

In Tune with Nature

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PREAMBLE

THE UNIVERSE, OUR HABITAT, A HOLISTIC MODEL COMPRISING OF A DIVERSE VARIETY OF SEEMINGLY DISPARATE OBJECTS, BOTH INANIMATE AND ANIMATE, CAPABLE OF FUNCTIONING IN UNISON AND TOTAL COORDINATION, IS A MARVEL WHICH CANNOT EVER BE REPLICATED BY ANY PROCESS WITHIN THE CAPABILITY OF THE MOST BRILLIANT HUMAN MIND.

“Body and mind are the two perfect tools that living beings are endowed with. While the first one starts functioning automatically with the first breath, the latter one needs a push from external sensory perception, but needs to be guided properly to be of use. The architecture of the body and mind which makes use of various principles of art and science has no parallel anywhere else. Seeing that the human beings have been gifted with an intelligent brain with the freedom for carving out a happy existence in the universe, makes one wonder at the trust that He has in us. Whether we are deserving of that trust is what we have to prove by managing the affairs of the Universe for betterment and well-being of every inhabitant. Let us use our capabilities, the way it is intended in tune with Nature and not according to our own caprices.”

AUTHOR'S NOTE

My nine decades of experience during tumultuous changes in the world has strengthened my beliefs in the lesson contained in our Scriptures. Some of the traditions and methods found in the Hindu sacred texts like *Prasthanatreya*, *Puranas* and *Itihasas* captured my interest and I decided to incorporate my views in a wider canvas by using *Santana Dharma* as a solution to our present predicament of destruction of our environment. *Sanatan Dharma*, as a way of life, which majority of people of the Indian sub-continent believe in, has taken care of the nation's interest in all spheres of its peoples' life. The traditional practices followed by us were based on our *puranic* lore and old scriptures. Its impact has positively influenced many countries of the near East for a long time. Many of the ancient practices like yoga and meditation have been acknowledged and followed by rest of the world as beneficial to mankind.

While science and technological advances have improved many aspects of the human life, the single-minded search for increased physical comfort and material happiness alone has corrupted our tradition and old cultural values to some extent. We have neglected the basic concept of a truly holistic and self-regenerative environment which has been our legacy from early days of our existence.

The aim of writing this book is to provide a clearer understanding of Hindu way of life or Santana Dharma, based on our Scriptures. It can help reverse the current travails facing us. I also want to emphasize that the opinions expressed in this book are based on my experiences and readings and if it offends or upsets anyone, that is not my intention at all.

I wish to record my thanks to well-wishers and friends for their support. Special mention to my daughter Vinita Srivalsan for editing the book.

PREFACE

In the vast expanse of the Universe, Earth is the only hospitable planet known to be capable of sustaining diverse life forms. Whatever may be discovered due to our intelligent capabilities in future and how long it will take to make such a place habitable for us is not the issue here, but how long we can continue in the way we are going on now before our present habitat becomes unliveable.

The period in the long history of the Universe when the small population of *homo sapiens* lived an organised life away from the wild is only a miniscule 7000 years or so. During this period, the use of advanced technological facilities has been in existence for less than a century, but we are seeing gruesome spectacles of disturbances and calamities, which have no business to happen, in spite of our professed intelligence.

On the other hand, these days we are always stressed and do not have sufficient time for earning a living. People are spending millions of hours looking for easier and comfortable methods of living, finally ending with no time to enjoy the comforts, forever worrying about the future or the past and adding on to our impatience. Some of newly introduced medicines for controlling or as permanent cures for certain diseases after research have been found to be ineffective to control the new strain of viruses and germs, as these have become resistant to old medicines. In certain cases such as cholesterol and BP which are built-in features in the human body meant to control normal functioning have been misrepresented by certain medical research agencies to make undue gain to themselves. These indicate our incapability to provide ideal solutions to problems that arise. All these problems have appeared in the last century alone, while many earlier centuries passed by without any troubles. Earlier people resorted to tried and tested remedies in vogue over years as most of the diseases were seasonal in character or limited to specific pattern of ailments affecting different types of people. These have now become irrelevant in a great measure as people are no longer permanent settlers of specific areas and have to adjust to different climatic and type of foods. Invariably people are apt to get affected with different sorts of ailments due to maladjustment. Things get worse when people try remedies advertised in papers with the sole intention of fleecing the public with falsehoods of efficacy of certain types of tribal and herbal preparations. Yoga and nature cures have recently caught the attention of people and are being tried out without proper assessment and without the intended results. A large percentage of advertisements are gimmicks to beguile gullible people into buying needless stuff. Similarly advertisements on the superiority of certain organic and natural cures are resorted to only for boosting sales and thereby profits of some concerns. During the last century we have been digging out many minerals for conversion into products for our day to day use, and throwing away the waste, many of them poisonous or incapable of assimilation by soil, thus making the environment dangerous for other species and future generations. As a consequence, the regular habitats of animal species have shrunk causing human-animal clashes more common and destroying the perennial peace that we enjoyed earlier.

If only we follow the teachings of our forefathers who had a clearer understanding of Nature without making violent changes, we will do less harm to the other species and the environment. A keen student of Nature will observe that the lower species very rarely violate the norms of mutual adjustment. On the other hand every one of the creatures assist in routine maintenance of Nature in some way or other and improve the vivacity of the planet Earth, making it an ideal place to live in. But people are more easily influenced by the pomp and show, not being unduly bothered by the ruination of our habitat, as long as they can enjoy an easy and comfortable life. A true teacher or a Guru can indicate the right path but it is for us, the followers, who have to decide how to be physically and mentally prepared to follow the instructions implicitly and practice it in the true spirit as these are meant. A mature person who understands and absorbs the basics and essential points of the process should be able to modify these practices suitably for him to carry out the practice without violating the central principle. For beneficial outcomes from these practices, a person should be fully aware of the working of his mind and body, how to improve their capabilities thus improving his potential.

Many of us consider that the primary aim of human life on Earth enjoyment of material and sensual pleasures and devote most of their time and energy for that purpose. It is perfectly fine as long as it is within limits and do not create problem for others. But it is easily said than done as normal human beings cannot curb their instinct for more. Then it becomes a hindrance to the rest. As a member of the intelligent species we have to ensure that the bounties of nature are shared equitably. We should be thankful that we have a lively habitat and Nature which has provided us with the capability to do many positive things with sufficient ease, comfort and happiness. True happiness is within our grasp if we live in communion with Nature. Our association and interaction with other objects of Nature gives us many chances for emotional satisfaction and sensory pleasures.

To find true happiness we have to go beyond the limit of our mind's prowess. Our ancestors who studied this problem in depth have come out with definite indicators on how to achieve happiness during our stay in this material world. This world is not a private space for a few selected entities alone but intended for use by all creatures inhabiting the space.

Therefore all objects have equal right to savour the fruits of this world and enjoy their existence. Keeping happiness as our goal we have to rework and modify our systems and thinking style to be in tune with the rest of the world by considering every other element therein as an equal partner. Though I acknowledge and appreciate the commands and teachings of seers and prophets of the major religions, in my opinion, most of these lay more stress on what should not be done or avoided to keep the flock together and get their material objectives fulfilled. Most of the sermons and directives enshrined in their Holy books shows that such activities ensure easy passages for their entry into heaven. It is noticed that such specific and cast-iron instructions provide no leeway for the faithful to depart from the laid down orders as these are supposed to be implicitly obeyed. It is in this respect that Indian philosophy is different. Understanding the vagaries of human nature it suggests different modes of approach depending on each person's character and limitations but all the while being in tune with Nature. In its true sense, the system endorsed by the ancient seers caters

for the happiness and prosperity of the entire universe living to the spirit of the motto '*Loka Samastha Sukhino Bhavanthu*'. It is defined as a way of life followed since ancient times by people who had settled down in the Indus region and their progeny who spread towards the east and south in what was known as *Bharatavarsha*. It was not the outcome of one man's imagination and did not come about because of oppression of a class of people by another group. Hindu way of life accepts the common origin of the entire observed world within its compass and also to quite some extent beyond the material world. For proof, many of our rulers in the distant past have always welcomed people of other faiths whether they came for safe haven or for business. They never believed in coercing people of other faiths to change unless they desired to do so willingly. Hindus always lived in amity with others who moved away because of minor differences in thinking but each one of such offshoots like the Jains and the Buddhists believed in the universality or oneness of the universe. It is perhaps the *Mughals* and later the British who coined the term (called the people inhabiting *BharataVarsha*) Hindus and their religion as Hinduism. Much earlier, before the Christian era, Persians had been referring to people of this region as Hindus, meaning the people from *Sindhu* river, as *Indus* was known at that time. As Persian language has no phonetic sound equivalent to 's' they called the inhabitants as *Hindus*. If one searches various edicts and earlier literature, people inhabiting *Bharata Varsha* were referred to by their caste or region of origin, such as *Mauryas*, *Kakatiyas*, *Kushanas*, and *Marathas* etc. The reason is not far to seek. The philosophy followed by this group of people was not laid down by any one person, but fashioned from the insights contributed by many sages and seers belonging to different regions with the same intrinsic philosophical thread accepted by every inhabitant of Indian sub-continent. This is now widely acknowledged as the Hindu way of life. We are highly indebted to the sages of old, forefathers of our Indic culture and intellectuals of other nations which existed in the old civilisations, and modern thinkers who have delved deep into our philosophy of life to clarify our understanding further. What is written here is not meant to deprecate the contributions of the other great religions in the progress of the world. The author has lived with people of different religions closely and really appreciates many of their contributions to our culture. According to the author, the basics of many wise practices followed by other faiths are not widely disparate from our culture except for the importance we give to all objects of the Universe in equal measure. The fact that they are at variance in some aspects from our culture is only because of the turbulent times people lived through in those areas that saw the birth of two of the most populous faiths, Christianity and Islam, both offshoots from original Jewish culture. Both believe in a monotheistic Invisible Power whose messages are spread either through the *Bible* based on teachings by Jesus Christ and his prophets, or through the *Holy Quran*, the word of God as recited by *Angel Gabriel* to *Prophet Mohammad*. Where these differ from the Hindu way of life and why can be easily explained thus- Christianity and Islam are based on the teachings of *Jesus Christ* and the word of God propagated by *Prophet Mohammad* respectively and centred primarily round the social ethics. On the other hand, Indic culture was not the brainchild of one individual but that of many sages/seers of an earlier era. On noticing the symbiotic relationships between the objects found in Nature, they meditated and realised that existence and survival was not the ultimate aim of human life- it was salvation or freedom from future birth. The Hindu way of life is the

outcome based on their ruminations. These were initially given out as '*Shruti*' and later compiled and edited from '*Smriti*' as the four Vedas by Sage *Veda Vyasa*, and explained in detail through Upanishads and *Puranas* (Epics) by different sages for the better understanding of lay people inhabiting the land of *Bharat Varsha*. It lays stress on the fact that all beings have been created from the same source and the main aim of life on earth is to attain salvation by living in tune with Nature. While evolution caters for the eventual transformation into a human being how they steer their life depends on them entirely. The human body and the mind are the two gifts which Nature has provided with which can help to achieve this paramount objective and how they utilise these facilities will decide the success or failure. This is the understanding I have gathered during my life as the meaning of Vedic culture.

This book does not purport to deal with after-life, except in passing, and what is given in appendices is just to stimulate in children an interest to explore those aspects. These are vital for an individual to live happily according to his interest or aspirations and accomplish the ultimate aim of his existence. Without some unknown but powerful source to control the working of the Universe, we cannot have such an orderly system or working environment. One can expect such an energy system to have its own ways to stabilize the conditions if and when it goes out of control such as a natural disaster. The power that human beings wield is so puny that it cannot sort out such problems. No one is expected to dictate what others should do but if the people live in an orderly way enjoying its fruits while ensuring that everyone gets their share, there should not be any complications in the world. However as a Hindu, I cannot but allow everyone to choose their own style of empowerment and life as long as it does not go against the universal principle that we all are 'one in essence' and cannot wish or bear ill-will for others. Hence what we should do to improve matters is to readjust our lifestyle so that our inclinations do not propel us away from moderating our needs and comfort to such levels and not create situations which affect Nature.

