

## STRAY THOUGHTS OF AN IDLE BRAIN

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## 1. JIVATMA AND PARAMATM

Sanatana Dharma or Vedic dharma is based on the assumption that life is transcendental. This axiom was given to Arjuna by none other than Lord Krishna in Bhagavatgita, which is one of the three of prasthanatrayi. The Bhagavatgita, Upanishads and Brahmasutras constitute the prasthanatrayi. The matter dealt in prasthanatrayi and particularly of Upanishads is called Vedanta. The entire body of Vedas, in essence, is summarized in Upanishads and is understood as Vedanta or the end of Vedas.. The end of Vedas has to be understood as the essence of Vedas but not as something that is termination of Vedas. According to the Vedanta contained in Upanishads, the most logical statement that has profound meaning 'that everything is Brahman and everything belongs to Brahman' emerges. Sanatana Dharma identifies God with Brahman and then it becomes immediately obvious that God is one. These two statements

1 That life is transcendental, and

2. That everything is God and everything belongs to God,

Are compatible with each other only when life, in whatever form it exists is God. To comprehend the statement that everything is Brahman and everything belongs to Brahman, it is necessary to understand what '**belonging to**' means. For example, this object belongs to me implies that there is an object and also there is a possessor of that object in me. It is, therefore, clear from the statement that Brahman exists and objects also exist. Brahman can now be construed to be that which possess the quality of transcendence among others, while what is not transcendent to be an object. Also Brahman can not be seen with the physical eye while an object can be seen.

It is necessary to examine Brahman in detail. The Vedanta philosophy takes the recourse to negate- **neti neti**- meaning that this is not Brahman by showing different objects. For example, it is said that the tree is not Brahman; this animal is not Brahman etc. What then is Brahman? Brahman loses its identity if it can be succinctly defined. In other words, what is not perceivable and what is not recognizable by the physical instruments that man possesses can not be defined. Also, Brahman has to belong to Brahman itself.

However, the attributes of Brahman are described vividly. Brahman is all pervading, omnipotent, total bliss, truth and in short **satchidananda**. It can immediately be inferred that Brahman has to be infinite, timeless (independent of time). The time independent nature of Brahman is the property of transcendental. Time as understood by human beings is dependent on the movement of earth around Sun, and it is apparent that this concept of time when extended to other planets and satellites has different time scales. For instant, a 12 year old boy on earth will be an young man of around 18 Martian years as per the time scale of the planet Mars. There is no such thing as absolute time scale workable for all situations. So Brahman is timeless implies that the measure of time, whatever may be the scale that is applied, does not have any significance. Brahman has no age as per our understanding of age. For that matter, we can say that Brahman is not bound by any concepts that we, the human beings formulate and explain

It is now necessary to find a way through which we can have a clear idea of Brahman. It is only a human being that can really think of understanding something that is far beyond the capabilities with the physical tools available. Because, to examine something that is infinite in nature with finite measures available to the human being is a challenge and could be almost impossible. Yet, the great Vedas, Upanishads, Brahmasutras and various puranas aim at doing just that. Perhaps it is very easy to ask the people to have faith on something or in somebody in order to know the existence of God or What God means than trying a logical method of making people understand God. But not all people are satisfied with the mere statements and at least a few inquisitive individuals surely question the content and also the authority of an individual who is also a human being. Any coherent theory expects to have some axioms, which are not possible to be proved and yet decisively understood to be true, and based on the axioms build the theory. Barring the axioms, as long as the axioms are true the entire theory would then be consistent, logical and can be proved. For example the Euclidean Geometry is true as long as the parallel axiom is true. If the parallel axiom is negated, then the entire Euclidean Geometry becomes meaningless. Similarly the entire knowledge of Vedas and Puranas becomes useless if the basic axiom on which they are developed is negated.

At this stage, we have to examine the axiom **life is transcendental**. In other words, life in whatever form it exists does not terminate with the physical body but continues even after the physical body perishes. In order to make this axiom evident the great seers created lot of metaphysics dealing with the principle of karma or actions. But we can take Newton's law which states that every action has an equal reaction which works in the opposite direction of action. Even this law is an Axiom in the sense that it is bound by terrestrial considerations including the parallel axiom. However most accept this law as scientific and so it has been universal. We can start from here to justify the axiom of transcendental life. Even though the species of the same kind have the same physical features broadly such as legs, feet etc. they differ drastically from one to the other in appearance because of which identification becomes easy. This can be said of all animals and human beings and trees but can not be said of the insect life as the insects are so small that this aspect has to be studied through microscope. When examined minutely, perhaps there would be individual differences. One thing is certain. The termination of the physical body of the entire species is not the same. The life span of an individual being varies from one insect/being to other insect /being. in the species is not the same. Why? There should be a reason for such a glaring phenomenon. The only reason that could be thought of is the reaction of a

previous action in each case. If the life is not transcendental, then this situation can not be explained logically

Brahman or Parabrahman and Paramatma are typically used to represent Brahman only. As mentioned earlier, Sanatana Dharma identifies Brahman with God. As has been discussed, God has to be one. Obviously it is not possible to associate sex to God.

Since life is transcendental, the physical body containing life being perishable has to be changed periodically. This change of physical body is indeed the death and rebirth that we see. Since the physical body is visible to the naked eye, this physical body containing life becomes the object of our discussion. This physical body is limited by time (terrestrial time, since the consideration is with reference to earth) and space. Both the time and space are bounded and finite. This physical body, therefore belongs to God since it is considered an object. But, every time a human being refers to the body, he says that it belongs to him. Of course! this claim can not be made either by the animal world or any other known living organism. Logically it means that man is God while every other living organism is not. This is a contradiction to the statement that every living organism is God and everything belongs to God. If a slight adjustment is made, then the contradiction can be got over. The adjustment is simply to say that Jiva, the life force in the living organisms is the owner of the physical body. While a human being can express that this body is his, the other organisms can not make such a claim because they can not speak, making the human life special. It would then mean that Jiva is none other than God. (Brahman).

Jiva is not an object because it is not visible to the physical faculties and Jiva is not perishable. Therefore it would not be different from Brahman. This Jiva is called the Jivatman or Jivatma. Here we have to observe that we did not say that Jiva is equal to the Brahman or Jiva is the same as Brahman. This is because of the association of Jiva with a physical body which is perishable. Jiva is sometimes referred as that which has consciousness or **chaitanyua**.

Jagadguru Sankara summarized the entire Vedanta and said

**Brahma satyam Jagat mithya**

**Jivo Brahmyna para.'**

If we observe, Jagadguru Sankara used Satyam and mithya, two words which have to be understood. Satya, of course! stands for truth for common understanding, but since Brahman is described as satchidanada, this sat also represents the sat of Satchidanada. When Brahman can not be completely described by physical faculties, how can one compare Brahman with anything other than Brahman? Even this description of Brahman has become possible only by a Jiva encased in human garb!

**Midhya** is that because of which Jiva is treated to be not different from Brahman but not identical with Brahman. If we remove midhya, the Jiva and Brahman are the same according to Jagadguru Sankara. Actually Midhya means a measure. Whatever is finite can be measured. So Midhya is related to finite things. Jiva is that part of the Brahman that makes the body alive by providing it with consciousness.

Thus Jivatma is that Brahman encased in a perishable physical case or body while Paramatma ( Brahman) is pure Brahman without any shackles.

Our sages examined this midhya and have come up with detailed analysis. Because it is so very important, Sage Baadarayana had to write a treatise called Brahmasutras, for which Jagadguru Sankara had written a commentary .Brahmasutras is one of the three of prasthanatrayi. Brahmasutras were also commented upon by Ramanujacharya to support his Visistawaita philosophy and Madhwacharya to support his Dwaita philosophy.

Sanatana Dharma is often criticized for its divisions and the worship of several Godheads. Some times it is called a pagan religion. Those who understand the true nature of Brahman (Paramatma ) and Jiva ( Jivatman ) will find that these points of criticism are baseless. Since everything that is perceived is Brahman, worship of Brahman in any form is possible and permissible. This aspect needs further clarification and would be dealt with separately.

The major divisions in the Sanatana Dharma are the Dwaita, Visistadwaita and Adwaita. Adwaita was propounded by Jagadguru Sankara and it is the oldest of the philosophies saying that there is no duality of God (Brahman) and is generally referred as monotheism. .Visistadwaita is the philosophy propounded by Ramanujacharya, a great vaishnava saint created with the sole object to identify Brahman with Lord Vishnu, generally referred as qualified monotheism which is at least six centuries later than Adwaita. The Dwaita philosophy was propounded by the great saint Madhvacharya, an ardent devotee of Lord Krishna (an incarnation of Lord Vishnu ) latest of all the three philosophies

These three schools of thought are so divergent apparently that any compromise or synthesis seems impossible giving rise to give strength to the critics of this Dharma from within and without.

Fortunately, Jagadguru Sankara had provided no room for any controversies existing at his time or that crop up subsequently. His one proclamation that '**Jivo Brahmy na para**' answers and silences all critics of Dharma once for all.

We have understood that Jiva (Jivatma) is the consciousness of a living organism and also that in the absence of the consciousness, the organism is not a living one. We do not use the word **death** for non existence of consciousness in an organism, because there is no such thing as Body)of the organism is separated from Jiva. Jagadguru Sankara stressed that Jiva is not different from Brahman. Why did he not say that Jiva and Brahman are the same? Brahman being infinite and unique can not be called Jiva because, Jiva when named has to be different from Brahman. Infinity has the properties

1. that anything of the same type has to be contained in it and therefore,,
- 2 that anything of finite nature and of the same type must also be contained in it

Jiva not being the same as Brahman and yet of the same nature must be capable of developing into such a position as to be called Brahman itself. This process involves according to the sages three stages. They are

- 1 Jiva and Brahman are two different entities even though of the same nature in the first instance,
2. Jiva could be considered as part ( Amsa ) of Brahman, and
3. Jiva has realized ( Jiva got over *Midhya*

The first of the above three stages occurs when man bounds himself to the physical body. At this stage, he thinks that he and his body are one and the same. The casting off body is the death to him. Then Paramatma ( God ) is totally different from the man. There is duality here because man finds himself to be different from God. This situation is the basis for *Dwaita* school

The second stage is the one in which man has gone a step ahead and has realized that he is not the body but he is a part of Paramatma. The rejection that the man is the physical body forms the base for *Visistadwaita* school.

The third stage is the one which is very important. Here man is able to realize that he is no different from Paramatma and so deathless. This is what *Adwaita* tells us.

These three stages are not arbitrarily fixed but are true for any human being aware of his position as a special species of all the living organisms. What is the reason that man finds himself in these three positioned is explained through the introduction of a concept called **midhya**. The endeavor of man is to reach the third stage where the realization that the organism is not different from Paramatma dawns. The quest of man to attain this stage has been the subject matter for many treatises from time immemorable. The basic difference between organized religions and the Dharma like Sanatana Dharma ( Vedic Dharma ) usually styled as Hinduism rests in the philosophy and the methods to attain the final goal of deathlessness.

Most human beings do not have time or aptitude to think about this matter. They are usually satisfied with the finite world and try to find the means of obtaining happiness to live this finite life. The need for God comes only at the time of distress or when the man finds that certain things are beyond human capabilities. For example, in spite of so much advancement in medical research, it is still not possible to think of the stage of deathlessness in terms of the physical body. The only thing this advancement in medicine brought about is longevity which still is not certain whether it is a boon or a bane to the human society or the individual for mere longevity alone will not give perfect happiness. The problems of old age and consequent problems of health and maintenance pose a big problem to the individual and to the society. Since the decay of the body is inevitable, it is possible that a feeling could set in that the return of youth should also be made possible in order to enjoy the pleasures of the physical life as long as possible.

## 2.THE PURPOSE OF HUMAN BIRTH TO JIVA

The age old question regarding the human birth is challenging and is complicated to answer. The attempts to answer this question over ages seem to take people to more confused state and the interpretations still more tough to be understood. However, everybody who tackled this problem had taken human birth to be superior to all other organisms.

They started with this assumption because the human species is the only one which can not only think about many things, formulate a plan of action and executes it. While every other organism is not able to express its thinking human being can communicate, granting that every other organism may have some sort of capacity. What makes the human species special is that while it has all the four qualities of the animal kingdom viz., hunger ,procreation ,fear and sleep, it has this additional capacity of the mind. The human being has become individualistic in the sense that the thinking and pattern of life is different from individual to individual. The skills of manipulation and adoption of the life around, both from the facilities available from the nature and also the facilities from the fellow human beings and animals are the most distinct and distinguishable features of the human.

The knowledge that the life span of a human being is limited is well understood by the human but the plans made by the human race go beyond the limited life time of an individual and extend to future generations. The concept of organizing the groups of human beings into clans, communities and nations and also think of laws to regulate behavior of individuals is astonishingly original. Besides the human mind has conceived that there is something beyond the comprehension which is not finite. While every other species has a threat of extinction from the greed of human beings, though some are predators for others which never caused total annihilation, human beings have to fear the fellow human beings. The entire animal world is viewed by the human being nay, the entire universe, nature and its wealth as the property exclusively meant to be enjoyed by him. Man had even made laws that killing of any other form of life other than human life is sport and goes on killing with impunity for pleasure. He can eat anything and every thing except the fellow human beings!

Scientific theories developed during the last three centuries believe that human species has evolved after thousands of years in the process of evolution, starting from marine life. In fact, the ten avatars of Lord Vishnu are tried to be associated to the evolution leading to the evolution of the human species. Whether these theories are true or not, one thing is certain. The human species has to be accepted as the most intelligent of all the species of the evolution both existing and extinct. The theory of survival of the fittest also indicates that the human species has that tenacity and intelligence to survive through all the centuries from the time of its evolution.

The leadership in animal world depends on physical strength but the human society usually needed mental capabilities besides physical strength in the primitive clans. In the present times it is only the mental capacity that dominates the leadership qualities. Besides organizing a group in to a clan or a social set up by bringing out regulatory rules and putting them into action through a few individuals seems to be the prerogative of the human being. The purpose of all these human endeavors appears to be the need for security of an individual and also the family which is again a social set up exclusively special to the human species. The aim of a human being is to enjoy the life, however limited it might be with a few chosen individuals and that enjoyment the human being calls happiness or bliss.

Once all the needs of an individual are narrowed down to a single pursuit called happiness, the problems of the individual human being should have ended. On the contrary, the human being is now confronted with the idea of obtaining uninterrupted happiness or bliss. First and foremost , the craving for this uninterrupted bliss began without the bother of the consideration whether life is limited or transcendental. In other words, the human being first thought that happiness or bliss is guaranteed if the wishes are fulfilled, but the experience had shown that this not true.

The human brain is unique in itself and is able to think beyond the day to day life because he was forced to do so when he failed to achieve happiness in the span of life available to him. He observed the nature and the world around and deduced that what all that is visible is finite and whatever is born ( has beginning) has to die ( the ending). This obviously made the human being wonder whether there is anything that is not finite; and he called this infinite. This achievement, though looks insignificant has far reaching consequences.

The concept of infinity is the result of analysis of the human brain and so the human brain and hence the human being has to be accepted far superior to any organism. Exploration of the unknown has lead the human being to make different approaches to describe, disseminate and explain this unknown (infinity).What is not known and is not perceptible by the physical facilities available to the human being is obviously unknown. .However, there is a subtle difference between the unknowns at a particular time and the unknown for all the time or independent of time. The infinity is such an unknown that it could be independent of all time or could be dependent of time. Time itself varies from planet to planet and perhaps from one



solar system to the other. So, when we speak of time , we are taking that measure commonly understood by everybody on earth. According to this time, there is present, past and future. However, when we take the infinity related to God, logically there has to be some other measure of time. Since no relationship is possible to be established between our time and the time related to God, God is taken to be the time also. However, in Mahabagavatga purana different time scales with relationships between them were discussed whereby life of all Gods of the Sanatana Dharma were fixed excepting the two Gods, Lord Vishnu and Lord Sankara. These two are said to be eternal and are not bound by any time scale,

An attempt was made to compare the time scales of God as eternal meaning having past , present and future of man's concept no relevance on one hand and that of the man in Bhagavata Purana.. It leads to the conclusion that all the time that had taken evolution from the start to today is an infinitesimal of absolute time. This point can be grasped if we remember that if the age of a human being on earth were to be 12 earth years, the same person if transferred to the planet Jupiter will be just one Jupiter -year old man. This is because it takes 12 earth -years fro the planet Jupiter to go around the Sun while earth takes one year to go round the Sun.

Similarly the advances made in physical, biological and medicinal sciences were all possible because the human brain created all this knowledge in a systematic fashion such that what ever was propounded could be understood in the same way universally ,and also possible for verification. All these inventions and advances , though laudable because of their uses for the betterment of life in general make the human being great without first making him blush with embarrassment for all the negative effects to the humanity in particular and to the universe and the other organisms in general. For example the exploitation of nuclear energy was possible because of the culmination of theoretical and experimental research in physics. Is this knowledge really useful to the human society? The enormous costs involved and the nuclear waste disposal involved makes this discovery useless unless the ruling powers think of using this knowledge to claim supremacy over nations by making a threat that the opposing nations would be annihilated. Even this annihilation threat becomes useless if more nations possess this knowledge which is the position today. Nevertheless it is a great land mark when such an invention was made from abstract principles alone.

