SANATANA DHARMA
3. Structure and Working

It is essential, if we are to get a right view of Indian culture, to keep to the central, living, governing things and not be led away by the confusion of accidents and details. The critics of this culture who refuse to take this precaution find themselves in a maze without a clue and stumble about among false and partial conclusions and miss entirely the true truth of the matter. Hence we shall here take the necessary precautions and keep our eyes fixed on the central motive, abiding principles and living forms of Indian culture.

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CONTENTS

I. THE CENTRAL MOTIVE AND SYSTEM OF INDIAN CULTURE 3
1. The Central Motive 4
2. The System 5

II. THE PAST DEALINGS OF INDIAN RELIGION WITH LIFE 8
1. The First Perception – The Triple Quartette 9
2. The Second Perception – The Insistence on the Spiritual Motive 10
3. Adhikara, The Varying Natural Capacity of Man 11
4. The Graded System of Religious Development 14

III. THE LINKING OF THE COMPLEX SYSTEM OF SPIRITUAL AND RELIGIOUS DEVELOPMENT WITH THE GENERAL CULTURE OF LIFE 19
1. The Rishi and the Shastra 19
2. The Ethical Culture and the Web of Dharma 21
3. Indian Art, Music, Literature and the Cultivation of the Aesthetic and the Hedonistic Parts of Nature 23
4. The Rishis, the Dharma, the Shastras and the Subjection of the Political, Economical and Social Being of Man to the Spiritual Ideal 24
5. The Summing Up : The General Character of the Endeavour 26

IV. THE AGES OF INDIAN CIVILISATION AND CULTURE — THE THREE STAGES 28
1. The First Stage – The Age of Vedas and Upanishads 28
(a) The External or Exoteric Side of the Veda 29
(b) The Inner or Esoteric Side of the Veda 30
(c) The Greatest Powers of the Vedic Teachings 32
(d) The Upanishads – the Vedanta 33
2. The Second Stage – The Post-Vedic Age or the Purano-Tantric Stage 36
3. The Third Stage – The Generalisation of Spiritual Life 43

THE ROOTS OF INDIAN CIVILISATION 45

I. The Central Motive and System of Indian Culture

"Indian culture recognises the spirit as the truth of our being and our life as a growth and evolution of the spirit. It sees the Eternal, the Infinite, the Supreme, the All; it sees this as the secret highest Self of all, this is what it calls God, the Permanent, the Real, and it sees man as a soul and power of this being of God in Nature. The progressive growth of the finite consciousness of man towards this Self, towards God, towards the universal, the eternal, the infinite, in a word his growth into spiritual consciousness, by the development of his ordinary ignorant natural being into an illumined divine nature, this is for Indian thinking the significance of life and the aim of human existence."[1]

"Differences of credal belief are to the Indian mind nothing more than various ways of seeing the one Self and Godhead in all. Self-realisation is the one thing needful; to open to the inner Spirit, to live in the Infinite, to seek after and discover the Eternal, to be in union with God, that is the common idea and aim of religion, that is the sense of spiritual salvation, that is the living Truth that fulfils and releases. This dynamic following after the highest spiritual truth and the highest spiritual aim are the uniting bond of Indian religion and, behind all its thousand forms, its one common essence.... not only was this greatest and widest spiritual truth seen in India with the boldest largeness, felt and expressed with a unique intensity, and approached from all possible sides, but it was made consciously the grand uplifting idea of life, the core of all thinking, the foundation of all religion,

the secret sense and declared ultimate aim of human existence."[2]

1. The Central Motive

"...the essential intention of Indian culture was extraordinarily high, ambitious and noble, the highest indeed that the human spirit can conceive. For what can be a greater idea of life than that which makes it a development of the spirit in man to its most vast, secret and high possibilities, – a culture that conceives of life as a movement of the Eternal in time, of the universal in the individual, of the infinite in the finite, of the Divine in man, or holds that man can become not only conscious of the eternal and the infinite, but live in its power and universalise, spiritualise and divinise himself by self-knowledge? What greater aim can be for the life of man than to grow by an inner and outer experience till he can live in God, realise his spirit, become divine in knowledge, in will and in the joy of his highest existence? And that is the whole sense of the striving of Indian culture.

It is easy to say that these ideas are fantastic, chimerical and impracticable, that there is no spirit and no eternal and nothing divine, and man would do much better not to dabble in religion and philosophy, but rather make the best he can of the ephemeral littleness of his life and body. That is a negation natural enough to the vital and physical mind, but it rests on the assumption that man can only be what he is at the moment, and there is nothing greater in him which it is his business to evolve; such a negation has no enduring value. The whole aim of a great culture is to lift man up to something which at first he is not, to lead him

to knowledge though he starts from an unfathomable ignorance, to teach him to live by his reason, though actually he lives much more by his unreason, by the law of good and unity, though he is now full of evil and discord, by a law of beauty and harmony, though his actual life is a repulsive muddle of ugliness and jarring barbarisms, by some high law of his spirit, though at present he is egoistic, material, unspiritual, engrossed by the needs and desires of his physical being. If a civilisation has not any of these aims, it can hardly at all be said to have a culture and certainly in no sense a great and noble culture. But the last of these aims, as conceived by ancient India, is the highest of all because it includes and surpasses all the others. To have made this attempt is to have ennobled the life of the race; to have failed in it is better than if it had never at all been attempted; to have achieved even a partial success is a great contribution to the future possibilities of the human being."[3]

2. The System

The basic principle or motive of a culture is one thing but its system is something different. "A system is in its very nature at once an effectuation and a limitation of the spirit; and yet we must have a science and art of life, a system of living. All that is needed is that the lines laid down should be large and noble, capable of evolution so that the spirit may more and more express itself in life, flexible even in its firmness so that it may absorb and harmonise new material and enlarge its variety and richness without losing its unity. The system of Indian culture was all these things in its principle and up to a certain point and a certain period in its practice."[4]

"The system of Indian culture at once indulged and controlled man's nature; it fitted him for his social role; it stamped on his mind the generous ideal of an accomplished humanity refined, harmonised in all its capacities, ennobled in all its members; but it placed before him too the theory and practice of a highest change, familiarised him with the conception of a spiritual existence and sowed in him a hunger for the divine and the infinite. The symbols of his religion were filled with suggestions which led towards it; at every step he was reminded of lives behind and in front and of worlds beyond the material existence; he was brought close to the nearness, even to the call and pressure of the Spirit who is greater than the life it informs, of the final goal, of a high possible immortality, freedom, God-consciousness, divine Nature. Man was not allowed to forget that he had in him a highest self beyond his little personal ego and that always he and all things live, move and have their being in God, in the Eternal, in the Spirit. There were ways and disciplines provided in number by which he could realise this liberating truth or could at least turn and follow at a distance this highest aim according to his capacity and nature, *adhikāra*. Around him he saw and revered the powerful practicants and the mighty masters of these disciplines. These men were in early times the teachers of his youth, the summits of his society, the inspirers and fountain-heads of his civilisation, the great lights of his culture. Spiritual freedom, spiritual perfection were not figured as a far-off intangible ideal, but presented as the highest human aim towards which all must grow in the end, and were made near and possible to his endeavour from a first practicable basis of life and the Dharma. The spiritual idea governed,

enlightened and gathered towards itself all the other life-motives of a great civilised people."[5]

To judge the value of a culture "...we have to see not only the spirit and principle of the culture, not only the ideal idea and scope of intention in its system, but its actual working and effect in the values of life. Here we must admit great limitations, great imperfections. There is no culture, no civilisation ancient or modern which in its system has been entirely satisfactory to the need of perfection in man; there is none in which the working has not been marred by considerable limitations and imperfections. And the greater the aim of the culture, the larger the body of the civilisation, the more are these flaws likely to overbear the eye."[6]

As we shall see in the following pages, Indian culture has been supremely effective in its actual working and in deeply stamping its ideals and aims on the mind and life of the race. Sanatana Dharma or Hinduism is the name given to the religious culture that gradually evolved in this process. It can be best perceived and understood in a closer examination of the past dealing of Indian religion with life and the linking of the system of religious development with the general culture of life.