An effective start can be possible if we have a clear understanding of the start and process of creation, and how the mineral resources, diverse plants, insects, birds, animals and human beings fit in the scheme of our Universe and Nature. Perhaps the time is now ripe to revisit the teachings of ancient seers and pore over the ancient scriptures. I am saying this because Hinduism and specially its scriptures like *Bhagavad Gita*, *Brahma Sutras* and the main *Upanishads* have gone beyond the mainly materialistic views on existence and dwelt upon esoteric realm of life after death, the relationship of the humans with Cosmic Consciousness and the common bond between all the objects inhabiting Planet Earth. These texts were the result of deep introspections and realizations of many ancient Sages who spent their lifetime seeking the Truth of Creation and our existence. They came to the conclusion of sameness/equality of souls in all living beings, big or small and that the facilities available in our habitat is to be shared and utilized for the welfare of all inhabitants. These principles are expressed tersely as '*VasudeivaKutumbakam*' and '*BahujanaSukhayaBahujanahitaya cha*'. Once we identify with these basics, we will realize that our material happiness is not the ultimate aim of existence but living in tune with Nature taking every living organism along with us,

considering them as equally important as ourselves. This will hopefully show us a way out of the present imbroglio.

In order to ensure the rationality of the subject, this book is presented in two parts.

Part I will deal with a brief view of the Universe with stress on the evolutionary changes over eons of time, settling down as an agricultural community and further to the progressive changes in the western world due to industrialisation and its adverse effect on environment.

Part II will delineate the eastern way of life fashioned by people who populated the Indian subcontinent which influenced many countries in the East until the time of the First World War and how it can assist in making our world a truly peaceful haven for creatures of diverse characteristics to live in amity and bliss.

Appendices 'A' and 'B' are meant mainly to elucidate the points depicted in the text.

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PART I

THE UNIVERSE, OUR HERITAGE AND EARTH, OUR HABITAT

CHAPTER 1

A BRIEF REVIEW OF THE UNIVERSE – OUR HERITAGE

Universe consists of millions of galaxies, each made up of billions of stars and planets, stretching over a vast and limitless expanse. It has been in existence for a very long, long time and each and every celestial object has been moving at different speeds along diverse trajectories of their own with very few hitches over time. Planet Earth, where we dwell, is just one of the many objects in our solar system which forms part of the 'Milky Way' galaxy. The stretch of the 'Milky Way' alone extends over one hundred thousand light years. The age of our Universe has been put at about 14 billion years and that of our Sun at 4.5 billion by modern scientific methods like the expansion of Universe and radiometric dating of meteorites respectively. Recently captured images by NASA shows the status and shape of the universe as it existed 14 billion light years back. It has been expanding since creation, and still continuing to do so.

The sun is the brightest star of our solar system, which is one of the many such solar systems in the Universe. Earth is one of the planets in our solar system orbiting the sun. All the constituent planets and other objects forming part of our solar system are composed of diverse elements, divergent from each other mainly in composition. All are generally spherical in shape but of different sizes and located in orbits at varying distances from the Sun. Compared to the immensity and power behind the creation of the Universe, our planet is itself just a small speck and the human being so minuscule and insignificant in size and age in comparison. This indicates how puny and powerless the human beings are, compared to the Cosmic power of Nature.

For the purpose of this book, we shall confine ourselves to the study of our habitat, the Earth.

Our habitat, planet Earth is the only one that we know which has a hospitable climate and environment capable of sustaining living beings. It is blessed with all the essential resources such as a perennial supply of water, oxygen, nitrogen and sunlight needed for sustenance of plants, animals and humans. Because our planet Earth is situated at a sufficient distance away from the power source, the Sun and is shrouded by an ozone layer, it escapes the searing heat but gets sufficient warmth for the growth and well-being of plant and animal life. It also spins around on its axis tilted at an angle and moves in an elliptical orbit around the Sun, causing the day and night sequences, thereby ensuring different seasons and climatic variations around the globe. Diverse climatic conditions permit growth of variety of food and fodder in diverse seasons suitable for its occupants inhabiting different regions. The plants, insects and animals whether based on land, water or air are seen to be equipped with body structures suitable for subsisting in those climates and engaging in activities befitting their nature. It is not surprising therefore that certain varieties of plants and animals may have different looks and characteristics in some specific regions, rarely seen elsewhere. The fruits borne in similar genus trees could also have slightly differing taste based on the composition of the soil and climatic conditions there. The universe can be said to be a holistic masterpiece of architectural and managerial brilliance designed by Mother Nature and our planet is the

prime jewel among the creation catering to the specific needs of diverse plants, insects and animals partaking in its bounty.

Our planet has been in existence for millions of years and its present state does not even remotely resemble how it used to be at the start of creation. Vast transformations in shape and content have taken place over the ages, with developments taking place ever-so-slowly so as to harbour and populate over millions of diverse evolving organisms. It was only in recent times that scientist could figure out when and how the first life-form evolved on Earth. It was a single-celled micro-organism which possibly appeared about 4 billion years ago. Appearance of the cyano-bacteria which was an improvement thereon capable of producing oxygen as a by-product of their metabolism was the next stage. Scientists have placed their presence on Earth around 2.7 to 2.3 billion years (3.5 Ga ago as per the earliest fossil evidence of life on Earth). Originally photosynthesis is attributed to have begun with the appearance of cyano-bacteria- i.e. life began to produce oxygen which happened about 3 Ga ago. Around 2.5 billion years or so the Earth's biosphere changed and the atmospheric temperature reached up to 72 degrees Celsius, the maximum temperature at which photosynthesis can take place.

Planet Earth is made up of a large variety of material, like soil, water, metals and elements, mixtures and compounds (solid, liquid and gaseous) which are inert and holds a host of live entities (beings) in the form of plants and trees, insects, reptiles, animals, birds and humans. Over three quarters of our planet's surface is covered by water and the rest is land. The land surface was originally a single supercontinent known as GONDWANALAND that was formed from the unification of several cratons in the later neo-proterozoic age, which merged with EURAMERICA in the carboniferous age to form PANGAEA, and began to fragment in the MESOZOIC times. This split into two mega continents- LAURASIA and GONDWANA -beginning in the late Triassic age. Gondwana broke up about 180 million years ago. This continent eventually split into landmasses which we recognize today as Africa, South America, Australia, Antarctica, the Indian subcontinent and the Arabian Peninsula. LAURASIA comprises the northern part - North America and Eurasia.

Out of these, the existence of the Americas and Australia were unknown to others until the 15th and 16th centuries respectively. Though these continents were also inhabited like other areas they had not progressed comparatively as much as the rest at that time. The reasons are twofold. Firstly the continent of Americas, Australia and Antarctica are situated far away with wide ocean stretches from the other continents and scattered islands. Secondly, Antarctica is located in the South Polar Region with many meters of ice on top and a freezing cold climate. Naturally in earlier times there was no possibility of communication with people in those lands from parts of Africa and Eurasia. Similarly Greenland, a highly ice-capped and sparsely populated landmass till a few centuries back and nearest to North America, could not have been approachable from Eurasia as the sea between was full of dangerous and floating submerged icebergs which might have been difficult to cross as well.

On the other hand, information about people and their lives in the rest of the areas especially around the Mediterranean Sea like Egypt, Greece, Italy, Turkey etc as also Mesopotamia to the East and the regions of North Indian river valleys and down south up to Sri Lanka were known to some extent. This was due to people to people contact and historical monuments, scriptures, epical books and travellers monologues. However, except for the stories from travellers and traders (to some extent), particulars about the land south of the impregnable Himalayas in the north of India were not known to many others.

The land surface over the Earth is dotted by features like mountains and valleys, deserts and forests, rivers and lakes. The climate varies from extreme cold to terrible heat which changes appreciably with the seasons, which herald rains, gale-force strength winds and snows at different locations and specific times. Flora and fauna with special characteristics and capabilities to live and survive in such conditions inhabit those areas. So we have a wide variety of plants, vines and trees as also insects, reptiles, animals, marine and avian life beside humans inhabiting our planet. Normally more than adequate foods of widely different varieties and tastes are available to cater for the entire need of all creatures on Earth based on climatic conditions prevailing in those locations. Availability of a variety of elements and compounds on Earth assist and support plant and animal growth in many ways. Nature has also provided living beings with different senses and a mind and body containing many features as needed for leading a purposeful life suited to different environments they normally inhabit. They sustain normally on strength of the diverse minerals in the soil, fodder and victuals available in the area to satisfy their hunger and thirst or move out to fresh pastures when these are depleted.

Certain regions of the primitive environment catered for the essential food items for healthy existence of a judicious mix of the various species of creatures, both herbivorous and carnivorous. Generally the smaller-sized animals have larger litters each time to cater for the depletion in their numbers caused due to kills by carnivorous animals, sickness and other natural causes. A look at the diverse objects living and non-living that had their origin and existence in our planet will not only show the wide variety of plant species and animal species - marine, sky and land, but also the innumerable variations of the parts these are comprised of. You must have seen umpteen varieties of plants of different shapes and sizes, some standing upright, some crooked and twisting and many clinging on to sturdier trees like different vines. Each would have their characteristic shape, size and colour of leaves, flowers with a mix of vibrant colours and similarly fruits of various sizes, shapes, colours and tastes. These in turn provide shelter and food to a wide range of land and avian animals according to their needs while helping themselves propagate and flourish. Over the years these life forms have re-invented themselves with newly evolved features to give them the latitude to live under changed environments.

Similarly a look at the avian, land and marine creatures will show a multiplicity of varieties of differently shaped external organs and limbs, capable of exploitation in their hunt for food, shelter, safety and procreation. It will be seen that various types of external organs capable of usage under diverse conditions as needed have been provided for each and every creature's healthy life. Whenever these were found inadequate, during evolution

its genetic process ensured that these got modified or adapted slowly to suit the different environment somewhat. This indicates the vibrant beauty and variety of the nature's process though it is slow. Life term of each and every species is generally limited within a stipulated range. For most part of their life, the lower order beings spend foraging for food for sustenance or resting. Many species have specific periods or seasons during adult life for mating and propagation of the species. It is generally seen that bigger animals have fewer brood in a litter whereas the insignificant majority lay many eggs or have larger brood to make up for depletion in numbers due to hostile elements or falling prey to enemies. During their activities that the lower order insects and animals undertake, they utilize and consume many products for their survival and pleasure but they always give back and at times much more than what they take from nature. These contribute largely to support the existence of others in many ways. One can notice that during their life time, their activities also cater directly or otherwise to the needs and requirements of others.

It will be seen that Nature is never static and various aspects thereof keeps changing always. So there is nothing in Nature that can be said to be permanent. Though not visible to the human eye there are many activities that are happening within the Universe which can impact life on Earth any time. But the process of evolution has followed a certain pattern which caters for continuity while ensuring the inherent nature of the living world. In the normal course there is no dearth of energy in our solar system for it to go on for a few millions of years unless it meets its doomsday due to some galactic calamity or man-made blunder. There are a lot of things in Nature for human beings to learn from and appreciate. The intrinsic beauty of form, activities and variety of nature and its constituents can keep one occupied pleasantly for long periods and besides giving unbounded happiness and pleasure. In spite of our superior intelligence the human can learn a lot from other species and life-forms on how to conduct their lives for betterment of the world. In their normal lifetime of 60 to 70 years, human beings are engaged in a variety of activities, educating themselves and working for a living, all with the main object of getting the most out of life, in terms of enjoyment and personal achievement. Due to the lack of intelligence, the lower order insects and animals go through their life driven by their instinct. As the most intelligent beings, humans have to take on the responsibility to ensure that our habitat continues to harbour the wealth of flora and fauna for all time to come by ensuring the *equilibrium of Nature*.