So the human mind,ever fertile, never ceases to probe in the realm of the unknown, first out of curiosity, then with the lofty idea of using the results for the benefit of the humanity and lastly for a weapon for the destruction of the enemy. The discoveries made by the modern science, while giving some relief to the society that could have done alright without them have increased tensions and strife among people and the peace needed for the perfect enjoyment without stress and fear is no where in sight. Even in the field of medicine, it is found that the benefits reach everybody only after a lapse of 10 years after the discovery.

One has to appreciate the process involving the formation of idea which could be termed as invention then innovation leading to perfection. These brilliant minds have never

thought of the negative impact of their researches on the society or environment and nature. Everybody expects that at least the intelligent have greater awareness of their responsibility to nature in the first place for, it is the intelligent few that have ideas going into concrete instruments and consequently know all the possible uses of those instruments. They should not be arrogant to such a degree where their only interest is self promotion; but should be responsible not only to the humanity in particular but to all the organisms in general because every organism has as much right to exist as the human being. But, during the process of evolution one finds that the human being is responsible for all the troubles and destruction of not only the fellow human beings but several other species on the planet with total disregard to the balances in nature. For example, the human society has exploited the natural resources such as oil and other metals to such an extent that the future generations may have to revert back to primitive conditions. Another example is that of food habits. The medical science has been voicing from the roof top that human digestive system is not suitable for the consumption of non vegetarian food. But we find that the medical advice is ignored completely world over. The dangerous killer disease, cancer is something not imported from any external agency but is the consequence of feeding the already existing cancer cells in the human body in a controlled quantity. The recent research says that these cells grow exceedingly fast by the food human beings take such as meats, alcohol, coffee, sugar. The question that immediately arises is that why every individual having the same food habits is getting this disease? Where the system is immune due to strong resistance to the growth of cancer cells, the disease is kept in the bay but in other cases people succumb to this disease. Statistically this disease is on the rise. The medical research suggests that this disease can not be cured by surgery, radiation therapy or chemo therapy, but by eating right kind of foods such as vegetables, nuts, fruits and avoiding processed foods this disease can be arrested; these foods are not suitable for the growth of cancer cells. The fact that the world's humanity is mostly non-vegetarian does not explain, how, in spite of the medical warning now and even earlier man has turned carnivorous. In nature we observe that carnivorous animals kill only for food and herbivorous creatures never take to non-vegetarian food. However man had become omnivorous. The human mind went beyond the ordinary functions and found that non-vegetarian food could also be consumed. While no other being deviates from its ordained path, the human being chooses anything that is not necessarily the predetermined way.

The significant conclusion that can be drawn is that the human being is very much, if not for all, responsible for all the actions that have been committed because of the decisions. The other organisms have no such responsibility. They act only for the purposes of food gathering, procreation and self defense and these also have predictable methods, the observation of which had made the human being what he is; ever trying to gain control on all the other organisms for his benefit and ultimately on the fellow human beings.

Obviously, the human being has the advantage to use all the devices invented through ages either for the benefit of the society or for annihilation of the same society of which he is a member. It is therefore necessary to have an agency to control the miscreants from possessing and using the instruments of destruction. Whatever agency that is created again consists of human beings and there is no guarantee that it serves the purpose. A class of individuals with dispassionate disposition having only one aim of doing good to all the

organisms could answer the problem if such a class could be created. The human society, thus had organized itself into tribes, nations and countries with a set of laws that govern and govern justly with the objective of giving individual freedom to think and contribute and without the possibility of inflicting damage to an individual or the collection of individuals. In most cases these laws do work and perhaps what we see in the world today is this picture of nations. While some countries have developed sufficient framework of laws and frame work of good governance, some continue to be in the primitive stage where might alone rules the roost. But this is not all. The nations fortunate enough to have attained supremacy either in economic conditions of military might do not stop being satisfied but intend to take over other nations either for their natural resources or to have cheap labor force. Through ages this state of affairs persist so that war in some form or the other exists.

The Indian experience brought through the great epics like Mahabharata and Ramayana among others discuss only this aspect of the human being. In no age strife between individuals or nations is absent and can not expected to be totally absent, but for happy living and existence of all sections of creation in harmony strife should be minimized. We come across a group of people in these epics called Rishis and Munis who were revered by all whose main job was to find equilibrium in the nature. Every action of these Rishis and Munis was shown to arrest the evil ( the harm willfully perpetrated by an individual or group of individuals against any section in nature ) and to foster happiness and harmony. The intention of an individual or of a group of individuals is never questioned or misunderstood when the purpose of these intention was known to have always been directed to find ways and means to achieve harmony among and between all the members of creation. When these Rishis and Munis did not own any property or did not have inclination to acquire property or possessions, they were respected. More so when they were found knowledgeable about the nature around. Even today people of knowledge are respected and it is common to see that the endeavor of others is always to learn from such people. It is commonly said that wise always learn from experience of the others. It is not necessary that one should put the finger in the fire in order to know it burns. These experiences, in course of time get the status of knowledge and one can either rely totally on this knowledge or can start verifying every statement recorded . Of course! The life span of a human would not be sufficient to test what all had been passed on to him by the knowledge of the previous generations.

The epic Mahabharata recorded that weapons of mass destruction were possessed by a few individuals such as Acharya Drona, Bhishma, Arjuna among others and it was a rule that such weapons shall not be used in the war. We find that these warriors scrupulously adhered to this rule through out the war. Arjuna could have annihilated the enemy with his one weapon 'Pasupatastra' leaving acharyas Drona, Kripa, Aaswathama and Bhishma. But his weapon would have destroyed not only the enemy but could have caused natural disasters effecting the lives of several organisms including the human race for a considerable number of years. We know that because of the use of atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in Japan during the second world war, the enemy was vanquished no doubt but the entire area surrounding these cities was totally burnt and the population suffered the after effect of radiation in the form killer diseases like Cancer. It is said that the use of these weapons was approved by the intellectuals of the day! The Mahabharata revealed that weapons of mass destruction were possessed by such individuals

who were tested for their character and who were righteous to have submitted to the general decree that those weapons shall not be used even in the face of death to self. It is possible that people might argue that such a war never took place and such individuals of character never existed. After a few hundred years the events of the great wars, first and second could also be questioned.. These questions and criticism become unimportant when the principle involved is understood.,because not all facts of yester years could be proved by carbon tests.

Every theory starts with an idea and on some basic assumptions called axioms which can not be proved and are not sought to be proved. These axioms are understood by everybody for their meaning and utility. For example, we propose counting. Counting is an idea. The existence of number 1 is an axiom, where the symbol 1 is accepted to represent one. Adding one to this 1 gives the next number two. Again adding one to two gives the next number three. This process gives us the result of our idea, that is counting. In this process there is no 'faith' involved. As long as the assumption is not disputed and also the logic involved in the development of the theory is consistent, the results are always true. Now the human brain has noticed that this counting process never ends. This is a startling observation. There is something which never ends. Such a thing can be called endless. If it is decided that things which have an end are called finite, then the thing that has no end is obviously not finite and so infinite. Though infinite can not be seen it is now understood to be possible to be conceived. The human brain does not stop at this idea but continues to probe in order to find ways to understand things that are not finite. From the idea that the axiom regarding the existence of the number 1, which is accepted by every one as truth, we arrived at the concept of infinity of numbers. The only thing needed in this process is consistent reasoning. As long as the reasoning is consistent, the results emerge as truths.

The Rishis and Munis have probed the matter of existence of God and analyzing and reasoning in different ways arrived at conclusions which seemed to be at variance with each other. The Vedas which literally mean knowledge comprise of the knowledge experienced by various Rishis who followed different paths. This Vedic knowledge became a jungle of hymns till Maharishi Veda Vyasa separated them according to the contents. The Rig Veda is that part of the knowledge which has only hymns composed in praise of the Godhead in different forms, the Yajur Veda dealing with the karma kanda dealing with yajnas and homas, Sama Veda dealing with the divine musical compositions and lastly the Adharvana Veda dealing with the matters of time and space bound bodies. These divisions, however, were not able to avoid overlapping and could be understood as broad divisions. There is always a counter argument that the experiences that are either recorded or believed implicitly can not be accepted unless they are proved periodically. This argument boils down to the fact that every experience has to be proved to everybody. As an example we can take the researches in medical sciences which often negate what had been said earlier. Does that mean that the practitioners of medicine should not be believed? Or should the medical research be stopped? These two questions, if posed to the public will bring protests because statistically it is proved that the life expectancy has gone up because of the research in medicine. So this situation exists with all the branches of knowledge. It is always taken to hold true unless it is proved to be otherwise.

All this discussion, still does not give any importance to the human body. It only shows how powerful is the human mind. In other words any body that contains such a powerful mind serves the same purpose as that of the human body. This fact has been amply discussed and exhibited through the epic Ramayana where monkeys headed by Vali, Sugreeva, Hanuman et al were shown to have this type of powerful mind. In fact these monkeys were deployed by Sugreeva for the search of Sita, Obviously we can infer that the body is insignificant provided the mind contained in it is capable of logic, analysis and decision- making with the additional capacity to implement the decision.

From experience over ages, we see only human beings exhibiting the possession of qualities like logic, analysis and implementation while no other being however intelligent it may have been proved could not be a match to the human being. Above all rising beyond the space-time, at least in contemplation does not seem to be possible for any organism

Jivatma, a speck of the Brahman is attached to one body or the other in order to be called an organism. In the human body Jivatma is able to think of all things finite and could identify that there is something called infinite. By constant meditation and logical thinking this Jivatma was able to recognize that it is not the body it occupies and that there is no such thing as death to it except that the physical body is perishable; at the time of shedding away the physical body, called death, the Jivatma looks up to take another body called birth. It is only one step ahead for the Jivatma to deliberate that it may be possible for it to reach the state where it is identical with Brahman. Having come to this conclusion, the Jivatma, being intelligence will naturally explore the ways to attain that position of Brahman of which it has realized to be not different, and pursue the way. A question arises as to why this Jivatma thinks of attaining Brahman. We have seen, even in the finite state of existence man alone thinks of attaining higher and higher positions for the sole purpose of gaining satisfaction which he calls happiness. In the absence of such thinking, man is no better than a beast and no man would like to be equated to a beast or organisms of lower strata.

It, then becomes necessary for man to think of the possibility of attaining the infinite, the Brahman which alone is capable of giving permanent happiness. When Jivatma, encased in a human body realized that any thing permanent can not be finite and also that finite happiness can not last, it becomes a duty to strive to get that position. Since no other body other than human body affords this quest, the Jivatma has to use the human body and human body alone. That is perhaps the reason for the Puranas to din into the ears of the human being that it is very difficult to get the human form and having got it, the human being should make good use of it without wasting the limited time allowed for the body to be used. At least the human being should think of having continuation of this human life meaning that another human body is available after this present one is lost so that his endeavor could continue till his goal is reached.

### 3. WHAT HAPPENS TO JIVA AFTER PHYSICAL DEATH

Jiva, the part of the Brahman has no death because Jiva is consciousness which is another form of energy; energy is neither created nor destroyed. Then what is physical death about which every organism seem to shy away. The human being is no exception and from time immemorial the effort was to postpone this death as long as possible. Obviously, physical death means casting away the body by Jivatma, body being the vehicle used. The natural outcome for Jivatama after being separated from the body should be to merge with the total energy. But such a thing does not seem to be possible. For example, can it be said that Jivatma after leaving the human body takes another human body, if it does not merge with the total energy. Actually there are four possibilities, 1. It can merge with the total energy, 2. It can take another human body 3. It can take any other body and 4. It does not take the first three courses but may remain in that position in space.

Let us see what different religions and Dharmas say regarding the status of Jivatma (Soul) after it gets separated with the physical body.

The religions starting with Zoroastrianism and ending with Islam have a shared ethos and continuity in terms of their origins and also some of the practices.

**Zoroastrianism:** Zoroaster preached that life in this world is temporary and is meant to combat evil forces with good thought, good speech and good action. Prior to birth as a human being, the souls were in a repository called “Fravashis” (perhaps equivalent to or corruption of Pravashi which means resident of an alien place). There are many such “Fravashis”. After the fourth day of death the soul reverts back to the “Fravashi” and then proceeds to the kingdom of Yima (a corrupted form of the Sanskrit word Yama, the Lord of death). It is said that souls again take birth after Ahur Mazda starts fresh creation. (#1)

**Judaism:** The dead would be resurrected. Obviously the souls await resurrection so that they may repossess the bodies. That is the reason for the burial of the bodies in Judaism. (#2)

**Christianity:** This religion has the largest following in the world. Christianity preaches that Jesus, the Prophet and son of God will resurrect and judge both the living and dead human beings according to the deeds of the human life. Those with good deeds will be sent to heaven for eternal happiness and those judged bad will be confined to eternal hell. Getting into heaven is called salvation and it is preached that non-Christians have no chance of salvation. The catholic Christianity preaches that salvation is assured for those who repent for their sins and make confession with the Christian priest. The Christians bury the dead bodies properly anointed for the purpose of judgment by the Prophet Jesus after His resurrection.

**Islam:** Islam preaches that human birth was given by Allah to serve Him. It is not meant to strive for perfection. Those who serve Allah and the Prophet Muhammad diligently

would go to heaven to enjoy the pleasures of life eternally; otherwise they would be condemned to hell. At the time of death, the soul goes to heaven or hell by the recommendation of the Prophet Muhammad. Muslims bury the dead so that the souls repossess them after judgment.

The other religions in the world practiced by people in China, Japan and Korea are Taoism, Confucianism and Shinto.

Taoism basically preaches that human beings should live on the three principles, 1. Compassion, 2. Moderation and 3. Humility. The practice of Taoism is centered around the belief that the soul is eternal and after the death soul remains in the family. They, therefore deify their ancestors and pray them. Confucianism more or less was about the philosophy of participation of individuals in social and political life.

Shintoism preaches that the spirit, after death becomes a Kami and that Kami should be worshiped as the family Kami.

The Semitic religions -Judaism, Christianity and Islam all believe that at some time the dead and alive souls will be judged by a messiah ( messiah is an agent of God ) for their deeds and would be sent to heaven or hell according to good or bad deeds respectively.

These religions had concentrated their thoughts and deeds only towards humans but do not seem to have considered the other organisms in the creation. Creation not only contains human beings but also have millions and millions of other organisms having all the faculties of the human beings, though not developed to the extent the humans' did. This aspect alone is not sufficient for all the organisms to be excluded from the thought of possessing soul, for death and decay are as common to them as to the human beings. We can not find any reason for this situation, particularly so when the latter Semitic religions, Christianity and Islam profess to monotheism; this belief automatically goes to say that the entire creation is the act of the same God. Or do they mean that God created everything in the universe for the benefit of the human being!

While the majority of human beings belong to the two Semitic religions- Christianity and Islam most probably due to their vigorous and sometimes aggressive mission to convert people of other faiths, sometimes bordering coercion with the threat of life, there is still a great human population which is outside these religions. Does this mean that those who do not belong to these religions have no right to live and enjoy this life if they say that the entire creation other than human beings is for the benefit of the people of these two religions? How could one explain the situation before these two religions were born? God can not be partial only towards those who were born and embraced these religions after the birth of these religions! Even if these principles are accepted for a moment for the purpose of argument, how should one explain the Ghosts, angels ( these are not human ) they believe? Intellectuals, where ever they are

and whatever they are would like explanation comprehensively but would not like to have gaps of unexplainable things. Perhaps that is why people would like every thing to be treated scientifically, because science admits non availability of data for things that can not be explained while bravely coming forward to prove what they had tested in the laboratory. Science has limitations of space and time and consequently can not be expected to answer questions that are beyond these limitations and limits.

Coming back to the beliefs of Dharma that are essentially Indian ,be it Sanatana Dharma,( Hindu Dharma/Vaidika Dharma ) or Bouddha Dharma or Jina Dharma, we see that each Dharma tried to base its argument scientifically. The reason for this attitude could be traced to the use of the word Dharam instead of religion, for Dharma essentially means support, while religion stands for faith.

**Jaina Dharma:** This Dharma is based on the fundamental postulate that Vedas were the knowledge acquired with human thought ( pourusheya ) . This is the negation of the belief of Sanatana Dharma which accepts as a postulate that Vedas are not man made but the knowledge revealed by those who could transcend the space and time. Jaoina Dharma believes that all the organisms have souls and the soul depends upon the physical size of the organism. It means that the soul of an elephant is bigger than the soul of an ant. They also believe in the transmigration of souls because they say that Lord Vardhamana Mahaveera was the last of the Tirthankaras and before Him there were 23 other Tirthankaras meaning that the perfect Tirthankara evolved through 23 earlier births. Because of the size of the soul the transmigration has to take place between the individuals of the same species. The soul of a human being must therefore go only into a human being after death according to Jina Dharma.

**Bouddha Dharma:** This Dharma was contemporary to Jina Dharma but its advent was much latter Jina Dharma. It was also founded on the principle of negation of the postulate of Sanatana Dharma like Jina Dharma which states that Vedas were apourusheyas. Being a Dharma, it had to explain every aspect of life both physical and transcendental. It believed in transmigration of souls because Siddhartha Goutama had several earlier births before He became Buddha, not all of them being human. This Dharma had gone one step ahead of Jina Dharma in accepting that a soul of human being could take some body different from human body. Bouddha Dharma preaches that Nirvana is the highest desirable state to which a human being can aspire and this state can be got only by meditation as per the Hinayana Buddhism which is the branch of Buddhism following the teachings of Lord Buddha. However Mahayana Buddhism and the later addition , the Vajrayana Buddhism go to the yogic and tantric practices to reach this goal. Thus Buddhism explores two of the possibilities where a soul may migrate after physical death, the first being taking the body of either human being or that of an animal and the second merging with the ultimate, if Nirvana is equated to that state where individual soul merges with the ultimate.