II. The Past Dealings of Indian Religion With Life

Indian culture succeeded by the strenuousness of its vision, the universality of its approach, the intensity of its seeking in doing what has been done by no other culture. "It succeeded in stamping religion with the essential ideal of a real spirituality; it brought some living reflection of the very highest spiritual truth and some breath of its influence into every part of the religious field. Nothing can be more untrue than to pretend that the general religious mind of India has not at all grasped the higher spiritual or metaphysical truths of Indian religion. It is a sheer falsehood or a wilful misunderstanding to say that it has lived always in the externals only of rite and creed and shibboleth. On the contrary, the main metaphysical truths of Indian religious philosophy in their broad idea-aspects or in an intensely poetic and dynamic representation have been stamped on the general mind of the people. The ideas of Maya, Lila, divine Immanence are as familiar to the man in the street and the worshipper in the temple as to the philosopher in his seclusion, the monk in his monastery and the saint in his hermitage. The spiritual reality which they reflect, the profound experience to which they point, has permeated the religion, the literature, the art, even the popular religious songs of a whole people."[7]

In its past dealings with life, Indian religion constantly held to two perceptions that showed a great practical wisdom and a fine spiritual tact. "First, it saw that the approach to the spirit cannot be sudden, simple and immediate for all individuals or

for the community of men; it must come ordinarily or at least at first through a gradual culture, training, progress. There must be an enlarging of the natural life accompanied by an uplifting of all its motives; a growing hold upon it of the higher rational, psychic and ethical powers must prepare and lead it towards a higher spiritual law."[8] Secondly it saw that "...if its greater aim was to be fruitful and the character of its culture imperative, there must be throughout and at every moment some kind of insistence on the spiritual motive. And for the mass of men this means always some kind of religious influence. That pervasive insistence was necessary in order that from the beginning some power of the universal inner truth, some ray from the real reality of our existence might cast its light or at least its sensible if subtle influence on the natural life of man. Human life must be induced to flower, naturally in a way, but at the same time with a wise nurturing and cultivation into its own profounder spiritual significance."[9]

The Indian religious culture – Hinduism, has always worked by two coordinated mutually stimulating and interblended operations which had these perceptions as their base and guiding principles. "First, it has laboured to lead upward and enlarge the life of the individual in the community through a natural series of life-stages till it was ready for the spiritual levels. But also it has striven to keep that highest aim before the mind at every stage and throw its influence on each circumstance and action both of man's inner and his outer existence."[10]

1. The First Perception – The Triple Quartette

In the plan of this perception the Indian religious culture

came nearer to other highest ancient cultures of mankind, but in a type and with a motive all its own. The frame of its system was constituted by a triple quartette. Its first circle was the synthesis and gradation of the fourfold object of life, vital desire and hedonistic enjoyment (Kama), personal and communal interest (Artha), moral right and law (Dharma), and spiritual liberation (Moksha). Its second circle was the fourfold order of society, (Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya, Sudra) carefully graded and equipped with its fixed economic functions and its deeper cultural, ethical and spiritual significances., Its third, the most original of the circles was the fourfold scale and succession of the successive stages of life, student (Brahmachari), householder (Grahastha), forest recluse (Vanprasthi) and free supersocial man (Sanyasi). "This frame, these lines of a large and noble life-training subsisted in their purity, their grand natural balance of austerity and accommodation, their fine effectiveness during the later Vedic and heroic age of the civilisation: afterwards they crumbled slowly or lost their completeness and order. But the tradition, the idea with some large effect of its force and some figure of its lines endured throughout the whole period of cultural vigour. However deflected it might have been from its true form and spirit, however mutilated and complicated for the worse, there was always left some presence of its inspiration and power."[11]

2. The Second Perception – The Insistence on the Spiritual Motive

The spiritual operation or cultural effort based on this perception was of a still greater importance. "For it is that which,

always surviving, has coloured permanently the Indian mind and life. It has remained the same behind every change of forms and throughout all the ages of the civilisation it has renewed its effectiveness and held its field. This second side of the cultural effort took the form of an endeavour to cast the whole of life into a religious mould; it multiplied means and devices which by their insistent suggestion and opportunity and their mass of effect would help to stamp a Godward tendency on the entire existence. Indian culture was founded on a religious conception of life and both the individual and the community drank in at every moment its influence. It was stamped on them by the training and turn of the education; the entire life atmosphere, all the social surroundings were suffused with it; it breathed its power through the whole original form and hieratic character of the culture. Always was felt the near idea of the spiritual existence and its supremacy as the ideal, highest over all others; everywhere there was the pervading pressure of the notion of the universe as a manifestation of divine Powers and a movement full of the presence of the Divine. Man himself was not a mere reasoning animal, but a soul in constant relation with God and with the divine cosmic Powers. The soul's continued existence was a cyclic or upward progress from birth to birth; human life was the summit of an evolution which terminated in the conscious Spirit, every stage of that life a step in a pilgrimage. Every single action of man had its importance of fruit whether in future lives or in the worlds beyond the material existence."[12]