A brief survey of the way the universe came into existence will help us to understand how Nature had ensured this from the beginning of creation. Universe is made up of many disparate objects – some inert and the rest alive. Initially our habitat comprised of the inert elements followed in later times by compounds. During the early period many changes took place in nature by upheavals of Earth due to earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, tsunamis and erosion by wind, rain or heat. This process continued for a number of years when a suitable environment evolved which led to the creation of the first life form, a single cell. All the living species on seen on planet Earth, we can say, can be thankful to those basic genetic cells formed at that time. From that time till the present, various life-forms have evolved to keep up with changing environments and requirements of the divergent species. The evolution therefore seems to be a

deliberately planned process and not a hurriedly put-up one, which ensured stability and equilibrium of the creatures with the interplay of natural elements. This will be evident when we study the evolutionary process in detail. It will be seen that from the first single cell bacteria onwards, Nature had seen to it that the prevalent environment then existing, ensured total support for the prevailing flora and fauna and to evolve gradually and gently to accommodate and provide for the evolving generations of living beings. Each and every living mechanism has been equipped with the wherewithal to pursue their lifestyle and exist comfortably utilising the facilities provided and evolved further as required. Safety and survival of the beings were always a top priority as can be evidenced from the way they prospered and evolved. Darwin's 'Theory of Evolution' has shown that life evolves suitably to conform to the changes taking place in Nature. Following paragraphs will help one to understand some of fundamental aspects of the process of evolution.

While it is possible to retrieve the original elements from their changed state by specific mechanical or chemical processes, the changes that take place in life forms are normally irreversible during lifetime and they invariably go through a process of growth and decay and revert to their original state much later. When life ends the body decays and reverts back to the basic elements in time. Creation of life forms from the basic elements comes under the purview of Nature and the human beings have no role to play. The life terms of individual life forms follow a pattern with minor variations unless afflicted by accident or disease. The geographical location and climatic conditions favour different varieties of plant and trees and these decide the suitability of habitation for disparate beings. It is the availability of potable water, foodstuff and comfortable climate that decide one's habitat and this is especially important for the lower order of beings. Forest cover and grasslands used to occupy over percent of the land area and it provided a viable habitat for innumerable species of the animal and avian world. These provided a convenient place for stay and propagation of their species. For the humans with their ingenuity and ability to cope with adverse climatic and other conditions, staying in any place within reach of basic amenities like water and power would not pose much difficulty. As the existing life forms are mutually interdependent, no single species or a few among them can hope to live on its own forever if the others do not contribute to the support of the system. Doing away with some species will reduce the efficiency of the life supporting systems somewhat. These life-supporting systems are so closely and cleverly intertwined in the world that we have seen the world flourishing as a compact unit for millennia. A study of the process of evolution will indicate that moderation is the key to ensure welfare and continuity of progress.

The proportion between the various species and life forms, in the worms and insects, the avian and the amphibian as also the animal and human population are generally been to be comparable and within limits, perhaps to maintain a state of equilibrium. The same is also applicable to the vines, plants and trees as they are the major source of food for most of life forms. If it is upset due to any reason, some or other law of Nature will take charge to correct the disparity. It could be pestilence, famine, flooding or earthquake. Different plants follow different systems for its propagation - some grow from the roots, a few from cuttings of branches and mostly as seeds. In the insect, birds and the animal

worlds, the progeny emerges out from cocoons, eggs or the mother's womb, where they develop from an embryo formed through male-female union, which further transforms and gets delivered as a young living one of the kind. Insects, birds and some reptiles lay eggs which, after a time, hatch into young ones of the species. Some are reared by the parents till they are able to fend for themselves whereas some manage on their own and survive, if lucky to escape death at the hands of marauders and continue with their existence. There are many methods by which propagation of plant and animal life is achieved. At this time our planet is passing through dramatic climate changes due to massive deforestation, we should devote more time and effort to increase the forest cover. This will also help in resolving man-animal encounters due to humans encroaching into areas which used to be wild animal habitats earlier. It was mentioned that nature takes care in ensuring proper balance in animal population. In case of human beings, sex-drive is active over many years of their adult life and it is incumbent on them to limit the progeny, knowing the disastrous effect of over-population on planet Earth.

Different species of living beings pass through various stages in their respective lifetimes. In certain cases the life form starts as an egg and emerging later as an insect, reptile or a bird, a few from an egg to a worm and pupae to a butterfly and yet others taking as a young one in case of animals and humans after a period of growth inside its mother's womb. Within the same species there may be difference in time periods in the different stages, but once the young one is born, the time taken to mature is shorter in case of most of the land-based animals compared to humans.

In the case of most animals and the humans, the mature female ovum fertilized by the male sperm during the sex act gets attached in the female womb. The womb becomes a safe haven for the embryo to grow into a foetus during the period of gestation. This period can be different for dissimilar species. Most of the animals are multiparous and therefore the female can have many offspring in a litter. Their sex-act is limited to specific season or time of the year and then the adult female is said to be in heat. It is the olfactory sense that guides the males to the ovulating female of the species. As a result ova is fertilised and serves the main purpose of propagation of species in their natural habitat. On the other hand in the case of human beings the fascination for sex is due to a feeling of love, affection or desire. Since human females ovulate every month up to certain age they can plan a family of their choice. During development of the child in the womb all nutritional needs are provided through the mother's life-systems. Development of various limbs and systems take place gradually in a systematic manner. In the normal course delivery of the fully developed infant takes place at the end of the gestation period. When the umbilical connection with the mother is cut and the infant starts breathing, it gets its own identity. Among the lower animal species the young ones find their bearings soon after birth and starts fending for themselves within a few days. Among the avian and higher animal species some amount of time elapses before they can forage for sustenance on their own and hence needs attention from the nursing mother. Not being endowed with the same intelligence as humans, the lower order of beings depend on their inbuilt traits and inherited aptitudes and senses to plod their way ahead along with some nudging along by their parents. The longest period of helplessness at birth and thereafter during infancy happens in the case of humans, where

the development of inherent skills needed to navigate in the world is remarkably and surprisingly low. Why it is so, would be an interesting aspect for study.

A cursory look at the concept and execution of the universe will reveal how expertly each component were designed and created, taking into account the nature and type of the divergent species that would inhabit the planet at a future date. Every animate or inanimate object has been given a specific role to play in the scheme of things happening over time periods, with every object without exception contributing its might managing, interacting and contributing within their areas under control, for the overall welfare of each and every one, in consonance with the laws of nature. Detailed studies about the architecture of the plants, insects and animals on the one hand and that of the humans on the other will show that the human version is much more complicated. The life pattern of the former group is simple, limited to fending for food, survival and propagation of their species without in any way endangering the balance of nature.

The multifarious objects have been endowed with specific qualities and functions to perform and each has been provided with requisite resources to execute those functions diligently. Every individual object has been crafted in such fine and perfect detail with features designed to carry out its functions and even subtly adjust to changing environmental features slowly and gradually over generations. I think it is well-nigh impossible to improve upon it without inviting undesirable consequences. Every living being from time immemorial, whether insect, animal or humans have generally inhabited such areas where environmental conditions were conducive for their sustenance and welfare. Their habitats were selected based on availability of food, water and shelter. Vast areas of fertile lands with tree cover and water resources were shared in common by diverse species of the animal kingdom, whether they belonged to carnivores or vegans but except for satiation of hunger, they rarely came in conflict. After the evolution of human beings initially as forest dwellers it was they who hunted the animals for satisfying their hunger and not vice versa. The requirements of different species sometimes caused minor scuffles and skirmishes but in time the wild animals and humans wisely kept away from each other. In fact the early humans respected and even worshipped some of the species as holy. Most of species had carved their own selected areas /spaces of activity where they thrived, but even while living in segregation, whether on land, at sea or air, every being from the smallest bacteria to the biggest animal, lived an irrevocably intertwined existence with each one supporting some and sustaining another in some way or other. From the beginning the universe has gone through many natural disasters like floods, cyclones and tempests and the flora and fauna have suffered in consequence. Eventually, they all came to terms with these calamities and the universe continued to exist in peace and amity.

The foregoing indicates the extensive variety in environment to cater to the taste of a large number of types and species of living beings to ensure their successful functioning and growth according to their individual/group preferences. The universe inclusive of all heavenly objects functions in unison to provide an amiable environment for all beings, both animate and inanimate. Individual design of every being depends on the weather and climatic conditions of their habitats, and additionally they have the ability to adjust

and adapt somewhat to varying conditions. The only proviso or stipulation expected was that all should live in amity by judicious utilization of the available facilities and equitable sharing between the users. Hence the use of the well-known aphorism "*VasudaivaKutumbakam*", meaning world is one indivisible community. It is mainly due to this that the equilibrium of the universe is always maintained while it is never at a standstill and changes are taking place every moment. The flora and fauna comes to life, grows and decays following nature's law as long as no one species dominate or decimate the others. Over population or increased mortality of one or more species were often restored through play of natural events so that a satisfactory balance was always maintained.

Some of the salient points to note are that Nature catered for sufficient time for things to settle and provide a suitable habitat for the different species to adapt and the chemistry was inbuilt for making minor adaptation and evolutionary changes in progeny to survive in minor climatic variations. Waste from any source was never accumulated but these either became survival food for some other creature in the same form or these were decomposed into basic elements for recycling as required.

It is humanly impossible to fully comprehend and appreciate the intricate artistry and skills that has gone into the making of the tiniest part of even a simple living plant or insect, let alone the coherent/logical working of the universe containing myriad of objects. There is no greater wonder which we can ever experience in our lifetime. Therefore the least expected of us, is to use this bounty for our individual and social benefit sensibly so as to ensure that it is available in good measure for the use of the coming generations as well. The beauty of the sights and sounds of nature around us alone can keep us happy and engrossed for our entire life-term.

CHAPTER 2

EVOLUTIONARY CHANGES ON EARTH PRIOR TO INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION AND THOSE WHICH HAPPENED AFTER

At the outset every one of us must appreciate the massive planning and painstaking effort that would have been necessary to create such an idyllic and easily maintainable habitat fit for diverse species of living beings from naught. The progressive changes to our habitat, the Planet Earth and the living beings also indicate the perfect planning of minute details of every aspect, the priorities and the positioning of these at the proper time right throughout the preparation and execution phases of creation. This is perhaps the only perfect holistic model that human beings will come across ever. As far as the changes that have happened since the start of civilisation, the credit goes to the intelligence of mankind, his inquisitive nature and ego.

Planet Earth is the only known habitat so far found suitable for human beings having the rudimentary needs for a healthy living. As we have learnt from earlier chapter, the conditions available on Earth today were not there at the time of creation. Earth's topography and environment has been undergoing subtle changes over the years, some natural and others manmade. In spite of all such happenings, Mother Nature has always ensured that our environment is capable of providing for her inhabitants and sustaining them so far. Like a doting mother she has shown that good practices and sincere hard work can provide needed resources for a happy and comfortable life. It behooves us, the humans, as the intelligent species to ensure that the environment continues to be self-supporting as hitherto if we are to lead a meaningful existence. Let us therefore review the progress made so far and known till date, to get an idea as to how effective we have been in ensuring our continued existence on Earth.

