (public) Ganesh festival, over 10-11 days from Bhadrapada Shukla (Ganesh) Chaturthi to (Anant) Chaturdashi (in Aug/Sept span), which contributed for people to get together and celebrate the festival and provided a good platform for leaders to inspire masses. He first observed the festival at Gwalior promoted by Sardar Khasgiwale. He found the idea innovative and later he wrote in Kesri about it on 26th September 1893. His call for boycott of foreign goods also served to inspire patriotism among Indian masses.

12. SRI NARAYANA GURU

Life and Messages

Sree Narayana Guru was an embodiment of all virtues, values and rare qualities seldom found in human race. He was a mystic, a teacher, a philosopher, a visionary, a scientist, a saint, a social reformer, a great nation builder and a poet, all blended into one. To millions of his devotees Sree Narayana Guru is an incarnation of God. He was a saintly contemplative man who could impart wisdom and give enlightenment to a seeker of truth. His teachings are straight forward and simple, bringing out spiritual, moral and material revolution. Sree Narayana Guru was treasure house of knowledge and wisdom. His greatness and purity is to be experienced by swimming through the ocean of knowledge revealed through his writings, lofty messages and personal life. His life, work and teachings have refreshing uniqueness. There was naturalness and sublime simplicity tinged with

mystery in them, thus rendering them peculiarly interesting and profoundly instructive. No one had so clearly and successfully demonstrated in recent centuries the ideals and methods and the way of realizing them. The achievements of Guru cannot be explained in words. His spiritual attainments made him omnipotent.

According to Theosophical Society of India, Sree Narayana Guru was “Patanjali in yoga, Sankara in wisdom, Manu in the art of governance, Buddha in renunciation, Mohamed in strength of spirit and Christ in humility”. Swamy Dharma Teerthan, a genius by himself, a contemporary and the disciple of Gurudev wrote in his book A Prophet of Peace: “We make no secret of the fact that we claim for Gurudev a place among the highest, among the suns and stars and not among the creatures of the earth; among the saviors of humanity and not among the kings and conquerors; among Buddhas, the Christs and Mohammeds, and not among mere philosophers and geniuses. The highest standards, therefore, are not too high to measure the value of his work. The widest sweep of our mental vision will not be too wide to comprehend the scope of his message. We have to approach the subject in terms of world problems and in the light of the evolution of centuries. To think of Gurudev merely as a reformer, as the religious leader of a community, as a great scholar and genius, or the founder of numerous institutions would be narrowing our own outlook and blurring our vision of the greater truth”. He further quoted. “It is impossible to find in history, an individual who has performed so many wonderful miracles and has become the object of worship for everyone, while alive.”

Deena Bandhu C.F.Andrews, a well known philosopher, after visiting Guru had said “I had a vision of God in human form; Sree Narayana Guru, who is renowned in the southern-most part of India is that Supreme Being”. Mahakavi Kumaran Asan, who had the opportunity to live with Gurudev had expressed, in many words, through his poems, that the Gurudev was none other than God. Shivalingadasa Swamigal, the first disciple of Gurudev, found Gurudev to be Shiva, the God.

The life of Guru was an open book. He was born in a humble peasants’ family at a time when the people in Kerala were divided on the basis of caste. Vast sections of the society were degraded as Untouchables. They were being exploited socially, culturally, educationally and economically forcing them to live in shame as deprived destitute. They were denied education and employment. They were not allowed to wear proper cloths to cover nakedness. They were not allowed to worship satvik Gods or to enter their temples. They were not allowed to walk through the roads meant for upper caste people. They were conditioned to believe that those restrictions were ordained by God. No one, therefore, dared to challenge the arrangements. Seeing the state of affairs, Swami Vivekananda had called Kerala as “Lunatic Asylum”.

Guru could not comprehend the prevalent state of affairs. He had the insatiable desire to know the world, the universe and the creations therein. After preliminary education, he set out in search for the reason and the solution. He traveled the length and breadth of the country spending most of the time for meditation and thought. He lived with all types of people and interacted with them. He learned the philosophies of Vedic, Dravidian, Christian, Islamic and other well known faiths and analysed them to know the

truth revealed therein. He had acquired excellent knowledge in Ayurveda. He undertook penance in pillathadam at the hills of Maruthwamalai in Tamil Nadu for years sustaining himself mostly on berries, tubers, leaves and water from mountain brooks. He came out from there self realized to serve the society.

Guru started his mission with the consecration of Shiva temple at Aruvipuram on a Shivaratri night on 12.03.1888. This was a small event without much of fanfare. But the aftermath of this small event sparked the social revolution in Kerala. It was an unprovoked challenge to the centuries old supremacy of priesthood. Throughout his life Guru executed his mission without confrontation and without creating any enemies. He never argued about anything. He never criticized anybody. He was a man of composure and action. He transformed the lunatic asylum to an abode of self respecting, forward looking and tolerant society with fraternal feelings smoothly and efficiently. He helped the people to save themselves from superstitious beliefs and to eradicate the self destroying rituals, customs and dogmas practiced by them out of ignorance and in the name of religion and tradition. He set an example to make the temples to be centers for purity and development. He was available for more than 40 years to execute his mission of transforming the society by instilling self respect and human dignity in the minds of the people. People of various talents from various fields of activity were attracted to Guru. Social reformers, freedom fighters, educationalists, thinkers, poets, writers, journalists, socially persecuted people and many more were attracted to Guru for guidance, light and inspiration. All of them actively participated and contributed to the revolution that followed.

Many great personalities visited Guru at his Ashram in Sivagiri Mutt Varkala and paid glowing tributes. Some of them were Rabindranath Tagore, Mahatma Gandhi, Acharya Vinoba Bhave etc. Rabindranath Tagore visited Guru at his Ashram in Sivagiri on 22nd November 1922 and recorded there that “I have been touring different parts of the world. During these travels, I have had the fortune to come into contact with several saints and maharshis. But I have frankly to admit that I have never seen one who is spiritually greater than Swamy Narayana Guru of Malayalam- nay, a person who is on par with him in spiritual attainment. I am sure, I shall never forget that radiant face illuminated by the self effulgent light of divine glory and those majestic eyes fixing their gaze on far remote point in the distant horizon”.

Mahatma Gandhi after visiting Guru on 13th March 1925 at Varkala had said “I feel it as the greatest privilege in my life to have visited the beautiful State of Travancore and to have Darshan of venerable sage, Sree Narayana Guru. I had the fortune to stay one day in his holy Ashrama. His Excellency the Regent Empress also spoke to me about the greatness of Guruswamy. I fervently hope that you would enforce his lofty ideals”. According to Guru, man’s duty is to take care of his life here and now. The life hereafter will take care of itself. It was in this spirit that he wanted his followers to work for the making of their present lives healthier and richer.

Ramana Maharshi after meeting Guru said that “Sree Narayana Guru was the Mahatma of high intellectual supremacy.”

M. Romain Rolland said in December 1928 that “The new religious manifestations in South India which are not negligible, such for eg: is the great Guru Sree Narayana whose beneficent spiritual activity has been exercising its influence during the past 40 years in the state of Travancore on millions of his followers(He passed away on 20th September 1928). His teaching permeated with the philosophy of Sankara shows evidence of striking difference of temperament compared with the mysticism of Bengal. He was one might say “a jnanin of action” a grand religious intellectual, who had a keen living sense of the people and of social necessities. He has contributed greatly to the elevation of the oppressed classes in south India and his work has been associated with that of Gandhi.”

Along with Gandhiji, E.V. Ramasami Naickar, C. Rajagopalachari, Mahadeva Desai, Devadas Gandhi etc., were also there. Gnadhiji had visited Sivagiri twice more. Great men like Swami Shraddhananda, Pandit Rishiram, Divan C. Rajagopalachari, Divan Watts, Diwan Mandat, M. Kishnan Nair, Acharya Vinoba Bhave, Rao Bahadur P. Sundaram Pillai, etc., had also visited Guru, at different times and received his blessings. Mahakavi Ulloor S. Prameswara Ayyer, who used to visit the Guru often and received his blessings, had deep devotion and respect for the Guru. The eminent scholar Punnassery Neelakanta Sharma also was an admirer of the Guru, and had composed a number of poems in praise of the Gurudev.

Eminent poets have also written poems praising the Gurudev. The Guru had such a wonderful personality that anyone came to him, became his admirer or disciple.

Swami Chinmayananda said: can India rediscover her heart ? can religion, a philosopher of the Upanishads, help us in meeting the challenges of our nation? Can they rediscover our moral balance ? all these burning questions are answered in living life by the Sivagiri ashram. My humble and devoted prostrations to Sree Narayana Gurudeva....may his blessings be upon all of us, Gurudeva was the personification of love as Jesus Christ and lord Buddha.

The spiritual and material revolution that took place in Kerala at the instance of Sree Narayana Guru had great impact in the freedom movement that was taking place in the country. Guru wanted a total transformation. He wanted balanced growth for the society spiritually as well as materially. Indian constitution drafted few years after the demise of guru had his influence. The secularism, Education, especially womens’ education, equality, prohibition etc were drawn from the teachings of the Guru. The Philosophy of Sree Narayana Guru is relevant without the barriers of place and time. It is relevant in the world as is relevant in India.