3. Adhikara, The Varying Natural Capacity of Man

The second perception was concerned with the general

pressure of religious conceptions, the training, the atmosphere, the stamp on the culture. But Hinduism was not content and did not stop with this only. "Its persistent effort was to impress the mind at every moment and in each particular with the religious influence. And to do this more effectively by a living and practical adaptation, not asking from anyone what was too much for him or too little, it took as a guiding idea its perception of the varying natural capacity of man, *adhikāra*. It provided in its system means by which each man high or low, wise or ignorant, exceptional or average might feel in the way suitable to his nature and evolutionary stage the call, the pressure, the influence. Avoiding the error of the religions that impose a single dogmatic and inflexible rule on every man regardless of the possibilities of his nature, it tried rather to draw him gently upward and help him to grow steadily in religious and spiritual experience. Every part of human nature, every characteristic turn of its action was given a place in the system; each was suitably surrounded with the spiritual idea and a religious influence, each provided with steps by which it might rise towards its own spiritual possibility and significance. The highest spiritual meaning of life was set on the summits of each evolving power of the human nature. The intelligence was called to a supreme knowledge, the dynamic active and creative powers pointed to openness and unity with an infinite and universal Will, the heart and sense put in contact with a divine love and joy and beauty. But this highest meaning was also put everywhere indicatively or in symbols behind the whole system of living, even in its details, so that its impression

might fall in whatever degree on the life, increase in pervasion and in the end take up the entire control. This was the aim and, if we consider the imperfections of our nature and the difficulty of the endeavour, we can say that it achieved an unusual measure of success. It has been said with some truth that for the Indian the whole of life is a religion. True of the ideal of Indian life, it is true to a certain degree and in a certain sense in its fact and practice. No step could be taken in the Indian's inner or outer life without his being reminded of a spiritual existence. Everywhere he felt the closeness or at least saw the sign of something beyond his natural life, beyond the moment in time, beyond his individual ego, something other than the needs and interests of his vital and physical nature. That insistence gave its tone and turn to his thought and action and feeling; it produced that subtler sensitiveness to the spiritual appeal, that greater readiness to turn to the spiritual effort which are even now distinguishing marks of the Indian temperament. It is that readiness, that sensitiveness which justifies us when we speak of the characteristic spirituality of the Indian people.

The ancient idea of the *adhikāra* has to be taken into careful account if we would understand the peculiar character of Indian religion. In most other religious systems we find a high-pitched spiritual call and a difficult and rigid ethical standard far beyond the possibilities of man's half-evolved, defective and imperfect nature. This standard, this call are announced as if imperative on all; but it is evident that only a few can give an adequate response. There is presented to our view for all our picture of

life the sharp division of two extremes; the saint and the worldling, the religious and the irreligious, the good and the bad, the pious and the impious, souls accepted and souls rejected, the sheep and the goats, the saved and the damned, the believer and the infidel, are the two categories set constantly before us. All between is a confusion, a tug of war, an uncertain balance. This crude and summary classification is the foundation of the Christian system of an eternal heaven and hell; at best, the Catholic religion humanely interposes a precarious chance hung between that happy and this dread alternative, the chance of a painful purgatory for more than nine-tenths of the human race. Indian religion set up on its summits a still more high-pitched spiritual call, a standard of conduct still more perfect and absolute; but it did not go about its work with this summary and unreflecting ignorance."[13]

4. The Graded System of Religious Development

"All beings are to the Indian mind portions of the Divine, evolving souls, and sure of an eventual salvation and release into the spirit. All must feel, as the good in them grows or, more truly, the godhead in them finds itself and becomes conscious, the ultimate touch and call of their highest self and through that call the attraction to the Eternal and Divine. But actually in life there are infinite differences between man and man; some are more inwardly evolved, others are less mature, many if not most are infant souls incapable of great steps and difficult efforts. Each needs to be dealt with according to his nature and his soul stature."[14] Indian religion distinguished between three principal

types – the tamasic, the rajasic and the sattwic depending only on the predominance of the tamas, rajas or sattwa (the three Gunas) respectively because in truth all the three Gunas are always present in every nature. "This distinction amounts to a gradation of three stages in the growing human consciousness. One crude, ill-formed, still outward, still vitally and physically minded can be led only by devices suited to its ignorance. Another, more developed and capable of a much stronger and deeper psycho-spiritual experience, offers a riper make of manhood gifted with a more conscious intelligence, a larger vital or aesthetic opening, a stronger ethical power of the nature. A third, the ripest and most developed of all, is ready for the spiritual heights, fit to receive or to climb towards the loftiest ultimate truth of God and of its own being and to tread the summits of divine experience."[15]

"It was to meet the need of the first type or level that Indian religion created that mass of suggestive ceremony and effective ritual and strict outward rule and injunction and all that pageant of attracting and compelling symbol with which the cult is so richly equipped or profusely decorated. These are for the most part forming and indicative things which work upon the mind consciently and subconsciently and prepare it for an entry into the significance of the greater permanent things that lie behind them. And for this type too, for its vital mind and will, is intended all in the religion that calls on man to turn to a divine Power or powers for the just satisfaction of his desires and his interests, just because subject to the right and the law, the Dharma. In the Vedic times the outward ritual sacrifice and at a later period all

the religious forms and notions that clustered visibly around the rites and imagery of temple worship, constant festival and ceremony and daily act of outward devotion were intended to serve this type or this soul-stage. Many of these things may seem to the developed mind to belong to an ignorant or half awakened religionism; but they have their concealed truth and their psychic value and are indispensable in this stage for the development and difficult awakening of the soul shrouded in the ignorance of material Nature.

The middle stage, the second type starts from these things, but gets behind them; it is capable of understanding more clearly and consciently the psychic truths, the conceptions of the intelligence, the aesthetic indications, the ethical values and all the other mediating directions which Indian religion took care to place behind its symbols. These intermediate truths vivify the outward forms of the system and those who can grasp them can go through these mental indices towards things that are beyond the mind and approach the profounder truths of the spirit. ...This ascending type of humanity claims for its use all that large and opulent middle region of philosophic, psycho-spiritual, ethical, aesthetic and emotional religious seeking which is the larger and more significant portion of the wealth of Indian culture. At this stage intervene the philosophical systems, the subtle illumining debates and inquiries of the thinkers; here are the nobler or more passionate reaches of devotion, here are held up the higher, ampler or austerer ideals of the Dharma; here break in the psychical suggestions and first definite urgings of the eternal and infinite which draw men by their appeal and

promise towards the practice of Yoga."[16]

The third and the greatest type could ascend to luminous gradations of spiritual truth, to the complete light of spiritual knowledge when it emerges from veil and compromise and goes beyond all symbols and middle significances to the absolute and universal divine love, beauty, knowledge, unity with all beings, compassion and benevolence. These divinest things were the heritage of the human being ready for divinity and their way and call were the supreme significances of Indian religion and yoga.

"But distinctions are lines that can always be overpassed in the infinite complexity of man's nature and there was no sharp and unbridgeable division, only a gradation, since the actuality or potentiality of the three powers coexist in all men. Both the middle and the highest significances were near and present and pervaded the whole system, and the approaches to the highest status were not absolutely denied to any man, in spite of certain prohibitions: but these prohibitions broke down in practice or left a way of escape to the man who felt the call; the call itself was a sign of election. He had only to find the way and the guide. But even in the direct approach the principle of *adhikāra*, differing capacity and varying nature, *svabhāva*, was recognised in subtle ways... One may note as an example the significant Indian idea of the *iṣṭa-devatā*, the special name, form, idea of the Divinity which each man may choose for worship and communion and follow after according to the attraction in his nature and his capacity of spiritual intelligence. And each of the forms has its outer initial associations and suggestions for the worshipper, its appeal to the intelligence, psychical, aesthetic, emotional power

in the nature and its highest spiritual significance which leads through some one truth of the Godhead into the essence of spirituality. One may note too that in the practice of Yoga the disciple has to be led through his nature and according to his capacity and the spiritual teacher and guide is expected to perceive and take account of the necessary gradations and the individual need and power in his giving of help and guidance. Many things may be objected to in the actual working of this large and flexible system.... But the principle of it and the main lines of the application embody a remarkable wisdom, knowledge and careful observation of human nature and an assured insight into the things of the spirit which none can question who has considered deeply and flexibly these difficult matters or had any close experience of the obstacles and potentialities of our nature in its approach to the concealed spiritual reality."[17]



III. The Linking of the Complex System of Spiritual and Religious Development with the General Culture of Life

The complex Religio-Spiritual system described above was linked by a process of pervading intimate connection to the general culture of life. The efforts in this direction on the part of the Rishis (Seers) or Acharyas and Gurus led to the perception of Dharmas and the creation of Shastras.