**Sanatana Dharma or Vedic Dharma ( Hindu Dharma):** This Dharma is the ancient of all paths that lead to the ultimate totally accepting Vedas as apourusheya ( not of



human origin) and in fact it is not unique path it suggests to reach the ultimate but says that there are several paths. According to this Dharma, the soul after released from the body at physical death can take a body of any organism whose physical life span could range from a second to several years or take the body of a human being or attain the position of higher state intelligent species which are capable of assuming any form at will called Devas ( those species that are in the form of pure intelligence) for a limited time after the expiry of which f they get back to any of the organisms or attain the highest state where the individual soul merges with the ultimate. One example of a Deva is that of Lord Brahma who is the highest Deva in the hierarchy of Devas starting with Lord Indra and others. All the Devas are bound by limitations of time not necessarily the terrestrial scale but could be converted to terrestrial time scale. The Dharma also states that the soul could hover in space after secession from the body for want of a suitable body ,or because of its unfulfilled strong desires refusing to take a body which are termed ghosts and other spirits .

All the religions and all the Dharmas are unanimous directly or indirectly that the body is not the soul and at the time of physical death the soul gets separated from the body. What happens to the soul after death is a matter viewed differently by each religion and Dharma. From this one can infer that life which could be taken synonymous with soul is transcendental beyond the physical existence from the point of view of all religions and Dharmas. The postulate that soul is transcendental is understood by all just like the postulate of parallel lines is understood by all studying Euclid's geometry.

However we have no direct methods that could verify the state of soul after secession from the vehicle, in this case the body be it human or otherwise. But we know definitely that the soul or jivatma being transcendental has the same possibilities of occupation as detailed earlier;

1. Takes a human body,
2. Take some body other than human body,
- 3 Hover in space for want a body or in the form of a ghost or spirit, and
- 4.Move towards merger with the ultimate or merge with the ultimate.

All the religions and Dharmas have, at a higher level think of finding lasting happiness while providing enough rules and guidance for living the physical life besides reminding the individual his duty as human being to be that he should aim at achieving that permanent happiness. The religions have mostly touched upon the aspect of good and bad and talk of incentives for doing good and punishment for doing bad. The Dharmas have, more or less decided to talk of both the physical life and the transcendental life together when they formulated the methods of obtaining that permanent happiness. The Sanatana Dharma, however has clearly indicated that every individual of an organism has as much right as the other to attain permanent happiness, that the vehicle of human body is ideally suited to pursue this ideal, that the soul in human body, as a matter of duty should pursue the methods to reach this goal

without giving up the perfection needed to live the finite physical life in an orderly way to start enjoying part of that happiness.

Scientific research and researchers had been spending so much time in order to understand and explain the things of nature. Has it become possible to understand the nature? Werner Heisenberg, the famous physicist of the last century responsible for quantum physics says “Almost every progress in science has been paid for by a sacrifice. For almost every new intellectual achievement previous positions and conceptions had to be given up. Thus, in a way, the increase of knowledge and insight diminishes continually the scientist's claim on 'understanding' nature.” (#3) It is also well known that most people believe in Einstein's theory based on the acceptance of the learned scientists than on personal verification because to understand Einstein's theory, one must have attained that position of intellectuals.

These truths apply to the discussion of the state of jivatma after its secession from the physical body. To understand the position, it becomes necessary to attain that level of intellectual ability needed. Otherwise we have to depend on the experiences of those who, after attaining that intellectual ability, gave the full account of the state of jivatma.

The greatest seers of Sanatana Dharma in this age, Jagadguru Sankara being the foremost among them have handed us down that knowledge through the Upanishads and Brahmasutras.

#1. The Muslim Belief; Shaik Muhammad as-saleh Al Uthaimin- Translated by Dr. Maneh Al-Johani. Chapter VI.

#2. Jewish view of life by Simcha Raphael-Jason Aronson Inc, Northvale 1996.

#3. As quoted by Robert P. Crease in his book “The Great Equations.” P 128.

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#### 4..KARMA

The Sanskrit word Karma means action or the action to do work. It is strange that this word is used in Sanatana Dharma to denote a profound idea linked with the Jivatma. Karma is something quite visible while Jivatma is not perceptible by the available physical organs of a human being. Every action of human being is premeditated and is used to obtain something in return. While every action necessarily gets reaction as per the physical laws, the human actions are special because they are charged by desire. All the organisms in creation definitely show action but they are not premeditated upon and are essentially for the purpose of fulfilling their basic needs for survival. Karma is, therefore possible only when the organisms including human being have a vehicle in terms of a perishable body. Jivatma when it is with a body does Karma. When Jivatma is in other states without a body Karma is not possible. We can readily infer that

Karma can be with or without desire when Jivatma has taken a body. Even taking up a particular body by Jivatma can not be without a reason. Why should one soul take a body of an animal, insect or any other type of organism while some other soul takes the body of a human being? There should be some reason for this phenomenon. Either we should attribute to God or the Brahman to have some partiality in making the creation or it is the result of some Karma.

If God was responsible for such an action, then God should be different from Jivatma and must be powerful to have such discretion. But God or Brahman is not different from Jivatma, for Jivatma is transcendental implying that its existence is independent of time; anything independent of time cannot be different from God or Brahman. That leaves only one possibility namely that the possession of a body by Jivatma is the result of some previous action.

Here is a contradiction. Action is not possible for Jivatma unless it takes a body; and it takes a body only because of some previous action. How did Jivatma come to take a body in the first instance and what was the cause for it? Why should there be so many different kinds of species because of which different bodies had to form? These questions are answered by religions and Dharmas in different ways. While religions came up that God had created the universe and its residents, Sanatana Dharma reiterates its stand that this is all the manifestation of Brahman in different forms solely resting on what Vedas and Upanishads say. But, the Puranas again the compilations of Veda Vyasa discuss various theories about creation. The Bhagavata Purana gives a vivid account of creation.

The only way to get over this situation is to understand that Jivatma is none other than Brahman and has capabilities of Brahman, if not all, because when Jivama attains that stage where it has all the capabilities of Brahman, it is Brahman. At various stages of ascension towards the position of Brahman, Jivatma has the capacity to take a body which can thrive in the conditions available in the environment and that should be reason enough for different types of bodies. If Jivatma takes a body at will then it is a premeditated Karma and consequently gets all the attachments of such an action or Karma. This dual behavior of Jivatma can not be considered as inconsistent.

In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, physicists were locking horns about the behavior of sub atomic particles. Quantum mechanics was the result of the compromise arrived at by the opposing groups. Quantum mechanics deals with wave-like, particle-like behavior of interactions of energy and matter. In the classical mechanics this duality has no place. The laboratory experience of physicists had indicated that the behavior of interactions of matter and energy at the atomic levels were both wave-like and particle like which is a contradiction and inconsistent from the point of view of classical mechanics. This objection was got over by the introduction of uncertainty principle by Heisenberg.

The uncertainty principle states “ one can never know with perfect accuracy both of these two important factors- position and velocity which determine the movement of the smallest particles”.

The Jivatma can have a dual way- taking a body to do Karma or having a body because of its previous Karma. Since life is transcendental, Karma is bound to be accrued by Jivatma in each one of the vehicles or bodies it had taken. If, on the other hand, the Jivatma is without a vehicle, it can not be in a position to do Karma because it is not bound by space and time . To be able to do Karma, the Jivatma , therefore must have a body. It is accepted by one and all that when action takes place, there is some result which is generally termed as reaction.

If Jivatma were to take a body, then it would normally choose the human body because it allows the Jivatma to merge with Brahman easily whereas the other bodies, having no scope for action of choice will make the Jivatma embroil in them. Another reason for the selection of human body is that Jivatma can influence the fellow human beings. The great souls who started new faiths upon their charisma are examples to show how people can influence the entire society.

This planet is supporting millions of species which exist depending on the conditions of the environment, access to food and inter dependency. The time span of their lives varying from a few seconds to thousands of years in terrestrial time scale. Each species except the human being has a well defined type of food, habitat and interdependency. The interdependency could be in the shape of food also. For example, we can classify the species to belong either to carnivorous type or herbivorous type. While it is possible that some carnivorous species could possibly be herbivorous, except human race no other species is omnivorous; though the human body is not suitable for carnivorous food, today the world over the human population is carnivorous by choice.

Interdependency of the organisms for survival is the reason for so many types of bodies to exist with varied periods of life span. Survival strictly means the finite life with a body. Had there been only one species, there would be no chance for their survival in the absence of plant life and animal life without which there is no food. This time as measured by the human beings may look like a meaningful one but when we consider the Brahman unbounded by time as we understand it becomes infinitesimally small or insignificantly small. What Jivatma , having got the body tries or should try is that state where it is not bound by the shackles of time .So the body obtained will not be able to last for the period needed to obtain timelessness normally, barring those stray cases where one body could be sufficient. The reason for Jivatma to take several bodies or just one body for obtaining timelessness is to be examined.

There must be two types of Karma ( result of actions), Karma of the past and Karma of the present in order to explain this phenomenon. If there is no Karma of the past, then Jivatma by avoiding such Karma which results in accruing of more Karma could merge with

the ultimate at the end of termination of a single body. If the past Karma ( result of earlier actions) is so great that it can not be burned in one stage, then it becomes inevitable for Jivatma to take several bodies. Burning of past Karma must be possible and there must be a way to do it, for there must exist facility if desired and prepared to go through. All this sprouts from the fact that Brahman is impartial and would not penalize on its own, excepting that the penalization could be the result of the Karma of the Jivatma alone.

The elevation of Jivatma through the human body can be analyzed easily but the other organisms have as much right as the human beings to get elevated. What could be the ways available for those organisms? The human beings are endowed with a fully developed brain capable of analysis and contemplation which make the human being to engage in action with a predetermined goal. If the goal for the human being is set to reach the ultimate, definitely an endeavor in that direction would be made, and success is possible after a few failures from which the human being will definitely learn. In the case of other organisms, their actions are found to be purely for survival. However, there must be a way that the individual of an organism is assessed for its Karma, however small it may be. We learn from our present day scientists that the honey bees in a hive are an organized community in which the duties, obligations and privileges have are well defined. It is possible that some actions of an individual bee may, without its knowledge merit for a body superior than bee's body after it casts away its body. Even in other species, this phenomenon may be existing and because of scant or no information about individual species' behavior, we can not say that they are not capable of action.

In Sanatana Dharma these matters were discussed extensively and in fact the Mahabharata purana is based on the Karma principle. If we accept that every action produces reaction or result, life being transcendental, there is no reason to dispute or totally ignore the principle of Karma.

We observe that no two human beings are the same and in fact no two individuals of the same species are the same. In human beings there are people who discovered some secrets of creation and some have helped the humanity with their research. The capacity to think is a gift to the human being, but to think in the right direction is possible only for a few. The only way to account for the disparity in the individuals is by accepting the Karma; then several of these difficulties could be properly understood.

Sanatana Dharma divides Karma into three parts, Sanchita Karma (Accrued Karma), Prarabdha Karma (the Karma responsible for the body) and Agami Karma (Karma that is to come). Jivatma can merge with Brahman, according to Sanatana Dharma only after burning or exhausting the entire Karma. Agami Karma can always be prevented because it is yet to come. Sanchita Karma can also be got rid off. But prarabdha Karma is something from which there is no escape and has to be endured. The first thing that a human being, having come to realize that his responsibility is to probe and obtain the Brahman in order to have eternal bliss should carefully disentangle himself from Karma.

The great rishis of Sanatana Dharma had advised the Human beings, for it is possible only to the human being for premeditated action to practice detachment from all things worldly as a first step towards the realization of the goal. It is attachment for a thing which on obtaining may give little pleasure but leads to more of sorrow. Detachment is possible only when the individual realizes the truth that the body has to be cast off. It is said that not all human beings make an effort in the right direction but get entangled with attachment more and more, the reason being that the prarabhdha Karma and the Sanchita Karma pulls the individual towards the worldly things. If that is so, would it mean that there is no chance for the individual to get over the attachment by burning the Karma? There is chance because the individual has the capacity to predetermine his actions. The only thing an individual has to do is to decide to pursue the path of realization. Because of this advantage of having a chance to liquidate all the Karma, past, present and future over every other species, the human body for the Jivatma is considered a rare opportunity among all the species and human birth superior,

Karma, as mentioned earlier could be viewed as Karma as a duty and Karma done with a purpose. The Karma which is responsible for the Jivatma to take body after body is the one about which every individual should give a thought. The reason for this Karma is the predetermined wish of an individual and this is again because of the attachment for the result. Attachment is the culprit because of which the Karma responsible for the Jivatma to take body after body. So any Karma devoid of attachment for any materialistic objects or joy can not create bondage. However, it takes quite a bit of effort on the part of the individual to be totally detached, for a married man has that attachment for his family creating bondage. This does not mean that marriage as a social institution should be abolished. On the contrary Sanatana Dharma advocates marriage as not only a social institution but elevated it to the position of sacrosanct with a rider that it should be supported by Dharma.

The religions of the world, Judaism, Christianity, Islam and those of the far east had more or less confined themselves with human beings without looking into the other organisms. Judaism believes the souls of the righteous go to heaven and reincarnate into human beings while those of the wicked go to hell to suffer eternally. Christianity goes a step further and say that human beings have to take birth after birth as human beings till they get salvation even though they say that on the day of resurrection the souls of the righteous go to heaven and those of the wicked to hell. Islam, on the other hand says that on the day of judgment both the living and dead would be judged and the followers of Muhammad, the prophet and Q'uran would be recommended to God to be sent to heaven for eternal happiness while the non believers would go to hell for eternal torture and suffering. It is not, however clarified as to why human beings have different levels of benefits and enjoyment of material life in all these religions; It is also not clear as to how human beings take rebirth as human beings only. So the concept of Karma is not discussed by these religions even though the mention of righteousness and wickedness of human beings were categorized. This obviates the necessity of taking Karma or action into account to determine the righteousness or wickedness.

In this regard the other Dharmas, Jina Dharma (Jainism) and Bouddha Dharma (Buddhism) followed the Sanatana Dharma (Hindu Dharma) in stating that the soul need not

necessarily take the body of a human being but can take body of the any organism. Jainism advocates righteousness living in order to avoid the births in other organisms or going to hell and to obtain again a human birth, this process being repeated till the soul attains salvation after exhausting the influence of Karma. Buddhism differs with Jainism in that it is agnostic. It believes that the soul goes on taking different births not necessarily human till it attains Nirvana. It also does not clearly state the reasons for the soul to take birth after birth.

Sanatana Dharma ( Hindu Dharma) has discussed the reasons for the soul to take birth after birth in different organisms and makes it solely responsible for such birth linking it with its Karma . From the point of view of analysis and rationality, this line of thinking is cohesive, consistent and convincing.\

For the believers and non-believers of Karma theory alike, Hindu Dharma had designed the ways to burn the Karma to attain salvation, notwithstanding the fact that the non-believers would not think of taking any of the ways given by the Dharma. It was also pointed out that it is safe for a human being to take to the Karma theory which is rational and consistent and get the benefit of eternal happiness rather than ignore it and suffer subsequently, in case it comes to be true that Karma alone was responsible for such suffering. When it is not possible to see things with the available facilities, one would take the course of analysis for the outcome.

## 5.MAYA

It is said in puranas, particularly in Mahabhagavata Purana that when Lord Vishnu took the Avatar of Lord Krishna, he was born to Devaki in Mathura and simultaneously a girl child was born to Yasoda in Vridavan. These two children were swapped so that Lord Krishna was with Yasoda while the girl child was with Devaki. Coming to know that the eighth child of Devaki was born, Kamsa the king of Mathura and cousin brother of Devaki, came to kill the child because of the prophesy that he would meet his end at the hands of the eighth child of Devaki. At the point when the girl child was thrown up to fall on a drawn sword to die, the girl child declared that she was the **Yogamaya**, that the child prophesied to kill Kamsa was born and growing else where; she then disappeared. This Yogamaya is called the *sahodari* (born of the same body) or sister of Lord Krishna, for Lord Krishna was brought up as the son of Yasoda. Why was Lord Krishna not able to face Kamsa, when he could kill Putana only after a few months after this incidence? The answer explains what Maya is? When Lord Krishna Killed Putana, the act on the part of a child of couple of months age being impossible and supernatural, He had already manifested as the avatar of Lord Vishnu with the exclusion of Yogamaya from Him. He could not have killed Kamsa as long as Yogamaya was with him because he would just be a human child, and no human child who was just born could have killed the mighty Kamsa. All the difference was the presence of Yogamaya. As long as He was with Yogamaya, his sister he was just a human being but the moment the Yogamaya left Him, he was the avatar of Lord Vishnu. Subsequent feats of Lord Krishna and His open declaration that He is the God aptly justifies this argument.

The puranas were extolling the avatar of Lord Vishnu for the benefit of the humanity, both intellectuals and others alike in the form of a narrative, which in general is the method adopted in order to reach the children in particular. But, this episode of the avatar of Lord Krishna defines the relationship between Brahman and the Jivatma in a human body. Brahman is free from Maya while Jivatma in the body of the human being is under the influence of Maya. Once Jivatma in the human body, for that matter in any body sheds off Maya then the Jivatma is none other than Maya.

Maya is responsible for Jivatma to identify itself with the body. Jivatma under the influence Maya behaves that this body is everything and tries to enhance the life with the body for as long as possible, aspiring to live with the body forever and knowing fully well that the body is mortal. Maya is commonly understood by every body as that which makes you believe it to be true when you know for certain that it is not so. Maya is illusion. What better example is needed for Maya !