The expanding Universe of diverse bodies is an interesting subject only because of its content-both sentient and non-sentient- and how they relate to each other. Initially and till the creation of the first human, all changes were unsullied and natural as the diverse creatures of the animal kingdom very rarely upset the natural equilibrium. Human beings were also pawns in the hands of nature at first but they soon learnt ways to manage their lives by adapting to natural conditions or by making necessary changes as required for their own comfort. Study of the conditions through which the Universe and its inhabitants went through in time as also the inter-relationship between the sentient and non-sentient elements were made possible by the modern scientists. They devised tools to estimate the relative ages and times when major changes occurred, thereby providing a logical time table of the transformations. In order to determine how the human beings progressed through the ages they depended on archaeological, anthropological and genetic information gathered from relics, fossils, rock paintings, sculptures and monuments pertaining to the period before the invention of writing. Based on those findings, it has been established that our ancestors have been around 6 million years in this planet as Hominids (a group of two-legged mammal). These gradually evolved into the anatomically modern form of human (Humanoids) who are likely to have evolved around 200,000 years back in Africa and reached behavioural modernity about 50000

years ago. Neanderthal people, our forefathers, belong to a class known as Homo sapiens and are believed to have lived between 100,000 to 30,000 years and were the first to bury their dead. (If certain later discoveries like the finding of some excavation of ruins in South India and that of a human skull recently in Greece, this theory may have to be revised). They were the first people who started to live in a group towards the end of the Palaeolithic age. End of the Ice Age is put at about 11,700 years and with the consequent environmental changes taking place around the planet, the Homo sapiens started migrating to habitable lands in Europe and Asia. The existence of the continents of Australia and Antarctica in the southern hemisphere and the Americas towards the west of Europe and Africa beyond the Atlantic became known to those living in other continents much later. In all these lands, after the transition from a semi-barbarian to cave and then a forest dweller, men became hunter-gatherers and journeyed as a nomadic groups. These tribes or social groups belonging to a common ethnicity moved from place to place searching for food and available shelter in hospitable climes which could sustain them. Such locations were normally around river valleys and basins in their respective regions. When they found such regions with fertile land and perennial supply of water and comparatively hospitable climate it gave them the impetus to settle down permanently. Soon they started planting fruit-bearing plants and trees and resorted to farming. Domestication of animals was their next step to aid in agriculture by using them for ploughing the fields and their dung as fertiliser. Their milk, meat and hide came in handy as food and for making items for household purposes. Initially men had depended on use of stone and later iron items as implements. Then they learnt to use clay for making pottery and once they learnt to mine the ores and purify these, the metals like copper, gold and silver were used for making vessels and ornaments. While copper was the first metal to be discovered around 9000 BC, its use as an alloy with bronze started around 2300 BC only. Smelting of iron was first done around 5000 BC. These were in use during the early civilizations, bronze mainly to craft artefacts, tools and idols for temples and iron as a general purpose metal for implements for household use and agrarian purposes generally. After noticing the regularity of the seasons and gaining the knowhow of what grain is ideal for the land, agriculture became the major activity of the settlers. With the availability of metals and trained artisans to make better articles and implements for farming and household purposes, agriculture flourished. Disposal of the surplus necessitated establishment of storage facilities and trading centres, development of road and waterways for movement of goods from surplus to needy areas. All these helped to improve trading between regions far apart and better understanding of other people, their habits and customs. Information flow from travellers to distant lands brought news of lands across the seas and this resulted in finding safe routes over the sea and the building of boats and sailing ships. People became rich and settlements prospered in course of time.

Start of civilisation

Remnants of civilized society in Ancient Egypt, Mesopotamia and the Indus Valley flourished during the Bronze Age and the Iron Age which followed. Chinese civilization along the Yellow and Yangtze Rivers placed at about 2200 BCE. A host of other smaller

civilizations also came up, populating the fertile lands in the vicinity of almost all the major perennial fresh water bodies like rivers and lakes.

It was much later that we came to know that there were many tribes and civilisations in other parts of the world during the early centuries, like the Mayans, the Incas, Native American tribes and Apaches in the Americas and many aboriginal tribes in the remote corners of Africa, Australia etc. They had their own lifestyle with witch doctors with magic potion, weird dances with masks and many tribal spirits or gods, but generally all of them lived in close alignment with Nature. Recently during excavation at a hill-top in Southern Turkey at Gobekli Tepe, archaeologists discovered some Stonehenge type of pillars, approximately 18 feet high made of lime stone. The pillars were found to be arranged in concentric circles and splashed with bas-relief of animals and cavalcade of gazelles, snakes, foxes, scorpions and wild boars. These are supposed to have been built around 11600 years ago soon after the end of Ice-Age, which took place nearly 7 millennia before the construction of the Great Pyramid of Egypt. There were no signs of any dwellings or source of water nearby indicating that these were the work of nomads who has no access to wheels or beasts of burden to carry these heavy pieces weighing around 16 tons each. It could possibly have been therefore a sort of temple which shows the beginning of a religion or a religious concept. In other words, this means that religion and language were there even before the so-called start of civilisation in the Middle East.

Growth of civilisation

Early agriculture was restricted to the vicinity of water systems, mainly rivers. Improved agriculture led to surplus foodstuffs in agricultural areas and safe storehouses. For disposal of surplus needy customers had to be located and facilities for transportation, such as roads and vehicles or boats when waterways were available. As a result, trading flourished along with need for additional homes for housing the labour and workmen proficient in carpentry and metalworking etc. Small townships based around the trading centres near main roads and waterways were established away from the agriculturists who lived in villages near their fields

Soon after the basic requirements of food and shelter were taken care of, it was the turn of the civilized societies to be established. Progression of arts and crafts, songs and drama developed. Initially waterways were used for navigation and transportation of goods. Gradually roads were built which made commerce profitable. Progressive improvements in agricultural processes and patterns made the communities prosper and consequently led to increase of trade across the regions. Soon some villages gave place to small townships and created more job opportunities for different trade categories. With increased prosperity people started accumulating personal possessions and purchasing property in places away from their fields with better facilities. There was a natural increase in migration of rural people into towns looking for work these settlements became the nuclei for growth of cities and mega-cities later. Higher density of population, lack of sufficient jobs led to imbalanced distribution and consolidation of wealth in the hands of a few resulting in deprivation of basic needs of the poor. These led to many undesirable social consequences like corruption, petty crimes and offences

which necessitated imposition of strict social laws and norms administered by a governing council of elders.

Consolidation of riches in the hands of a few individuals was a natural outcome which brought in its wake diversity of interests in those persons. This caused disgruntled people having similar interests to group themselves for better safety and fortify their interests. Initially it was each group fending on its own against the others and those stronger naturally reaped the spoils. They maintained paid followers or armies to defend their wealth and property. More workmen moved from villages to towns in search of jobs and the more affluent towns became cities. Powerful leaders from neighbouring regions naturally eyed these opulent cities for attack. A system of fortifications and ramparts were constructed to keep away raiders and invaders and slowly a few banded together and created a regime under a king or a chieftain. This was the state during the time of the Mesopotamians, Egyptians, Greeks and the later kingdoms of Romans. These chieftains or kings were almost always at war with someone or the other. A few like the Romans and Greeks invoked their Gods for help to win over their rivals in these realms the people believed in polytheistic religions and in times of war. The Iliad and the Odyssey portray the way Gods helped their devotees to fight their rivals. It looked as if one God fighting against another. Students of history will notice that the religion followed initially was polytheistic which flourished in the area around the Mediterranean Sea. The capricious nature of the Gods and Goddesses of the Greek and Roman religion led one Greek philosopher to state that philosophy has its base in religion. During those times the behaviour of kings and leaders showed that many of them believed in morality. For example, the fighting was stopped at sundown and the opposing armies went round collecting the wounded and the fallen for treatment or cremation from the battlefield till the hostilities started again next morning. With the gradual waning of moral principles later, the code of conduct in later wars underwent a sea change and guile and stealth or blatant violations based on superior power became the order of the day. It could be seen that over the last two millenniums, the Middle East and Europe were the scene of many wars resulting in the fall of kingdoms and new ones replacing those. Geneva Convention in 1864, the League of Nations in the 1920's and the United Nations organisation after World War II has brought some change and certain guidelines about the conduct of the countries in war. Chance of a large-scale war in the future is remote since the major nations with nuclear capabilities will have to act responsibly because any untoward action will make life on earth untenable for everyone.

Growth of trade

It was natural that trade in goods started growing with the increasing population and the new needs of civilised society and the hankering of rich people for luxurious articles. Initially these were restricted to spices for cooking, silks and gems and later spread to handy household articles and artefacts developed by well-known artists produced in different parts of the world. Requirements for raw material like metal ores for crafts for which expertise existed were imported by countries not having these from countries which had plenty. While transportation overland was possible between countries with good road connections mostly, water route like canals and rivers were also utilised when

found cheaper. Gradually to meet requirements from overseas clients for rare and exotic items like spices, silks, carpets and precious metals, trade was carried over sea routes between continents. In between, while at different ports of call, they bought and sold requisite items on the way to destination and back. These became regular trade routes which helped in the development of faster moving ships, initially with sails and later powered by steam or diesel engines. These helped the nations like Britain, France, Portugal and Netherlands in setting up trade settlements and later subjugating and colonising them.

Certain European nations having commercial interests in colonies located in far-flung continents, capitalised on the expertise so gathered and got mastery over the sea routes. This helped them later to use naval power and deceit to subjugate many local regions and kingdoms in Africa and Asia. The consequent intermingling and interchanges resulted in some conversions to new religion and transformation or at least introduction of a few new customs and way of life among the people of the colonies. After the discovery of Americas in late 15th/early 16th centuries, Europeans moved in and many wars broke out between them to establish control over regions. Areas which came under their control were strengthened and colonised thereafter. In South America, the settlers were mainly the Spanish and the Portuguese and they used the local inhabitants as a labour force to work on their mines, and cotton, sugar, coffee and tobacco plantations. Diseases brought by the European settlers like measles, influenza, typhus and small pox had a detrimental effect on the natives and reduced their population to a great extent by the 1600's. With the depletion of local labour force, the settlers turned to Africa and started the slave trade from Africa which flourished till the beginning of the 19th century. This influx of Africans gradually transformed the societies they were enslaved in. After colonisation of Australia by the British, workers were found from locals, the indicted prisoners and people from South Sea Islands. One of the results of colonisation by the Europeans was the induction of some of their customs and lifestyles in their areas of influence. Taking a world view, one can say that it has united people of different linguistic and cultural denominations under one umbrella to ensure peace on earth by inducement of overall material benefit, but it is a very slender thread to hold them together. While material benefit may hold back many, it may also give rise to some problems caused by those with other interests. A slight hiccup on the part of any member of the community or group could cause wide repercussion which would be difficult to avert.

Start of religions

According to Wikipedia, **Religion** is a [cultural system](#) of designated [behaviors](#) and practices, [morals](#), [worldviews](#), [texts](#), [sanctified places](#), [prophecies](#), [ethics](#), or [organizations](#), that relates humanity to [supernatural](#), [transcendental](#), or [spiritual](#) elements. However, there is no scholarly consensus over what precisely constitutes a religion.

One of the earliest emotions shown by the animal kingdom was fear of the mightier or stronger one in the herd and the smaller herbivorous animals were equally afraid of the

carnivorous ones in search of prey. They took precautions to evade onslaughts to some extent by using the special features they were endowed with. However human beings were not too afraid of ferocious animals compared to the natural events like thunder, lightning, hurricane and cyclone which they could not decipher with their initial limited intellect. These struck terror in their minds and they tried to reduce their impact by getting under some sort of shelter like the first cavemen. But it also set them thinking and finally coming to the conclusion that these were possibly caused by 'evil spirits'. Therefore they tried to appease these spirits with prayers and through offerings of fruits or sacrifice of animals. During the early days, most tribes had soothsayers or oracles who, the tribesmen believed, wielded control over nature's spirits. Since such persons knew how to make magical potions to cure diseases as well, they were feared by the community and followed their instructions without question. Faith or belief in a person or unseen powers provides a convenient handle to forget current problem and still the mind at least temporarily. With passage of time, they noticed that many of these events were seasonal and cyclic in character. Though unable to decipher the reason for these happenings they noticed that the rains and the weather were beneficial by providing them with items for satisfying their hunger and thirst for sustenance. In due course of time these unknown powers were given names and revered for their bounty and support and raising them to the level of Gods with one Supreme One and others subordinate. These were only just a belief initially and cannot be considered as an established religion.

The earliest evidence of belief or religious rites like going round the body of a deceased, periods of silence and mourning after the death, caressing the remains and returning to the grave site. This is something which the early humans learnt from Nature as seen during the treatment of the dead by other elephants of the group. Neanderthals buried their dead along with the implements they used, which indicated their belief that there is a life after death. Evolution of the human brain with the expansion of the neo cortex of the brain gave an impetus to the evolution of religion from its rudimentary form of simple faith and belief to the creation of theories based on theology. We can now authoritatively state that organised religion had its roots in the Neolithic evolution that began about 11000 years ago in the near east along with several other locations around the world.