1. The Rishi and the Shastra

The most delicate and difficult part of this task is concerned with the thinking being of man, his mind of reason and knowledge. No known ancient culture, not even the Greek, attached more importance to this part of human being or spent more effort on its cultivation than the Indian. "The business of the ancient Rishi was not only to know God, but to know the world and life and to reduce it by knowledge to a thing well understood and mastered with which the reason and will of man could deal on assured lines and on a safe basis of wise method and order. The ripe result of this effort was the Shastra. When we speak of the Shastra nowadays, we mean too often only the religio-social system of injunctions of the middle age made sacrosanct by their mythical attribution to Manu, Parashara and other Vedic sages. But in older India Shastra meant any systematised teaching and science; each department of life, each line of activity, each subject of knowledge had its science or

Shastra. The attempt was to reduce each to a theoretical and practical order founded on detailed observation, just generalisation, full experience, intuitive, logical and experimental analysis and synthesis, in order to enable man to know always with a just fruitfulness for life and to act with the security of right knowledge. The smallest and the greatest things were examined with equal care and attention and each provided with its art and science. The name was given even to the highest spiritual knowledge whenever it was stated not in a mass of intuitive experience and revelatory knowledge as in the Upanishads, but for intellectual comprehension in system and order, – and in that sense the Gita is able to call its profound spiritual teaching the most secret science, *guhyatamam śāstram*. This high scientific and philosophical spirit was carried by the ancient Indian culture into all its activities. No Indian religion is complete without its outward form of preparatory practice, its supporting philosophy and its Yoga or system of inward practice or art of spiritual living: most even of what seems irrational in it to a first glance, has its philosophical turn and significance. It is this complete understanding and philosophical character which has given religion in India its durable security and immense vitality and enabled it to resist the acid dissolvent power of modern sceptical inquiry; whatever is ill-founded in experience and reason, that power can dissolve, but not the heart and mind of these great teachings. But what we have more especially to observe is that while Indian culture made a distinction between the lower and the higher learning, the knowledge of things and the knowledge of self, it did not put a gulf between them like some religions, but considered the knowledge of the world and

things as a preparatory and a leading up to the knowledge of Self and God. All Shastra was put under the sanction of the names of the Rishis, who were in the beginning the teachers not only of spiritual truth and philosophy, – and we may note that all Indian philosophy, even the logic of Nyaya and the atomic theory of the Vaisheshikas, has for its highest crowning note and eventual object spiritual knowledge and liberation, – but of the arts, the social, political and military, the physical and psychic sciences, and every instructor was in his degree respected as a *guru* or *ācārya*, a guide or preceptor of the human spirit. All knowledge was woven into one and led up by degrees to the one highest knowledge."[18]

2. The Ethical Culture and the Web of Dharma

The whole right practice of life founded on the one highest knowledge was 'in the view of Indian culture a Dharma, a living according to a just understanding and right view of self-culture, of the knowledge of things and life and of action in that knowledge. Thus each man and class and kind and species and each activity of soul, mind, life, body has its dharma. But the largest or at least most vitally important part of the Dharma was held to be the culture and ordering of the ethical nature of man. The ethical aspect of life... attracted a quite enormous amount of attention, occupied the greater part of Indian thought and writing not devoted to the things of pure knowledge and of the spirit and was so far pushed that there is no ethical formation or ideal which does not reach in it its highest conception and a certain divine absolutism of ideal practice. Indian thought...

considered that man was justified in satisfying his desires, since that is necessary for the satisfaction and expansion of life, but not in obeying the dictates of desire as the law of his being; for in all things there is a greater law, each has not only its side of interest and desire, but its Dharma or rule of right practice, satisfaction, expansion, regulation. The Dharma, then, fixed by the wise in the Shastra is the right thing to observe, the true rule of action. First in the web of Dharma comes the social law; for man's life is only initially for his vital, personal, individual self, but much more imperatively for the community, though most imperatively of all for the greatest Self one in himself and in all beings, for God, for the Spirit. Therefore first the individual must subordinate himself to the communal self, though by no means bound altogether to efface himself in it as the extremists of the communal idea imagine. He must live according to the law of his nature harmonised with the law of his social type and class, for the nation and in a higher reach of his being – this was greatly stressed by the Buddhists – for humanity. Thus living and acting he could learn to transcend the social scale of the Dharma, practise without injuring the basis of life, the ideal scale and finally grow into the liberty of the spirit, when rule and duty were not binding because he would then move and act in a highest free and immortal Dharma of the divine nature. All these aspects of the Dharma were closely linked up together in a progressive unity. Thus, for an example, each of the four orders had its own social function and ethics, but also an ideal rule for the growth of the pure ethical being, and every man by observing his Dharma and turning his action Godwards could grow out of it into the spiritual freedom. But behind all Dharma and ethics

was put, not only as a safeguard but as a light, a religious sanction, a reminder of the continuity of life and of man's long pilgrimage through many births, a reminder of the Gods and planes beyond and of the Divine, and above it all the vision of a last stage of perfect comprehension and unity and of divine transcendence."[19]

3. Indian Art, Music, Literature and the Cultivation of the Aesthetic and the Hedonistic Parts of Nature

"Poetry, the drama, song, dance, music, the greater and lesser arts were placed under the sanction of the Rishis and were made instruments of the spirit's culture. A just theory held them to be initially the means of a pure aesthetic satisfaction and each was founded on its own basic rule and law, but on that basis and with a perfect fidelity to it still raised up to minister to the intellectual, ethical and religious development of the being. It is notable that the two vast Indian epics have been considered as much as Dharma-shastras as great historico-mythic epic narratives, *itihāsas*. They are, that is to say, noble, vivid and puissant pictures of life, but they utter and breathe throughout their course the law and ideal of a great and high ethical and religious spirit in life and aim in their highest intention at the idea of the Divine and the way of the mounting soul in the action of the world. Indian painting, sculpture and architecture did not refuse service to the aesthetic satisfaction and interpretation of the social, civic and individual life of the human being; these things, as all evidences show, played a great part in their motives of creation, but still their highest work was reserved for the greatest spiritual side of the culture, and throughout we see them

seized and suffused with the brooding stress of the Indian mind on the soul, the Godhead, the spiritual, the Infinite. And we have to note too that the aesthetic and hedonistic being was made not only an aid to religion and spirituality and liberally used for that purpose, but even one of the main gates of man's approach to the Spirit. The Vaishnava religion especially is a religion of love and beauty and of the satisfaction of the whole delight-soul of man in God and even the desires and images of the sensuous life were turned by its vision into figures of a divine soul-experience. Few religions have gone so far as this immense catholicity or carried the whole nature so high in its large, puissant and many-sided approach to the spiritual and the infinite."[20]

