

14. Bharatheeya Culture

Dharma (righteousness) is the way of life that confers lasting joy; the *Shaasthras* are the source of *dharma*; they lay down the rules of *dharma*. The *Shruthis* and *Puraanas*, the *Shruthis* and *Ithihaasas* are all included in the term *Shaasthra*. Of these, the *Shruthis* are the most authoritative. The others all follow the *Shruthis* and keep in step with them. Bhaaratheeya culture is the expression of such sacred ideals. Throughout the ages, this culture has been providing spiritual teaching and training in a friendly fruitful manner. The *Puraanas* are but simple and sweet expositions of the *Shruthi* ideals of life; that is why they are called, the comrades of man.

Those who study the *Vedhas* and understand the principles direct from them are called *Shrothriyas* and *Naais-thikas*. They are the highest grade of seekers. Those who understand them from the popular texts like the *Puraanas* and base their conduct on that knowledge are of the middle grade. They get inspired from some excellent poems and dramas also and they follow the *dharma* that is sought to be explained through those media. Thus, Hindus have tried to spread the principles of their culture through various means among the masses.

Bhaaratheeya culture teaches not merely the truth about the visible objective world; it lays bare the truth of the subjective invisible world of the spirit also. This is the task of *Sanaathana Dharma* or *Vedha Dharma*. This religion has in it the principles of all contemporary religions. Those who doubt this should examine the scriptural sources in an impartial spirit.

Due to the wide influence of Western civilisation, absence of exposition and explanation by persons who have accumulated experience, inability to clearly grasp the meaning of the texts, and neglect of the Sanskrit language which is the precious treasure of India, truth about the greatness of Bhaaratheeya culture is largely unknown today.

Hindu Culture is World Culture

As a diamond shines in splendour when it is cut into many facets, the foundation principles of Hinduism will shine brightly and illumine the world, when one starts the inquiry, patiently and enthusiastically. How can you know the taste if you do not eat? How can you know the depth, if you refuse to enter the water? Those who spurn Bhaaratheeya culture without practising it are as foolish as those who dismiss a dish without tasting it.

Hindu culture is the pillar and support of the nation; it is the backbone of the spiritually adventurous; it grants both this world and the next to all beings. It is really World Culture, the culture that the world needs. Other cultures assume various forms in various climes. But, the culture of Bhaarith has asserted eternal values, values for all times and all climes--like *dhaya*, *dharma* and *dhama* (compassion, virtue and self-control). It has not bent before the pressure of patronage or persecution.

The impact of Western civilisation has given rise to certain new sects that attempt to re-form and modernise Hindu religion. Hindusim has the strength to correct their egoism and establish concord. Hinduism is the one religion that proclaims the truth that there is nothing separate from God and it proves it too. Because people are not able to understand this fundamental integrating principle, hatred and malice have grown in the followers of other faiths.

Religion has its root in the mind

There are not wanting Indians who see only the externals of religious observance and start condemning religion itself, as fraught with disaster to the people. These people even argue that

religion itself should be abolished from life. Alas, their insane slogans remind us of the efforts of the ant to judge the depth of the sea or that of the cat to drink up the Ocean of Milk. Perhaps they do not realise that their negation of religion is itself growing into a 'religion'. Had they known this, they would not have ventured into a field of which they know nothing.

Others attempt to design a composite religion, without first seeking to manufacture a composite mind. Unless all become of one mind, all cannot welcome a single religion. Religion has its root in the mind. Correct the source; the end will be corrected. Ensure that the basement is strong; then you can build a house of many floors over it. Unless you ensure the strength of the foundation, the house will topple down. To plan the destruction of religion without realising what religion does to man, is itself the height of ignorance and irresponsibility. Of course, injustice, indiscipline and superstition might raise their heads in the name of religion. But, religion never sanctions these.

The chief purpose of religion is to make man aware of his relationship with God. Every person has full rights for worshipping God and winning His Grace. But, whatever the road, whichever the path, the Goal is the same. *Vedhic* religion will not permit you to quarrel with any other religion, or hate it or decry it. It insists on tolerance and respect. If you seek to develop love towards all men and the spiritual outlook that will sustain it, you will have to follow the discipline laid down in the *Shaasthras*, for your stage and state.