Sree Narayana Guru was born on the 28th of August 1854 in a small village called Chempazhanthi in Trivandrum Dist. of Kerala state, at the southern tip of India. His parents were Maadan Aasan and Kuttiamma. It is said that the Guru was born to this ideal couple after intensive prayers and many years of waiting. Though the little boy was named Narayanan, in course of time, the name came to be shortened as Nanu. He certainly grew up to become great. It is said that even his birth was extraordinary. This baby did not cry when he was born, did not cry when the umbilical cord was cut, nor when he was bathed. He never cried even for hunger, thirst or any other physical needs. This

calmness was a strange phenomenon. He had three younger sisters. As a child when he visited their family temple of Manakkal Bhagavathi, along with his mother and sisters, it was usual to find him somewhere in the temple meditating seriously or just watching the blue sky, immersed in deep thought.

Sree Narayana who was known as Nanu and Nanu Bhakathan learned a lot from his father. His knowledge on customs and rituals and also Indian spirituality was immeasurable. This knowledge was obtained directly from his father. Even though he was a naughty boy during childhood, he noticed every bit of his surroundings for understanding the universal laws guiding the world including the animals and human beings. His quotations, experiences, stories, advice, guidance, counter questioning and challenging the superstitions, etc were always superb due to this approach of learning from the nature/surroundings. His explanation to all customs and rituals, Indian concepts, beliefs, pathways, traditions were all impregnated with full of logical, scientific and rational analyses and wisdom.

During childhood itself he had the innate awareness that everything was an appendage of God. The sense of equality or oneness therefore prevailed in his behaviour towards anything and everything. His feeling of ONENESS extended to encompass not only human beings but all living beings, trees and vines, animals and birds, worms and even insects. This inherent conviction led to the logical conclusion that he and God are the same in essence. He used to eat the offerings to the God at home, before the pooja was over. When questioned, his reply used to be “God will be pleased if I am pleased”.

Savarna, Avarna, Brahmin, Nambudiri, Nair, Ezhava, Paraya, Pulaya, were all equal to him. He displayed these as a fun by touching and polluting the one who observed caste discriminations and untouchability. He made friendship with the children of low castes like Parayas and Pulayas. He took bath with them scrubbing their backs and allowing them to scrub his. The people who observed caste discriminations and untouchability expressed their unhappiness saying “Nanu has become totally impure, defiled” but the little Nanu had a ready reply that “My back and their backs are clean now”.

Nanu was initiated to primary education in 1860 by the Elder Narayana Pillai of Kannamkara household, who was also a member of the Advisory Council to the King. Observing Nanu’s learning ability, he remarked, “Nanu learns as if he had studied the lessons earlier, and is simply repeating now”. Nanu was very good at studies. He could internalize anything that he heard or read just once. He exhibited extraordinary intelligence, brightness, humility, kindness and spiritual strength. Narayana Pillai told Maadan Aasan, that “Nanu’s birth and life shall be something extra-ordinary. After he crossed sixteen you will not be able to hold him to you”. Nanu acquired profound knowledge in Malayalam and Sanskrit. By the time Nanu reached 16 years, he developed the tendency to be introvert in thoughts and actions. He found solace in the loneliness on sea shores, near backwaters and among the bushes on hillocks. Immersed in deep thought he used to roam about all alone in Chempazhanthy and neighbouring localities.

It is believed that during these wanderings, he mastered Tamil language and read all the important literary works and philosophical compositions in Tamil. He in later life translated holy books in Tamil like Thirukkural,, Ozhuvilodukkam, etc. to Malayalam.

During the period of his wanderings he had an attack of small-pox and for about 18 days he did not go home. He lived in the dilapidated temple of Mother Goddess on yonder hill, where the people were afraid to go even during day time.

Nanu set out to Kayamkulam for higher studies in 1877 as a student under Kummampally Raman Pillai Aashan, a great scholar of those days and a strict celibate. The noble household of Varanapally was in the vicinity., where Nanu got free boarding and lodging. Under the guidance of Ramam Pillai Aashan, Nanu studied advanced Sanskrit literature, grammar, logic, astrology, and philosophy. He completed his studies in about three years (1877-1880). In those days Nanu developed interest in the worship of Lord Krishna and also practiced introspection and meditation. It is said that once he had a vision of young Lord Krishna playing with him. He composed a poem of single stanza in Sanskrit “Sree Krishna Darshanam” describing the ecstasy he experienced on these visions. Later on he composed hymns like Vasudevashtakam, Vinayakashtakam, Bhadra Kalyashtakam, Guhashtakam, Nava Manjariri etc. while at at Varanappally.

The eldest member of Varanappally Shri. Kochu Krishna Panickar helped him in all his endeavors, either in higher studies or spiritual exercises. During the routine literary discussions held everyday Nanu participated mainly as a listener to all arguments and counter arguments. If the discussions reached the level of quarrels, Nanu intervened and his opinions were always being accepted as final.

After returning from Varanapally Nanu started teaching in the small school founded and run by his father, Maadan Aasan. This gave him the title”Nanu Aasan”. Few months later, he started a small school at Anchuthengu, a place having concentration of Pulayas, an untouchable community who were denied admission to the schools. He concentrated on inculcating piety and other sober habits in the children. The behavior of Nanu Aashan gave an indication that he was moving away from normal family life to saintly life. The family members therefore decided to get him married to bring him to the normal family life. As per the prevalent system Nanu’s three sisters went to the bride’s(Kaliamma of Nedunganda ,his paternal aunt’s grand daughter who was selected as the bride) home, gave her a set of new clothes as part of marriage ceremony and brought her home at Chempazhanty. But Nanu Aasan had already left his home before his marriage was performed or Kaliamma was brought home. He was not in favor of family life.

Nanu Aasan rambled throughout South India, all alone, during 1880-1888. He wandered around the places like the seashore of Shankhu Mukham, Veli, Kochuveli, Mannanthala, Anchuthengu, Kulathur, Varkala, Nedunganda, Kadakkavur, Chilakkur, Nadayara, Aruvippuram (near Kilimanoor) Parasala, Neyyatinkara, Aruvippuram, Kalayikkavila, Iraniyal, Marthandam, Thakkala etc. It is said that he was seen among the fisherman, Christians, Muslims and all others and learnt their ways of life, practices, rituals and philosophy. He acquired extensive knowledge of Quran , Bible and other religious

texts. Christian and Islamic Scholars revered him for the interpretations he could give on the texts of Bible and Quran.

Kunjan Pillai Chattambi introduced Nanu to Shri. Thaikkattu Ayyavu, a great adept in Hatha Yoga. Yoga practices under the guidance of Shri. Ayyavu increased his thirst for self realization and this led him to pillathadam in Marutvan hills of Kanniyakumari district for intense penance.

Enlightenment, descended on him like a thousand suns rising together and his self ascended like the flutter of a blissful butterfly from flower to flower tasting the nectar of life. This made him Sree Narayana Guru. The experience of Guru at Marutuan Hills and the ecstasy he enjoyed could be gathered from his works like sivasatakam, subramanya stotram, guhastakam, atmopadesa satakam etc.

His life after self realisation reveal that he had a definite plan and a well defined programme to reform the society from decadence. He sacrificed his spiritual achievements for the betterment of humanity. From Maruthwamalai he moved to the thick forest on the banks of Neyyar river and started living at a place known as Aruvippuram. Knowing the presence of a person with divine powers, the people around started visiting Guru for blessings and mitigation of sufferings. He got his 1st disciple, Ayyappan Pillai-later Shivalingadasa Swamigal, from this place. Sree Narayana Guru with the mastery Yogic powers (Ashta Siddhi) and the knowledge in Ayurveda could cure the diseases of many people. He had miraculous powers of giving the blind the vision, the dumb the powers to speak, the paralysed ability to walk, curing the diseases like leprosy by a touch, a look or a word, blessing the childless with the children by offering some medicinal leaves or fruit . The elderly at villages, could tell us thousands of such stories.

At the time of Guru's birth Kerala was a land of worst caste distinctions, ignorance, superstitions and long practiced social bondage. In the name of chaturvarna the people were divided and discriminated. The Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vysya and Shudra constituted "Savarnas " and others as "Avarnas". Avarnas, though formed the majority of the population, were kept strictly away from the general stream of the society.

The rigid caste rules observed from generation to generation were the supreme power in the land. In the midst of ignorance and social tyranny, the poor laborers lived like a dumb-driven cattle serving their masters uncomplainingly. Large number of people in the society were denied the right for worship in temples, education, social status, economic freedom, freedom to walk along the public roads, wearing decent cloths to cover nakedness or wearing ornaments etc;. Seeing the pathetic condition of the people Swamy Vivekananda called Kerala State as a "Lunatic Asylum". But Sree Narayana Guru wanted to transform the people there to a self respecting, forward looking and tolerant society. Guru wanted them to be educated, make them understand the importance of cleanliness and make them self reliant in earning the livelihood.