Maya is indicated as a sister to Brahman in the Puranas but not as the wife. The reason is that while separation from a sister is possible, separation from the wife was thought to be impossible by Hindu tradition which was exhibited by showing the consort as the inseparable part in the trinity Brahma, Vishnu and Maheswara; Brahma's wife Saraswati is said to be on his tongue, Vishnu's wife is said to be in his heart and Maheswara's wife is said to have occupied his left part of the body. This symbolism is essentially to indicate that Maya could be separated from Jivatma if willed.



Maya, being shown as sister to Brahman and identified with sakti is not different from Brahman. In essence Maya is a different energy. This can not be a surprise because we see different energies at work; electrical energy, heat energy and so on. Logically also when everything is Brahman and Brahman is everything, this categorizing does not lead to inconsistency.

The moment Jivatma takes birth in any organism, it is bounded by space- time and Maya, space-time because it has dimensions as we understand and time because it has growth as time advances. It looks as though Maya can not be separated in other species other than human beings, for they have no means to get over Maya while human beings are bestowed with a powerful brain capable of concentration. However, even the human beings, (majority of them) think that body is important and tend to gratify themselves with material things in pursuit of happiness because of this Maya because the seed of curiosity to know themselves had not entered the brain.

Every human being is in one of the three states, wakeful state or deep sleep state or dream state at any given time. In the dream state, the experiences are such that some time the subject is an onlooker and at some time the subject may be participating. In any case, when he is awake all that he has experienced in a dream have vanished and he is left with the memory of the dream. In the wakeful state the pleasure or pain he got from the dream is irrelevant. Similarly the life of an individual which ought to have no impact on the Jivatma occupying the body of the individual, but due to Maya attachments are developing. These attachments have made the Jivatma forgetful of its being the same as Brahman. Just as a man realizes that what all he witnessed in the dream is not permanent and not true after coming out of slumber, he should shake off Maya and realize that what all he is going through is not permanent and false to the Jivatma that occupies his body.

Maya created attachments to the Jivatma in the vehicle of human body or any other body. The attachments in the animal world hold only to the extent of rearing the off springs till such time that they can stand on their own and the animals do not recognize their calves after words. The attachment is to the extent of the duty and nothing more. But in the case of human beings the situation is totally different and attachments are thought to be permanent there by creating bondage to the Jivatma. Is this not a Paradox? The human being with the superior intelligence is not able to get out of attachments where as a lesser intelligent species were successful in getting rid of attachments. This is because the lives of other species were programmed to run their course and the human beings are programmed with an additional facility of acting on the decisions made by their intelligent reasoning. The other species have no way to realize Brahman but the human being could be wise in this respect if only uses his special facility. We have answer for the question "who made this arrangement?". It is simply the Brahman. We don't have a ready answer for the question "why was it done so?" If we wish to toss off the question, we need merely say that Brahman wished it. But Brahman has no partiality and no desires!

In a completely programmed device there is no chance for any deviation from what has been programmed. But, if a device is made with such a program such that the selection

of action to be taken is given to the device itself, then is it possible to predict the outcome? Within the limits of program, the device may choose any way to go including self destruction. This is the position of a device made by somebody. But if the device develops on its own because of the conditions around and needs it may have then the situation differs altogether. The species in this world including the human species have emerged because of the disturbances due to flux of the total energy which is called Brahman, each species having its own limitations. The human species, besides the normal limitations has the completely developed brain with varying capacities. Because of the varying capacities of the brain, the human being has a choice of staying in the domain of animals or raise himself to the state of timelessness or stay anywhere between these two states. The immediate reaction of a human being the temptations of situations arising because of organizational set up. These lures, most times makes the man blind and makes him a slave of his own doings. For example, if Kumbhakarna were to have dreams, could it be possible for him to have a break from them every day? At best he may wake up once in six months to have food and other preparations needed for another spell of six months sleep and he would hardly have time to think about the dreams, leaving alone the contemplation whether those dreams are true or false. In that sense most human beings are Kumbhakarnas, the difference being that the human beings under the spell of Maya prepare for another birth as Kumbhakarna prepares for another bout of sleep. We have to remember that the choice of sleep of Kumbhakarna and the choice of staying under the sway of Maya for the human being were self inflicted.

Bouddha Dharma Jina Dharma had accepted the Karma to be responsible for rebirth though they refuse belief in Vedas as not of human compilations. All the other sects of Dharmas originated from India have taken the Principles of Sanatana Dharma particularly the Karma being responsible for rebirth, though they differ in other minor matters. The religions of the other regions of the world had not touched upon Karma though they believe in rebirth.

Jagadguru Sankara and a host of modern day saints like Swami Vivekananda, Ramana Maharishi, Yogi Aurobindo Ghosh, Swami Yogananda have reiterated this stand from their personal experiences.

## 6. CYCLES OF BIRTHS AND DEATHS

PunarapiJananamPunarapiMaranam  
PunarapiJananeejathareSayanam  
IhaSamsaareBahudustaare  
Kripayapaare Paahi Murare

The sloka is from Bhajagovinda stotram of Jagadguru Sankara. It gives the entire concept in a consize form which has volumes of philosophy. Because of continuous indulgence in attachment resulting in bondage makes the Jivatma take a birth followed by death and immediately followed by the entry into mother's womb. The life in this world is very difficult to swim through. We pray Lord Vishnu to help us get over this trouble.

The bondage created through the actions relating to attachments leads to more attachment. The attachments have all been precipitated by the human society. In order to have a safe and relatively easy living human beings organized themselves into tribes to start with and slowly evolved a complicated society which naturally depends on rules and regulations for avoiding frictions leading to conflicts. The human species inherited the four major functions of animal species namely food, fear, sleep and procreation besides having a fully developed brain. Finding that the greater strife results because of the relationship between humans of opposite sex, they hastened to develop a social institution in marriage between individuals of opposite sex. The first and most important rule that emerged from this institution was that intercourse between father and his children, mother and her children and the siblings. Today, this rule is so ingrained in every individual on the entire globe and anything contrary to it is a sacrilege. Yet it is no surprise that the Royal house of Pharaohs of Egypt, in order to keep the royal blood pure, celebrated marriages of siblings, and the absence of a female sibling that son was made to marry his own mother. In every other civilization, such a marriage was inconceivable and immoral.

The second result was that after marriage, the male belonged to the female and vice verse. Polygamy and Polyandry were in existence in some societies though polyandry was more an exception than a rule but today we rarely come across Polyandry, \Polygamy is still in practice in Muslim countries because their religion allows it. However, in today's world polygamy is as much looked down as polyandry.

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Thus marriage brought about a family and so a sense of belonging which in other words created attachment. In the animal world the attachment lasts only that much time needed for the calf to be able to procure food by itself. But in the case of a human being this attachment goes

on increasing through out the life time. In trying to solve a problem involving conflict relating to the worldly life a bigger problem related to transcendental life is created. The easiest solution seems to be to give up the institution of marriage altogether. But this solution, instead of making man detached to worldly matters, which incidentally is the purpose of abolishing the institution of marriage brings about anarchy in the human society and even then detachment to worldly matters can not be assured. The great thinkers around the world and over all the time, never thought of a society devoid of the institution of marriage. whether their interests were worldly or otherwise.

The reasons for support of marriage are manifold. Firstly, the life as a human, however finite it may be, is important, for only then it is possible to contemplate about Brahman and attain the same. Secondly procreation is one of the natural functions and it would be better or perhaps important that this function is performed under guided control. Lastly, in an organized setting, the society is built around this institution. Marriage, thus has become an important institution that whatever plan is thought of in the direction of reaching the ultimate had to include marriage between two individuals of opposite sex; any other marriage is abhorred as it is irrational.

The human life, while it should be lived comfortably is expected as a the basic ground for making plans to avoid the birth, death and birth so on which is called the cycle of births and deaths. Unless this chain is broken the goal to reach the ultimate remains impossible. At this time we need a system whereby human beings live in families and also have a way to work for liberation from the cycle of births and deaths. Liberation from the cycle is possible only when there is no attachments. The other species live without really developing attachments because whatever attachments they had, they were due to their duties. The human beings, having organized into a society of families must be in a position to limit their attachments to the extent needed to perform their duty.

This aspect of rebirth did not get the attention of any religions, most probably because the material world has taken predominance and the promise of quality life cherished in this world was promised for good behavior in this life; the possibility of taking the life of other species was also not considered. Of the Dharmas Buddhism simply advised people not to bother about any thing but concentrate on right thinking and right behavior with a view to get rid of desires. Jainism advocated life of abstinence and asceticism so that no organism is wronged.

The Sanatana Dharma had taken up this issue very seriously because it felt life in this world is only a small part of the entire existence of Jivatma and Dharma meaning support should be to every part of the existence.

Any theory gets approval only when the truths that come out based on reasoning and consistency have been known to have been experienced personally or by some body whose credentials are beyond any doubt. Sanatana Dharma, therefore, went about and spelled Dharma

should be foremost and everything else must be strictly controlled by Dharma and Dharma alone. Usually man craves for possessions and develops desires. These two, Possessions ( Called artha) and desires ( called Kama) should also be controlled by Dharma. Ultimately man, as per the sages should work towards Moksha ( liberation) meaning liberation from the cycle of births and deaths. Once Dharma is made the pivot on which the others, Artha, Kama are regulated attaining Moksha would be easy. What Sanatana Dharma discussed about the cycle of births is not a theory but the revelations of liberated souls who had experienced. But, even if it taken as a theory, one should have the patience to check it personally. The immediate response would be that the conditions and the methods provided for this purpose are time consuming and the results, at least in stages may not be perceivable. The other response that is commonly floated is that there is no necessity to explore and one should be satisfied with the present life. For the second response there is no reason to respond because such persons who hold this view are not ready yet and are still using only those faculties that are common with animals but are not willing to use the special powerful faculty provided for the human beings. The first response indicates that the people are ready but do not have guidance which always can be remedied.

The great rishis realized that the majority can not go beyond the day to day life and in order to induce them to the right thinking, several measures were suggested. These methods were not only meant to make people come round in quest of a path to attain the ultimate suitable but to make the worldly life more satisfying and enjoyable.

SatsangatNissangatvam  
NissangatveNirmohatvam  
NirmohatveNischalatattvam  
Nischalatattve Jeevanmukti

This sloka of Bhajagovinda Stotram by Jagadguru Sankara gives the easiest way through which the majority of people who are entrenched in the worldly pleasures could be brought to think and obtain liberation. The sloka says " contact with righteousness through righteous people make them single minded; this single mindedness makes them gain detachment; this detachment makes them determined; and this determination makes them liberated.

Building up of righteousness among the people in the society guarantees firstly a society free from strife and friction leading to security and secondly takes them to greater heights whereby every human being could get liberation.

## 7. THE IMPORTANCE OF OM( AUM )

The word of single letter of Sanskrit OM is actually the combination of three sounds; the sound of A, the sound of U and the sound of M. In Sanskrit and all the Indian

languages, the syllable Aa is the first letter of the alphabet just like A being the first letter of the alphabet in European languages. Similarly the letter alef is the first letter in Persian and Arabic languages also. Hebrew language also starts with the first letter sounding like A. There must be some reason for these languages to start their languages with the sound of Aa. It is common that we find the sound coming out either of A or of U or combination of A and U when one is in pain or pleasure. Naturally man started to use one of these sounds to be represented as the first letter. They must have observed that the sound A occurs more frequently and so they denoted it by the first letter of the alphabet A.

OM is also called Pranavam. The literal meaning of Pranavam in Sanskrit language is *making sound*. Obviously the sounds made by the man due to pain or pleasure are most important because they come out spontaneously without premeditation. Symbolically they are taken to represent Brahman, for any exclamation emanating from a man ordinarily takes the name of God.

Sanatana Dharma ( Vaidic Dharma or Hindu Dharma ) traces the origin of creation from ether ( Akasa), then Air ( Vayu ), then Fire ( Agni ), then Water (Jalam) and lastly Earth ( Prithvi ). These are the basic five elements with which the bodies of all organisms are constituted. Once there is Air transmission of sound becomes possible. The audible sound of a human being initially made is then possible to be heard by everybody else. Sound has a very great impact on human beings and also the medium of communication not only in human beings but also in other species. Sound could be soothing or irritating. The irritating sound is noise which can cause immense damage to the living. When OM is intoned by taking deep breath, it is observed that tranquility is felt and the constant repetition of OM brings about concentration of mind. This can be verified by anybody. The concentration of mind helps in two ways. First, the concentration helps achieve the goals easily thereby giving immense pleasure and satisfaction. Secondly, concentration of mind helps human beings to go beyond the physical objects and arrive at a state where there is nothing but bliss.

Of late, the medical sciences have come to realize the importance of tranquility of mind for controlling blood pressure with the result that they started yoga therapy in the hospitals. The yoga therapy essentially aims at controlling the intake and emission of breath through meditation which is known as pranayama. Meditation is a process through which the mind is made calm devoid of all thoughts and disturbances. For meditation, one should choose a quiet and clean place and also a comfortable posture. During meditation, intoning OM slowly was found to have helped to achieve the goal quickly. Concentration of mind not only helps increase in efficiency but leads to a sense of satisfaction in what one does. Chanting of OM has must have been found to have great impact on the human brain that not only the Sanatana Dharma but the Bouddha Dharmma, Jina Dharma had adopted OM for recital in their meditative practices. As mentioned earlier, OM consists of three sounds, that of A and a long and elongated U followed by an abrupt M. The Sanatana Dharma associates the sound of A to Lord Brahma the creator, the sound of U to Lord Vishnu, the sustainer of life and lastly the sound of M to Lord Siva the destroyer indicating that Brahman alone, acting as Lord Brahma, Lord Vishnu and Lord Siva is responsible for birth, sustenance and destruction of every type of activity.

If we observe the practices of the major religions, we find that Jews and Christians use the word Amen and the Muslims Allah. These two words start with the sound of A only. Whatever may be the reasons they might say for using these words, it is not accidental but the experience of the effect of the sound of A that must have lead them to use these words. Obviously we can deduce that mankind had inadvertently experienced the profound effect of the sound of OM.

In Sanatana Dharma, meditation is the part of the training one is advised to go through and for all the dwijas ( twice born) the imparting of Gayatri Mantra is the initiation to meditation. For meditation several mantras were prescribed depending on the Guru one takes, but all the mantras are taken to be in complete without the OM. All the different schools of Sanatana Dharma agree unanimously that OM is important for any mantra to bear fruits though they may differ in other aspects. It is said that the intoning OM shows its efficacy through the vibration of the tender membrane on top of the skull. The person meditating on OM will feel a sensation equal to the moment of crawling ants on the soft membrane of the skull. This by no means is claimed to be a conclusive proof of OM to be the Brahman but it is the starting point on the path of realization that OM is Brahman.

No experiment in a Laboratory gives results instantaneously. By constant endeavor the experiment is repeated several times before results are verified and analyzed. Similarly one has to practice meditation, by repeating the word OM silently over a period of time in order to verify its efficacy.

Mandukya Upanishad discusses in detail all that is meant by OM. Once OM is experienced, the truth that Brahman is OM itself, the Nada Brahman unfolds itself. Every mantra save a few Vedic mantras is known in terms of the bijaksharas and the estimate is that there are 70 million combinations of these bijaksharas resulting in 70 million different mantras. Every one of these mantras start with OM before adding the other bijaksharas. Mandukya Upanishad says that OM is the gist of all the Vedas, meaning that OM is that Brahman proposed by the Vedas and represented by them. The knowledge of Vedas is called Vidya and everything else is called Avidya. It is said that once Avidya is removed, Brahman automatically manifests and conversely when Vidya manifests, then there is no Avidya. Manifestation of Vidya can be experienced by experiencing the meditation on OM.

Those who desire to have moksha ( free from the cycle of births and deaths) meditate on the mantra Soham. This mantra, as the process of meditation takes one to the point of Samadhi ( State of absolute bliss) is said to dissolve into OM. Soham means “ I am the same as Brahman”. Dissolution of Soham into OM is the culmination that is aimed at by the person meditating on OM.

## 9. WOMEN IN THE SOCIETY

The heading of this article is somewhat confusing. The reason is that we are not discussing the man in the society. Does this mean that the man is not in the society? To day every body talks as though the society is created by the man for the man. In general the assumption is that Women were purposefully relegated to the second position by man in order to establish the supremacy of man and also retain the leadership or rather dictatorship. For the past two centuries movement after movement was coming up justifiably with the sole intention of liberating women from the tyranny of man or man controlled society. It is, therefore necessary to address this situation.

Equality is possible when we design a thing according to some specifications. For example, mass produced utility objects are equal but may not be identically equal. But the creation is not an out come of a mass production unit. Hence no two individual specimens of the same family are equal. Further for a cohesive society with order it is necessary to have some rules to be followed and most importantly a leader to implement them judiciously. Such a person has a position much above the others. Thus absolute equality between two persons either of the same sex or opposite sex is impossible. A viable alternate principle may have to be thought of in place of equality between two people of opposite sex or of the same sex.

In every civil society whether it is primitive or advanced, laws are promulgated for criminal and civil activities. The criminal laws are those for which punishments are prescribed for individual crimes leaving enough latitude for benefit of doubt. Civil laws generally go to define inheritance, marriage and agreements and so on. Criminal laws are generally for the purpose of correcting the errant persons and are expected to be more of a deterrent than punishment. The civil laws are a set of rules that have to regulate regular affairs in the society. Laws are essentially made for the purpose of protection of the weak against the strong in the society.