The sign of the *Mahaathma*

What is Truth, what is Love, what is God? Unless these three are clearly understood, man cannot fulfil himself, nor can he realise his true glory. But, people nowadays interpret these, according to their pet fancies without delving into their implications or even without approaching those who know those implications, for instruction. *The Shaasthras* emphasise that it is inner conviction, inner purification that matters. Also that the conviction must be expressed through good deeds. This emphasis is now ignored; only the gesticulations of the outer man remain. So, people believe that the observance of the "Don't touch" rule is itself sacred, sanctioned behaviour. This is 'kitchen religion', not *Vedhaantha dharshana* or the religion expounded in the *Vedhas*.

The fault lies in those who talk and write about religion, without putting the preaching into practice. Thought, speech and action must be co-ordinated and complementary. Each should be in strict accordance with the others; that is the sign of the *Mahaathma* (high-souled), the *dharmic* individual, the Pandith. Those who do not adhere to this are *Duraathmas* (bad souled), not *Mahaathmas*. To be truly religious is to follow the footsteps of these *Mahaathmas*.

Religion has to confer knowledge of the Self; that is its real purpose, not providing matter for club conversation or coffee-hotel-debates. Every one has to strive to know his own truth and experience it. That striving is the heart of religion; it is the goal of life. Without it, life is as bad as death. Only when superficial activities are transcended does true religion begin. It leads to *Brahmaanandha*, through the awareness of one's identity with *Brahmam*.

Good acts that help promote *Bhakthi*

Bhakthi is the foundation for all religions. Of course, *japa* or *homa* or offering of flowers, or going on pilgrimages to holy places cannot be taken as *bhakthi*! They are good acts that help promote *bhakthi*. True *bhakthi* opens the door of *jnaana*. Faith in God and His Glory and His Grace must be supplemented by discrimination of the Real and the unreal and the control of the

senses. Those who argue whether *bhakthi* or *jnaana* is superior for God-realisation are travellers in the dark, for, they argue from ignorance. The unripe fruit and the ripe fruit have different tastes, but, they are the same fruit; the unripe fruit becomes later the ripe one.

To understand clearly the basic principles and to explain to others these principles, a knowledge of Sanskrit is essential. *Samskrithi* or Culture has arisen out of Sanskrit. Sanskrit is the most ancient of all the languages of the world. It is the original spring out of which has flowed all arts and all ideals. The root words of languages are all to be found in the *Vedha bhaasha* or Sanskrit. It is invaluable for world culture, but, it is a cause of concern that it has now fallen into neglect.

Some among the supporters of Hinduism who profess to revive it are engaged in the establishment of their own name and fame, than the work which they have to do. They fight among themselves, shouting "I am more worthy of respect", like the Yadavas who destroyed themselves by internecine war. The herd of monkeys ruins itself as well as the garden it enters; so too, these people ruin themselves and damage the reputation of *Vedhic* religion itself.

***Vedhic* religion should be revived at all costs**

But, there were many great individuals who sacrificed their all and suffered untold miseries for the sake of reviving and re-establishing the religion of the *Vedhas*. Their *thapas* (penance) has made this religion survive, with whatever little strength it has. Without them we cannot imagine what would have been the fate. Take an example from contemporary affairs. Every one knows that the whole country is preparing single-minded to keep away the Chinese hordes. But, few recognise the fact that, but for Shankaraacharya and his establishment of Adhwaitha and his fostering of *Vedhic* religion, India would have become another "China". Deep reflection is needed to realise the enormously important work carried out by such great personalities, incarnations of God or of a part of His Glory. "The advent of the great is for no little task", it is said. They do not move among men to discuss tawdry stuff or take part in trivial themes.

Those *Mahaathmas* bound themselves with the duties and obligations of *dharma*; they were ready to engage in activities dictated by the *Vedhas*; they gave up all desire to cater to the ego; they respected the rules and regulations prescribed for them by the *Shaasthras*; they curbed all evil desires; they dedicated themselves to the promotion of *Vedhas* and the revival of the Hindu religion. There is no comparison between them and the religious teachers and expounders of today. Those great men spoke from actual experience and so their authoritative exposition promoted faith and encouraged belief. The exposition by the leaders of today have no base in experience and so, faith is being undermined. For the sake of mankind, this religion has to be revived and strengthened. For, *Sanaathana Dharma* (Eternal Religion) has maintained itself even today, in spite of the devastating current of Time, for this very purpose.

From an article written by Baaba for the Mandalothsava Sanchika, Sanaathana Vedhaantha-Sabha.

You must examine every moment of your waking time whether you are observing the precepts of Dharma or straying away: Dharma is not just a convenient excuse to derive benefits from others, not an opportunity to fulfill your duties to others!

You remind others of it, when you desire to squeeze some advantage from them. You must remember not only the rights that Dharma confers but also the duties it imposes.

Sathya Sai Baaba