This may be the start of religion, meaning thereby belief or faith in the existence of some unseen or abstruse powers that controlled natural happenings which people could not understand fully. The embodiment of these hidden powers became the later-day minor gods in pantheism, totemism, shamanism, paganism, polytheism, animism and monotheism and worshipped by several tribes and sects in different regions of the world. Civilised communities like Egyptians, Greeks and Romans followed polytheistic religions, but Gods in their pantheons were not the same. Towards the end of the Egyptian empire some of the Roman Gods and Goddesses were incorporated into Greek religion. Much later in the 1st century AD a few Christian beliefs got added which is known as Gnosticism. In all these religions, the followers believed that Gods and Goddesses exercised powers in specific fields and people prayed to them for relief accordingly. Homer's epics, the Iliad and the Odyssey, mentions about the Romans and the Greeks asking for help and assistance from Gods in their wars against enemies. Egyptians prayed

to many Gods, like Amun-Ra, Mut, Osiris, Anubis, Ra, Horus, Thoth, Hathor, Sekhmet and Earth, each of them responsible for different areas of one's life. The Egyptians also believed in afterlife as noticed by the items of household items left for use by the departed souls of mummies entombed in the Pyramids. This highlights the fact that Egyptians and later the Greeks and Romans too believed in polytheism and theory of rebirth.

Growth of religions

Faith and religion initially served to provide people who could not understand the forces of Nature. They attached faith to a superior power and propitiated themselves to this power, which later became religions. But at times groups with different faiths led to fights and gave rise to oppressive measures by the stronger. There have been many cases of genocide in recorded history which caused the exodus by the Jews, followed by a new religion Christianity, with the birth of Christ which also denoted by the 1st year Anno Domini. The period from almost the 2nd century AD saw clashes between the Christians and other empires.

Evolution of the Abrahamic religions had their origin in the Middle East and gives an interesting insight into the growth and differences between Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Abraham, a tenth generation descendent of Noah is the founder of Judaism around 18th century BCE. He is the Patriarch of Judaism and was staying at Ur in Mesopotamia when he was commanded by God to leave that place and settle in the Promised Land, Shechem, a Canaanite city, with a covenant for him and his followers to adhere rigidly. Judaism followed by the Jews and the later ones which evolved like Christianity, Islam and Bahai'sm were also monotheistic with definitive changes in way of worship, prayer and customs. These paid more importance to ethical way of living in a community and was intended mainly to manage the affairs without tension between the individuals. With their experience the elders in the community knew that the usual reasons for disputes and confrontation between people were the lure of wealth and women. The Ten Commandments was meant to address this problem and later elaborated or set down as a dogma in the Hebrew Bible (also known as Hebrew literatures, Old Testament or Tanakh), Holy Bible and the Holy Quran, to be followed by the followers of the respective religions. While these three religions had evolved from the same basics, the latter two felt that their religion was superior and their path was the correct one to follow.

The original Biblical Jews were Black African people who were ruthlessly persecuted by the white man (Romans). The Roman-Jewish War in 66 A.D. marked the peak of this persecution and the end of the original Black Jews (Hebrew-Israelites) as a nation. Abraham's grandson Jacob had 12 sons who led the 12 tribes of Israelites. Joseph, one of the sons of Jacob who was sold into slavery to Egypt later became the assistant to Pharaoh. Moses, was 7th generation descendent of Jacob, around 400 years later, who led Israelites out of Egypt and received the Torah from God, Yehwah, at Mt Sinai. The ethnic Jews/Israelites are Levantine Semitic group and the Arabs are Arabian Semitic group. (Yehwah, god of Israel, whose name was revealed to Moses as four consonants

YHWH, was later changed by Christians to Jehovah). After the Babylonian exile in 6th Century BCE and especially after 3rd century BCE, Judaism became a more common universal religion. The word Yehwah which was the name of God as understood from the time of Moses was replaced by Elohim around that time. Christianity which is one of the major Abrahamic religions was similarly born out of strife and constant persecution by the Romans. Prophet Jesus (Son of God) was a black Jew born between 3BC and 0 AD and died around 30 to 33 AD according to computation by different scholars. Later in the 8th century came Prophet Mohammad, the Last and final according to Islam. Islam is again an offshoot of the same with certain modifications founded by Prophet Mohammed in 8th century AD. All the three Abrahamic religions are monotheistic but the commonality ends there. Each of them have separate scriptures and follow widely different rituals. Though all the above three religions originated and prospered in the area around Jerusalem, there were many basic and ritualistic differences between them. Gradually the latter two religions got divided into many further sects and sub-sects formed and functioned separately from original ones. Besides, these sects differed between themselves too over even minor matters. Right through the period of the Roman Empire and beyond, differences between these three religions crept up on many issues which caused rivalry and war between them. It started with the contention of Islamic scholars that their faith is the only true one and the scriptures of the rest, Holy Torah and Holy Bible are corrupted. The Jews have however kept a low profile whereas the other two have been at war for a considerable period of time, starting from the 7th century. During the first two centuries Islamic forces made headway through sheer force of the sword. With passage of time, both these religions dispersed into different sects, under different hierarchies with altered objectives, each one claiming to be the real one. Though the conflicts reduced in intensity, Islamic forces gradually gained control over large areas in the Mid-Western Europe and the Middle East. The confrontation is now not visible in the open because of various other reasons, but still some violent sects are carrying on terrorising some of the liberal sects and others endangering peace. Tensions between two different ethnic communities with one of them being mistreated may have been one of the reasons for the growth of these religions. The main role of all religions is to unify mankind by inspiring noble thoughts and actions so that all live in harmony. During the next few centuries upheavals of a different kind with ideas of nation-states gaining attention became the norm in certain regions. In Europe most of the nations were ruled by kings with Christianity as main religion. Beyond the Mediterranean in the Gulf States to the east, it was the sway of Muslim rulers. Russia and Siberia had Tsars ruling with Russian Methodist Church as the main religion, Tibet was a Buddhist stronghold but little known to the outside world, and various regions in India to the south of Himalayas were ruled by different dynasties and kingdoms. China was again mostly Buddhist along with its neighbouring Korea, Japan to the east, Siam, Cambodia and many of the islands down South. After the discovery of the Americas and new sea routes opened, trading by the Europeans nations increased followed by colonisation of weaker regions through conquest or treachery. By the time of the First World War there was some stabilisation of the nation-states. The prominent religions of the day, Christianity and Islam through their preachers and Mullahs however made inroads into areas occupied by tribes in the continents of America, Australia, Africa and Asian islands. Whereas the Christians were

busy proselytising in the first two continents Muslims concentrated on the other two. Normally every individual should have the freedom to follow his belief without forcing or antagonising others. However there will be some die-hards in every religion and certain sects of Christianity and Islam (both religions together account for 57% of world population) similarly minded are actively pursuing to improve their share through proselytisation or by aggressive conversion because of some of their contentious beliefs. That is their method of getting power over others in these days of current type of democracy based on vote banks.

Change of activities of groups of people

There was not much change in the lifestyle and activities of population around the known world from the start of Christian era till the end of the sixteenth century but for sartorial changes and culinary adaptations based on regular availability of food items and condiments according to local climatic conditions. Most of the countries grew their own cereals, vegetables and fruits for their daily needs and lived on the output of the land they occupied. Except for specific and unavoidable needs of the common folk and some luxury household items and exotic fruits and nuts from distant lands which the rich kings and nobles desired were imported. Otherwise it was routine trade of surplus items from country to others in need. Whatever changes in activities took place at different locations of the globe were decided by the power centres in their respective areas based on the relative strengths of their trade, culture, civilisation, scientific discoveries and innovations or religion and last but not least the leadership provided to the groups at different times. Effective leadership, weak neighbours or power vacuum in the areas and technical advantage of mightier armies decided which kingdoms survived for longer time. Towards the end of the sixteenth century, the discovery of the Americas opened up new trade-routes and commerce picked up at a faster pace and with the invention of the gunpowder and innovations brought about by the industrial revolution created scope for further improvements in communication and organisation of war machines. These upset the power setup in the world with new players carving out newer dominions into their stronghold. Finally after the two World Wars ended, which affected almost every country in the world, and with the setting up of the League of Nations, certain normalcy was restored between the nations. The current century has some chance for peaceful atmosphere with the establishment of some balance of power between power-centres.

Today we can communicate with others far away at any time, move from place to place as we wish, access items and products from all over the world any time of the year, have better medical care and treatment for complicated disabilities and diseases at the best of hospitals using innovative techniques and live a life of pleasure and enjoyment over an extended period. Anyone who can harness money and power can hope to live in luxury. So getting rich by any means has become the main aim of the modern human.

The small percentage of people blessed with sufficient riches and also plenty of surplus funds are generally not bothered about those people who cannot meet even their minimal needs. Luxuries however always come at a price. If more people start hankering for more, something or someone has to suffer or lose. In the present case it is our

environment and the lower strata of creatures which are facing trouble. Soon we will find that we have no place to escape to.

Majority of human beings presume that other creatures and world's treasures exist only to fulfil their requirements and desires. They believe that they are intelligent enough to control and manage Nature according to their wishes. Both these premises are being proved wrong seeing the deterioration that has set on the ecology of our habitat due our attitude and current lifestyle. The adverse impact which began at a slow rate initially with the industrial revolution has advanced perilously close to disaster now.

CHAPTER 3

CHANGES IN WORLD CIVILIZATION POST-INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

Looking back we will notice that from life in caves and forests to agrarian villages and rural communities to small townships and now megacities, it has been a long journey, with gradual but slow changes in the path of growth of civilisations. While the animal kingdom had to depend mainly on their survival instinct for their existence, human beings were blessed with an intelligent mind to charter their journey of life. They used the spirit of inquisitiveness that all beings possess combined with their intelligence to improve their physical and mental ability to fashion a comfortable lifestyle. During the early times, religion or common beliefs helped people of a region to bond and work together for their common good. People shared their expertise in different fields in every venture. Influence of religions which imposed a moral code of ethical living on the followers and paved the way for many improvements. Due to personal ego of some of these leaders, these started breaking up into sects and power groups with hardly any stress on ethics.

Discoveries of metals and metalworking gave impetus to improved agriculture and new norms in trade and commerce. These led to further prosperity and ease of living. As mentioned earlier however desires can never be satiated fully.

Lure of abundant wealth amassed by kingdoms invited mercenary action by powerful tribes to attack weaker states and widen their reach and power. Most of these kingdoms fell to invaders and marauders because after a period of opulence and a state of indolence, these became weaker and were easily subdued by more adventurous chieftains. Improvement in quality of life of people at different periods in history were made possible because of many reasons like industrialisation, voyage of discovery and greater intermingling of ideas and cultures. These also paved the way for colonisation and/or forceful introduction of culture on the subdued notions which led to certain disadvantages and some gains. During the Middle Age, sea routes were often used for trade between Europe, Asia and Africa. Till the start of industrialisation, 1760 in Europe and 1820 to 1860 in US there were hardly any noticeable developments in the way of living except for increased commerce between countries.

World history is replete with many wars waged over such disputes. Invention of gunpowder by the Chinese changed the character and format of war. The limited-purpose usage of metals increased manifold times with the Industrial revolution and the discovery of aluminium further increased the pace of progress of civilisation. Developed nations eyed the wealth of material wealth of underdeveloped nations. Search for and manufacture of efficient war equipment during World Wars I and II in the 20th century paved the way for intense research for suitable materials and alloys and also discovery of nuclear fission which finally led to the creation of the Atom Bomb.

With the cessation of World War II, most of the factories churning out army equipment for destructive purposes earlier were converted for mass-production of items for civilian use utilising new techniques and materials. Some of the scientific advances like materials withstand high fatigue and temperature resistant materials created previously unseen

possibilities in the world of space travel and communications. These aided in increased cross-mingling of people between far-flung societies and provided them with a high level of comfort and ease of living.