The very first act towards the implementation of his plan was the consecration of a "Shiva" temple at Aruvipuram, a village about 15 miles away from Trivandrum on 12.03.1888. It was a clarion call from Aruvippuram, proclaiming that those who belong to the lower rungs of the society also could install and worship gentle and serene deities,

which had been the privilege of the upper strata alone for thousands of years. Apparently this was a simple act without hurting anybody. Nevertheless in effect it demolished the very foundation of age old tradition of consecrating idols and temples by the coterie of so called high caste priests alone. Here on the walls of this temple Guru wrote:

jaathibhedam-mathadvesham	“This is a model abode
ethumillathe sarvarum	where all men shall live as brothers
sodarathvena vazhunna	without caste distinctions
mathrukasthanamanithu	and religious rivalries”

This event was quickly followed up by similar consecrations of temples in other parts of Kerala. All with the request and active participation of the people. The Guru had consecrated more than 60 temples in and outside Kerala He opened the doors of the temples to all who knock. People were made to realise that the Gods and Goddesses were not the monopoly of few priests. Slowly and steadily his axe started falling on the mindset or perception of the people. The changed mental programming made them to believe that they are lower to none. Guru revealed through the consecrations of temples that the idols are not very essential. It is the ideals which matter. God lives not in temples but in the hearts of the seeker. Temples are required for men to purify themselves on their journey to the realization of truth. Guru revealed through his own life how the Advaita philosophy, that the supreme one alone prevails and all that we see and experience are only its variegated manifestations and could be practically applied in the day-to-day life of humanity. He wanted the temples to be places for the people to assemble exchange their views and to work together for the betterment of their lives.

Sree Narayana Guru Consecrated Jagannadha temple of Talassery on 13.02.1908, Kozhikkodu Sree Kantwswaram temple on 11.05.1910, Gokarnanatha Temple at Kudroli, in Mangalapuram(1910),Sivagiri Sree Sarada Madom on 30.04.1912, Sundareswaram temple at Kannur on 11.04.1916, Karamukku Sree Chidambara Temple on 13.05.1921, Kalavamkodam Ardhanareeshwara Temple on 14.06.1927 and Ullala Omkareshwara Temple on 25.06.1927. Disciples of Guru Viz. Santa Linga Swamy, a native of Tamil Naadu started Sree Narayana Mattom in 1913. Srimad Govindananada Swamy, started Sree Narayana Sevasharam at Kancheepuram in 1916, Govindananda Swamy had also toured Singapore, Malaya and Japan in 1917 to spread the messages of the Guru. In the same year, Sree Narayana Satsanga Samithi, and Advaitasharama Sabha was also started at Chintadripet in Madras. Maharshi Asangananda Swamy, disciple of Sivalinga Dasa Swamy, settled at Yerpedu near Tirupati in Andhra Pradesh and started Vyasaashramam. He became popular in Andhra Pradesh as Malayala Swamy. Sankarananda Swamy, founded a number of hermitages in and around Kashi. He was a teacher in Kashi (Banares) University and had introduced the Guru’s Darsanamala to be taught in a number of Ashramas. Shanti Ashram, founded by Sadhu Sivaprasad in Agra.

The Guru visited Sri Lanka in 1918 and started an organization “Vignanodayam”, and the devotees started Sree Narayana Mandiram at Colombo.

Guru taught the people: “Gain strength through organization” and put this into practice by establishing an organization by the name Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam in the year 1903. Sree Narayana Guru was the life time President (1903-1928) of SNDP Yogam, Dr. Palpu was 1st Vice – President and Kumaran Asan, the 1st Secretary. SNDP played quite decisive and distinctive role in the evolution of modern Kerala. Before the advent of political organizations SNDP took up political issues required for the progress of the people, on the suggestions of the Guru. SNDP played a major role to secure freedom for untouchables, to use roads, right to temple entry and eradication of untouchability. SNDP was also used to dispel superstitions and unhealthy traditions and to introduce reformative steps for the progress and prosperity of the people. SNDP always struggled to secure the rights of the weaker sections. By using this organization he taught the people to have clean living habits and clear thinking. Self destroying customs like polygamy and polyandry, thalikettu (a mock marriage), worship of Gods with cruel features, animal sacrifices to please Gods etc; were also stopped with scientific reasoning. SNDP Yogam was founded for achieving material and spiritual progress of a large mass of people discarding discriminatory feelings. It was not meant to work for the emancipation of one particular community alone but to strive for the progress and prosperity of the entire society. That was the objective of the Guru’s vision. A report submitted at the 50th Anniversary of SNDP, by the then general Secretary Sri R. Shankar will throw light on this. The first Women’s Association Stree Samajam (1904) and first Industrial and Agricultural Exhibition of Kerala was organized at the 3rd Anniversary celebrations of SNDP at Kollam. The first Labour Association meeting was conducted during the 15th Annual meeting of SNDP in 1918. The First Labour Union (The Travancore Labour Union) was founded at Alapuzha in 1925. The leadership for this was taken up, following the suggestion of the Guru, by Vadappuram Sri V.K. Bava, a householder disciple of the Guru. Much before reservation was introduced in the Constitution of India, an agitation for proportionate representation under the leadership of SNDP had resulted in the introduction of reservation in Travancore Assembly in the Year 1934. SNDP Yogam assumed the leadership in the process of social renaissance in Kerala. In later days, following the ideals of this organization, “Sadhu Jana Paripalana Yogam” for the uplift of Pulaya community was started by Ayyankali, Nair Service Society (NSS) by Mannathu Padmanabham, Yogakshema Sabha by V.T. Bhattadirippadu and Kalyana Dayini Sabha by Pandit Karuppan.

“ Gain freedom through education” was another clarion call made by Guru. He started Schools and technical training centers at various places. Though the education was in Sanskrit and Malayalam, emphasize was given to the need to teach English. People from all strata of the society were admitted in his schools.

Activities of Guru attracted talented people from various fields of activity. Guru could deploy all of them effectively and efficiently in the reformation process enunciated by him. They were from the field of social service, freedom fighting, education, politics, thinkers, writers, poets, spiritual seekers etc; etc;. Under the guidance, light and inspiration of Guru all of them performed in their own respective fields for the development of the

people. Guru also established Sree Narayana Dharma Sanghom (Registered on 09.01.1928) for the perpetual spiritual learning and its dissemination.

Thus in all conceivable ways, he led the people onward educationally, economically, socially, culturally and spiritually making them work out their own salvation, injuring nobody or raising not even a word of protest from any source.

He opened places of worship and education to all without any difference in caste, creed, religion or language. People could assemble there and work, learn and live in fraternity. Guru helped the fellow beings to save themselves from superstitious beliefs and to do away with the self destroying rituals, customs and dogmas practiced by them out of ignorance and in the name of religion and tradition. He wanted the temples to be centers for purity and development. Guru never argued about anything. Guru never criticized any body. Guru was a man of composure and action. While he was liberating the people from the age old ill-conceived traditions, he never said a word against the then so called custodians of tradition and vested interests. But he went on doing what was right and exhorted the people to follow.

Sree Narayana Guru had written many books. There are about 63 books now available and published. The list of books Could be seen from the web site of Sree Narayana Mandira Samiti, Mumbai (the address being www.snms.in).

These books could be categorized into five. They are

- (1) Devotional Songs
- (2) Philosophical Books
- (3) Books of Proclamations
- (4) Translations and
- (5) Prose.

Darsanamala (A garland of vision of the absolute), Atmopadesa-satakam (One hundred verses of self instruction), Advaita Dipika (Lamp of non-dual wisdom), Anukampa Dasakam (Ten verses of mercy), Arivu (Epistemology of Gnosis) Cit-Jada-Cintanam (Reverie on consciousness and matter), Pindanandi (Pre-natal Gratitude), Swanubhava-Giti (Experiential Rhapsody), Daivadasakam (Ten verses to God), Janani Navaratna Manjari (Nine-Jewelled Bouquet to Mother), Kundalini pattu (The song of the kundalini power) etc. are some of the popular books written by Guru. These works are incomparable for their haunting melody, sublime concepts and mystic experience.

