

Essence of Indian Spiritual Thought (Sanathana Dharma)

The way of life envisaged for people of India by their sages and saints of yore (from time immemorial) is known as "SANATHANA DHARMA". Sanathana in Sanskrit means eternal and Dharma means a way of life. Hence, Sanathana-Dharma simply means a way of life that leads man in the evolutionary direction (higher order).

Religion is a set of Do's and Don'ts prescribed rightly or wrongly by its founder for his followers, demanding unquestioning faith and loyalty to his teachings. In this sense Sanathana Dharma is not a religion for it has neither a founder nor a beginning. It is eternal and Universal as nature is, and always catering to the evolutionary instincts of man at all levels. "Sanathana Dharma" is also known as Hinduism. The invaders from the north west frontier of the subcontinent who invaded India in the recent historical time, called the civilization beyond Sindhu river as Hindu and it became the name of Sanathana Dharma. In fact there is no such civilization called Hindu as seen in our Puranas (legends) and Ithihasas (history).

Sanathana Dharma envisages four directive principles i.e. **DHARMA** (right way of living), **KARMA** (sum of good and bad actions that binds an entity to the creation or world), **PUNARJANMA** (re-birth) and **MOKSHA** (salvation).

One who leads one's life in accordance with Dharma (right way of living i.e., following the divine principles like, love, compassion, non-violence mentally and physically, charity, doing allotted or accepted duties in the right and dedicated way, service to God by way of serving fellow-beings, practising spiritual practices like devotion to God, meditation etc.) will not get into Karma which is the cause for re-birth. Thus, one who leads one's life in accordance with Dharma, for him there is no Karma and hence no Punarjanma (Rebirth).

Those who do not lead life in accordance with Dharma shall get into the bondage of Karma and hence take birth again and again (Punarjanma) to work out their Karma.

Those who lead life according to Dharma, incur no new Karma and also wipe out accumulated Karma of the past and, when left with no Karma, there will be no Punarjanma (rebirth). Then the Individual Consciousness (self or ego) dissolves into Universal Consciousness, attaining eternal rest from the cycle of birth and death. This is Moksha (Salvation).

These are the four fundamental PILLARS of Sanathana Dharma.

The philosophy propounded as the guiding light for the evolution of man in India, and in accordance to with which their way of life is moulded by Sanathana Dharma, is known as VEDA-VEDANTHA.

VEDA & VEDANTHA:

VEDA means knowledge. Veda is the cosmic science which deals with knowledge of various cosmic laws that are operating in creation; their propitiation in the manifested form for the well being of man and the world at large.

Vedas declare that there are innumerable divine laws (Gods and Goddesses which are often mistaken for plurality of God) governing the creation and each one can be identified in symbolic form, invoked, worshipped and appeased to salvage the individual, environment and the world. Various methodologies like Worship, Yagna, Homa (certain vedic rituals) and other technical ways are envisaged in the four branches of knowledge known as Rigveda, Yajurveda, Saamaveda and Atharvanaveda. Vedic way of life is for the welfare of man and, following it, will lead him to higher orders of life in the course of his evolution.

VEDANTHA is pure knowledge that deals with the un-manifest, all pervading, Absolute BEING. IT is the source of all knowledge, bliss and peace, from which all creation (animate and inanimate) manifests, sustains itself and finally dissolves back into the same BEING from which it had emerged .

This Absolute Universal Being cannot be invoked, worshipped and appeased like the Gods and Goddesses (Cosmic laws), except by dissolving oneself into THAT.

Vedanta is the philosophy for the evolution of individual beings into UNIVERSAL BEING. Therefore vedanta is the path of salvation.

The Vedanthic way of life is very simple and easy and can be followed by one and all. Ignorant or intelligent, sinner or saint, all can follow this way of life. After all, it is to realise and establish in that Absolute Universal Being which is the cause of everything.

The Essence of Vedantha is as follows :-

1. Behind the ever changing transient reality (creation) lies a never changing eternal reality.
2. The ever-changing reality is confined by, time and space; and THAT never-changing eternal Reality is beyond time and space and it is unaffected by the changing realities.
3. The goal of ever-changing reality is THAT the never-changing reality, for the never-changing reality alone is the ABSOLUTE truth.
4. The ever-changing reality is called CREATION which includes the entire animate and inanimate creation (manifestations in varied forms within time and space).
5. The never-changing Reality is called ABSOLUTE BEING which is nothing but Universal Consciousness.
6. From this never-changing Reality (Absolute Being) the ever-changing creation manifests in terms of time and space like waves on the surface of the sea.
7. The waves have no independent existence; they are dependent on the sea which is the only source of all manifested waves. The waves are made up of the same sea water and hence there is no difference in essence except that the waves are transient, dynamic, changing segments while the sea is static, full and never changing. So long as the wave is there as a wave, it cannot become the sea. But the same wave, when it recedes and merges into the sea, ceases to exist as a wave any more. Now it is there as the sea itself and the sea is ever there without any changes.