Speed of communications using internet and digital communication and air travel have shrunk the size of the globe, so to say, that any person can contact or reach any remote parts of the world within a short time, unthinkable about a decade back. Also the availability of different modes of travel and improved support facilities have reduced commuting time and costs for workers, In the case of white-collar workers the ability to work from home in some jobs has improved family interaction to some extent. With improved transport systems over sea, land and air and better infrastructural support, world trade has now penetrated most of the human settlements to a great extent. This has resulted in diverse and exotic food items and other household produce from across different parts of the globe being easily available in most cosmopolitan cities so that persons living and working in such places in other lands can get the taste and flavour they enjoyed earlier in their own homes. New methods of preservation and long-time storage of fruits and vegetables has made these available to many in most of the major cities throughout the year.

In the field of agriculture and farm produce, modern methods including use of genetically modified seeds, robotics and advanced farming machinery have reduced diseases and helped to improve the yield and quality of agricultural produce.

Various space programs initiated by some of the developed countries have improved our insight about the possibility of locating heavenly objects in our vicinity capable of sustaining life and in the process our ability to place satellite in space for us to be able to foresee impending natural disasters and take preventive action. This is in addition to improving our channels of communication for the benefit of humanity. At the current speed of technological advances the day is not far off when we will be able to usher in the age of hypersonic transportation. We have made a lot of progress in various other areas such as science, architecture, medicine, astronomy, aeronautics, and others since industrial revolution.

Field of artificial intelligence is another area where lot of time and effort is being spent now and whether it will bring a new world order of well-being for the inhabitants or sound the death-knell of the world, will only be known eventually by the coming generations.

Easier and comfortable living all over our habitat has been made possible due to reach of the modern technology over almost all aspects of human life. Better town planning

with properly laid out housing colonies in hygienic surroundings with easy approach to necessary amenities are now possible. Modern offices are now literally groups of independent/self-sufficient workstations, well-lit, air-conditioned and ergonomically designed to lessen stress and boredom. Improved infrastructure with regular road and rail communication connecting distant places at a faster pace has raised the possibility of getting people to tourist places all over the globe.

Physical Health and Fitness

Another area where we have made remarkable progress in the last 100 odd years is in the field of medicine and treatment of diseases. This has been possible because of the incessant study and research about human anatomy and physiology combined with research on pharmaceutical preparations to overcome diseases.

School and college students doing the science stream are being taught what a normal human being should know about the human body, its' capabilities and the limits beyond which it should not be forced. We know that human beings are the ultimate product of natural evolution. To befit that status we are equipped with a complex body having multiple organs and limbs capable of functioning under diverse conditions in a coordinated and efficient manner. While the basic design and functions are similar, each person has unique qualities which distinguish them from the rest. Human bodies are built around a skeletal structure covered with flesh, blood and skin, enclosing various organs (like the brain, heart, lungs, liver, bladder etc), several systems (like endocrine, respiratory, circulatory, muscular, digestive, nervous, gastro-intestinal, urinary, reproductive and immune etc) and limbs like hands, legs etc. Vital organs like the heart and lungs are enclosed within the rib-cage and the brain within the skull to give additional protection from any external pressure source. Each and every organ provided has some role in the functioning or automatic servicing of the systems. The various organs, systems and limbs are designed to perform their specific functions as in other beings as well but the humans have the added advantage of being able to improve upon the working of some of these systems to a certain extent. It is the improved design of the human brain having the ability to apply logic and discriminate between options that facilitate them to outperform other species. The behavioural attitudes of animals are limited due to their inborn natural instincts whereas human beings have wider options.

To cater for diverse functions a human body has to perform, it has been provided with many complex systems. The respiratory system involves the nasal passages, trachea or the windpipe which divides into two bronchial tubes leading to the lungs. These bronchi branches out into a large number of bronchioles which end in alveoli covered with many capillaries on their surface. The oxygen contained in the inhaled air travels through the above path and gets absorbed into the bloodstream.

At the helm of the circulatory system is the heart, which is a four-chambered pump firstly to move the blood to the lungs (pulmonary artery) and also to push it out into the body (aorta). The oxygenated blood during its travel through the blood vessels and capillaries collects en route nutrients like proteins and carbohydrates from the small intestines for delivery to every nook and corner of the body covering all limbs and organs according to

their needs. On the return journey the nutrient depleted blood travels via the lungs to expel the waste gases through exhalation into the atmosphere and then back to the heart for start of the next cycle. Besides the lungs, two other organs, namely the liver and the kidneys constantly work on the bloodstream. Whereas the liver produces different enzymes some of which help to detoxify the effect of harmful substances (nicotine, caffeine, various drugs and alcohol) and converting some of their end products during the digestive process and the kidneys filter the blood of impurities and unwanted wastes like urea, sugar, salt and excess water for further disposal. These organs have many other functions including maintenance of equilibrium and balancing of requisite chemicals in the bloodstream.

The digestive system consisting of the stomach, small and large intestines are all served by the blood capillaries which collect the nutrients from the ingested foods for further distribution around the body to various organs and limbs. In the mouth the foodstuff is masticated and mixed with the saliva and then it passes through the gullet to the stomach where it mixes with variety of juices supplied by glands to help in breaking down the food particles into elements which can easily be absorbed later by the body parts. Human beings have a highly sensitive tongue with precise areas that are receptive to specific tastes so that one can enjoy and relish the taste of foodstuff consumed. When food consumed pass through the small intestines the miscellaneous nutrients get absorbed by the bloodstream and is delivered to the body parts as wanted. Excess water and unwanted waste are passed on to excretory organs for disposal.

Excretory system, situated at the far end of the colon collects and ejects the remnants of the undigested food as faeces. Kidneys carry out a vital function in the body, cleaning and filtering the blood stream continuously and remove wastes like urea, excess potassium, sugar, salt, water which can be toxic to the system. It also ensures bodily health by controlling the vital water and chemical balance.

Another system, the skeleton-muscular, gives shape and stability to the body and provides space and security for many other functioning organs and systems. For example, the bone marrow produces the red blood cells, many white blood cells and other immune system cells which contribute to the efficient overall working of the circulatory system. Reproductive systems, which are differently structured in the two genders, provide sperm and ova which unite to ultimately achieve the purpose of propagation of species. There also exist many glands which secrete fluids necessary to control vital functions of different body systems. A composite system of skin, hair, nails and sweat glands covers and protects the body and act as the first line of defence against the mess created by poor environment and disease-causing germs. All these above systems function in a coordinated fashion according to the changing needs and responses of various organs to ensure an efficient functioning body from the moment it starts breathing. Functions like transportation of oxygen, nutrients and waste products to their relevant destinations as also detection and elimination of hostile bacteria and germs, temporary alleviation and repairs of broken down systems to some extent also are automatically carried out.

In a human being the respiratory, circulatory and digestive systems are the basic ones which help to generate and supply energy necessary for actions by the body. The energy for body functions comes from the ingested foodstuff which is broken down through the digestive process into nutrients and transferred to the blood circulatory system through the linings of the small intestines. Heart muscles pump the deoxygenated blood through the lungs to replenish it with oxygen and the lungs functions by breathing in air and breathing out the waste gases like carbon dioxide through a process of inhalation and exhalation. The blood circulatory system acts as the supplier of the nutrients like minerals, vitamins, hormones, glucose, fats, to the required limbs and organs in the body and as the agent for removal of unwanted waste gases, and excess water excreted as urine or sweat. By fighting and decimating intruding disease-inducing microbes and sealing of small wounds by rushing platelets to such areas, the white corpuscles help maintain a healthy body. We also have other support systems to ensure proper balance, regulation and control of functioning of the body in the form of various glandular secretions like pituitary and thyroid and organs like liver, pancreas and gallbladder. We also have an excretory system for body waste removal and reproductive system for ensuring one's lineage. There are many other components and systems such as the muscular and immune systems which contribute to the entire gamut of activities required to be done. It is needless to state that a coordinated functioning of all these systems is a must for ensuring the quality of life of the person concerned. Existence of pineal gland, discovered later, located between the two hemispheres of the brain regulates the circadian cycles of sleep and wakefulness of the body. This is also known as the 'third eye' and assists the individual to gain perception beyond the senses.

Sense-Mind- Intellect Complex in intelligent beings

Being a significant part of the universe, the life of human beings is verily affected by the state of unrest and conflicting situations and an intelligent mind was provided possibly to assist them to cope with such circumstances. This faculty assists them to fully enjoy their life and existence on earth comfortably. Primary function of the body systems is to carry out of the tasks by its limbs which are decided by the sense-mind-intellect combination based on environmental factors existing at each moment. The sensory nerves relays the sensations received by the five senses through the network of the nervous system to the brain, which acts as the command and control centre deciding the various actions to be executed by the relevant limbs of the body. The human sense-mind-intellect complex with its sense receptors, sense organs, network of nerves that transmit various inputs from the senses and a complicated brain structure where all these sensations are converted into ideas. These help people to decide not only what physical activities they have to perform but also how to enjoy the process.

Normally there are many activities taking place all around us but we do not and also cannot obviously react to all such activities. First perception of any activity or event happening outside occurs at the level of the external sense organs. Our five senses, hearing, sight, smell, taste and touch help us to be aware of these happenings around us. Any object or sensation that is peculiar, prominent or out of tune with the surroundings is what catches the attention of the most dominant sense and it latches on to that and

the resulting sensation transmits the message to the brain. It is always the perception of the dominant sense that gets prompts this impulse. This is what the animal kingdom depend upon for their survival. Our habitat has been progressing well even before the evolution of man with additional intelligence. This additional facility is available to human beings so as to convert their daily experiences into knowledge and live a purposeful life. Initially known as native intelligence, it is knowledge, a capability to distinguish and understand the difference in items or events which one sees happening systematically or repeatedly and learning how to live with them. Humans are able to guide and control certain types of animals only because of his native intelligence. An uneducated native can therefore be more knowledgeable on subjects which he has been practising and living with than an educated person and help to improve the native intelligence. We can call it as limited-edition knowledge, particular to the terrain he inhabits.

Action performed by humans can be purely spontaneous and incidental or deliberate. Usually spontaneous reflexes in humans are taken care of by their inherited traits and survival instinct. If some complex situation arise which is not encountered normally, the discriminative mind decides the preventive action, as will be clear later, which describes the functioning of the latter. Additionally there can be instinctive reactions which can be induced by repetitive practice to instigate specific actions. These are used while training pets such as parrots and dogs. Most of the insects, animals, some plants and even humans can be trained to react in a particular way by repetitive exercises. These actions are due to 'conditioned reflex' and different from those prompted by inherited basic instinct.

The sense receptors and nerves carrying the signals of external stimuli start their functions with the infusion of breath in the body. The destination of these stimuli is the brain. Human brain has two areas or repositories for experiences. The lower mind or the intuitive one packs information based on ancestral encounters with danger and life-threatening situations. The higher mind holds the experiences and desires of the current life. It is noticed in apes and early human species at the initial development stage and in a [more enhanced](#) state in modern human beings. The brain's development can be attributed to its regular usage to cater for activities and circumstances that humans are involved in from time to time. The sensory perceptions which prompt the survival instinct also travel to the brain or discriminatory mind, but the path is a bit longer and the reaction time more. Inputs received from the sense receptors are evaluated with reference to the information/experiences of the individual stored in this part of the brain as memory before initiating any action. Logical analysis thereby ensures the emergence of ideas and thoughts, culminating in an appropriate bodily response. It is normal for certain sensory perceptions to generate specific emotional waves also in the mind which may cause divergent reactions.

Consciously thought-out action plans should be based after studying the impact of various factors according to each person's cache of experiences and suitably modified to take into account contemporaneous environmental and other factors. Recent advances in technology have contributed in no small measure in our attempt to carry out extremely complicated jobs using our cognitive and discerning mind. This discriminatory mind

necessarily takes comparatively longer time to come out with solutions and that is the reason why a conscious and explicit physical activity cannot happen spontaneously.

The above narrative provides a fairly good idea of how a well-coordinated human being can and should function. Our scientists and scholars deserve all the credit for demonstrating what a dedicated person can achieve today.