4. The Rishis, the Dharma, the Shastras and the Subjection of the Political, Economical and Social Being of Man to the Spiritual Ideal

These parts belonging to the most outwardly vital life of man too the Indian spiritual culture took strenuously in hand and subjected their whole body to the pressure of its own ideals and conceptions. "Its method was to build up great Shastras of social living, duty and enjoyment, military and political rule and conduct and economical well-being. These were directed on one side to success, expansion, opulence and the right art and relation of these activities, but on those motives, demanded by the very nature of the vital man and his action, was imposed the law of the Dharma, a stringent social and ethical ideal and rule, – thus the whole life of the king as the head of power and responsibility was regulated by it in its every hour and function, – and the

constant reminder of religious duty. In latter times a Machiavellian principle of statecraft, that which has been always and is still pursued by governments and diplomats, encroached on this nobler system, but in the best age of Indian thought this depravation was condemned as a temporarily effective, but lesser, ignoble and inferior way of policy. The great rule of the culture was that the higher a man's position and power, the larger the scope of his function and influence of his acts and example, the greater should be the call on him of the Dharma. The whole law and custom of society was placed under the sanction of the Rishis and the gods, protected from the violence of the great and powerful, given a socio-religious character and the king himself charged to live and rule as the guardian and servant of the Dharma with only an executive power over the community which was valid so long as he observed with fidelity the Law. And as this vital aspect of life is the one which most easily draws us outward and away from the inner self and the diviner aim of living, it was the most strenuously linked up at every point with the religious idea in the way the vital man can best understand, in the Vedic times by the constant reminder of the sacrifice behind every social and civic act, at a later period by religious rites, ceremonies, worship, the calling in of the gods, the insistence on the subsequent results or a supraterrestrial aim of works. So great was this preoccupation, that while in the spiritual and intellectual and other spheres a considerable or a complete liberty was allowed to speculation, action, creation, here the tendency was to impose a rigorous law and authority, a tendency which in the end became greatly exaggerated and prevented the expansion

of the society into new forms more suitable for the need of the spirit of the age, the Yuga-dharma. A door of liberty was opened to the community by the provision of an automatic permission to change custom and to the individual in the adoption of the religious life with its own higher discipline or freedom outside the ordinary social weft of binding rule and injunction. A rigid observation and discipline of the social law, a larger nobler discipline and freer self-culture of the ideal side of the Dharma, a wide freedom of the religious and spiritual life became the three powers of the system. The steps of the expanding human spirit mounted through these powers to its perfection."[21]

5. The Summing Up : The General Character of the Endeavour

"Thus the whole general character of the application of Indian ideals to life became throughout of this one texture, the constant, subtly graded, subtly harmonised preparation of the soul of man for its spiritual being. First, the regulated satisfaction of the primary natural being of man subjected to the law of the Dharma and the ethical idea and besieged at every moment by the suggestions of religion, a religion at first appealing to his more outward undeveloped mind, but in each of its outward symbols and circumstances opening to a profounder significance, armed with the indication of a profoundest spiritual and ideal meaning as its justification. Then, the higher steps of the developed reason and psychical, ethical and aesthetic powers closely interwoven and raised by a similar opening beyond themselves to their own heights of spiritual direction and

potentiality. Finally, each of these growing powers in man was made on its own line of approach a gateway into his divine and spiritual being. Thus we may observe that there was created a Yoga of knowledge for the self-exceeding of the thinking intellectual man, a Yoga of works for the self-exceeding of the active, dynamic and ethical man, a Yoga of love and bhakti for the self-exceeding of the emotional, aesthetic, hedonistic man, by which each arrived to perfection through a self-ward, spiritual, God-ward direction of his own special power, as too a Yoga of self-exceeding through the power of the psychical being and even through the power of the life in the body, – Yogas which could be practised in separation or with some kind of synthesis. But all these ways of self-exceeding led to a highest self-becoming. To become one with universal being and all existences, one with the self and spirit, united with God completed the human evolution, built the final step of man's self-culture."[22]



IV. The Ages of Indian Civilisation and Culture — The Three Stages

"...the spirit of Indian religion and spiritual culture has been persistently and immovably the same throughout the long time of its vigour, but its form has undergone remarkable changes. Yet if we look into them from the right centre it will be apparent that these changes are the results of a logical and inevitable evolution inherent in the very process of man's growth towards the heights."[23]

1. The First Stage – The Age of Vedas and Upanishads

"The first age of India's greatness was a spiritual age when she sought passionately for the truth of existence through the intuitive mind and through an inner experience and interpretation both of the psychic and the physical existence. The stamp put on her by that beginning she has never lost, but rather always enriched it with fresh spiritual experience and discovery at each step of the national life. Even in her hour of decline it was the one thing she could never lose."[24]

"The Veda was the beginning of our spiritual knowledge; the Veda will remain its end. These compositions of an unknown antiquity are as the many breasts of the eternal Mother of knowledge from which our succeeding ages have all been fed. ...The recovery of the perfect truth of the Veda is therefore.... a practical necessity for the future of the human race. For I believe firmly that the secret concealed in the Veda, when entirely

discovered, will be found to formulate perfectly that knowledge and practice of a divine life to which the march of humanity, after long wanderings in the satisfaction of the intellect and senses, must inevitably return."[25]

(a) The External or Exoteric Side of the Veda

The Indian spiritual culture in its earliest form, its first Vedic system "... took its outward foundation on the mind of the physical man whose natural faith is in things physical, in the sensible and visible objects, presences, representations and the external pursuits and aims of this material world. The means, symbols, rites, figures, by which it sought to mediate between the spirit and the normal human mentality were drawn from these most external physical things. Man's first and primitive idea of the Divine can only come through his vision of external Nature and the sense of a superior Power or Powers concealed behind her phenomena...

For that inevitably must be the initial way in which his active physical, vital and mental nature is allowed to approach the Godhead. He approaches it through its visible outward manifestations as something greater than his own natural self, something single or multiple that guides, sustains and directs his life, and he calls to it for help and support in the desires and difficulties and distresses and struggles of his human existence. The Vedic religion accepted also the form in which early man everywhere expressed his sense of the relation between himself and the godheads of Nature; it adopted as its central symbol the act and ritual of a physical sacrifice."[26]

"But even in its external or exoteric side the Vedic religion did not limit itself to this acceptance and regulation of the first religious notions of the natural physical mind of man. The Vedic Rishis gave a psychic function to the godheads worshipped by the people; they spoke to them of a higher Truth, Right, Law of which the gods were the guardians, of the necessity of a truer knowledge and a larger inner living according to this Truth and Right, and of a home of Immortality to which the soul of man could ascend by the power of Truth and of right doing. The people no doubt took these ideas in their most external sense; but they were trained by them to develop their ethical nature, to turn towards some initial development of their psychic being, to conceive the idea of a knowledge and truth other than that of the physical life and to admit even a first conception of some greater spiritual Reality which was the ultimate object of human worship or aspiration. This religious and moral force was the highest reach of the external cult and the most that could be understood or followed by the mass of the people."[27]