Some of the important teachings of Sree Narayana Guru which have universal relevance are the following:

- 1) “One caste, one religion, one God for man”
- 2) “One in kind, one in faith, one in God is man, of one same womb, one same form, difference none there is at all”
- 3) “Whatever be the religion of a man, it is enough if it makes him virtuous”

- 4) “Ask not, say not, think not caste”
- 5) “Acts that one performs for one’s own sake should also aim the good of others”
- 6) “Liquor is poison, make it not, sell it not, drink it not”
- 7) “ Gain freedom through education”
- 8) “Gain strength through organization”
- 9) “Gain prosperity through Industry”

Inspired by the teachings and messages of the Guru, hundreds of temples and other independent organizations came up and are functioning now in the state of Kerala and other places, such as Thalassery Jnanodaya Yogam, Kollam Sree Narayana Trust, Koorkancheri Sree Narayana Bhakta Paripalana Yogam, Moothakunnam HMDP Sabha, and a number of Clubs in Urban areas of all important towns, Mumbai Sree Narayana Mandira Samithi (Holy teeth, the only mortal remains, of Sree Narayana Guru -one wisdom tooth and four artificial teeth used by the Guru- received on 11th January 2004 are kept here)., Coimbatore Sree Narayana Mission, Bangalore Sree Narayana Mandira Samithi, Hyderabad S N Educational and Cultural Society, Kolkata Sree Narayana Seva Sangham, Delhi Sree Narayana Kendra. Thousands of branches of SNDP, Branches of Narayana Gurukulam functioning in over 16 countries like Fiji, Singapore, Belgium, and America. Organizations in the name of the Guru in cities like Singapore, London, Chicago and Colombo, Vyasashram in Andhra Pradesh (Yerpedu, near Tirupati), Suka Brahmashram near Sri Kalahasti in Andhra Pradesh, Sree Narayana Vidyalayam at Payyannur founded by the last disciple of the Guru Sri. Ananda Theerthar, Gayatri Ashram at Chalakudy founded by Geethananda Swamy, Sree Narayana Sevika Ashram at Paliathuruthu of North Paravoor Dist. Started by Swamini Amrutha Matha, Sree Narayana Shanti Mattom started by Brhmacharini N.K. Thankamma of Pathanamthitta, Mangala Bharati Ashram, Thottuvapadi, Perumbavoor, Sree Narayana Samskarika Samithi, an organization by Govt. servants among the devotees of the Guru etc.etc.

Sri Nataraja Guru, started Narayana Gurukulam In 1932 The Gurukulam offers a way of life in which all should live in unity immersed in eternal bliss, as all are just miniatures of the all pervading Universal Consciousness. Hindus, Christians, Muslims, atheists and agnostics live together in unity without any divisive feelings there. Guru Nityachaithanya Yati, and Muni Narayana Prasad nurtured and developed Gurukulam to a world renowned organization. The East West University of Brahma Vidya run by the Gurukulam is a great institution for comparative philosophical studies.“The Parliament of World Govt.” established by Garry David, a disciple of Nataraja Guru and a world citizen, deserves special mention. The contributions of Nataraja Guru’s other disciples, viz. Mr. John Spiers, Swamy Ascharyacharya and Mangalananda Swamy are also remarkable. “Gurukulam”, spiritual magazine, is the manifesto of Narayana Gurukulam. Gurukulam runs a big publishing house, which publishes books on the studies, interpretations and criticisms of the Guru’s philosophy, his compositions, and other

philosophical works. The Gurukulam Convention, held every year during Dec, 23 to 29th is a blessing to the seekers of Truth.

13. DAYANANDA SARASWATI

Dayananda Saraswati was an important Hindu religious leader of his time. He is well known as the founder of the Arya Samaj, a Hindu reform movement of the Vedic tradition. He was a profound scholar of the Vedic lore and Sanskrit language. He was the first to give the call for Swarajya as "India for Indians" – in 1876, later taken up by Lokmanya Tilak. Denouncing the idolatry and ritualistic worship prevalent in Hinduism at the time, he worked towards reviving Vedic ideologies. Subsequently the philosopher and President of India, S. Radhakrishnan, called him one of the "makers of Modern India," as did Sri Aurobindo.

One of his notable disciples was Shyamji Krishna Varma, who founded India House in London and guided other revolutionaries. Others who were influenced by and followed him included Madam Cama, Pandit Guru Dutt Vidyarthi, Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, Lala Hardayal, Madan Lal Dhingra, Ram Prasad Bismil, Bhagat Singh, Mahadev Govind Ranade Swami Shraddhanand, Mahatma Hansraj, Lala Lajpat Rai and others. One of his most influential works is the book Satyarth Prakash, which contributed to the Indian independence movement. He was a sanyasi (ascetic) from boyhood, and a scholar, who believed in the infallible authority of the Vedas.

Maharshi Dayananda advocated the doctrine of Karma and Reincarnation. He emphasized the Vedic ideals of brahmacharya and devotion to God. The Theosophical Society and the Arya Samaj were united from 1878 to 1882, becoming the Theosophical Society of the Arya Samaj.

Among Maharshi Dayananda's contributions are his promoting of the equal rights for women, such as the right to education and reading of Indian scriptures, and his intuitive commentary on the Vedas from Vedic Sanskrit in Sanskrit as well as Hindi so that the common man might be able to read them. Dayanand was the first to give the word of Swadeshi long before Mahatma Gandhi.

Early life

Dayananda Saraswati was born on 12, February, 1834 in Tankara, near Morvi in the Kathiawad region (now Rajkot district of Gujarat). His original name was Mool Shankar. His father's name was Karshanji Lalji Tiwari and mother's name was Yashodabai. Theirs was a Brahmin family. A tax collector, his father was a rich, prosperous and influential person. He was the head of an eminent Brahmin family of the village. When Mool Shankar was eight years old, Yajnopavita Samskara, or the investiture with thread of the "twice-born" were performed. His father was a follower of Shiva and taught Dayananda Saraswati the ways to impress the Lord. Dayananda was also told the importance of keeping fasts. On the occasion of Shivratri, Dayananda had to sit awake the whole night in obedience to Lord Shiva. One such night, he saw a mouse eating the offerings to the God and running over the

idol's body. After seeing this, he questioned himself, if the God could not defend himself against a little mouse then how could he be the savior of the massive world.

Since he was born under Moola Nakshatra, he was named "Moolsankara", and led a comfortable early life, studying Sanskrit, the Vedas and other religious texts to prepare himself for a future as a Hindu priest.

The deaths of his younger sister and his uncle from cholera caused Dayananda to ponder the meaning of life and death and he started asking questions which worried his parents. He was to be married in his early teens, as was common in nineteenth-century India, but he decided marriage was not for him and in 1846 ran away from home.

Dayananda Sarasvati spent nearly twenty-five years, from 1845 to 1869, as a wandering ascetic, searching for religious truth. An ascetic is someone who gives up material goods and lives a life of self-denial, devoted to spiritual matters. He lived in jungles, in retreats in the Himalayan Mountains, and at a number of pilgrimage sites in northern India. During these years Dayananda Sarasvati practiced various forms of yoga. He became a disciple, or follower, of a well-known religious teacher, Virajananand Dandeesha (sometimes spelled Birajanananda). Virajananand believed that Hinduism had strayed from its historical roots and that many of its practices had become impure. Dayananda Sarasvati promised Virajananand that he would devote his life to restoring the rightful place of the Vedas in the Hindu faith.

Dayananda's mission

Aum is considered by the Arya Samaj to be the highest and most proper name of God. Dayananda's mission was not to start or set up any new religion but to tell the humankind of Universal Brotherhood through nobility as spelt out in Vedas. For that mission he founded Arya Samaj enunciating the Ten Universal Principles as a code for Universalism *Krinvanto Vishwaryam* meaning the whole world be an abode for Nobles (Aryas). His next step was to take up the difficult task of reforming Hinduism with dedication despite multiple repeated attempts on his personal life. He traveled the country challenging religious scholars and priests to discussions and won repeatedly on the strength of his arguments based on his knowledge of Sanskrit and Vedas. He believed that Hinduism had been corrupted by divergence from the founding principles of the Vedas and that Hindus had been misled by the priesthood for the priests' self-aggrandizement. Hindu priests discouraged the laity from reading Vedic scriptures and encouraged rituals, such as bathing in the Ganges River and feeding of priests on anniversaries, which Dayananda pronounced as superstitions or self-serving practices. By exhorting the nation to reject such superstitious notions, his aim was to educate the nation to Go back to the Vedas. He wanted the people who followed Hinduism to go back to its roots and to follow the Vedic life, which he pointed out. He exhorted the Hindu nation to accept social reforms like the abolition of untouchability, sati, and dowry, Education of women, Swadeshi and importance of Cows for national prosperity as well as the adoption of Hindi as the national language for national integration. Through his daily life and practice of yoga and asanas, teachings, preachings, sermons and writings, he inspired the Hindu nation to aspire to Swarajya (self

governance), nationalism, and spiritualism. He advocated the equal rights and respects to women and advocated the education of a girl child like the males.

Swami Dayananda did logical, scientific and critical analyses of all faiths i.e. Christianity & Islam as well as of other Indian faiths like Jainism, Buddhism and Sikhism. In addition to denouncing idolatry in Hinduism, as may be seen in his book Satyarth Prakash. He was against what he considered to be the corruption of the true and pure faith in his own country. Unlike many other reform movements of his times within Hinduism, the Arya Samaj's appeal was addressed not only to the educated few in India, but to the world as a whole as evidenced in the sixth principle of the Arya Samaj. In fact his teachings professed universalism for the all living beings and not for any particular sect, faith, community or nation.

Arya Samaj

Swami Dayananda's creations, the Arya Samaj, unequivocally condemns idol worship, animal sacrifice, ancestor worship, pilgrimages, priest craft, offerings made in temples, the caste system, untouchability, child marriages and discrimination against women on the grounds that all these lacked Vedic sanction. The Arya Samaj discourages dogma and symbolism and encourages skepticism in beliefs that run contrary to common sense and logic. To many people, the Arya Samaj aims to be a "universal society" based on the authority of the Vedas. However, in popular culture, it is considered a short cut way of getting married for runaway lovers. Marriage certificate issued by Arya samaj is valid for 60 days after which it needs to be ratified by the concerned Registrar of marriages which, in turn, issues the formal certificate of marriage.