Against this backdrop, if we analyze the position of women, be it a matriarchal society or patriarchal society the co-existence of man and woman is a necessity. Man without a woman and vice-verse is unthinkable because in general in every species in the creation we find individuals of opposite sexes have to come together in order to promote procreation and human species is no exception. But only in the human species we find a society organized on the basis of rules and regulations exists however the primitive the society may be. Obviously this species had fore sight to visualize the advantages of an organization. Any organization is based on the principle of mutual cooperation. Perhaps this principle of cooperation could be taken as the basis for a relationship between individuals of opposite sex instead of trying to find the grounds of inequality between sexes. When equality is not possible between two individuals, trying to create a system based on equality is paradoxical to say the least. Is that not what the modern societies trying?



The reason for humans to come together to form a clan or a society is to have security. People may gather food but there is no chance to eat it if some others rob away what has been gathered. They can not sleep in peace because of the prowling animals and menacing humans. In the primitive society food was very important because it has to be obtained with considerable effort and it was possible for people to go without food for days. Hunger knows no rule or law. The strong can always snatch from the weak. The weak, however may contrive dubious methods to obtain the gathered food. The very survival is a big question, Even in the case of animals, it is not uncommon to find that they form packs and hunt the prey together. So human being learns from observation and finds that there is lot to gain if he joins others to form a group which ultimately develops into a clan. Even in the civilized society the importance of security can not be undermined. In fact security becomes the cardinal principle to judge a government. It is significant to note what the great warrior Bhishma said to Dharmaraja at the end of the great Bharata war and just before the coronation of Dharmaraja.. The great Bhishma said “ that rule is good where a woman fully decked with precious ornaments could move about without fear in the dead of night”. Lord Krishna advised Dharmaraja to go to Bhishma to learn about Dharma, governance and the duties of the ruler because Bhishma was acclaimed to be an experienced person not only as a warrior of first rank but an expert in statecraft. Why should Bhishma name a woman only ignoring the man? Did he forget the weak in men? His statement at once brings lots of inferences. Foremost of them is that any body and everybody could roam about in the night without fear if a fully bejeweled beautiful woman could go about in the night without fear. Another implication is that the temptations for robbers, thieves and antisocial elements are essentially money and woman. Yet another implication is that the society must respect the women. This is evident from the advice of Bhishma where he mentioned a woman instead of saying anybody. To achieve this state the ruler has to develop the moral character of the individuals in the state by making himself the example of all what he expects in others.

We find that there are many ways to interpret the same statement, the interpretation being dependent on the mental capabilities of the individual, the utility of such interpretation for his argument or counter argument. A statement is made in a particular context in an environment and at a particular period of time. If the context, or the environment or the period of time is different, often the statement could produce negative meaning. That is precisely what we see in the present day's political ambience. For example, let us take the case of Draupadi. She was praised by one and all that she was one of the great pativratas ( a pativrata is one whose god is her husband only). Even in that age, a great warrior and a man of character Karna called her a slut (an immoral woman) when the entire body of learned men of that period approved the marriage of Draupadi with the five Pandavas. It is no wonder if people try to interpret a great pativrata ( Mahapativrata) to mean one having many husbands!!. Similarly Bhishma's advice regarding security could be interpreted as denigration of women as unequal to men but not as respect for women. In order to determine what the correct interpretation is one has to go and study Bhishma in detail and find whether he ever denigrated women either by thought, action or in speech. An unbiased researcher would definitely come to the conclusion that Bhishma was ever respectful to women.

After security is assured, people begin to think of several privileges among which individual liberty is important. Do men and women enjoy the same type of liberty? This is the

question nagging the minds of several people and agencies across the continents. One should not forget that along with privileges people have responsibilities towards the fellow human beings and the society. So privileges and responsibilities go hand in hand and one cannot be there without the other. The first causality for liberty is acceptance of safety under the umbrella of society because the obligation to obey the laws and general rules laid down by the society had been implicitly understood. Whatever liberty one expects, be it man or woman is strictly within the framework of the laws of the society.

Historically personal liberty for any individual was limited and till French revolution people were accustomed to live under the dictatorial rule of either the king or the religious head. World over we find societies were under the rule of kings and the ruling of the land remained in a family, kingship being hereditary. In course of time the king from being a leader and benevolent became a despot. Man and women alike was subjected to the tyranny of the ruler. Till the time of overthrowing of the British monarchy, the concept of democracy did not get any attention in the world. For the first time people got a say in the choice of the ruler in British democracy and who are those people. They are the landed gentry, nobles and rich people. The common man was left out in the process of selecting the ruler. The political parties in a democracy started extending the facility to vote according to their self interest and took over a century before all men above the age of 21 years got the privilege of voting. However, women were totally left out from the electors till the first quarter of twentieth century and even in a country like United States of America where democracy was the type of rule of choice of the people after getting liberation from the British rule, women did not get right to vote till the end of the first quarter of last century.

Generally, for any ills in the society, particularly the society under the democratic rule the individuals in the society are responsible. It is not possible to show the accusing finger towards a particular section of the society. In any other form of the government even this is not possible because all the people will have the same treatment, favors however, being kept for a selected few. But in reality the tendency is to find a whipping boy for anything wrong in the society.

In the process of this blame game the reason for which a society was formed gets lost, and the people having got some security because of which they could eat and live indulge more and more in the meaningless mudslinging. The main reason for this state of affairs is the introduction of concept of equality between individuals. The equality of French Revolution is to be understood as the equality of all the individuals for opportunities in all the areas and also for the laws of the land.

From ages the societies had been patriarchal though matriarchal societies did exist. For example the matriarchal society did exist in Kerala. But in course of time, all the societies became patriarchal. The reasons could be many. Foremost among them could be that man was found better equipped for defense than woman and security being uppermost priority, man became the leader. Even today the armed forces of the nations have a very few women,

almost negligible in numbers compared with men even though entry was thrown open for everybody. It may be next to impossible to have equal number of women in the armed forces.

Even in this century when women started to compete with men in most fields, special laws for security of women against rape and molestation are demanded and got in all the democratic countries. For this legislation women never protested anywhere. Obviously this is possible only when women feel that they need special treatment with regard to security. The critics might say that men were so selfish in treating women as property that they vigorously supported this legislation knowing fully well that it is the men who would be punished if found guilty of this crime.

Islam allows polygamy and it is the second largest religion the world in terms of population. Women have to go in veil in all the countries and in fact Muslim women have to adopt this practice where ever they are, be it in Muslim country or a secular country. There does not seem to be any protest from the women folk any where in the world for this practice. On the contrary there were protests from all sections of the Muslim Society, both men and women, when this practice was sought to be abolished. The Prophet Muhammad advocated polygamy because he felt that women uncared for particularly widows are likely to become destitute. This idea seems to have been shared by Jews as well. Even in the Christian world also the marriage of the widows must have its roots in the Jewish practices. In all these religions the safety and protection of women was the concern of the society. In the middle east, in the countries polygamy is practiced women do not seem to mind the sharing of a common husband. According to a Journalist of the National Geographic magazine, a woman was astounded when she was told that the journalist's husband did not have any other wife. She was reported to have remarked that the journalist's husband could not have afforded to have more wives! The circumstances under which polygamy was accepted by the prophet in those times was essentially meant to give protection to women from becoming destitute.

Several thousands of years ago, Sanatana Dharma which was based on the wisdom of Srutis ( Vedas ) gave Smritis, the laws needed for the temporal life of people of the society. These laws were framed by Manu and were thus promulgated, keeping in view the society's needs on one hand and the wisdom of Vedas on the other. They go by the name of Manu Smriti's. Manu said that feminine sex needs security of all kinds in childhood, in adult life and in old age. He said such security shall be provided by the father when the female was a child and for that time till she was married and went to her husband; in her married life the husband and in her old age the sons were given this responsibility. The wisdom of Manu is apparent from the fact that the security for feminine sex was to be provided by those who love and respect during various stages of the life of a female. Of course! The votaries of woman's liberation ( these are mostly men ) criticize Manu for this law saying that it was meant to subjugate woman at all stages of her life! Ages had gone by, civilizations under went changes through all these thousands of years and yet today's societies promulgate special laws for the protection of women. Obviously security to the females of the society can not be guaranteed by the common laws and therefore special laws are required. Do we need to expunge the usage of weaker sex for females ?

## 10. MARRIAGE AS AN INSTITUTION IN THE SOCIETY

We observe that all the organisms have a basic tendency of reproduction. Most of the organisms do this reproduction through the mating of two individuals of opposite sex. We have no way to conclusively prove the process of evolution of a human being. Christianity believes that God created Adam, the first male and then Eve, a female. Obviously, from this stand point man takes the precedence over a woman and the leadership. The Sanatana Dharma had described the evolution of all the different organisms in Bhagavata Purana. The discussion as to how a man and a woman first appeared on this planet takes us nowhere and so taking the reality, we conclude the reproductive mechanism was and is responsible for the growth of human species on this planet. The other observation we make is that mating takes place between two individuals of opposite sex only for the purpose of reproduction in all the organisms except the human beings. The human species is endowed with a special faculty in the form of a powerful mind which allows options and decision making. This faculty is there either to use it or misuse it. Often this faculty is misused making the human being no better than any other species in most respects. While the other species survive or perish depending on the natural conditions, the human species not only finds ways of survival by adopting to different situations and environments but gain over lordship over other species.

Civilization starts with a group of human beings coming together and forming a social group which can be called a clan, or a civil society after the clans start elaborate organizational structure. Be it a clan or a civil society the necessity of having a pivot, which we call a leader, a king or a group of individuals was felt and in most societies a single individual was chosen to be that pivot. Being aggressive and physically strong compared to the woman, man had usurped the coveted position of the leader. Even before forming clans, the human beings following the animal pattern formed alliance with the individuals of opposite sex and started cohabitation. Surprisingly this concept of cohabitation seems to have caught up the present generation because most think they would not have to bother about the responsibilities of the marriage. It is really funny that the most civilized society should think of adopting a principle which was cast off by the primitive society. Nevertheless the procreation can not stop and the responsibility of bringing up the off springs rests either with the society or with those responsible for the children unlike the animal world where the mother takes care of the child till it can be on its own. Security in the animal world is quite restricted and so the result is the survival of the fittest. The human beings organized the clan system so as to have security beyond the expectations of the animal world, the purpose of the organization being security for the weak against the strong.

At this stage, the human society had to think of ways and means by which the forces that threaten the security could be minimized for the forces could not be altogether abrogated. One of the main contentions between human beings and perhaps the most important one at that was the woman because the woman was considered by the primitive societies as a

belonging if not equated to property. Since cohabitation of two individuals of opposite sex is inevitable in the human society for the sake of procreation at least, if not for the lust, the social institution of marriage came into existence, primarily to indicate that once the two individuals of opposite sex start cohabitation under the institution of marriage, either of them that were married should not be sought, more particularly the woman for cohabitation. Considering women as property or a belonging may be called unjust and today the people, majority being men cry hoarse that such an unjust social structure reduces the woman to the position of a slave. One should understand that it is impossible to create a social structure which is perfect in every respect. Even today, with the most advanced legal system in place, the courts have no respite. More than fifty percent of the people of the world still consider women as a belonging and their societies have accepted this practice. Principles and practices are two different things. It is laudable if practices are based on principles but it is not possible to ignore the practices that are not based on principles altogether. Any law maker takes all these matters into consideration before setting the rules. If a law is made without taking the practices into consideration, then it is only observed in breach. For example laws were enacted prohibiting child marriages in India but in practice the law is not able to stop these marriages. It was common even in a modern society like American Society for girls getting married at the age of fourteen some fifty years ago. Considering women as commodity or a belonging is wrong and it should be condemned but that does not help women in societies where such practices are accepted. In Sanatana Dharma, this concept was totally overruled and it was viewed that both man and women are partners. People might point out that even in Sanatana Dharma such a practice existed quoting the incidence where King Harischandra after losing the kingship to Sage Viswamitra sold his wife and son in order to pay back the dues to Sage Viswamitra. Those who followed the narration must have observed that this act was forced on Harischandra by none other than his wife and eventually even Harischandra agreed to be sold as a servant. The other example people might take was that of Draupadi. Dharmaraja, during the game of dice with Sakuni offered his wife as a wager. Dharmaraja not only offered Draupadi as a wager but offered all his brothers and also himself as a wager. Nobody upheld these acts.

Probably the first civil institution that came into existence was marriage, essentially bringing the two people of opposite sex together to cohabit and take up the responsibilities there of. The first and foremost principle of marriage was and still is that the married couple shall not have sexual relation with any other person. The result was that promiscuity was barred and the chance of strife because of woman was vastly reduced, if not totally eliminated. The most important constituent of the society is family which came into existence as a consequence of marriage. Today the sociologists try to define family as a group of individuals living together, perhaps with a view to accommodate the heterogeneous sex between individuals but the family as understood world over is the one group of people closely related because of marriage comprising of the husband, wife and their children.

This institution of marriage can be seen to exist in every society, be it primitive, tribal or advanced in some form or the other. It existed and is existing and will continue to exist even though people might try to tinker the institution. In fact marriage is such an institution that can never be done away with. Marriage was actually considered as the main pillar on which the society rests. Imagine a state where this institution does not exist. Obviously the relationship

between individuals would then be the same as the animals. The security of the weak can not be guaranteed. The constant struggle for food and shelter, and the infatuation for the opposite sex makes life miserable even for the strongest. The word incest loses its significance. Above all humanity degrades to the level of an animal with all its intellect and the purpose for which the extra faculty of a powerful mind given to the human is lost. Whether we take the process of evolution or not, it is significant that the endeavor was always to better the conditions conducive for happy living. In that context the powerful mind of the human being made things possible which looked to be impossible in the normal course. Why should not the human think of a state of society where every individual gets maximum happiness? In spite of many pit falls in experimentation, the human being emerged victorious in near perfect solutions. Similarly even in the case of marriage, the human being arrived at almost perfect system and conditions for happiness depending on the conditions of the region and environment. Even till mid twentieth century people lived in wedlock for life, with the mindset that marriage was for the life time. It does not mean that all individuals were perfectly happy with their spouses. It only means that people found that certain amount of give and take could result in making the marriage a success. Even in societies where divorce was not looked down as a social stigma, remarriage was accepted generally in the cases of widowed people, people strived to save the marriage. Even today, world over marriage between two people of opposite sex is taken as a life long association between them barring a minority.

The reasons for this institution to gain such prominence are manifold. Basically it created indelible impression between people that it provides life long support and security. Secondly, it has come to be understood that sex outside marriage is wrong and is described by a derogatory word adultery. Marriage brought about a sense of responsibility not only in harnessing the unbridled sex between individuals of opposite sex but in cooperation to be able to live together. If forming a civil society or a clan has robbed off a tiny part of individualism in a human, marriage has completely taken away the individualism of a human being. These two institutions are based on cooperation and understanding and because of these, the human being had to live not only for self but also for others in the society or family. Simultaneously the laws made by the society from time to time in general and for the marriage in particular had to be obeyed by every individual. This is the price paid by the individual for obtaining security net. Whatever freedom one may desire has to be strictly within the precincts of these laws.

As mentioned earlier this institution of marriage was used in several ways in various societies in the world to suit the needs of the society and also the times. There was polyandry in certain societies but in course of time the practice was given up. Polygamy exists even today. The Muslim societies all over the world accept polygamy as has been sanctioned by the Prophet Mohammad which means that a good chunk of the population of the world accepts polygamy and most of the countries under Muslim rule it is practiced even today. However, the present day thinking is favoring monogamy and most of the countries in the world are barring polygamy. In all the societies in the world marriage is linked either strongly or loosely to the religion (Faith) or the Dharma because the other strong pillar on which the society rests is the religion or Dharma. Islam made the marriage a contract under the supervision of a religious judge called Qazi and the provisions of the contract include divorce. This contract is a written

document duly attested by witnesses and confirmed by the Qazi. Perhaps this marriage is the fore runner of the registered civil marriages of today.

Procreation is a natural phenomenon and this occupation is not special for human beings. The attraction between individuals of opposite sex which is sometimes called love and sometimes infatuation is basically found to be the purpose for procreation. In all species except human beings this attraction could be termed as biological urge resulting in mating. In human beings, because of the powerful mind they possess the biological urge is not limited as in the other species. Experience shows that the human being, though decided to be part of an organized society thinks of having freedom to do anything at will even disobeying the laws of the society forgetting that he had already committed to be part of the society. He lives not only for himself but to the family and to the society. He should therefore, be aware that what ever he does may be good for himself temporarily but endanger the institutions of the society of which he is a part, if not immediately but in the long run. Marriage is such an institution. Any abberation because of individual whims will cause irreparable damage to the institution.

Considering the life span of a human being to be hundred years, we examine the productive span of this life. From the age of twenty to the age of fifty human beings are active but in general procreation takes place between the ages of twenty and forty. Even during these twenty years, the woman has lost interest in the husband to the extent of fifty percent after the birth of the first child because the child needs more attention and no mother ordinarily would give up her right of bringing up the child. Bringing up of the baby may be taking five years to start with for the mother but till the child attains at least fourteen years of age the mother along with the father devote time for the child. We find cooperation superseding the mutual affection or love between the spouses after the birth of a child. As time passes, what is found is mutual respect, cooperation and companionship in the marriage rather than biological urge. People begin to realize that the spouses alone will take care of each other primarily in old age. Living together in wedlock brings about several compromises in the conflicting personalities of the spouses when they understand that marriage is for life. Cohabitation assumes that the partners have the liberty to separate at any time even on flimsy grounds. This assumption works against cooperation and understanding needed between the two individuals as they for certain know that the cohabitation is temporary. They will always be on the look out for better partners ignoring the need to strengthen the bond between themselves, which can only be possible when they beget children. Cohabitation does not encourage procreation and so it is purely for the biological needs. Needless to say that this cohabitation creates more problems to the society than can be solved, if it becomes endemic. However, marriage has taken strong roots over time and will not wither away because of the disturbances caused by a few individuals who obviously do not wish to honor their responsibilities to the society.