(b) The Inner or Esoteric Side of the Veda

"I believe the Vedas to hold a sense which neither mediaeval India nor modern Europe has grasped, but which was perfectly plain to the early Vedantic thinkers. Max Muller has understood one thing by the Vedic mantras, Sayana has understood another, Yaska had his own interpretations of their antique diction, but none of them understood what Yajñavalkya and Ajatashatrou understood.... It is because we do not understand the Vedas that three fourths of the Upanishads are a sealed book to us.... It is only Veda that can give us a complete insight into Vedanta. Only

when we thoroughly know the great Vedic ideas in their totality shall we be able entirely to appreciate the profound harmonious and grandiose system of thought of our early forefathers. By ignoring the Vedas we lose all but a few rays of the glorious sun of Vedanta."[28]

"The deeper truth of these things was reserved for the initiates, for those who were ready to understand and practise the inner sense, the esoteric meaning hidden in the Vedic scripture. For the Veda is full of words which, as the Rishis themselves express it, are secret words that give their inner meaning only to the seer, *kavaye nivacanā niṇyā vacāṁsi*. This is a feature of the ancient sacred hymns which grew obscure to later ages; it became a dead tradition and has been entirely ignored by modern scholarship in its laborious attempt to read the hieroglyph of the Vedic symbols. Yet its recognition is essential to a right understanding of almost all the ancient religions; for mostly they started on their upward curve through an esoteric element of which the key was not given to all. In all or most there was a surface cult for the common physical man who was held yet unfit for the psychic and spiritual life and an inner secret of the Mysteries carefully disguised by symbols whose sense was opened only to the initiates....It was this inner meaning, it was the higher psychic and spiritual truths concealed by the outer sense, that gave to these hymns the name by which they are still known, the Veda, the Book of Knowledge. Only by penetrating into the esoteric sense of this worship can we understand the full flowering of the Vedic religion in the Upanishads and in the long later evolution of Indian spiritual seeking and experience."[29]

(c) The Greatest Powers of the Vedic Teachings

"...the greatest powers of the Vedic teaching, that which made it the source of all later Indian philosophies, religions, systems of Yoga, lay in its application to the inner life of man. Man lives in the physical cosmos subject to death and the 'much falsehood' of the mortal existence. To rise beyond this death, to become one of the immortals, he has to turn from the falsehood to the Truth; he has to turn to the Light and to battle with and to conquer the powers of the Darkness. This he does by communion with the divine Powers and their aid; the way to call down this aid was the secret of the Vedic mystics. The symbols of the outer sacrifice are given for this purpose in the manner of the Mysteries all over the world an inner meaning; they represent a calling of the gods into the human being, a connecting sacrifice, an intimate interchange, a mutual aid, a communion. There is a building of the powers of the godheads within man and a formation in him of the universality of the divine nature. For the gods are the guardians and increasers of the Truth, the powers of the Immortal, the sons of the infinite Mother; the way to immortality is the upward way of the gods, the way of the Truth, a journey, an ascent by which there is a growth into the law of the Truth, *ṛtasya panthāḥ*. Man arrives at immortality by breaking beyond the limitations not only of his physical self, but of his mental and his ordinary psychic nature into the highest plane and supreme ether of the Truth: for there is the foundation of immortality and the native seat of the triple Infinite. On these ideas the Vedic sages built up a profound psychological and psychic discipline which led beyond itself to a highest spirituality and contained

the nucleus of later Indian Yoga. Already we find in their seed, though not in their full expansion, the most characteristic ideas of Indian spirituality. There is the one Existence, *ekaṁ sat*, supracosmic beyond the individual and the universe. There is the one God who presents to us the many forms, names, powers, personalities of his Godhead. There is the distinction between the Knowledge and the Ignorance, the greater truth of an immortal life opposed to the much falsehood or mixed truth and falsehood of mortal existence. There is the discipline of an inward growth of man from the physical through the psychic to the spiritual existence. There is the conquest of death, the secret of immortality, the perception of a realisable divinity of the human spirit. In an age to which in the insolence of our external knowledge we are accustomed to look back as the childhood of humanity or at best a period of vigorous barbarism, this was the inspired and intuitive psychic and spiritual teaching by which the ancient human fathers, *pūrve pitaraḥ manusyāḥ*, founded a great and profound civilisation in India."[30]

(d) The Upanishads – the Vedanta

The high Vedic beginning of spirituality was secured in its results by a larger sublime efflorescence. "The Upanishads have always been recognised in India as the crown and end of Veda; that is indicated in their general name, Vedanta. And they are in fact a large crowning outcome of the Vedic discipline and experience. The time in which the Vedantic truth was wholly seen and the Upanishads took shape, was, as we can discern from such records as the Chhandogya and Brihadaranyaka, an epoch of immense and strenuous seeking, an intense and ardent seed-

time of the Spirit. In the stress of that seeking the truths held by the initiates but kept back from ordinary men broke their barriers, swept through the higher mind of the nation and fertilised the soil of Indian culture for a constant and ever-increasing growth of spiritual consciousness and spiritual experience. This turn was not as yet universal; it was chiefly men of the higher classes, Kshatriyas and Brahmins trained in the Vedic system of education, no longer content with an external truth and the works of the outer sacrifice, who began everywhere to seek for the highest word of revealing experience from the sages who possessed the knowledge of the One. But we find too among those who attained to the knowledge and became great teachers men of inferior or doubtful birth like Janashruti, the wealthy Shudra, or Satyakama Jabali, son of a servant-girl who knew not who was his father. The work that was done in this period became the firm bedrock of Indian spirituality in later ages and from it gush still the life-giving waters of a perennial and never-failing inspiration. This period, this activity, this grand achievement created the whole difference between the evolution of Indian civilisation and the quite different curve of other cultures.

For a time had come when the original Vedic symbols must lose their significance and pass into an obscurity that became impenetrable, as did the inner teaching of the Mysteries in other countries. The old poise of culture between two extremes with a bridge of religious cult and symbolism to unite them, the crude or half-trained naturalness of the outer physical man on one side of the line, and on the other an inner and secret psychic and

spiritual life for the initiates could no longer suffice as the basis of our spiritual progress. The human race in its cycle of civilisation needed a large-lined advance; it called for a more and more generalised intellectual, ethical and aesthetic evolution to help it to grow into the light. This turn had to come in India as in other lands. But the danger was that the greater spiritual truth already gained might be lost in the lesser confident half-light of the acute but unillumined intellect or stifled within the narrow limits of the self-sufficient logical reason. That was what actually happened in the West, Greece leading the way. The old knowledge was prolonged in a less inspired, less dynamic and more intellectual form by the Pythagoreans, by the Stoics, by Plato and the Neo-Platonists; but still in spite of them and in spite of the only half-illumined spiritual wave which swept over Europe from Asia in an ill-understood Christianity, the whole real trend of Western civilisation has been intellectual, rational, secular and even materialistic, and it keeps this character to the present day. Its general aim has been a strong or a fine culture of the vital and physical man by the power of an intellectualised ethics, aesthesis and reason, not the leading up of our lower members into the supreme light and power of the spirit. The ancient spiritual knowledge and the spiritual tendency it had created were saved in India from this collapse by the immense effort of the age of the Upanishads. The Vedantic seers renewed the Vedic truth by extricating it from its cryptic symbols and casting it into a highest and most direct and powerful language of intuition and inner experience. It was not the language of the intellect, but still it wore a form which the intellect could take hold of, translate into its own more abstract terms and convert

into a starting-point for an ever widening and deepening philosophic speculation and the reason's long search after a Truth original, supreme and ultimate. There was in India as in the West a great upbuilding of a high, wide and complex intellectual, aesthetic, ethical and social culture. But left in Europe to its own resources, combated rather than helped by obscure religious emotion and dogma, here it was guided, uplifted and more and more penetrated and suffused by a great saving power of spirituality and a vast stimulating and tolerant light of wisdom from a highest ether of knowledge."[31]