Our knowledge about the basics (internal details of functioning) of our body and mind earlier have been scanty and only external injuries to limbs were generally attempted. Invasive treatment for internal defects was not known except the use of internal medicines temporary solace. In the field of medicine and health, the earliest mention in the western world was that of Hippocrates who laid the foundation of Greek medicine. This was taken forward by Galen in 2nd century BC who was a physician and biologist with expertise in physiology, neurology, anatomy and philosophy among other subjects. Galen's influence was very negligible in Western Europe till 11th century until commentaries on his works by Arab physicians and translation from Latin texts became available there. During the early middle ages, superstition and restrictions by Church on dissections hampered understanding of the human body. This was related to the notion of the spirit, invisible and tenuous diffused throughout the body of living beings. It was only after the start of Renaissance period from late 14th century that the practice of medicine started picking up. We now have a better.

It is revealing that though we started the practice of western medicine around 14th century AD, discovery of the basic cell came about in the 17th century when the modern microscope was invented. It took more than one century before they came to know that they were the basis of all life. The fact that all living beings are made of cells which were tiny bags of living matter that comes in different shapes and sizes was established much later in the 19th century. An updated version of the 'tree of life', a kind of family tree for every species, presented by scientists in April 2016, suggests that a bacterium was the common ancestor of all life. Before 1800's people believed in 'vitalism' which visualised that living organisms were endowed with a special magical property that made them different from inanimate objects. In 1901 AD, Sir J.C. Bose proved that plants too are living beings. Charles Darwin's theory set out in 'The Origin of Species' in 1859 explained how the vast diversity of life could have from a common ancestor. Alexander Oparin, a biochemist and a Russian communist in his book 'The Origin of Life' set out that the birth of life started from water. He imagined that the surface of Earth was searing hot with semi-molten rocks, containing a huge range of chemicals including many based on carbon. Eventually Earth cooled enough to form water vapour to condense into liquid water and the first rain fell. Soon Earth had oceans which were hot and rich in carbon-based chemicals. These could react with each other to form lots of new compounds, some of them complex. Thus molecules central to life, like sugars and amino-acids could have formed in Earth's waters.

Through the process of evolution, the first cells diversified into different species, each species developing features to live and survive in environments congenial to them finally evolving into a human being. Each and every aspect created by Mother Nature whether

it is phenomenal landscapes and sceneries around the world, the types and tastes of fruits, colours and aroma of flowers or anything else created out of five basic elements are incomparable and unique, all provided free for the welfare of the inhabitants.

Scientists have learnt a great deal about intricate working details of the human body in the last few centuries but still we cannot authoritatively say we know everything that has to be known. There is wide variation in minor details even between individuals and only experienced doctors can decipher diseases correctly by checking each case clinically when they consult them for problems or for treatment. People are exposed to lot of information these days through media, which however cannot necessarily be banked upon because of the wide variations in symptoms. These days even a layperson is aware about the basic facts about the human body courtesy our education system or other sources which was not the case some years back.

Using latest techniques and innovating to a certain extent, scientists have been able to improve efficiency of functioning in certain spheres and some of the physical capabilities. For example, starting from the fact that the primary cell is the building block from which the body is created, scientists have reached the stage of understanding the characteristics of each cell and their functioning due to availability of latest techniques. Now we know that a human cell is enclosed by a plasma membrane and consists of water, proteins, lipids and a few macromolecules, belonging to nucleotide group like RNA and DNA amongst others. The interior of the cell is organized into specialized compartments or organelles. The major organelle is the nucleus containing genetic information culled from the parental genes relating to growth and reproduction. Other organelles have specific functions like responsibility for energy transactions for cell survival (mitochondria), digestion of unwanted material (lysosomes), internal organization of cells by synthesizing selected molecules (endoplasmic reticula and the Golgi apparatus) as also the processing, sorting and directing them to their proper locations. In short, the cell is as composite machine capable of subdividing into millions of cells with unique characteristics as required in the functioning of various tissues and organs of the human body. One should not forget the versatility of the unique stem cell which is capable of transforming into cells particular to many or most organs. It will be seen that from the one unique first cell vastly different and diverse-functioning organs and system are created which make up the body, mind and sense organs. Every component of the body-sense-mind complex is created out of innumerable cells which emanate out of innumerable repetitive divisions of the first cell resulting from the union of the female ovum and male sperm. The resultant cells automatically transform and form parts of different tissues, bones, muscles, tendons or organs and limbs based on the genetic chemistry it holds. Cells have definite life time after which they die and get broken up and much of the contents go to make up new cells. Similarly there has been progress in every area of medical science and in the area of pharmacology, where new medicines are being used to cure diseases.

Research during the past fifty years or so in the field of medical science and pharmacology has produced a wealth of information. The present day doctors are almost fully aware of the functioning of the human body from the formation of the basic cell by

the union of the male sperm and the female ova. The improved understanding of the body and nature of diseases have helped in formulating new methods of treatment, advanced equipment and highly innovative techniques to repair and cure most defects and diseases. Many hospitals have latest technologies to detect microscopic internal defects without invasive action as also to identify very minute disease causing germs in samples and find antidotes to destroy those effectively. Various gadgets and appliances used these days are engineering marvels designed by brilliant minds to suit the requirements which make it easier for the doctor and convenient for the patient.

Another recent development provides our scientists and medical staff with off-the-cuff latest information and technical expertise to diagnose and solve acute problems affecting the physical body. People have now access to innovative exercises and equipment to build a strong and flexible body, and improve their quality of life while living longer and health.

RECENT INNOVATIONS AND TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCES CONTRIBUTING TO IMPROVED LIFESTYLE

Research has made possible discovery of new materials, alloys and compounds from never-earlier thought of sources including biological matter. We are now able to produce materials with improved characteristics of much higher ranges than ever and even bio-compatible usages internally with long life. Such materials are now in use in voice /visual and aerial communication, mass production machinery, innovative scientific tools and equipments for mass production in industry, use of robots, artificial intelligence, space technology, new medicines, high definition/ resolution cameras, new modes of faster transport systems and as building material for residential, office and commercial ventures.

The advances in computer technology have been responsible for unprecedented savings in effort and time in planning and completion of large and medium projects during the last fifty years. This has specifically provided better ease and comfort to human beings because of lesser response time and physical effort. Any ordinary citizen of the world would go ga-ga at the facilities available at a flick of fingers for routine daily requirements. Such modern developments have captured the imagination of the people to such an extent even in the developing nations, that we can say that the old world culture has disappeared from the urban areas of world and is limited to small pockets of backward rural localities.

Compared to the life in the early centuries let us have a look at those areas of human venture where the world has advanced phenomenally.

Faster and improved communication devices

From fire signals and drum beats, we have gone past letters through messengers and horsemen to posts carried by vehicles, codes or telegraph to wireless, radio, audio and videos and even video-conferencing over continents to space vehicles. These have facilitated easier and faster transmission for news and messages to reach the intended

destinations within seconds so that people can respond forthwith. These have resulted in reducing many worries and cost reductions in many cases.

Transportation and infrastructure needs for movement of people, material and finished goods

Innovative modern techniques and use of efficient materials in the design and construction of roadways, railways, airports and space stations, have effectively lessened fuel costs and frequent maintenance efforts besides reducing travel time and connected expenses. This has increased the scope for tourism and travel for relaxation manifold, thus providing for increased employment opportunities in sale of local handicrafts, hospitality and allied industries and improves man to man interactions and cultivation of affinity, understanding and increased commerce between nations.

Comfortable residences, offices, factories and commercial ventures

With the increased activities involved in modern day living, workers generally get segregated into allied groups living in close proximity to economise on shelters, offices and factories in urban areas. Designing of cities and townships keeping these factors in mind has the effect of communities looking for improving their setups for efficient utilisation of facilities. People of different climes with similar skills staying together help them to understand and accept their dissimilar ways of living. This not only influences loyalty within the group and work towards common good, thereby economising on living expenses.

Health and control of diseases

Results of advanced research in biology, physiology, medicinal and surgical therapies have enhanced our ability to provide better medical care for wide range of human disorders. The life expectancy of the urban human population has more than doubled and infant mortality and maternal deaths related to pregnancy have reduced considerably. Ability to recognise and prevent congenital disorders at an early age itself has given a better chance to children to enjoy their life in full comfortably and without regret.

Educational opportunities

Various advances and innovations have made it possible for humans to unravel age-old secrets and data from diverse sources hitherto unknown to have existed before. Digging into old ruins and exploring space beyond earlier known frontiers have unearthed information which are now providing fresh leads to better living conditions. Compared to the handful number of subjects of limited content that were available for students to learn and benefit, currently there are subjects unheard of before, where an avid student can spend his formative years working with and earning his living.

Recreational activities

This is another area capable of providing attractive employment opportunities for youth. Not a day passes now without something new of importance being invented or discovered which provides additional knowledge or entertainment in different art forms-whether visual like architectural or video or laser shows, outdoor hobbies like different forms of racing on water, land or air or sensory like music or culinary arts. The availability of plethora of materials amenable for use under diverse conditions enables people to keep them from damage for long periods so that they can be enjoyed to their heart's content.

Commercial activities

These are days when every bit of information available to man can be converted into an employment possibility if it is well planned. A common sense approach, inquisitiveness and keenness to put in hard work without losing heart are essentials to do get ahead. If a diligent person can locate the availability of a product or information, the party who needs it and has the capability of transporting at reasonable cost to the consumer is a potential trader. If he also knows the right people who can support him and motivate them, there is nothing that can stop him. One who does not have the go in him or is indolent cannot expect to be spoon-fed and will remain a failure forever.

Some of the major advantages we have gained are listed below.

Better and faster communication networks and transport systems,

Less time and expense required in getting requirements,

Easy availability of consumables and commodities close by,

Better medical facilities for diagnosis and faster treatment,

Reduction in hospital-stay periods and costs,

Availability of vegetables and fruits out of season instead of being limited to local seasonal ones,

More time available for leisure, hobbies or travel for pleasure,

Quick access to information on subjects which can benefit one monetarily or more comfort.

Improved lifestyle and monetary support from public and private institutions, such as

- (a) easier ways of getting loans for improving one's status,
- (b) life and health insurance cover offered for employees,
- (c) limited insurance cover to unemployed persons
- (d) benefits through planned social and community networks.

CHAPTER 4

DEMERITS OF THE PRESENT STYLE OF LIFE AND ITS EFFECT ON THE ECOSYSTEM OF OUR HABITAT

The current generation has to thank the recent generation of scientists and other professionals who have worked untiringly to make our life today comfortable and easier than ever before as has been explained in the last chapter. In the glow of new facilities and greater opportunities created for the populace at large, one should not and cannot forget that not everything about globalisation is glorious or good for our habitat and the world. We are seeing those are becoming more visible and hurting us too. A few things that stick out as a sore thumb are:-

a) Too much prominence/importance given to material progress now

At present almost all countries are run on a capitalistic model, whether the government is run on a democratic, communist or dictatorial style. The country with economic clout leads the world, though all developed nations are technically qualified to provide an easy and comfortable living style. This has produced nations where there is wide disparity in incomes in different levels of society.

The recent changes in way of life has made people material-minded and think that possession of wealth and power can make one's life comfortable and promote happiness. The benefits that have accrued to the middle class and the rich have not filtered down to the poor to the required extent still. There are many still below the poverty line and however much we try to narrow the gap between the haves and the have-nots we have not been able to find a viable model. Consumerism is now at its peak which though beneficial to some extent as it provides job opportunities and ability to earn one's livelihood has its dark side as well. This has created a new generation where ethics has taken a back seat and people do not mind committing moral lapses to earn money easily.

Whereas most of the consumer ads are gimmicks a lay person is easily swayed by its appeal and wastes hard-earned money when proven items are available at hand cheaper locally. The low and middle income group go in for possession of replicas of costly *objects de art* and expensive accoutrements held by rich people just to boost their ego in their local social circles.