Till the later part of the twentieth century, the mind set of people was tuned to the fact that marriage was as natural as birth. Everybody thought that marriage was a mile stone in his or her life and fact can be corroborated by the literature produced in various countries in those times. The societies frowned on the concept of cohabitation equating it to immorality. Children born outside the marriage were called bastards which was and still is a derogatory

word. Today reports say that around forty percent of children born in USA are outside the marriage. The society obviously helpless to stem this trend and if it continues the society will have its hands full with problems of children and in due course aged people. The magnitude of this calamity is enormous and staggering and the civil society shall have to come up with remedial measures, because no amount of legislation by the government can stop this trend.

The uncared children without parental care and affection pose a grave threat to the society in terms of mental health and crime. A child reared by both the parents gets affection and discipline in the formative years and the society gets all the benefit of a responsible citizen. The governments have to come up with plans for the care of children and aged which works in cross purposes with the main responsibility of providing security to the people of the society. This responsibility was hitherto taken by the family to a larger extent and what was left of this problem to the government was negligibly small. Organization at smaller units with a decentralized care is much more effective than a central administration and the costs of maintaining a central administration also will be very high. After all the society is its constituents and the society is healthy only when the people who form the constituents are happy. Dissatisfaction, misery of one section is bound to reflect badly on the health of the society. Every society consists of children, adults and aged. The adults have the responsibility to take care of the children and the aged. Children in the society is the major resource roughly termed as human resource. This resource has to be trained to take up the yoke. The aged is the experienced section of the society and so it should be used for the welfare of the people by providing adequate care for this aged. Inter dependence of all sections in the society is obvious and can not be ignored.

Wise people of the clans of yore found the institution of marriage most suitable to tackle all the above problems. From this point of view marriage is not the business of only those two individuals involved, but a broad based institution where an individual is made to realize that he is living for others mostly. Strikingly the concept of living mostly for others has become the hallmark of the society and the distinguishing factor for a human being.

What does the society ideally expect from this institution? First and foremost, the children shall have both caring parents around when they need them most. The children shall not become delinquent and thereby burden the society. The aged people are taken care of so that their experience which is indeed knowledge could be put to use for the benefit of the society. In short the society expects the marriage to bring two people of opposite sex together to create a small unit called family which with cooperation between its members creates a security net for the members of the family. The members of the family will share the responsibilities according to the ability of each individual member. Besides the bond of marriage must have created an attachment between the members of the family better than the one one, if it at all possible of the bond between two unrelated individuals. If this set up is strong then the society consists of families and extended families which thrive on the basis of cooperation. On the other hand if people were to be thrown together without the mutual cooperation and individuality, then fight for sharing the privileges starts, each claiming more equal than the other. The next question that comes to mind is whether such an ideal situation as envisaged possible? Utopia may not be possible but the fact the institution has been used by the society from time immemorial shows



that the society and the people had and still have immense faith in the efficacy of the institution and no better alternative could ever be found.

Marriage has got into the blood and psyche of the society so much that it is no exaggeration if we say that almost all the literature and plays, drama produced so far is centered around marriage, and even in the last fifty years whatever the cinema and television focused has been themes of family and marriage.

Sanatana Dharma, having a great understanding of the needs of the society and also that of the individuals came up with a set of rules that were and still are desirable for the humanity. These rules go by the name of Manu smriti. Manu is an office and different individuals occupy this office in different times. Manu, therefore periodically reviews and makes such modifications to the laws that are desirable and acceptable to the society. In these laws, Manu placed the institution of marriage in the third place in the four fold duties of a human being. The first of these duties was Dharma, the second Artha, the third Kama and the fourth Moksha. Marriage comes under Kama meaning desire. Dharma takes precedence of all these four duties because it is the main support of human life. Anything else has to be strictly under the Dharma only. The next was Artha the where with all for living which shall be controlled by the tenets of Dharma. The third Kama also controlled by Dharma includes every type of desire. Among the desires the unbridled sexual attraction was found to lead to disaster in the society and so the law giver put this desire under the iron clad institution marriage defining its purpose to be purely procreation. Even today sex outside marriage is called adultery and is shunned by the society. From this understanding only the words prostitution, promiscuity etc., must have gained coinage. Manu, the law giver of Sanatana Dharma had, therefore thought of a state where every individual gets into wedlock after attaining maturity say at the age of twenty for men and at the age fourteen for girls because girls attain puberty normally at this age. Manu perhaps thought that girls should get married immediately after attaining puberty only to avoid complications arising out of the sexual urge leading to social stigma. Even in the west it was common for girls to get married at the age of fourteen till about the middle of twentieth century. Besides taking care of the biological needs, people found several benefits in this practice. One such benefit was that individuals at that age were able to accommodate themselves for the views of the life partners which lead to strengthen the marriage, and were able to live in wedlock for life. As long as women thought of themselves as house makers this practice was fruitful and provided support to the family and the society. When the women felt or rather made to feel that their job is not that of a house maker alone people started to magnify the disadvantages of such early marriages. This situation became more pronounced in societies where widow marriage and divorce were frowned upon.

In order to bring wider net of marriage to the society, Rishi Aapastambha had conceived eight different situations that could be faced by the individuals of the society and therefore defined eight kinds of marriages. This Rishi was one of the set of Rishis who gave vivid and detailed procedures for the day to day living in the South India elaborated form what was given by Manu smriti and strictly following the Veda. Even today these are the rules followed in South India. They are:

1. Braahma Marriage: This is the type of marriage where a person learned in Vedas and is eligible for respect is invited and offered the girl in marriage by the father.

- Daiva Marriage: This is the type of marriage where a person who was invited to perform yajna is offered the girl in marriage by the father'

3. Aarsha Marriage: The father of the girl receives a couple of cows and gives his daughter in marriage.

4. Praajapatya Marriage: The father of the bride searches for a suitable person to marry his daughter, invites him and celebrates the marriage saying that the union may live together doing your duty and obtain good progeny.

The above four marriages are consecrated according to Vedic rites and are considered the best types of marriages. The fourth type of marriage is the one still contracted by those who are the followers of Sanatana Dharma. He also gave four more types of marriages:

- Asura Marriage: A person pays money to the parents of a girl, take her away and marries her according to Vedic rites.

6. Gaandharva Marriage: Desiring sexual intercourse, two individuals of opposite sex come together. This is also called a love marriage and this was practiced by those belonging to Kshatriya Varna.

7. Raakshasa Marriage: This is the type of marriage where the bride may either be raped or threatened to be killed and is carried away.

8. Paisachika Marriage: This is the type of marriage where a girl is kidnapped or marrying when a girl is unconscious state.

From the above classification, we can see that Rishi Aapastambha analyzed all the possible situations that could arise in the society which lead to the physical union and was determined to prevent illegitimacy of the progeny and also prevent the woman being called unchaste. In all the first six types of marriages, the man and the woman belong to the same varna. The marriages contracted under Raakshasa and Paisachika were detested and were considered *fait accompli*.

Manu has not approved divorce or remarriage of a woman. Disapproval of divorce is understandable because divorce creates problems to both the spouses and also their children and damages the family system. Any chance to have divorce is likely to be exploited. Remarriage is possible either in the case of divorce or death of a spouse. When divorce is disapproved, the question of remarriage comes up only in the case of death of spouse. Why did Manu allow remarriage in the case of a man? This seems to be a corollary to polygamy. Polyandry, though existed in some small pockets in the world was more or less abhorred and was totally given up while polygamy existed and exists even today. This is the point of controversy which is debated and people jump to the conclusion that women are not treated equal to men. Equality had already yielded to cooperation in the institution of marriage. If marriage was to be respected because of its utility to the society, then it should be under the conditions prevailing in the society. Polyandry was practiced but was given up because it was creating frictions in the family itself.

Just because Manu had decreed that divorce and remarriage of a woman shall not be accepted, it should not be taken that the practices were strictly according to the laws of Manu. There were instances where a spouse left the other; there were remarriages of women also. These more of an exception than a rule. What is found today is that when divorce was allowed, people go for it on flimsy grounds even the next day of marriage. One never understands why they should go through the process of marriage at all ? Obviously marriage survives on cooperation, compatibility, mutual respect and also respect for the marriage. Both the spouses should have to understand each other and work out compromises and above all have respect for the institution.

Marriage was between people living in areas which were very close when there was no fast transportation. The families were known, the traditions and customs were the same. So the compatibility problem was minimized because the people were from the same back ground. For a marriage, compatibility is very important and the law givers expected the individuals to respect tradition just for this purpose.

Today there is clamor for legalizing same sex marriage!! This aspect is the specialty of human beings because no other organism practices sexual act between individuals of the same sex. Does this mean that human being is superior than the other organisms?

## 12. THE IMPORTANCE OF PURANA

Vedas and Upanishads constitute the knowledge of the ultimate which has neither beginning nor end, time independent Brahman. In order to study these one has to master the six vedangas. The vedangas, as the name specifies are the limbs of Veda. They are: 1. Siksha- the science of phonetics and breaking the sentence at a proper place, 2. Kalpa- the ritual connected with the particular part of the Veda, 3. Vyakarana- the grammar used in the language of Veda, 4. Chandas- the meter and lastly 6. Jyotish- astrology and astronomy needed to find the correct timings for the ritual. Without mastering Vedangas, study of Veda leads to disastrous results because the meaning of the recitation could be diametrically opposite to what is to be understood if any one of the Vedangas is not correct. Mastering Vedangas takes long time and devotion and it is not possible for the majority of people in the society to have access to Vedas. Therefore, certain restrictions were imposed on those who intended to study Vedas. such as Upanayana, a purification rite and suitability of the novice and the rapture and sincerity of the novice. The restrictions could be seen even in the present day educational system where an engineering aspirant is expected to have knowledge of mathematics, physics and chemistry, a medical aspirant to have knowledge of physics, chemistry and biology and so on. The restrictions imposed for the study of Vedas have become a matter of controversy because it was felt that barring women and people of Sudra Varna from this study was biased and it was a deliberate attempt on the part of Brahmins( as a caste ) to keep away these people from knowledge. If Brahmins were involved in this conspiracy, why would they bar their own women from this knowledge? Also the examples from the Upanishads show that a woman Gargi was a very great scholar of Vedas and was a competent philosopher to be able to participate in the discussions, and the case of Satyakama Jabala who was allowed to study Vedas though his

lineage was unknown should be enough to negate the argument. Even today only a minority gets into technical studies out of the large number of students coming out of the high schools. During the later part of the twentieth century, Swami Dayanad Saraswati declared that any body can study Vedas, and taught people of all castes and women.

However, access to Vedas is something and ability to study Vedas is something else. Even after providing access to Vedas, the benefit of that knowledge was remote to a majority of the people because of their inability for various reasons such as aptitude, time needed and above all the man's quest to fulfill his basic needs. Every individual of a species, more so in the case of human species because of its special faculty of a powerful mind is an infinitesimal part of that Brahman. Since life is transcendental, these individuals have to attain Brahman at some point of time. Vedas and Upanishads are the knowledge of that Brahman knowing which is necessary for attaining Brahman. Alternately, there must be a way by which every individual is made to realize his fundamental duty- attaining Brahman even though that individual may not be competent to have knowledge of Brahman at that moment. Just as a child is taught several things through stories as a prelude before putting it to schematic study, a way shall have to be found to bring an individual human being to the path of realization of Brahman. Whether there are several paths or a single path, or no path to reach Brahman because you don't need any according to some Brahman has to be attained. Those who argue that there is no path to lead to Brahman base their argument on the premise that every organism is Brahman. Of the organisms, human being alone identifies the distinction between body and self. As long as the self does not lose the consciousness of the body it occupies, the idea that Brahman is different from self remains. At least to lose the identity of self, a method or path is needed. Generally this method or path is called the path to reach or merge with Brahman. Thus there are infinitely many ways to lose this consciousness of self and so it is said that there are many ways to attain Brahman. Losing consciousness of self is called Vidya and everything else is called avidya. By getting vidya alone it is possible to attain Brahman or merge with Brahman.

Getting Vidya is again possible by gaining knowledge of self. Those who had no chance of learning Vedas and Upanishads or gaining mastery over the knowledge of self are the bulk of the humanity and those who gain this knowledge form an infinitesimally small minority. If every human being is to be given the right to attain Brahman, which he has then there shall have to be ways to gain this vidya or at least initiation to gain this vidya. Granting that those who have urge will automatically try every method to find ways to gain the knowledge, what is to be done to those who do not have this urge, or better still how to initiate this urge? This question must have bothered those who struggled very hard to gain this knowledge. The solution found by the wise of ancient times was Purana.

The word Purana means ancient times. These are repositories of knowledge not merely of the essence of Vedas and Upanishads but provide encyclopaedic details of several subjects starting from the geography of the times, history, cosmology astronomy, astrology etc., The content of Purana is told in the form of a story, or a dialogue between two distinguished sages and either of the forms are most alluring to almost every body. The story form gives the narration of most important points of Vedas and Upanishads suitable to all sections starting from

a child to a grown up person. The story usually carries a moral or an important saying and the story teller indicates the purpose of the story to the audience. The story telling is a medium of entertainment and this medium is exploited to carry the essence of knowledge to a heterogeneous audience. The basic idea in this method is to attract people so that the most difficult and profound philosophy could be explained and induce them to think further on these matters, for some people tend to get into the habit of contemplation the moment they happen to hear a story or a discourse. Repeated performance of story telling will definitely bring a large number to the path of knowledge. The second method is narration of a discussion between two individuals. This method is very effective to clear the doubts arising out of a story or a discourse. Getting a doubt is really healthy because it is the starting point for total understanding of the principle.

Puranas use these two methods very effectively in the narration and include such other topics that are of common interest to all in the society. In short Puranas convey both vidya in a form that could be comprehended by almost every body and also other topics that do not belong to Vidya and are so called Avidya. In order to study Vedas one should have mastered the vedangs ;but any flaw in the study of vedangas will lead to erroneous rendering of Veda,sometimes detrimental to the student. Vedas are powerful mantras and any deviation from the correct rendering will cause diametrically opposite results than expected. For example, if one recites Vedic mantra for the purpose of enhancing longevity, it may result in the loss of life by incorrect rendering. On the other hand Puranas have no such problems and so approachable for everybody. The only expertise needed is the attention to understand the contents. This type of attention could be induced by the tool in the form of story.

The great Bhagavtgitā is incidentally not part of either Vedas, Upanishads or Puranas. It is a part of Mahabharata, which is referred as Panchama Veda ( Fifth Veda)but is classified as Itihasa (History). But the importance given to it is so great that it is included in Prasthanā Trayi. If we examine critically the literature created by the great sages. we find that they were concerned about every human being irrespective of the gender, varna and mental capabilities. They were anxious that nobody shall be left out from the Vidya recognizing the right to Vidya of every human being, for every individual is a part of the Brahman. The basic tenet that life is transcendental is relevant because at each point of the cycle of births and deaths, the mental attainments of an individual are different. Since the ultimate goal is attainment of Brahman for every organism, more so for the human being, and that attainment is possible only by obtaining Vidya, initiation to Vidya has to start at some point or the other. The common understanding that only a few were allowed to have access to Vidya (Vedas and Upanishads ) by strictly enforcing stringent conditions that include the gender, and the varna into which one is born is not only wrong but also the immaturity stemming out of irrationality. Today, certain prerequisites are necessary to pursue a particular study of specialization. Not everybody gets to study astronomy and cosmology with out undergoing the necessary preliminary topics. Why should people not think on these lines when they come to the question of study of Vedas?

Puranas, thus serve the humanity in giving the opportunities, irrespective of intellectual attainments to gain Vidya and work as preliminaries. They provide different

approaches to gain Vidya. Bhakti, the easiest path has its origin in Puranas. Yoga and meditation have their roots in Puranas. It is generally stated that Indians and particularly Hindus do not have a tradition of recording the events which ultimately gets to be the history. The Hindu ethos ( Sanatana Dharma ) is such a great antiquity that all the learning was done without recourse to books because the writing material was not yet discovered. The entire body of knowledge was stored in human brain and was transferred orally. Whatever that was thought important was committed to memory and it was not uncommon for learned pandits to have memorized a great volume of literature which could be termed as a small library. So most of the knowledge was in the form of Sutras (aphorisms) that could be easily memorized. The Puranas are such compendiums of various diverse subjects ranging from history, geography to cosmology.