However, Swami Dayanananda showed extreme rationalism and paradoxically made many assumptions while interpreting the Veda. Thus, he posited that Brahman could be the only God, and denied the existence of the lower gods. He also partially accepted the authority of the Shastras and the commentaries of Sayana.

The Shastras, much like the Vedas according to the Sanatana dharma, are correct because of the yogaja pramana of the rishis. The gods cannot either be discovered by the senses or by reason.

Death

Dayananda was subjected to many unsuccessful attempts on his life because of his efforts to reform the Hindu society such as killing dangerous snakes worshiped in temples across India. In 1883 Dayananda was invited by the Maharaja of Jodhpur to stay at his palace. The Maharaja was eager to become his disciple and learn his teachings. One day Dayananda went to the Maharaja's rest room and saw him with a dance girl named Nanhi Jan. Dayananda boldly asked the Maharaja to forsake the girl and all unethical acts and follow dharma like a true Aryan. Dayananda's suggestion offended the dance girl and she decided to take revenge. She bribed Dayananda's cook to poison him. At bedtime, the cook brought him a glass of milk containing poison and powdered glass. Dayananda drank the milk and went to sleep only to wake up later with a burning sensation. He immediately realized that he had been poisoned and attempted to purge his digestive system of the

poisonous substance, but it was too late. The poison had already entered his bloodstream. Dayananda was bedridden and suffered excruciating pain. Many doctors came to treat him but all was in vain. His body was covered all over with large bleeding sores. On seeing Dayananda's suffering the cook was overcome with unbearable guilt and remorse. He confessed his crime to Dayananda. On his deathbed, Dayananda forgave him and gave him a bag of money and told him to flee the kingdom lest he be found out and executed by the Maharaja's men.

MODULE III

ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE IN SANSKRIT

DEFINITION, SCOPE AND IMPORTANCE OF ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES

DEFINITION

Environmental studies deals with every issue that affects an organism. It is essentially a multidisciplinary approach that brings about an appreciation of our natural world and human impacts on its integrity. It is an applied science as it seeks practical answers to making human civilization sustainable on the earth's finite resources. Its components include biology, geology, chemistry, physics, engineering, sociology, health, anthropology, economics, statistics, computers and philosophy.

SCOPE

As we look around at the area in which we live, we see that our surroundings were originally a natural landscape such as a forest, a river, a mountain, a desert, or a combination of these elements. Most of us live in landscapes that have been heavily modified by human beings, in villages, towns or cities. But even those of us who live in cities get our food supply from surrounding villages and these in turn are dependent on natural landscapes such as forests, grasslands, rivers, seashores, for resources such as water for agriculture, fuel wood, fodder, and fish. Thus our daily lives are linked with our surroundings and inevitably affects them. We use water to drink and for other day-to-day activities. We breathe air, we use resources from which food is made and we depend on the community of living plants and animals which form a web of life, of which we are also a part. Everything around us forms our environment and our lives depend on keeping its vital systems as intact as possible.

Our dependence on nature is so great that we cannot continue to live without protecting the earth's environmental resources. Thus most traditions refer to our environment as 'Mother Nature' and most traditional societies have learned that respecting nature is vital for their livelihoods. This has led to many cultural practices that helped traditional societies protect and preserve their natural resources. Respect for nature and all living creatures is not new to India. All our traditions are based on these values. Emperor Ashoka's edict proclaimed that all forms of life are important for our well being in Fourth Century BC.

Over the past 200 years however, modern societies began to believe that easy answers to the question of producing more resources could be provided by means of technological innovations. For example, though growing more food by using fertilizers and pesticides, developing better strains of domestic animals and crops, irrigating farmland through mega dams and developing industry, led to rapid economic growth, the ill effects of this type of development, led to environmental degradation. The industrial development and intensive agriculture

that provides the goods for our increasingly consumer oriented society uses up large amounts of natural resources such as water, minerals, petroleum products, wood, etc. Nonrenewable resources, such as minerals and oil are those which will be exhausted in the future if we continue to extract these without a thought for subsequent generations. Renewable resources, such as timber and water, are those which can be used but can be regenerated by natural processes such as regrowth or rainfall. But these too will be depleted if we continue to use them faster than nature can replace them. For example, if the removal of timber and firewood from a forest is faster than the regrowth and regeneration of trees, it cannot replenish the supply. And loss of forest cover not only depletes the forest of its resources, such as timber and other non-wood products, but affect our water resources because an intact natural forest acts like a sponge which holds water and releases it slowly. Deforestation leads to floods in the monsoon and dry rivers once the rains are over.

Such multiple effects on the environment resulting from routine human activities must be appreciated by each one of us, if it is to provide us with the resources we need in the long-term. Our natural resources can be compared with money in a bank. If we use it rapidly, the capital will be reduced to zero. On the other hand, if we use only the interest, it can sustain us over the longer term. This is called sustainable utilisation or development.

IMPORTANCE

Environment is not a single subject. It is an integration of several subjects that include both Science and Social Studies. To understand all the different aspects of our environment we need to understand biology, chemistry, physics, geography, resource management, economics and population issues. Thus the scope of environmental studies is extremely wide and covers some aspects of nearly every major discipline.

We live in a world in which natural resources are limited. Water, air, soil, minerals, oil, the products we get from forests, grasslands, oceans and from agriculture and livestock, are all a part of our life support systems. Without them, life itself would be impossible. As we keep increasing in numbers and the quantity of resources each of us uses also increases, the earth's resource base must inevitably shrink. The earth cannot be expected to sustain this expanding level of utilization of resources. Added to this is misuse of resources. We waste or pollute large amounts of nature's clean water; we create more and more material like plastic that we discard after a single use; and we waste colossal amounts of food, which is discarded as garbage. Manufacturing processes create solid waste byproducts that are discarded, as well as chemicals that flow out as liquid waste and pollute water, and gases that pollute the air. Increasing amounts of waste cannot be managed by natural processes. These accumulate in our environment, leading to a variety of diseases and other adverse

environmental impacts now seriously affecting all our lives. Air pollution leads to respiratory diseases, water pollution to gastro-intestinal diseases, and many pollutants are known to cause cancer.

Improving this situation will only happen if each of us begins to take actions in our daily lives that will help preserve our environmental resources. We cannot expect Governments alone to manage the safeguarding of the environment,

nor can we expect other people to prevent environmental damage. We need to do it ourselves. It is a responsibility that each of us must take on as ones own.

NEED FOR PUBLIC AWARENESS

The dictionary meaning of the word ‘environment’ is surrounding objects, region or circumstances and the phrase ‘environmental awareness’ will mean that one should be aware of his surrounding so that this surrounding is not disturbed.

As the earth’s natural resources are dwindling and our environment is being increasingly degraded by human activities, it is evident that something needs to be done. We often feel that managing all this is something that the Government should do. But if we go on endangering our environment, there is no way in which the Government can perform all these clean-up functions. It is the prevention of environment degradation in which we must all take part that must become a part of all our lives. Just as for any disease, prevention is better than cure. To prevent ill-effects on our environment by our actions, is economically more viable than cleaning up the environment once it is damaged. Individually we can play a major role in environment management. We can reduce wasting natural resources and we can act as watchdogs that inform the Government about sources that lead to pollution and degradation of our environment.

This can only be made possible through mass public awareness. Mass media such as newspapers, radio, television, strongly influence public opinion. However, someone has to bring this about. If each of us feels strongly about the environment, the press and media will add to our efforts. Politicians in a democracy always respond positively to a strong publicly supported movement. Thus if you join an NGO that supports conservation, politicians will make green policies. We are living on spaceship earth with a limited supply of resources. Each of us is responsible for spreading this message to as many people as possible.

INSTITUTIONS IN ENVIRONMENT

There have been several Government and Non-government organizations that have led to environmental protection in our country. They have led to a growing interest in environmental protection and conservation of nature and natural resources. The traditional conservation practices that were part of ancient India’s culture have however gradually disappeared. Public awareness is thus a critical need to further environmental protection. Among the large number of institutions that deal with environmental protection and conservation, a few well-known organizations include government organizations such as the Botanical Survey of India, Calcutta (BSI) and Center for Science and Environment, New Delhi (CSE), and NGOs such as Bombay Natural History Society, Mumbai (BNHS), World Wide Fund for Nature, New Delhi, (WWF-I), etc.