2. The Second Stage – The Post-Vedic Age or the Purano-Tantric Stage

"...the second long epoch of India's greatness was an age of the intellect, the ethical sense, the dynamic will in action enlightened to formulate and govern life in the lustre of spiritual truth. After the age of the Spirit, the age of the Dharma; after the Veda and Upanishads, the heroic centuries of action and social formation, typal construction and thought and philosophy, when the outward forms of Indian life and culture were fixed in their large lines and even their later developments were being determined in the seed. The great classical age of Sanskrit culture was the flowering of this intellectuality into curiosity of detail in the refinements of scholarship, science, art, literature, politics, sociology, mundane life. We see at this time too the sounding not only of aesthetic, but of emotional and sensuous, even of vital and sensual experience. But the old spirituality reigned behind all this mental and all this vital activity, and its later period,

the post-classical, saw a lifting up of the whole lower life and an impressing upon it of the values of the Spirit. This was the sense of the Puranic and Tantric systems and the religions of Bhakti."[32]

"The second or post-Vedic age of Indian civilisation was distinguished by the rise of the great philosophies, by a copious, vivid, many-thoughted, many-sided epic literature, by the beginnings of art and science, by the evolution of a vigorous and complex society, by the formation of large kingdoms and empires, by manifold formative activities of all kinds and great systems of living and thinking. Here as elsewhere, in Greece, Rome, Persia, China, this was the age of a high outburst of the intelligence working upon life and the things of the mind to discover their reason and their right way and bring out a broad and noble fullness of human existence. But in India this effort never lost sight of the spiritual motive, never missed the touch of the religious sense. It was a birth time and youth of the seeking intellect and, as in Greece, philosophy was the main instrument by which it laboured to solve the problems of life and the world. Science too developed but it came second only as an auxiliary power. It was through profound and subtle philosophies that the intellect of India attempted to analyse by the reason and logical faculty what had formerly been approached with a much more living force through intuition and the soul's experience. But the philosophic mind started from the data these mightier powers had discovered and was faithful to its parent Light; it went back always in one form or another to the profound truths of the Upanishads which kept their place as the highest authority in these matters. There was a constant admission that spiritual

experience is a greater thing and its light a truer if more incalculable guide than the clarities of the reasoning intelligence.

The same governing force kept its hold on all the other activities of the Indian mind and Indian life. The epic literature is full almost to excess of a strong and free intellectual and ethical thinking; there is an incessant criticism of life by the intelligence and the ethical reason, an arresting curiosity and desire to fix the norm of truth in all possible fields. But in the background and coming constantly to the front there is too a constant religious sense and an implicit or avowed assent to the spiritual truths which remained the unshakable basis of the culture. These truths suffused with their higher light secular thought and action or stood above to remind them that they were only steps towards a goal. Art in India, contrary to a common idea, dwelt much upon life; but still its highest achievement was always in the field of the interpretation of the religio-philosophical mind and its whole tone was coloured by a suggestion of the spiritual and the infinite. Indian society developed with an unsurpassed organising ability, stable effectiveness, practical insight its communal coordination of the mundane life of interest and desire, *kāma, artha*; it governed always its action by a reference at every point to the moral and religious law, the Dharma: but it never lost sight of spiritual liberation as our highest point and the ultimate aim of the effort of Life. In later times when there was a still stronger secular tendency of intellectual culture, there came in an immense development of the mundane intelligence, an opulent political and social evolution, an emphatic stressing of aesthetic, sensuous and hedonistic experience. But this effort too always strove to

keep itself within the ancient frame and not to lose the special stamp of the Indian cultural idea. The enlarged secular turn was compensated by a deepening of the intensities of psycho-religious experience. New religious or mystic forms and disciplines attempted to seize not only the soul and the intellect, but the emotions, the senses, the vital and the aesthetic nature of man and turn them into stuff of the spiritual life. And every excess of emphasis on the splendour and richness and power and pleasures of life had its recoil and was balanced by a corresponding potent stress on spiritual asceticism as the higher way. The two trends, on one side an extreme of the richness of life experience, on the other an extreme and pure rigorous intensity of the spiritual life, accompanied each other; their interaction, whatever loss there might be of the earlier deep harmony and large synthesis, yet by their double pull preserved something still of the balance of Indian culture."[33]

"Indian religion followed this line of evolution and kept its inner continuity with its Vedic and Vedantic origins; but it changed entirely its mental contents and colour and its outward basis. It did not effectuate this change through any protestant revolt or revolution or with any idea of an iconoclastic reformation....At one time indeed it seemed as if a discontinuity and a sharp new beginning were needed and would take place. Buddhism seemed to reject all spiritual continuity with the Vedic religion. But this was after all less in reality than in appearance. The Buddhist ideal of Nirvana was no more than a sharply negative and exclusive statement of the highest Vedantic spiritual experience. The ethical system of the eightfold path taken as the

way to release was an austere sublimation of the Vedic notion of the Right, Truth and Law followed as the way to immortality, *ṛtasya panthāḥ*....Buddhism could easily have claimed for itself a Vedic origin and the claim would have been no less valid than the Vedic ascription of the Sankhya philosophy and discipline with which it had some points of intimate alliance. But what hurt Buddhism and determined in the end its rejection, was not its denial of a Vedic origin or authority, but the exclusive trenchancy of its intellectual, ethical and spiritual positions. A result of an intense stress of the union of logical reason with the spiritualised mind, – for it was by an intense spiritual search supported on a clear and hard rational thinking that it was born as a separate religion, – its trenchant affirmations and still more exclusive negations could not be made sufficiently compatible with the native flexibility, many-sided susceptibility and rich synthetic turn of the Indian religious consciousness; it was a high creed but not plastic enough to hold the heart of the people. Indian religion absorbed all that it could of Buddhism, but rejected its exclusive positions and preserved the full line of its own continuity, casting back to the ancient Vedanta."[34]

"This lasting line of change moved forward not by any destruction of principle, but by a gradual fading out of the prominent Vedic forms and the substitution of others...The Vedic gods rapidly lost their deep original significance. At first they kept their hold by their outer cosmic sense but were overshadowed by the great Trinity, Brahma-Vishnu-Shiva, and afterwards faded altogether. A new pantheon appeared which in its outward symbolic aspects expressed a deeper truth and larger

range of religious experience, an intenser feeling, a vaster idea. The Vedic sacrifice persisted only in broken and lessening fragments. The house of Fire was replaced by the temple; the karmic ritual of sacrifice was transformed into the devotional temple ritual; the vague and shifting mental images of the Vedic gods figured in the mantras yielded to more precise conceptual forms of the two great deities, Vishnu and Shiva, and of their Shaktis and their offshoots. These new concepts stabilised in physical images which were made the basis both for internal adoration and for the external worship which replaced sacrifice. The psychic and spiritual mystic endeavour which was the inner sense of the Vedic hymns, disappeared into the less intensely luminous but more wide and rich and complex psycho-spiritual inner life of Puranic and Tantric religion and Yoga.