There are eighteen Mahapuranas and eighteen upapuranas. The author of all these Puranas was none other than Maharishi Veda Vyasa, who incidentally is the one who along with his four disciples Paila, Vaisampayana, Jaimini and Sumanta categorized the Vedas into four divisions Rig, Yajur, Sama and Atharva Vedas. In fact the entire body of knowledge comprising of Vedas, Puranas and Mahabharata was his contribution. The greatness of Maharishi Veda Vyasa reached the pinnacle when he wrote Brahmasutras, one of the most important of the Prasthanas. His name is Krishna Dwaipayana (he is one of the seven Chiranjeevis, the others being Parasurama, Vibhishana, Bali, Aswatthama, Kripa and Hanuman ) and came to be well known as Veda Vyasa because of the organization of Veda. He is also known as Baudhayana and the authorship of Brahmasutras is in this name. Lord Krishna said that He is Veda Vyasa in Maharishi's discourse of Bhagatgeeta to Arjuna. Mahabharata war was witnessed by Maharishi Veda Vyasa and the epic Mahabharata was the eye witness narration of the entire struggle between Dharma and Adharma. Both the Pandavas and Kauravas were his progeny and his involvement in the entire episode is more or less personal, but to a Brahmagyani (liberated soul in human form) like Maharishi Veda Vyasa nothing can be personal. Born of Sage Parasara and a fisher woman Satyawati, he attained the position of Brahmagyani and whose son the sage Suka had the unique distinction of being recognized as walking Brahman. Suka became an Avadhoota and every tree and every organism responded on his behalf when he accosted him. He was respected universally at all times. This achievement is parallel to that of Satyakama Jaabaali, as cited in Chandogya Upanishad who attained the supreme position even though his lineage was unknown. These cases prove that Sanatana Dharma was always of the opinion that every human being has a right to attain Moksha and attainment of Moksha is independent of the birth or lineage. What is important is that the attainment of Moksha is more related to Satvic Guna than anything else and the methods needed to gain this Satvic Guna had been put before everybody.

The common criticism leveled at Maharishi Veda Vyasa is that he could not have written all that body of knowledge comprising of Puranas, Mahabharata and not to speak of organization of Vedas. For somebody whose only aim was to think of ways to get the common man to the path of enlightenment, the task of producing literature in that direction is not at all impossible but could only be difficult. Maharishi Veda Vyasa is (We believe he still lives ) also a great Guru and so he had many disciples to assist in this stupendous task. Coming from the background from which he came, it was easy for him to understand the many difficulties and

pitfalls of ordinary human beings whether they belong to the class of Brahmins who could not get access to knowledge because of their mental caliber, for birth in the class of Brahmins in itself is not a passport to knowledge though better placed, or to the other sections of the society. The need for Puranas must have been acutely felt by him resulting in the birth of Puranas. His organization of Vedas had helped those suitable for the study of Vedas, Puranas helped those who could not get ready for the study of Vedas and lastly the great Bhagavatgita which is part of the epic Mahabharata for everybody. The revered Lalitha Sahasranama stotram is part of Brahmanda Purana. Similarly many prayers and mantras form an integral part of the Puranas. The estimate of mantras go to 800,000 million and all these are not from the Vedas. Vedas give only four mantras whose meaning is the same- I am thou. But the mantras originating from Puranas have all along been the great source for yoga practitioners which is open to all sections of the society.

The greatness of Sanatana Dharma lies in the fact that it does not prescribe a single book and it does not ask that the sayings of a single individual alone have to be taken as sacrosanct without a chance of verification or questioning. What ever method one takes to reach the ultimate, as long as the method is not detrimental to the fellow human beings and the other organisms the Sanatana Dharma tacitly approves it. Also the methods given by the great thinkers within the frame work of Vedic sayings have always been insisted upon to be experienced individually and they did not insist on faith. Once a an individual or a group of individuals come to realize the supreme with the method so suggested by the sages, it becomes a matter of faith for them. The the followers need not try to verify the efficacy of the method if they have faith in the teacher; however they have a privilege to check and verify the truth of the method from personal experience. The beliefs among groups of human beings are the experiences supposed to have been enjoyed by an individual of that group at earlier times and perpetuated since then. There is a chance that these beliefs could turn into dogmas as time passes by. Usually the closed society would then insist on following that dogma blindly which might cause misery to the people. It is therefore necessary that beliefs have to be checked and rechecked periodically because the system created for the happiness of the group of individuals should not bring cataclysm for the group. This review and readjustment of the beliefs have to be undertaken in such a way that the main purpose of such beliefs remain undisturbed and giving every opportunity for misconceptions that might have crept in to be examined and corrected. Perhaps the theme adopted in the Puranas was meant to be understood as a means to give access to knowledge needed for attaining Brahman in the transcendental life at various stages.

What was the need for the same Maaharishi Veda Vyasa to write 18 Mahapuranas and 18 upapuranas? The message could be conveyed through one Purana when the author was one. The reasons for writing so many Puranas seem to be;

- To show different views on the same topic,
- To give chance for the opinions of the other learned to be ventilated.
- To be able to answer several questions and doubts, and
- 4. To meet the needs of an individual depending on the mental attainments.

These Puranas and the itihisas together can be termed as another Veda which are accessible for everybody unlike Vedss. Mahapurana is defined to be one which has the following qualities:

- Sarga: Sarga gives the creation in general and creation on this planet in particular.
- 2 Pratisarga: Deals wit creation after deluge or dissolution of the existing,
- Vamsa: Describes the genealogy of various demigods and sages,
- Manvantara: This is very important because it discusses the creation of human beings. The life time of each Manu and Lord Brahma and their life span are given in detail comparing the life span of a human being. In other words Manvantara gives the concept of time and implicitly shows that there is no such thing as absolute time, and
- Vamsacharitam: This is the description of solar and lunar dynasties and their descendents. It is the starting point of an organized society with the concept of a leader (ruler or King ) implementing the civil laws laid down by each Manu.

According to Swami Sivanada the following ate the Mahapuranas and a brief summery of what they contain;

1. Agni Purana: Contains 15,400 slokas. In addition to the regular features of Mahapura, this Purana gives Vastu, the knowledge of building construction.
2. Bhagavata Purana: Contains 18,000 slokas. The Purana describes the ten avatars of Lord Vishnu- Mastya (Fish), Kurma (Tortoise ), Varaha (the wild Boar ),Narasimha (man -lion ), Vaamana ( Brahmin anchorite ), Parasurama (Rama of the Battle ax), Sri Rama, Balarama, Krishna and Kalki. Starting from Vaamana all the avatars are in the human form. Some people take Lord Buddha as

an avatar of Lord Vishnu and place this avatar after Krishna Avatar. They,however do not take Balarama as an Avatar so as to keep the number 10 intact. The high light of this Purana is Krishna Avatar, Lord Krishna being contemporary of Maharishi Veda Vyasa the detailed account of Lord Krishna.s deeds were given.

3. Bhavishya Purana: Contains 14,500 slokas. Interstingly this Purana recorded some of the events of modern times. The critics are of the view that the antiquity of this Purana though can not be questioned, the events mentioned regarding the Christianity, Islam and some of the rulers give an impression that it is open ended. There is no way to prove this view. Is it possible to verify the authorship of prophecies of Nostradamus?

- Brahma Purana: Consists of 10,000 slokas. Creation and cosmology form the major portion of the Purana. The sacred qualities of river Godavari and its greatness was discussed. Purushottama Tirtha and the great qualities of Sri Rama and Sri Krishna were extolled.

- Brahmanda Purana: Contains 17,000 slokas. Brahmanda literally means great egg. The sages of ancient India postulated that the Universe is in the shape of an egg infinite major and minor axes. In fact it assumes the form of a sphere of infinite radius. The



speculation about the shape of Universe continues to interest the astronomers even today some saying that it is in the shape of a cigar while some others say that it is in the shape of an ellipsoid.

This Purana is written as a discourse given by Mahamuni Suta, a desciple of Maharishi Veda Vyasa who was famous as a great exponent of Vedas, Puranas and all the other allied literature. In the absence of large number of books, people like Mahamuni Suta helped the people with their discourses to get to know the content of Vedas and sastras. These discourses were the main source of learning, clearing of doubts and were organized regularly in the rainy season when people had no work. This practice of having discourses exists even today with large audience.

This Purana assumes great respect and importance because it contains the revered Lalitha Sahasranama Stotram as being taught by Sage Hayagriva (It is said that Sage Hayagriva was none other than Lord Vishnu with the head of a horse) to Sage Agastya. This stotram is considered to give praise of Goddess Raja Rajeswari, but also vedanta, mantra, tantra and yoga. There is no taboo to recite this stotram and everybody who recites this stotram is said to get the benefit of Vidya ( Knowledge of Brahman as pronounced by Vedas).

The Parasurama Avatar of Lord Vishnu is the other important part of this Purana. The Radha Krishna bhakti gets its foundation in this Purana, Radha being shown as the consort of Lord Krishna. Another important aspect of the Purana is the appending of the Adhyatma Ramayana to it as being told by Lord Siva to Parvati. When the Purana deals with the topics related to Sakti, Adhyatma Ramayana, the story of Sri Rama being told to Parvati with reverence by none other than Lord Siva gives an impression that they( the great sages headed by Maharishi Veda Vyasa) wanted to show that there is no quarrel between Lord Siva and Lord Vishnu and it is foolish for the followers to have disputes.

- **Brahmavaivarta Purana:** Contains 17,000 slokas. This Purana depicts Lord Krishna as the Supreme Lord with Radha as his consort. It is said that the Lord Krishna and his consort Radha live in Goloka. The reason for declaring Lord Krishna as Supreme may have its roots in Lord Krishna's declaration in Bhagavatgita that he is that Brahman. The Bhakti movement started by Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu was obviously based on this Purana. Since Brahman is everything and everything has Brahman, the view of this Purana poses no contradiction.

- **Garuda Purana:** Contains 19,000 slokas. Garuda Purana has some parts of smriti or civil laws while the rest is devoted to the discussion on the state of soul after physical death, funeral rites, position of soul after death and reincarnation or rebirth. Lord Vishnu gives a discourse to Garuda on all these aspects after being questioned by Garuda. Evidently the sages thought that the common doubts of individuals about physical death and aftermath have to be addressed in order to bring out the fact that life is transcendental, so Maharishi

Veda Vyas had devoted this Purana for that purpose. It is the tradition to recite this Purana as part of antyesti (last rites).

- **Kurma Purans:** Contains 17,000 slokas. This Purana is a dialogue between Lord Vishnu and Sage Narada about the need for Lord Vishnu to take the Avatar of Kurma (Tortoise) and the details of the avatar. Some portion is devoted to magic. This Purana gives in detail the duties of The four Varnas, Brahmana, Kshatriya, Vysya and sudra along with those of the mixed castes.

- **Linga Purana:** Contains 11,000 slokas. This Purana explains why Linga is the form of a linga. Lord Siva represents Brahman and hence taken to be formless. He can not be described in words nor can he be represented by any .To show the finiteness of Lord Siva , the symbol Linga is used to represent the Lord. He is also described as one who is independent of time. Generally Brahman is always associated with timelessness and only two , Lord Vishnu and Lord Siva are said to be time independent. Since Lord Vishnu and Lord Siva have no difference because they are the same Brahman.

The discussion about the emergence of Lord Vishnu and Lord Siva and also the of Lord Vishnu were given. Geography of Sapta Dwipa (Seven Islands) is also a significant inclusion. Some aspects of yoga were discussed.

- **Markandeya Purana:** Contains 9,000 slokas. This is a dialogue between sage Markandeya and Sage Jaimimn, one of the principal disciples of Maharishi Veda Vyasa and organizer of Yajur Veda. Discussion on the doubts arising out of Mahabharata between Sage Markandeya and Sage Jaimini are important because these are the doubts all the readers usually get when they study Mahabharata. Devi Mahatmyam ( Durga Sapata Sati) is part of this Maahapurana,, which is a very revered text recited at the time Dussera.

- **Matsya Purana:** Contains 14,000 slokas. A detailed description of Lord Vishnu's Matsya Avatar (Fish Avatar) was given. The important detail regarding the deluge and how Lord Vishnu in the Avatar of Matsya helps the Manu to construct a big given.

- **Naradeeya Purana:** Contains 25,000 slokas. In this Purana Sage Naarada tells the importance of pilgrimage and narrates the places of pilgrimage to Sanatkumara. This is a comprehensive and exhaustive narration about the places of pilgrimage, the location geographically and its history making it place of pilgrimage. This is something like a modern tourist guide book sans where to stay and where to eat.

The interesting part is that this Purana carries the story of Sage Markandeya who was known to be a devotee to Lord Siva and because of his austerities he obtained a boon of long life. But according to this Purana, Sage Markandeya was a devotee of Lord Vishnu and the boon he got was to outlive the great deluge. Usually these inconsistencies become points of contention and create confusion to those who take Lord Vishnu to be different from Lord Siva.

- Padma Purana: Contains 55,000 slokas. The interesting aspect of this Purana is the dialogue between Brahma and Sage Pulastya, Lord Siva and Parvati about the origin of faith (Religion). Perhaps, it was felt that the mankind should be made aware of the need of a Dharma or religion. It contains details of contemporary history and geography of Jambu Dwipa that includes India, Swarga, Martya and Patala lokas, cosmos and the need to pray the grahas (Planets) as part of astrology. There is another version of Vishnu Sahasranama Stotram different from what was given in Mahabharata. Some pilgrim locations were given. The observation of the critics was that the geography and history seem to tally with that of eleventh century India.
- Siva Purana: This Purana is totally devoted to Lord Siva and this Purana was taught to Sage Romaharshana, a disciple of Maharishi Veda Vyasa by none other than Maharishi Veda Vyasa himself.
- Skanda Purana: Contains 81,100 slokas and is the largest Purana in terms of the slokas it contains. This Purana is devoted to Lord Kartikeya (Kumaraswamy), a son of Lord Siva and Parvati. Daksha Yagna is described in this Purana as a part of the births of Parvati. This Purana describes various pilgrim centers related to Lord Siva such as Varanasi (Kasi), Kedar., notable among them. An excellent reference work regarding the location, legend and importance of pilgrim centers.
- Vaamana Purana: Contains 10,000 slokas devoted to the praise Lord Vishnu in his Vaamana Avatar which he took to subdue emperor Bali. Noteworthy aspect of this Purana is the praise of both Lord Vishnu and Lord Siva.
- Varaha Purana: Contains 24,000 slokas and is devoted to the praise of Lord Vishnu in his Varaha Avatar.
- Vaayu Purana: Contains 24,000 slokas. Considered a Saiva Purana, it has included topics on music and measurement of time. Describes the seven nether worlds (Patala), the origin of Rakshsas, Gandharvas. Geographical aspects of seven Dwipas (Islands), their inhabitants were discussed.

There are two more Puranas considered to be Mahapuranas but not included in the list of 18 Mahapuranas. They are 1. Harivamsa, dealing with mostly Lord Krishna and 2. Vishnu Purana dealing with the ten Avatars of Lord Vishnu. From a cursory glance of the list of Mahapuranas, we can see that most of them were devoted to Lord Vishnu and a few for Lord Siva. But the division of Puranas are not done generally based on either Lord Vishnu or Lord Siva but the basic Gunas (Satwik, Rajo and Tamasa) which are the characteristics of Brahman. In the entire literature these gunas are highlighted whether it is with reference to the creation, or Gods or with the varnas indicating all the time that it is Brahman and Brahman alone, be it in the

form of Lord Vishnu or Lord Siva that is projected. The categorization of Puranas according to Gunas is an attempt only in that direction.

Satwa Guna: Vishnu Purana, Bhagavata Purana, Naaradeeya Purana, Garuda Purana, Padma Purana, Varaha Purana, Vaamana Purana, Kurma Purana, Matsya Purana.

Rajo Guna: Brahma Purana, Brahmanda Purana, Brahma Vaivarta Purana, Vaamana Purana, Markandeya Purana, Bhavishya Purana.

Tamasa Guna: Siva Purana, Linga Purana, Skanda Purana, Agni Purana

The division shows that Lord Siva is indicated as the Tamasa Guna of the Brahman and Lord Vishnu as the Satwa and Rajo Gunas of the Brahman.

The Upa Puranas are also said to be eighteen in number. They are:

1.Sanatkumara, 2.Narasimha, 3.Brihannaradeeya, 4.Siva Rahasya, 5.Durvasa, 6.Kapila, 7.Vamana, 8.Bhargava, 9. Varuna, 10. Kalika, 11. Samba, 12. Nandi, 13.Surya, 14.Parasara, 15.Vasistha, 16. Devi Bhagavatsa, 17. Ganesa, 18.Mudgala.

Hamsa Purana is also considered as a Upa Purana. These are devoted either to extoll the greatness of a particular God or the discourses of great sages.

Whatever may be the Purana or Upa Purana, the common thread is the Knowledge (Vidya) strictly following the Vedas and Upanishads. The several Gods portrayed in the Puranas have to be understood as the manifestation of the Brahman in the form sought after by an individual or a group depending on the attitudes (roughly Gunas). These Puranas have proved to be eternal and have and are still serving the purpose for which they were written. Trying to place them in the time scale is futile because they are meant to be eternal.

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### 13. BHAKTI-HOW DOES IT HELP THE HUMAN BEING ?

The human beings are the almost perfect species in creation with all the faculties of other species fully developed in them; the human mind was shown to have achieved such heights in all the areas that have no parallels. In a way human species, according to the scientists is the culmination in the progression of creation. If we examine the issue and try to analyze as to why these special facilities are given to human beings alone, we have to come to the conclusion that these faculties are meant to achieve something beyond what human beings have. Human beings think of what they want after the needs are met and when they can not get what they want they get distressed. It is obvious that happiness is what human beings want by possessing what they want but the wants do not stop and the happiness got by satisfying wants do not give lasting

happiness. Is there lasting happiness? Many sages have opined that it is possible to have ever lasting happiness, perhaps bliss. This statement is possible to be examined and experience personally if only one has patience and practice the meditation prescribed for this purpose. But, such happiness is identified as **satchidananda** which is Brahman itself. The idea of permanent happiness is linked with Brahman and so every human being whose single objective is to have permanent happiness in whatever he does, can get the happiness only by attaining Brahman. Human life has meaning only if it is spent for the attainment of Brahman.