Similarly, when individual ego, like a wave on the sea, is individualistic in nature, it is subject to change owing to time and space. When the same individual Being dissolves into the Universal Being, it ceases to exist any more as an individual Being, but IS there as Universal Being (consciousness) which is ever there.

8. The ever-changing reality (creation) which is the manifest form of the unmanifest Absolute is called dynamic divinity (energy & consciousness) and that never changing eternal Reality (unmanifest Absolute) as static divinity (Absolute consciousness).
9. Hence, Hey Man, your true nature is not the dynamic body, mind, intellect or ego, but that never-changing, static, eternal Reality (Universal Being which is all pervading, ever full and has no birth, death or rebirth). Therefore, the goal of the individual ego is to reach that UNIVERSAL BEING.
10. All that exists in reality is only the UNIVERSAL BEING which pervades both manifest and unmanifest fields alike. All that has manifested (animate and inanimate) is nothing but universal being itself. This alone is the Absolute truth.
11. The Universal Being is eternally aware of itself and is the silent witness to all its manifestations and their inter reactions. It is totally non-interfering with the creation just as the bottom of the sea does not interfere with its waves. The Universal Being is the finest of the fine existence which is full of Bliss, Knowledge and Peace.
12. The Universal Being can Transcend ITSELF to a state of ABSOLUTE i.e., the state of ZERO which is beyond peace, bliss, knowledge and awareness. Zero is beyond the only ONE and it is the OTHER SIDE of the Universal Being (SHUDDHA - ABSOLUTE).

THE REALITY OF CREATION

If the UNIVERSAL BEING is the only Truth, then what about creation with all its diversities ?

A dream is very real so long as it is being dreamt, but on waking it simply disappears as if it never happened at all. Similarly, creation exists only in terms of time and space and once the individual consciousness wakes up in that UNIVERSAL BEING shedding its

individuality, the whole creation with all its diversities disappears (just as the dream disappears) and then creation is perceived in the UNIVERSAL BEING as only a transient reality and not as an Absolute reality. Hence, the dualities of the world will not have affect on the entity which is established in that UNIVERSAL BEING.

Once the entity has lost its individuality by dissolving its ego in the UNIVERSAL BEING, which is unattached and unaffected by the changing creation, the entity is freed from all desires, sorrows, attachments, pains and pleasures that exist in the world. When established in that everlasting, non changing eternal BEING, one ceases to exist through ego, intellect, mind and senses but continues to be in the BEING as Universal BEING. This is salvation. Then, Here or There it does not matter for IT (Universal Being) is everywhere and there is nowhere to go in FULLNESS. JUST STATIC (Sthithaha - Anchored in Absolute Being).

PLAY OF KARMA

What prevents Man from establishing himself in that state of ABSOLUTE BEING ?

Karma (sum of good and bad actions) is the barrier which prevents an entity from establishing itself in that Absolute BEING.

Karma is not only the barrier hiding the true nature of an entity but it is also THE cause for its rebirth making it manifest again and again within creation (time and space) through ego.

When this Karma is erased or cleansed, the entity ceases to exist through its ego and dissolves into the Absolute BEING just as a wave recedes merging into the sea.

How does Karma begin ?

The will of God (Absolute BEING) to create (manifest itself in many fold) is the ACTION and manifestation of creation (animate and inanimate) from HIMSELF is the REACTION. Thus the divine law of action and reaction (Karma) was set in motion.

It is this cosmic law of Karma that governs, controls and beholds the creation through its ACT OF BALANCE at all levels of creation without fail. No action of any Being anywhere in the creation can escape from receiving the reaction at an appropriate time in a relevant birth. The accumulated actions and pending reactions will cause the entity to take birth again and again till it escapes from the Karma by erasing it. The collective Karma too has its own way of operation. No Being in the creation is free from the shackles of Karma. The act of balance in creation is always ON through the law of Karma so long as the creation is there.

GOD (ABSOLUTE BEING) does not sit in judgement and punish or reward for the good and bad actions of the entities in creation. This concept that GOD is the punisher or awarder is primitive and born out of ignorance. God (Absolute Being) is the silent witness to all that goes on in creation and HE remains by HIMSELF in silence, bliss and peace i.e., in a state unaffected by creation. However, God has set this greatest divine law of Karma into motion which operates at all levels of creation in varied ways carrying out the act of balance (judgement, punishment or reward etc.) in creation. No definite ways of operation of the law of Karma can be fixed because infinite are its ways of functioning.

How to cleanse this accumulated Karma and realize UNIVERSAL BEING ?

VEDANTHA advocates meditation on the form or formless UNIVERSAL BEING as the Supreme way to realise the Eternal BEING. The goal of meditation is to liquidate the Karma and dissolve the ego into the UNIVERSAL BEING. All the other modes of spiritual practices like worship, devotion, prayer etc., ultimately lead to meditation on the UNIVERSAL BEING, because meditation alone can lead to one's own dissolution into that ABSOLUTE BEING.

Here or There, it does not matter for IT is every where. You have nowhere to go except dissolving yourself into THAT all-pervading UNIVERSAL BEING, for eternal rest from the cycle of birth and death, thus, Anchored in the ABSOLUTE .