The Purano-Tantric stage of the religion was once decried by European critics and Indian reformers as a base and ignorant degradation of an earlier and purer religion. It was rather an effort, successful in a great measure, to open the general mind of the people to a higher and deeper range of inner truth and experience and feeling. Much of the adverse criticism once heard proceeded from a total ignorance of the sense and intention of this worship. Much of this criticism has been uselessly concentrated on side-paths and aberrations which could hardly be avoided in this immensely audacious experimental widening of the basis of the culture. For there was a catholic attempt to draw towards the spiritual truth minds of all qualities and people of all classes. Much was lost of the profound psychic knowledge of the Vedic seers, but much also of new knowledge was

developed, untrodden ways were opened and a hundred gates discovered into the Infinite."[35]

"Nothing essential was touched in its core by this new orientation; but the instruments, atmosphere, field of religious experience underwent a considerable change. The Vedic godheads were to the mass of their worshippers divine powers who presided over the workings of the outward life of the physical cosmos; the Puranic Trinity had even for the multitude a predominant psycho-religious and spiritual significance. Its more external significances, for instance the functions of cosmic creation, preservation and destruction, were only a dependent fringe of these profundities that alone touched the heart of its mystery. The central spiritual truth remained in both systems the same, the truth of the One in many aspects. The Trinity is a triple form of the one supreme Godhead and Brahman; the Shaktis are energies of the one Energy of the highest divine Being. But this greatest religious truth was no longer reserved for the initiated few; it was now more and more brought powerfully, widely and intensely home to the general mind and feeling of the people. Even the so-called henotheism of the Vedic idea was prolonged and heightened in the larger and simpler worship of Vishnu or Shiva as the one universal and highest Godhead of whom all others are living forms and powers. The idea of the Divinity in man was popularised to an extraordinary extent, not only the occasional manifestation of the Divine in humanity which founded the worship of the Avataras, but the Presence discoverable in the heart of every creature. The systems of Yoga developed themselves on the same common basis. All led or

hoped to lead through many kinds of psycho-physical, inner vital, inner mental and psycho-spiritual methods to the common aim of all Indian spirituality, a greater consciousness and a more or less complete union with the One and Divine or else an immergence of the individual soul in the Absolute. The Purano-Tantric system was a wide, assured and many-sided endeavour, unparalleled in its power, insight, amplitude, to provide the race with a basis of generalised psycho-religious experience from which man could rise through knowledge, works or love or through any other fundamental power of his nature to some established supreme experience and highest absolute status."[36]

3. The Third Stage – The Generalisation of Spiritual Life

The great effort and achievement of the Purano-Tantric stage which covered all the time between the Vedic age and the decline of Buddhism, was still not the last possibility of the evolution of Indian spiritual culture. The first stage made possible the preparation of the physically-minded external man for spirituality. The second stage took up the outward life into a deeper mental and psychical living and brought him more directly into contact with the spirit and divinity within him. "...the third should render him capable of taking up his whole mental, psychical, physical living into a first beginning at least of a generalised spiritual life. This endeavour has manifested itself in the evolution of Indian spirituality and is the significance of the latest philosophies, the great spiritual movements of the saints and bhaktas and an increasing resort to the various paths of

Yoga.... If Indian culture is to survive and keep its spiritual basis and innate character, it is in this direction, and not in a mere revival or prolongation of the Puranic system, that its evolution must turn, rising so towards the fulfilment of that which the Vedic seers saw as the aim of man and his life thousands of years ago..."[37] "This greatest movement of the Indian spiritual mind has a double impulse. Its will is to call the community of men and all men each according to his power to live in the greatest light of all and found their whole life on some fully revealed power and grand uplifting truth of the Spirit. But it has had too at times a highest vision which sees the possibility not only of an ascent towards the Eternal but of a descent of the Divine Consciousness and a change of human into divine nature. A perception of the divinity hidden in man has been its crowning force. This is a turn that cannot be rightly understood in the ideas or language of the European religious reformer or his imitators. It is not what the purist of the reason or the purist of the spirit imagines it to be and by that too hasty imagination falls short in his endeavour. Its index vision is pointed to a truth that exceeds the human mind and, if at all realised in his members, would turn human life into a divine superlife. And not until this third largest sweep of the spiritual evolution has come into its own, can Indian civilisation be said to have discharged its mission, to have spoken its last word and be *functus officio*, crowned and complete in its office of mediation between the life of man and the spirit."[38]



The Roots of Indian Civilisation

"The Vedas are the roots of Indian civilisation and the supreme authority in Indian religion. For three thousand years, by the calculations of European scholars, for a great deal more, in all probability, the faith of this nation, certainly one of the most profound, acute and intellectual in the world, has not left its hold on this cardinal point of belief. Its greatest and most rationalistic minds have never swerved from the national faith....Religious movements and revolutions have come and gone or left their mark but after all and through all the Veda remains to us our Rock of the Ages, our eternal foundation... The Upanishads, mighty as they are, only aspire to bring out, arrange philosophically in the language of later thinking and crown with the supreme name of Brahman the eternal knowledge enshrined in the Vedas. Yet for some two thousand years at least no Indian has really understood the Vedas."[39]

List of References:

1. Page 156,
2. Page 127,
3. Pages 172-73
4. Pages 173,
5. Page 107,
6. Page 174,
7. Pages 127-28,
8. Page 158,
9. Page 158,
10. Pages 158-59,
11. Page 159,
12. Pages 159-60,
13. Pages 160-62,
14. Page 162,
15. Pages 162-63,
16. Pages 163-64,
17. Pages 164-65,
18. Pages 166-67,
19. Pages 167-68,
20. Page 169,
21. Pages 169-71,
22. Page 171,
23. Page 141,
24. Pages 406-07,
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26. Pages 141-42,
27. Pages 142-43,
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30. Pages 145-46,
31. Pages 146-48,
32. Page 407,
33. Pages 148-50,
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6. Names and addresses of individuals who own the newspaper and partners or shareholders holding more than one percent of the total capital: Peoples Awakening and Service Organisation, Jhunjhunu - 333001

I, Gopal Kedia, hereby declare that the particulars given above are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

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(sd) Gopal Kedia
Signature of Publisher