The often asked question is 'What about this present life span?' If the entire life is spent in pursuit of perfect happiness, what happens to the natural functions of a human being. Since every organism eats, procreates human being also should have these duties but in a disciplined way because indiscriminate use of these duties can cause disaster due to the powerful mental capabilities and independence to take decisions the human race has. Thus the human being expects to have equanimity, tranquility and pleasure during the physical life and a long physical life to enjoy. The whole matter boils down to two things. 1. A long physical life to enjoy living and 2. attain the state where there is only bliss. What better purpose could there be for some body to be a human? The human being could also degenerate into an animal. When a choice is there, obviously an intelligent human being would choose the better of the choices. Unlike the animal life, the human being leaves behind the experiences to the posterity. This advantage is known to have been used for his benefit.

Human life expectancy is put around hundred years. Of these hundred years forty years are unproductive from mundane point of view, because the human being is incapacitated due to aging problems. The childhood and the period spent for study takes another twenty years of life. It is reasonable to assume that the productive life does not in any case exceed forty years. The major portion of human life is unproductive for all purposes. Why should a human being live for such long time if 60 per cent of the life span is neither useful to the individual nor to the family or the society? This part of life is a burden to the individual and also the family and society. Jagadguru Sankara has very aptly says in his Bhaja Govinda Stotram:

Baalastaavat Kreedasaktah  
Tarunastaavat Taruneesaktah  
Vridhastavaat Chintasaktah  
Pare Brahmani Kopa Na Saktah

Meaning of the sloka: When you were young you were interested in play and when you became an adult you were attracted to women. When you became old you are worried. When do you have time to think of Brahman?

The Jagadguru was chiding the human race for the complacency to think of Brahman by getting distracted by several unworthy things. He called upon the humanity to recite the name of the Brahman because the primary responsibility of a human being is to attain higher position than the one he has. He was also aware the natural tendencies of a human being to get attracted to play and women at the appropriate ages and he did not belittle either the play or woman.

Being upholder of Vedas and Upanishads, he will not be against the union of man and woman. What all he said was that every human being will have to find time amidst his mundane activities to think of Brahman and try for reaching the Brahman.

The physical life of the human being is as important as his transcendental life if not more because this life is the vehicle to reach Brahman. It is not wrong to wish for a long life free from such sorrows as those of losing the progeny and people younger and dear. The human being, it is observed more worried about the things he wants than those things he needs. When the basic needs of food and shelter are met, theoretically there shall not have to be any worry. It looks as though the worry caused by the struggle to get food and shelter does not, in general create that type of worry which might lead to physical death. On the other hand, the worries caused due to non fulfillment of wants and the problems related to wants seem to be detrimental. The medical science tells that the human system is a self correcting system which shall have no problems as long as the food and mental conditions are disciplined. Here, the human being uses his independence in decision making to satisfy his palate and the urge to possess. Scientists are of the opinion that good health depends on food, physical activity and meditation. So the call given by the Jagadguru was not only to direct the human being towards Brahman but also to have good health and long life.

The reason for giving this clarion call is pertinent because the Jagadguru was a realized soul, and having found Brahman in every living being in a dormant state he was eager to bring Brahman in them to a wakeful state.

The Jagadguru, the Brahman in human form also knew that the human beings because of environment forget their true identity. Not all human beings can get rid of Avidya like him and so was giving a way easier to follow and quicker to reach the path of Vidya. This tool is Bhakti. Many wonder why the Jagadguru chose Bhagavatgita as one of the prastana trayi ( the three paths of travel towards Brahman ) and placed it along with the Upanishads and Brahmasutras. ( the other two of prastana trayi). What was taught by Lord Srikrishna to Arjuna in Bhagavatgita? Total surrender and unswerving Bhakti. The Jagadguru was sending a message that Bhakti is as much a good path to reach the ultimate as the other paths. While the other paths need certain qualifications and certain maturity, Bhakti does not require any. The other paths need definitely some years of study, contemplation. Bhakti can be easily integrated with living and it does not demand a special place or time for its practice. Bhakti is suitable for the present day living and perhaps was suggested in Bhagavatgita in view of the numerous temptations in these times.

Maharishi Veda Vyasa had organized the Vedas and wrote all the Puranas and Upanishads. His Mahabharata was an eye witness account of the war between his own progeny and Bhagavatgita is part of Mahabharata. After completing this stupendous task, it is said that he was engulfed with a sense of dissatisfaction and worry. When he broached this matter with Sage Narada, the Maharishi was told that the dissatisfaction was because of the fact that he did not praise Lord Vishnu even though he produced all the literature. He was advised by Sage Narada to write Bhagavata Purana in praise of Lord Vishnu and there upon he wrote it. It is said that he derived immense satisfaction upon writing Bhagavata Purana and teaching it to his son the Sage

Suka. Bhagavata Purana. We are immediately besieged with questions. The foremost question is why the Maharishi was asked to sing the praise of Lord Vishnu? Why not Lord Siva or for that matter why not Lord Vishnu and Lord Siva together? We must not forget that Lord Krishna was a contemporary of the Maharishi who had been known as the Brahman in human form and whose teaching of Bhagavatgita was recorded in Mahabharata. This is further enlightened by the fact that the Bhagavata Purana, though contains all the avatars of Lord Vishnu, emphasizes Krishnavatsara by the greater part it occupies in the Purana. One should not forget that Maharishi also wrote Puranas connected to Lord Siva. The Maharishi is ( he is still living) a realized being and for him there is no distinction between Lord Vishnu and Lord Siva.

Another question that pops up is why the Maharishi was asked by Sage Narada to praise the Brahman, The Maharishi, being a realized person has no necessity to praise the Brahman. Sage Narada, also realized person need not ask the Maharishi to praise the Brahman. Generally everybody looks to the wise people for direction and imitate them even without a second thought. When the realized persons praise the Brahman, others follow them implicitly. In order to show the importance of Bhakti to people, Sage Narada, himself a bhakta asked the Maharishi to sing in praise of the Brahman so as to set an example and induce others to take up the path of Bhakti.

Yet another question arises. What is the need for either Sage Narada or Maharishi Veda Vyasa to give direction to attain Brahman when they were already realized persons? When everything has come from Brahman, everything has to go to Brahman because the cause, result and the ultimate destination is Brahman. The effort of the realized persons is only to accelerate the process. Besides Rig Veda says that a Rishi is one who always does good and thinks of helping the humanity. Thus the foundations of Bhakti were laid by the Maharishi through the Mahabhagavata Purana. Apart from Bhakti, the Purana gives alternate method of realization through Yoga. However, from all the avatars of Lord Vishnu we see that the principal thrust is towards Bhakti.

Bhakti, as mentioned earlier is a method through which a human being gets rid of all unnecessary thoughts because of the attention he pays for the name he keeps on either repeating or thinking. The name need not necessarily be that of Lord Vishnu or any of the Avatars, but could be that of Lord Siva, Ganesa, Surya, Rajarajeswari, Shanmukha or Hanumantha in which he gets special attraction. The attraction could be from the family sources due to the family's attachment usually called family deity (Ishta Devata) or due to the association of a group praying for a particular form of God. There is no initiation to Bhakti through a Guru or necessity for it. Everybody, irrespective of the sex, caste or age could get into this Bhakti mode. For this inducement to Bhakti, the family environment and the social environment are enough unless the individual resists from being drawn in. Even this resistance does not come naturally but comes only because of the association with people who take the path of temptations. So the first prerequisite for Bhakti is good company or Satsang. The only other requisite is to repeat the name of a form of God or the Brahman. People usually name their children after a God or Goddess and this makes them to take the name of God or Goddess when ever they accost them which is not infrequently. The second method adopted by people is to say the name of a God whenever they

make a remark. These two methods takes care to induce the child of the family to take the name of the God. There may be exceptions but they are only marginal and negligible.

The immediate benefit of Bhakti is driving away those unnecessary thoughts from the mind and make the individual stress- free. A stress- free person is also free from most ailments and is likely to live long and healthy because stress is found to be a cause of high blood pressure. As the intensity of Bhakti increases, the person's attitude towards life , fellow human beings and the other organisms changes. The person becomes more compassionate, understanding and forgiving.

Bhakti yoga is an accepted path for realization of Brahman. This has been the subject on which Lord Krishna was eloquent in Bhagavatgita while addressing Arjuna. He told Arjuna ( In effect we can take it that he was addressing everybody) that total surrender in the form of Bhakti is enough for one to realize Brahman. Realization depends on getting rid of Vasanas, detached attitude towards joy and sorrow alike and above all acquiring Satwa Guna. Mahabhagavata Purana is a source book to show that Satwa Guna ultimately wins over the Rajo and Tamo gunas and the avatars of Lord Vishnu who incidently represents Satwa Guna are all examples of how Rajo and Tamo Gunas though aggressive initially fail to stand against Satwa Guna. The story of Prahlada and Bali are the great examples to show how easy for people to become pray for temptations and ego. In case of Prahlada, it was pure Satwa Guna at work but it was shown that Prahlada also was temporarily under the sway of ego. In case of Bali, though a great Bhakta of Lord Vishnu, it was shown that Bali had fallen because of his ego. The essential point brought out through these stories was that humility is most important and the rise of ego is only for the down fall. The presence of ego is the sure sign that Satwa Guna suffers. Bhakti which is total surrender is essentially bringing out the humility in a person to the fore front, making him a person of Satwa Guna without a trace of ego. When ego is eliminated, he is a realized person because he sees the Brahman in everything. The Vedas, the Upanishads and Brahmasutras tell us that the moment ' I ' is removed, Avidya is removed and the person is a realized one.

Bhagawan Ramana Maharshi speaks the greatness of Bhakti because of its simplicity and accessibility. In his Upadesa Sara, it was said that Bhakti makes a man's mind concentrate on a single form of God whose name is taken in Japa which ultimately brings perception of non duality to the seeker; that means that the seeker finds no difference between himself and the Brahman because the ' I ' has vanished. The Bhagawan says;

Ajyadharaya strotasa samam

Saralachintanam Viralatah param

Meqaning: Uninterrupted contemplation which is like a stream of ghee and the flow of river, is superior to interrupted contemplation.



Bhakti, when it becomes a habit is an uninterrupted stream of mental japa of the Brahman in the form he thinks of. Mental Japa is a superior type of Japa than any other type and needs no special time or place. It may not be out of place to narrate the famous story about Sage Narada. Sage Narada is a well known Vishnu Bhakta and in fact he took great pride in saying that he never ceases even for a fraction of second to take the name of Lord Vishnu. It so happened that when he went to visit Lord Vishnu he was not given the usual attention by the Lord. It was after a while that the Lord looked to sage Narada and inquired after him as per the usual custom. Sage Narada wanted to know why there was delay in receiving his respects. Then the Lord said 'Look, Narada! A great Bhakta was loudly uttering my name and I had to find what the matter was.' Sage Narada was jealous and he immediately wanted to know the whereabouts of the Bhakta. When the Lord told him that he was a farmer on earth, Sage Narada went to the place of the farmer and found him tilling his fields. Sage Narada asked the farmer how he became a great Bhakta of Lord Vishnu. The farmer simply told him that while doing all the chores of a householder he keeps the Lord in his mind and he was no great a Bhakta compared to the Bhaktas like Sage Narada and others. Upon hearing the farmer, Sage Narada rushed back to Lord Vishnu and demanded to know how the Lord chose to designate the farmer as a great Bhakta. Then the Lord gave him a vessel completely filled with ghee and asked Narada to walk around the hall without spilling a drop of ghee. When the sage returned back, the Lord asked, 'Narada, how many times did you repeat my name?' The Sage said that he did not take the name of the Lord even once because his total attention was on the vessel to see that no ghee gets spilled. Then the Lord said, 'Narada for a little responsibility given, you forgot my name altogether while the farmer with all his responsibilities continues to remember me in his mind and shouts my name loudly now and then. Is he not a great Bhakta? This story gives the greatness of silent Japa by mind on one hand and shows that even great souls also develop pride which is another form of ego on the other.

Chaitanya Mahaprabhu had advocated Bhakti in another form. He would sing in praise of Lord Krishna loudly and dance bringing the song and dance to such a tempo where he would be in ecstasy and forget the surroundings. This approach was very effective because he was able to draw the others also. His method was caught up by the entire length and breadth of the country and perhaps it is from this method the Hare Rama Hare Krishna movement got the inspiration, Vaishnavism (The Path of Lord Vishnu) through Bhakti engulfed the entire Bengal, Orissa, Gujarat and several other places. The great Vallabhacharya hailing from Andhra, who was a realized soul had taken to Bhakti way to reach all the people irrespective of their religion, sex or caste in Gujarat. The Goudiya Mutt in Bengal started Radha Krishna Bhakti basing their philosophy on Brahma Vaivarta Purana, Bhagavata Purana, Vishnu Purana, Har Vamsam and Bhagavatgita. In the recent past great Bhaktas like Kabir Das, Mira Bai, Sur Das, Tulasi Das, Tukaram, Narsi Mehta, Rama Das, Purandara Das Annamacharya Thyagaraja Swamy and several others had shown the path of Bhakti for realization to large mass of humanity by their exemplary life and Bhakti. The Vaishnava Bhaktas are called the alvars and the Saiva Bhaktas are called Nayanars. These Alvars and Nayanars enjoy the same respect as the Lord Vishnu and Lord Siva.

The concept of Bhakti as formulated by the Veda and Upanishads is satwic in nature whatever be the God in question. However in non Vedic practices such as Bhairava Puja, Veerasaivism Bhakti had taken Rajo and Tamo forms. In these practices non vedic rituals and tantra were practiced. While Bhakti is essentially meant for the purpose of realization, the non vedic type of Bhakti was for immediate gains and the followers say that even realization is swift in these tantras. These were adopted by Vajrayana Buddhism also.

Whatever way one chooses to be a realized soul, it should strictly be approved by the Vedas and Upanishads. Any other form could be counter productive and may result in disaster. Jagadguru Sankara aptly said:

Satsangatve Nissangatvam  
Nissangatve Nirmohatvam  
Nirmohatve Nischalatatvam  
Nischalatatve Jivanmukti,

Bhajagovindam, Bhajagovindam.

Meaning: repeat the name of Govinda. And good company leads you to detachment. This detachment as you repeat the name of Govinda leads you to a state of delusion where you have no sense of joy or sorrow. This Nirmohatvam leads you to immutable reality about the self and ultimately this knowledge makes you a realized soul.

#### 14.MOKSHA OR REALIZATION

The word Moksha means release from bondage while realization means attaining the Brahman. How do these two words mean the same?

The human birth as mentioned earlier is significant because this birth among the four types of creation consisting of Devas, Manavas, Tiryagjantus and Jadas, is the only one which allows the jivatma to reach the Paramatma. When the jivatma reaches the Paramatma. Then the human being in question is a realized soul. Moksha liberates human being from bondage which means that the entire karma is exhausted and the human being is now free from the cycle of births and deaths. Unless the karma is exhausted, the human being can not attain Moksha. When the human being attains Moksha, his atma (jivatma) reaches the paramatma.

The human body is endowed with six chakras, Mooladhara at the base of the anus, Swaadhistana at the place of genetic organ, Manipura at the naval, anahata near the heart, Visuddha at the throat and the Ajna at a point between the two eye brows situated on the spinal chord. On top of the skull is the Sahasrara which is described as a thousand petaled flower. For every human being a serpent like thing called Kundalini will be at rest at the Mooladhara

Chakra. If the Kundalini reaches the Sahasrara by whatever method and remains there at the will of the individual, then the individual loses all the senses of self and finds himself in every object. At this stage, the individual loses the ego ( Aham). This stage is called Moksha because the individual finds no difference between objects, loses all the sense of joy or sorrow, does not feel either heat or cold. But there is a difference in this type because the jivatma did not give up the human body. However, the individual for whom the Kundalini reaches Sahasrara and remains there at will has the option to get rid of the human body and merge with Paramatma intending not to take birth again. This is Moksha by Yoga. The technique through which Kundalini is brought to Sahasrara from Mooladhara Chakra is vividly described in Mahabhagavata Purana.

When the human being gets rid of Avidya, then he is a realized soul. Whatever be the path adopted, Moksha is possible only when the Avidya vanishes. All the paths are the different directions to get rid of Avidya.

In Bhagavatgita Lord Krishna talks about different ways of attaining Brahman and ultimately brings the confused Arjuna to the right path. This path is essentially doing one's duty as though it was an offering to Brahman without expecting the fruits of his actions. In this path, it means that the actions and the results both belong to the Brahman, the doer being simply an instrument. Lord Krishna again reiterates that total surrender to the God (Brahman with a form) and doing the duty amounts to losing ego ( Aham).

Moksha is that state that is deathless, where there is bliss, freedom from the cycle of births and deaths, free from karma and above all liberated from all bondage. The human being with all his special status, who has been striving for better position in the material world is capable of reaching the state of Moksha and so should attain it in the life span given without squandering the precious time for worthless worldly gains. Jagdguru Sankara calls Brahman Satchidanandam. Human being though not different from Brahman does not know the truth because of Avidya and so the foremost duty of getting rid of Avidya should be attended to by every human being. He makes this very clear in the "Sivanadalahari". He says that you are not what you think you are but you are

Chidanandarupa Sivoham Sivoham.

The great sage Annamacharya sings: “ telisina mokshamu-teliyakapoyina bandhamu ( If you know it is Moksha and if not it is bondage)".