PEOPLE IN ENVIRONMENT

There are several internationally known environmental thinkers. Among those who have made landmarks, the names that are usually mentioned are Charles Darwin, Ralph Emerson, Henry Thoreau, John Muir, Aldo Leopold, Rachel Carson and EO Wilson. Each of these thinkers looked at the environment from a completely different perspective. Charles Darwin wrote the 'Origin of Species', which brought to light the close relationship between habitats and species. It brought about a new thinking of man's relationship with other species that was based on evolution. Ralph Emerson spoke of the dangers of commerce to our environment way back in the 1840s. Henry Thoreau in the 1860s wrote that the wilderness should be preserved after he lived in the wild for a year. He felt that most people did not care for nature and would sell it off for a small sum of money. John Muir is remembered as having saved the great ancient sequoia trees in California's forests. In the 1890s he formed the Sierra club, which is a major conservation NGO in the USA. Aldo Leopold was a forest official in the US in the 1920s. He designed the early policies on wilderness conservation and wildlife management. In the 1960s Rachel Carson published several articles that caused immediate worldwide concern on the effects of pesticides on nature and mankind. She wrote a wellknown book called 'Silent Spring' which eventually led to a change in Government policy and public awareness. EO Wilson is an entomologist who envisioned that biological diversity was a key to human survival on earth. He wrote 'Diversity of Life' in 1993, which was awarded a prize for the best book published on environmental issues. His writings brought home to the world the risks to mankind due to man made disturbances in natural ecosystems that are leading to the rapid extinction of species at the global level.

There have been a number of individuals who have been instrumental in shaping the environmental history in our country. Some of the wellknown names in the last century include environmentalists, scientists, administrators, legal experts, educationists and journalists. Salim Ali's name is synonymous with ornithology in India and with the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS). He also wrote several great books including the famous 'Book of Indian Birds'. His autobiography, 'Fall of a Sparrow' should be read by every nature enthusiast. He was our country's leading conservation scientist and influenced environmental policies in our country for over 50 years. S P Godrej was one of India's greatest supporters of wildlife conservation and nature awareness programs. Between 1975 and 1999, SP Godrej received 10 awards for his conservation activities. He was awarded the Padma Bhushan in 1999. His friendship with people in power combined with his deep commitment for conservation led to his playing a major advocacy role for wildlife in India. M S Swaminathan is one of India's foremost agricultural scientists and has also been concerned with various aspects of biodiversity conservation both of cultivars and wild biodiversity. He has founded the MS Swaminathan Research Foundation in Chennai, which does work on the conservation of biological diversity. Madhav Gadgil is a wellknown ecologist in India. His interests range from broad ecological issues such as developing Community Biodiversity Registers and conserving sacred groves to studies on the behavior of mammals, birds and insects. He has written several articles, published papers in journals and is the author of 6 books. M C Mehta is undoubtedly India's most famous environmental

lawyer. Since 1984, he has filed several Public Interest Litigations for supporting the cause of environmental conservation. His most famous and long drawn battles supported by the Supreme Court include protecting the Taj Mahal, cleaning up the Ganges River, banning intensive shrimp farming on the coast, initiating Government to implement environmental education in schools and colleges, and a variety of other conservation issues. Anil Agarwal was a journalist who wrote the first report on the 'State of India's Environment' in 1982. He founded the Center for Science and Environment which is an active NGO that supports various environmental issues. Medha Patkar is known as one of India's champions who has supported the cause of downtrodden tribal people whose environment is being affected by the dams on the Narmada river. Sunderlal Bahugna's Chipko Movement has become an internationally wellknown example of a highly successful conservation action program through the efforts of local people for guarding their forest resources. His fight to prevent the construction of the Tehri Dam in a fragile earthquake prone setting is a battle that he continues to wage. The Garhwal Hills will always remember his dedication to the cause for which he has walked over 20 thousand kilometers.

ORIGIN OF ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE FROM VEDAS

Vedas are the first texts in the library of mankind. They are universally acknowledged to be the most precious Indian Heritage. The antiquity to the Vedic civilization is debated to a great extent but indeed there is no civilization known to humanity with such antiquity as Vedic Aryan Civilization. The so-called Aryans would have originated in the Aryavarta.

The Vedas deal with knowledge, the knowledge of all sorts. They cover knowledge both physical and spiritual. They are source of all knowledge according to Manusmriti. Especially the Vedic views revolve around the concept of nature and life. The visions of the beauty of life and nature in the Vedas are extremely rich in poetic value. Perhaps nowhere else in the world has the glory of dawn and sun-rise and the silence and sweetness of nature, received such rich and at the same time such pure expression. The symbolical pictures projected there remain close to life and nature. The most authoritative among the four Vedas is called the Rigveda. Each Vedic verse has one or more sages (Rishis) and deities (Devatas) associated with it. Generally, Rishis are supposed to be the recipient of knowledge revealed in the verses and Devatas are supposed to be the gods in whose praise verses are revealed.

The oldest and simplest form of Nature-worship finds expression in Vedic texts. Many scholars have come to the conclusion that the Vedas are primarily concerned with cosmology, however, they are not in a position to show that Vedic cosmology has the solutions to the most difficult problems of modern cosmology. Some say, like dramas are played to remember history, the process of various shruta yajnas describes the science of Cosmology.

The Vedic hymns are full of statement, ideas and unusual images which contain truths of all sciences. Here, knowledge is couched in symbolic language and unless the symbols are decoded, the real purport of the mantras cannot be understood. The only point is that Vedas need to be studied and interpreted, not in a pedantic manner, but in their

propoer perspective and in relevant context. The tripartite model of knowledge at the basis of the kymns helps in heir understanding. Generally indication of most of the principles is there in their earliest from. Often expressions of ideas are enveloped with the shade of symbolism. The approach of Vedic seers is truly comprehensive. They do not visualize in parts. They do not elaborate subjects as is done in current education. But at the same time, grandeur and brevity of the Vedas are not found in the disciplines of modern science. The Vedas and disciplines of modern science are rather complementary and not contradictory. If modern science is seen or read through Vedic eyes, the students will be much benefited. Students of science may search the earliest of the ideas about any discipline in the Vedic literature.

In recent days, environmental science and ecology are disciplines of modern science under which study of environment and its constituents is done with minute details. As Science, they are established in 20th century, but their origin can be seen long back in the Vedic and ancient Sanskrit literature. The concepts of environment differ from age to age, since it depends upon the condition, prevalent at that particular time. In this paper, an effort is made to find out the awareness of ancient Indian people about the environment. As Sanskrit literature is so wide we refer here mainly to Vedic texts, particularly the Vedic Samhitas.

The Environment (Protection) Act, 1986 defines the environment as follows: 'Environment includes water air and land and the inter-relationship which exists among and between water, air and land and human beings, other living creatures, plants, micro organisms and property'. From the above definition, it can be briefly said that environment consists of two components namely biotic (living organisms) and abiotic (non-living materials) factors. The living organisms can be grouped into three types - those living mainly on land, in water and in air. The non-living materials of the environment are land, air, water, property etc.

In modern Sanskrit, the word Paryavarana is used for environment, meaning which encircles us, which is all around in our surroundings. But in the Atharvaveda words equivalent to this sense are used; such as Vritavrita, Abhivarah, Avritah, Parivrita etc. Vedic view on environment is well-defined in one verse of the Atharvaveda where three coverings of our surroundings are referred as Chandamsi : 'Wise utilize three elements variously which are varied, visible and full of qualities. These are water, air and plants or herbs. They exist in the world from the very beginning. They are called as Chandansi meaning 'coverings available everywhere.' It proves the knowledge of Vedic seers about the basic elements of environment.

According to one indigenous theory established in the Upanishads, the universe consists of five basic elements viz. 1. Earth or land, 2. water, 3. light or lustre, 4. air, and 5. ether. The nature has maintained a status of balance between and among these constituents or elements and living creatures. A disturbance in percentage of any constituent of the environment beyond certain limits disturbs the natural balance and any change in the natural balance causes lots of problems to the living creatures in the universe. Different constituents of the environment exist with set relationships with one another. The relation of

human being with environment is very natural as he cannot live without it. From the very beginning of creation he wants to know about it for self protection and benefit.

VEDIC APPROACH TO ENVIRONMENT

The Vedic Aryans were children of nature. They studied nature's drama very minutely. Sand-storm and cyclone, intense lightening, terrific thunderclaps, the heavy rush of rain in monsoon, the swift flood in the stream that comes down from the hills, the scorching heat of the sun, the cracking red flames of the fire, all witness to power beyond man's power. The Vedic sages felt the greatness of these forces.

They adored these activities. They appreciated these forces. They worshiped and prayed them due to regard, surprise and fear. They realized instinctively that action, movement, creation, change and destruction in nature are the results of forces beyond men's control. And thus they attributed divinity to nature.

- 1. Divinity to Nature:** Rigvedic hymns could be divided into many parts, but their main part belongs to Natural hymns, the hymns related with natural forces. Yet Vedic gods are explained in different ways by the scholars of India and West, but speaking generally, the hymns addressed to deities (Devata) are under the influence of the most impressive phenomenon of nature and its aspects. The word Devata means divine, dignity which is bright, strong, donor, and powerful. In these hymns we find prayers for certain natural elements such as air, water, earth, sun, rain, dawn etc. The glorious brightness of the sun, the blaze of the sacrificial fire, the sweep of the rain-storm across the skies, the recurrence of the dawn, the steady currents of the winds, the violence of the tropical storm and other such natural energies, fundamental activities or aspects are glorified and personified as divinities (Devata). The interaction with nature resulted in appreciation and prayer but, indeed, after a good deal of observation. Attributes assigned to deities fit in their natural forms and activities, as Soma is green, fire is bright, air is fast moving and sun is dispenser of darkness. The characteristics of these forces described in the verses prove that Vedic seers were masters of natural science.

In Vedic view, this world consists of Agni i.e., fire or heat and Soma i.e. water. Sun (Surya) is the soul of all which is moving and also of which is not moving. Indra is most powerful god who kills Vritra, the symbol of cloud to free waters. Vritra means one who covers and is derived from the root vri, to cover. R.R.M. Roy opines that the main force of expansion in the Vedic cosmology is Indra, and his chief adversary, the main force of contraction, is Vritra. Maruts are Indra's associates. Vedic seers pray boldly to these natural forces and aspects for bestowing plenty and prosperity on them. Aditi is praised as Devamata, the mother of all natural energies and she symbolizes the Nature.

A famous geologist S.R.N. Murthy has written on the earth sciences in the Vedas. He has somehow a different opinion about Vedic gods and hence states, 'the natural geological aspects have been described as Indra, Agni, Vayu, Varun, Usas etc.15

2. **Cosmic Order ‘Rita’ and Varuna:** In the Vedas, the order of the Universe is called ‘Rita.’ Rita reduces chaos to cosmos, and gives order and integration to matter. It also gives symmetry and harmony in the environment. Hence the conception of Rita has an aesthetic content too; it implies splendour and beauty. It is for this reason that the Vedic gods, upholding Rita, are all lawful, and beautiful and good. Their beauty is a significance attribute.

Rita is defined variously by scholars in different Vedic contexts, but in general sense it has been elaborated as great ‘cosmic order’ which is the cause of all motion and existence, and keeps world in order. No one can ignore it,¹⁶ even gods are abided by the ‘Rita’ and they are born of Rita. It is controlling and sustaining power. It sustains sun in the sky.¹⁷ Rita as Universal Law governs everything in the cosmos. The whole of the manifested universe is working under Rita. S.R.N. Murthy assumes it as a law of gravitation in simple form. According to H.W.Wallis ‘The principle of the order of the world, of the regularity of cosmic phenomena, was conceived by the Rishis to have existed as a principle before the manifestation of any phenomena. The phenomena of the world are shifting and changeable, but the principle regulating the periodical recurrence of phenomena is constant; fresh phenomena are continually reproduced, but the principle of order remains the same; the principle, therefore, existed already when the earliest phenomena appeared.’

In the Vedas, Varuna is depicted as the Lord of Rita, the universal natural order. He is sovereign god, great king, law-maker and ruler of cosmos and even of the gods. Basically, he is regarded as the Lord of water and ocean but chiefly he controls and keeps the world in order. From his throne on high he looks down upon all that happens in the world, and into the heart of man. ‘By the law of Varuna heaven and earth are held apart. He made the golden swing, the sun to shine in heaven. He has made wide path for the sun. By his ordinances the moon shining brightly moves at night, and the stars placed up on high are seen at night but disappear by day. He causes the rivers to flow. As a moral governor Varuna stands far above any other deity. Thus, the concept of Varuna represents the consciousness of Vedic seers in respect to controlling and balancing the natural forces in environment.

3. **Division of Universe:** Vedic seers have a great vision about universe. The universe is made on scientific principles, and that’s why it is well measured. The universe consists of three intertwined webs, Prithivi, Antariksha and Dyau. Vedic scientists divided even the length in three calling them upper, medium and lower. The tripartite division of the universe into three regions³Prithivi, the earth, Antariksha, the aerial or intermediate region which is between heaven and earth, and Dyau, the heaven or sky is very well established in the Vedic literature. Prithavi can be given a scientific name ‘observer space.’ It is our space, the space in which we live and die, whatever we can see and observe. From one end of the universe to the other end is the expanse of Prithivi, and that is what the name Prithivi means: the broad and extended one. Dyau can be termed ‘Light space’ because light propagates in this space. Antariksha can be termed as ‘Intermediate space’ as this space exists in between observer space and light space. A verse from the Yajurveda states that the

division of universe was done on a subtle level, and not on gross level. The Vedic sages had the capability of looking at such a subtle level, which is beyond the reaches of modern science. Here; in reference to environmental study, we regard the division of the universe as the most important concept of the Vedas.

Though a large number of gods are described in the hymns, and it is very difficult to arrange them in different classes, but Yaska in his Nirukta talks about three Gods: Agni in earth, Vayu or Indra in atmosphere and Sun in heaven. Each one of them is known by various names depending on the different actions performed. These three gods are three major forms of energy, fire on earth, air in intermediate space and light in upper region. Other energies of those regions are related to or under them. So generally gods are classified in three groups called upper, middle and lower, and, therefore, provide a system to study atmosphere and its all aspects. Regarding global harmony, Vedic seers always pray for the welfare of all creatures and all regions.

CONCEPT OF THE EARTH 'PRITHVI'

The concept of the form of the earth in the Rig-veda is most fascinating. It is mostly addressed along with the heaven into a dual conception (Rodasi, Dyavapriithivi). There is one small hymn addressed to Prithivi, while there are six hymns addressed to Dyavapriithivi. Prithivi is considered the mother and Dyau is considered the father in the Vedas, and they form a pair together. One of the most beautiful verse of the Rig-veda says, 'Heaven is my father, brother atmosphere is my navel, and the great earth is my mother.' Heaven and earth are parents: Matara, Pitara, Janitara in union while separately called as father and mother. They sustain all creatures. They are parents of all gods. They are great (Mahi) and widespread. Earth is described as a goddess in Rig-veda.

In the Atharvaveda, the earth is described in one hymn of 63 verses. This famous hymn called as Bhumisukta or Prithivisukta indicates the environmental consciousness of Vedic seers. The seers appear to have advanced understanding of the earth through this hymn. She is called Vasudha for containing all wealth, Hiranyavaksha for having gold bosom and Jagato Niveshani for being abode of whole world. She is not for the different races of men alone but for other creatures also. She is called Visvambhara because she is representative of the universe. She is the only planet directly available for the study of the universe and to realize the underlying truth. This is wide earth which supports varieties of herbs, oceans, rivers, mountains, hills etc. She has at places different colours as dark, tawny, white. She is raised at some place and lowered at some places. The earth is fully responsible for our food and prosperity. She is praised for her strength. She is served day and night by rivers and protecte by sky. The immortal heart of earth is in the highest firmament (Vyoma). Her heart is sun. 'She is one enveloped by the sky or space and causing the force of gravitation. She is described as holding Agni. It means she is described as the geothermal field. She is also described as holding Indra i.e., the geomagnetic field. The earth is described then as being present in the middle of the oceans (sedimentary rocks) and as one having magical movements.' The hymn talks about different energies which are generated from the form of the earth.-'O Prithivi! thy centre, thy navel, all forces that have issued from thy body- Set us amid those forces; breathe upon us.' Thus, the earth holds

almost all the secrets of nature, which will help us in understanding the universe. She is invested with divinity and respected as mother³ 'The earth is my mother and I am Her son.' The geographical demarcations on this earth have been made by men and not by nature.

CONCEPT OF WATER 'APAH'

Water is essential to all forms of life. According to Rig-veda the water as a part of human environment occurs in five forms:

1. Rain water (Divyah)
2. Natural spring (Sravanti)
3. Wells and canals (Khanitrimah)
4. Lakes (Svayamjah)
5. Rivers (Samudrarthah)

There are some other classifications also in the Taittiriya Aranyaka, Yajurveda and Atharvaveda as drinking water, medicinal water, stable water etc. Chandogya Upanishad describes about qualities of water 'The water is the source of joy and for living a healthy life. It is the immediate cause of all organic beings such as vegetations, insects, worms, birds, animals, men etc. Even the mountains, the earth, the atmosphere and heavenly bodies are water concretized.' The cycle of water is described. From ocean waters reach to sky and from sky come back to earth. Rainwaters are glorified. The rain-cloud is depicted as Parjanya god.

The fight between Indra and Vritra is a celebrated story from the Rig-veda. It is explained in many ways. According to one view it is a fight for waters. Indra is called Apsu-jit or conquering the waters, while Vritra is encompassing them. Vritra holds the rain and covers waters and thus being faulty is killed by Indra through his weapon called Vajra i.e., thunderbolt. The Indra-Vritra fight represents natural phenomenon going on in the aerial space. By the efforts of Indra all the seven rivers flow. The flow of water should not be stopped and that is desired by humanity. The significance of water for life was wellknown to Vedic seers. They mention -Waters are nectars. Waters are source of all plants and giver of good health. Waters destroy diseases of all sorts. Waters are for purification. It seems that later developed cultural tradition of pilgrimage on the river-banks is based on the theory of purification from water. The ancient Indians knowing water as a vital element for life, were very particular to maintain it pure and free from any kind of pollution. The Manusmriti stresses on many instances to keep water clean. The Padma Purana condemns water pollution forcefully saying, 'the person who pollutes waters of ponds, wells or lakes goes to hell.'

It needs no proof that water is an indispensable thing for life, nay, water is life itself, as the word jivana used for water indicates. The health of any man depends much on what type of water he drinks. If it is impure, the man definitely suffers from diseases. The Vedic seers were aware of this fact.

CONCEPT OF AIR 'VAYU'

Air is the element which was most taken care of by the Vedic people. The importance of pure air and ventilation can hardly be exaggerated and the Vedic seers also recognized this importance. In every place wherever vayu, the deity of air, is invoked, he is asked to become so pure that no impure things will ever dare to enter into the atmosphere. Atharvaveda states that wind is the support of all beings. Wind is equated with the highest self, for the very reason that it destroys enemy, i.e., bad things, protects the people and impels them for activity. In order to take the advantage at these qualities of the wind, he is invoked to keep the surroundings pure. Surroundings are likely to become impure with the contact of different bad, impure and poisonous things. And an impure atmosphere, as we know, is likely to create many problems of ill-health, epidemics, etc. To get rid of these problems the air must always be kept clean.

The observer space is the abode of matter particles, light space is the abode of energy and the intermediate space 'Antariksha' is the abode of field. The principal deity of Antariksha is Vayu. Jaiminiya Brahmana quotes, 'Vayu brightens in Antariksha.' Field is another form of energy and, therefore, Yajurveda says, 'Vayu has penetrating brightness.' The meaning of Vayu is made clear in Shatapatha Brahmana in the following Mantra, 'Sun and rest of universe is woven in string. What is that string, that is Vayu.' This verse clearly shows that here Apparent meaning of Vayu is air. The Vedic seers knew the importance of air for life. They understood all about air in the atmosphere and also about the air inside the body. The Taittiriya Upanishad throws light on five types of wind inside the body: Prana, Vrana, Apana, Udana and Samano Air resides in the body as life. Concept and significance of air is highlighted in Vedic verses. Rigveda mentions-'O Air! You are our father, the protector. Air has medicinal values 'Let wind blow in the form of medicine and bring me welfare and happiness.' Medicated air is the international physician that annihilates pollution and imparts health and hilarity, life and liveliness to people of the world. Hilly areas are full of medicated air consisted of herbal elements. Another verse describes characteristics of air 'The air is the soul of all deities. It exists in all as life-breath. It can move everywhere. We cannot see it. Only one can hear its sound. We pray to air God. Ancient Indians, therefore, emphasized that the unpolluted, pure air is source of good health, happiness and long life. Vayu god is prayed to blow with its medicinal qualities.

CONCEPT OF ETHER 'AKASHA'

Modern environmentalists discuss sound or noise pollution. There is a relation between ether and sound. The sound waves move in sky at various frequencies. Scientist could see the sky which exists only in the vicinity of earth, but Taittiriya Upanishad throws light on two types of ether i.e: one inside the body and the other outside the body. The ether inside the body is regarded as the seat of mind. An interesting advice to the mankind is found in the Yajurveda-'Do not destroy anything of the sky and do not pollute the sky Do not destroy anything of Antariksha.' Sun shines in Dyuloka and we get light from sky. The sunrays strengthen our inner power and are essential for our life. Thus importance and care for ether is openly mentioned in the Vedic verses.

CONCEPT OF MIND ‘MANAS’

Many prayers are found in Vedas requesting the God to keep the mind free from bad thoughts, and bad thinking. In this regard the Sivasankalpa Sukta of Yajurveda is worth mentioning. Considering the havoc that the polluted minds may create, our ancient sages prayed for a noble mind free from bad ideas. The logicians recognize Manas as one of the nine basic substances in the universe. The mind is most powerful and unsteady. Although the study of mind does not appear directly under the contents of modern environmental science but in reference to cultural environmental consciousness of Vedic seers, we find many ideas discussed in Vedic literature on the pollution of mind and its precautions.

ANIMALS AND BIRDS

Animals and birds are part of nature and environment. It is natural, therefore, that Vedic seers have mentioned about their characteristics and activities and have desired their welfare. Rig-veda classifies them in three groups -sky animals like birds, forest animals and animals in human habitation. All the three types of living creatures found in the universe have distance environment and every living creature has an environment of its own. But when we look from man's perspective all of them constitute his environment. There is a general feeling in the Vedic texts that animals should be safe, protected and healthy. Domestic animals, as well as wild animals along with human beings should live in peace under the control of certain deities like Rudra, Pushan etc. Vedic people have shown anxious solicitude for welfare of their cattle, cows, horses etc. The cow as the symbol of wealth and prosperity, occupied a very prominent place in the life of the people in Vedic times.

PLANTS AND HERBS ‘OSHADHI’

The knowledge about the origin and significance of plants can be traced out from Vedic Literature in detail. In Rigveda one Aranyani sukta is addressed to the deity of forest. Aranyani, queen of the forest, received high praise from the sage, not only for her gifts to men but also for her charm. Forests should be green with trees and plants. Oshadhi Sukta of Rig-veda addresses to plants and vegetables as mother, ‘O Mother! Hundreds are your birth places and thousands are your shoots.’ The plants came to existence on their earth before the creation of animals. Chandogya Upanishad elaborates šwater have generated plants which in turn generated food. The Atharvaveda mentions certain names of Oshadhis with their values. Later this information became important source for the Ayurveda. The Rig-veda instructs that forests should not be destroyed. The Atharvaveda talks about the relation of plants with earth, ‘The earth is keeper of creation, container of forests, trees and herbs.’ Plants are live. There is an important quotation in a Purana which says, ‘One tree is equal to ten sons.’ The Atharvaveda prays for continuous growth of herbs,-‘O Earth! What on you, I dig out, let that quickly grow over.’ And another prayer says, ‘O Earth! Let me not hit your vitals.’

The ‘Avi’ element referred in the Atharvaveda, as the cause of greenness in trees, is considered generally by Vedic scholars as ‘Chlorophyll.’ The term ‘Avi’ is derived from the root ‘Av’ and thus gives the direct meaning of ‘protector.’ Hence, plants were studied as a part of environment and their protection was prescribed by the Vedic seers.

CONCEPT OF SACRIFICE ‘YAJNA’

The sacrifice ‘Yajna’ is regarded as an important concept of Vedic philosophy and religion but when we study it in its broader sense, it seems to be a part of Vedic environmental science. Yajurveda and Rigveda describe it as the ‘navel (nucleus) of the whole world.’ It hints that Yajna is regarded as a source of nourishment and life for the world, just as navel is for the child.

Vedas speak highly of ‘Yajna.’ Through it, seers were able to understand the true meaning of the Mantras. All sorts of knowledge was created by Yajna. It is considered as the noblest action. In simple words, Yajna signify the theory of give and take. The sacrifice simply has three aspects: Dravya (material), Devata (deity) and Dana (giving). When some material is offered to a deity with adoration, then it becomes Yajna. Pleasing deity returns desired material in some different forms to the devotee. This Yajna is going on in the universe since beginning of the creation and almost everywhere for production and, also for keeping maintenance in the world. Even the creation of universe is explained as Yajna in the Purusha Sukta. Thus, the concept of Yajna seems to be a major principle of ancient environmental science.

In environment all elements are inter-related, and affect each other. Sun is drawing water from ocean through rays. Earth gets rain from sky and grows plants. Plants produce food for living beings. The whole process of nature is nothing but a sort of Yajna. This is essential for maintenance of environmental constituents. The view that Yajna cleans atmosphere through its medicinal smoke, and provides longevity, breath, vision etc., is established in Yajurveda. Few scholars have attempted to study the scientific nature of the Vedic Yajnas. Undoubtedly, they have never been simple religious rituals, but have a very minute scientific foundation based on fundamental principles. According to Vedic thought, Yajna is beneficial to both individual and the community. Yajna helps in minimizing air pollution, in increasing crop yield, in protecting plants from diseases, as well as in providing a disease-free, pure and energized environment for all, offering peace and happiness of mind. Moreover, Yajna serves as a bridge between desire and fulfillment.

CO-ORDINATION BETWEEN ALL NATURAL POWERS

Modern Indian Scientists should be astonished and also feel proud of our ancestors for their knowledge and views about environment. Ancient seers knew about various aspects of environment, about cosmic order, and also about the importance of co-ordination between all natural powers for universal peace and harmony. When they pray for peace at all levels in the ‘Shanti Mantra’ they side by side express their believe about the importance of coordination and interrelationship among all natural powers and regions. The prayer says that not only regions, waters, plants trees, natural energies but all creatures should live in harmony and peace. Peace should remain everywhere. The mantra takes about the concord with the universe-‘peace of sky, peace of mid-region, peace of earth, peace of waters, peace of plants, peace of trees, peace of all-gods, peace of Brahman, peace of universe, peace of peace; May that peace come to me!.

It is clear that the Vedic vision to live in harmony with environment was not merely physical but was far wider and much comprehensive. The Vedic people desired to live a

life of hundred years and this wish can be fulfilled only when environment will be unpolluted, clean and peaceful.

The knowledge of Vedic sciences is meant to save the human beings from falling into an utter darkness of ignorance. The unity in diversity is the message of Vedic physical and metaphysical sciences. Essence of the environmental studies in the Vedas can be put here by quoting a partial Mantra of the Isavasyopanishad 'One should enjoy with renouncing or giving up others part. Vedic message is clear that environment belongs to all living beings, so it needs protection by all, for the welfare of all. Thus the study proves the origin of environmental studies from the Vedas.