When desire lurks in one's heart the tendency to earn easy money creeps up and makes people resort to cheating and committing petty crimes. Many cases of adulteration of liquor and foodstuff used by humanity at large are happening now as a result, which is an unpardonable crime against society. The tendency amongst traders to hoard items to create short supply just because one sees a chance to amass wealth is another instance. These lead to egoistic tendencies which disturb good politics.

b) Material progress alone cannot ensure happy existence and can cause further inconveniences.

Technological progress can ensure some physical ease and comfort which provides transient pleasure which is relative. It is not happiness. We must be clear about the aim of existence. There can be no doubt in our mind that our primary aim is happiness bereft of pain and sorrow. Current lifestyle promotes sensual indulgence. Sense-bound material satisfaction may be physically pleasant but as human desire can never be truly satiated, it will only lead to excessive indulgence. Consequently ill-health, pain and unhappiness result. More than the physical pain, human beings will have to endure mental agony, which one cannot escape.

Large scale industries and firms are mass producing consumer items at lower costs, by moving low-paid workers from economically poor regions. Ideally this will need facilities to be arranged for them and their families, like accommodation, markets for groceries, vegetable and meat, educational institutions and hospitals. Administrative set-up, and transport and communication facilities will be other requirements.

This creates large slums near cities to accommodate working people with poor sanitation and hygiene and these could precipitate large scale outbreak of diseases which will be difficult to contain.

Even a perfunctory study of original cultures, sartorial and culinary habits of different regions of our habitat will show that these have been the result of the climate, seasonal changes, type of terrain and soil, the flora and fauna that thrived there and have provided immunity to people concerned. The displacement of these people from such regions to new areas poses problems for their immunity. The current and popular way of life around the world has made it almost one-size-fits-all in the utilisation of consumer items, with many succumbing to trying out other styles irrespective of the regions they inhabit. It is a well-known fact that the climate and foodstuffs available locally in different seasons are ideally suited for good health of the people of that region. Perhaps for a change of taste once awhile exotic fruits, vegetable and foreign cuisine will be delightful and enjoyable. Making it a regular feature would be going against Nature's mandate and may prove unhealthy.

The enclosed building accommodating office spaces with controlled temperatures and humidity using central air-conditioning or heating are also unnatural to say the least, but circumstances these days do not allow us to do without. The chances of anyone sick passing on to another colleague is much more.

The requirements of modern societal enterprises need transmission of information between remote corners of the globe within seconds and this has necessitated establishing of 24x7 call centres and upsetting the normal sleep-awake cycle of workers. Same is the case with commercial and business travellers who practically spend 20 to 30 percent of the days in a year in airports and planes and cars. This is bound to affect their health in the long run.

Another area much advertised and monies spent on is tourist destinations around the world, which has become a rallying point for lavish and boisterous living, indulging in alien foodstuffs and alcoholic drinks local to the region. These might be giving temporary

feeling of happiness, a chance to collect local artefacts for display in homes while wasting hard-earned money just for the sake of showing off or boasting about such travels.

c) Existence cannot be allowed to become a permanent roller-coaster ride.

Moderation is the key to enjoyment. It is a well-known fact that everything in life lies between two opposite extremes. Unless one has been rich he will not understand what it is to be poor. Being rich may look great for others but they have to face bigger problems. Everything in life similarly has two extremes with unequal nuisance. It is therefore better to stick to a middle course and be generally comfortable. That is why our elders advised moderation in every activity we undertake.

The tendency to go on seeing, eating, drinking or actively partaking in something we like is something that tends to grow on you and it soon becomes a habit and you become a slave addicted to it. Once a person is addicted no amount of reason or restraint is possible for one to fall prey to disease or untold misery.

If we look at the way we live today, it is found that everyone is eyeing for the top post. It is a fallacy to think that the one will be always happy if he has access to all that he desires. There is a saying: 'Uneasy lies the head that wears the crown'. Normally it is fine as long as the person is capable and equally determined to face all odds for the good of the nation at large. Personal ego and ambition does not help much. Besides the qualities mentioned above, he must bide the time and not be impatient or be in a hurry to rush things. Sufficient time should be given to establish the infrastructure needed for the process and for it to settle down. So for any project to work efficiently, this has to be planned holistically. We can learn from the way creation progressed in specific changes as per the need at a particular time. All necessary items required for sustenance of the diverse elements in nature were planned and arranged and then the plants and trees and the creatures from the simplest one to the most complicated with necessary capabilities to sustain were introduced. They were given sufficient time to create capabilities to survive and sustain. It was ensured that there was sufficient to sustain their needs but not to satisfy their greed. The victuals were provided as required at the proper times.

A look at the way we organise our lives these days shows where we are going wrong. We want our needs to be provided at our will and pleasure which Nature cannot provide. So we twist and tweak the supply position by going against Nature. We never live as per the dictates of Nature and thus create unnecessary complications in the way we live and finally end up cursing Nature for our deficiencies and misdeeds. Our ancestors did live fairly comfortably till about a century ago. I cannot think that the current way of life in any way helps us to achieve our main goal of attaining moksha or salvation, which is the aim of majority of humans. On the other hand the new trend takes us on an opposite track.

d) Some good practices of earlier times that are no longer followed

Some of the facilities which our elders experienced during their lifetime are no longer possible due to recent changes in our environment and shows how much we have degraded our environment and set us on the wrong path.

We could drink fresh and clean water coming down springs from small hills as also water from wells in the backyard of our homes which were sweet to taste without any need to boil or use company-made filters, water purifiers and RO water. In place of clay matkas in hot summers, nowadays one will hardly find a house without water-coolers which are used throughout the year.

The local foodstuff from the village mandis and own backyard gardens were fresh and often sufficient for home requirements. This was at times even shared with our needy neighbours and friends when available in plenty to ensure freshness and variety. Only requirement of items like grains and cereals or condiments and spices were stocked for longer periods. Some items like yams, pumpkins and ash gourds harvested in season were stored for few weeks for use out of season. These days we use large fridges with deep-freezer compartments to hold fruits, vegetables and meat bought from stores, and invariably these do not provide the freshness and nutrition of items from local markets.

Similarly, our ancestors understood that to be comfortable in any weather we only need to be in an area where it is at a difference of 3 to 4 degrees either more or less than the body temperature depending on the season. They moved to cooler, open areas under shade of trees, unlike the present generation who escape into air-conditioned rooms in spite of any type of weather.

Money is now being spent unnecessarily for transport, stocking and purchase of items which are not real necessities for daily existence. Also think of monies spent on advertisements and payment to brand ambassadors, normally well-known film stars or international players or such people who one can be certain never uses these products themselves. Lay persons are carried away by the advertisements and purchase these items unnecessarily.

e) Impact of digging Earth for ores and minerals

For technological advancement to be really effective, we need to dig out many minerals from the bowels of the earth and this upsets certain environment conditions affecting different species of creatures inhabiting those areas.

Consequent dislocation often results in man-animal clashes. Invariably the human beings win the tussle, but in the long run everyone loses due to degradation of environment. The build-up of large towns and cities along with large number of factories necessitates clearing of large areas of tree cover. Ultimately everyone suffers due to weaker monsoons and reduction in availability of water, both underground springs and storage reservoirs like wells and lakes. This water shortage has to be made up by transportation in tankers or water trains, adding to additional effort and expenditure.

f) Improper disposal of harmful chemicals into landfills and water sources

Many of the rare metals and their compounds were used in the manufacture of medicines to combat new diseases affecting human beings and pet animals. Since modern medicine is depended for quicker remedies many of these medicines were not checked for their side-effect on other internal organs and this causes further problems

at times. Careless handling and disposal of soiled and used items made of harmful substances was another source which polluted the atmospheric air and water bodies causing health problems.

g) Unexpected ill-effects of globalization.

Human beings are susceptible to two other types of diseases. One of them is known as the life-style diseases or NCDs and the other communicable diseases caused by germs and viruses.

i) Life-style diseases.

Generally, diseases caused by locally prevalent germs do not affect the local community as all insects, creatures and animals based on water, land or air and roaming free in the wild have a built-in-immunity because of the way they subsist in that area. Once human beings moved away from caves and forests to civilization, people gradually lost their innate immunity. A person gets immunity to diseases caused by germs prevalent in an area by adapting to local conditions only after a very long period of stay in such surroundings and not overnight.

The current trend of becoming part of the global community has made the present generation a walking encyclopedia of information with high IQ. With the skills available they are multi-tasking all the while attending to many diverse activities which were unheard of in the earlier era. Hence, we are seeing a host of white-collar workers on long stretches of work-schedules and far away from their homes for comparatively short stretches of time. They are expected to stick to deadlines which additionally cause increased mental tension. Everyone from the top downward has a harrying time driven by the urge to do well or to meet deadlines and this profoundly undermines their physical and mental condition. While we use our intelligence to change our habits and multi-task, we are simultaneously doing great damage to our health and destroying our immunity. Business and pleasure consume most of their time and there are no set timings for exercise which affect their health in the long term. Even globe-trotting and partaking of food and consumables foreign to our climes and habits has become a regular feature in the life of a few people.

Diseases like High BP, Type II Diabetes, Obesity, Heart diseases Cancer, Respiratory diseases and food allergies can be attributed to the new lifestyle. These can be controlled by dietary habits, keeping oneself hydrated, maintaining one's reasonable weight, regular exercises and workouts, avoiding smoking and alcohol abuse, proper and regular sleep and managing stress. Overuse of allopathic medicines to reduce or prevent NCDs have now been proven to have not much efficacy in cure whereas regular healthy living style can alleviate such problems.

ii) Increased incidence of communicable diseases.

The major communicable diseases affecting humans known could bacterial like Anthrax, Cholera, Diphtheria, Typhoid, Tetanus etc. can be to a great extent avoided by better hygiene and social distancing. Immunity increasing indigenous herbs can also lessen the

effect. In case of viral attacks, we are still in the wilderness so far for an effective remedy. It would not be out of place to mention here that malarial infection has been the result of human beings venturing into jungles to clear and access shrub and hillsides for preparing tea, coffee and rubber plantations. In the process the workers who had low immunity got infected. It was further rendered worse by overuse of DDT sprays which the mosquitoes got immune to. Similarly, there are many diseases which afflict humans because of overuse of chemical derivatives which do not affect the carriers in the wild but affect humans. We have noticed many cases wherein extended use of chemical derivatives to kill insects and parasites transmitted by animals getting immune and evolving into dangerous ones. So, we have to be wary of overuse of insecticides and pesticides to eliminate such germs.

We are now on the threshold of inter-space travel. Now scientists are capable of looking into the tiniest parts of an atom or a cell and even on the verge of tinkering with the DNA to change certain characteristics of individuals. These may cause more damage to our existence. The premature death of the cloned sheep Dolly within seven years of birth some time back and the recent cases of infection of the captive wild animals in the New York zoo are pointers not to go against Nature.

h) Impatience

The present generation is impatient and wants things achieved in a jiffy. Earlier we had sufficient time at our disposal to do most of our essential activities and we had the patience to wait for things to mature in their own time. We never opted for new solutions unless absolutely necessary and that too only when we were certain that it will not affect Nature and mankind adversely. Today our vanity and impatience to achieve our objectives at a fast pace does not permit sufficient time for the change we desire and expect to take root. In addition, in our hurry to obtain results we tend to work on it haphazardly and do not approach it in a holistic manner.

Our activities are time-bound in that we are looking at the time of completion of results that we want to achieve. We are ready to forego our daily routine of exercise and personal well-being, proper timely food and sleep or rest for achieving the result. My parents used to say, 'before you can paint the picture ensure that the wall is properly built', meaning thereby that a healthy body is a must before one can enjoy any fruit of one's labour. One will be surprised to know that very few many workers these days are able to follow a regular personal life schedule.

i) Currently prevalent unrealistic education system

The current education system is ideally suited for generating standardised jobs as it teaches you where and how to search for data and generate information for easy and convenient ways to conduct our day-to-day life. It is oriented more for organising abilities rather than acquisition of knowledge and practical skills as modern machines can take over the jobs of skilled labour. Indian culture was strong enough not to be seriously affected by the impact of foreign traditions during the subjugation and rule by the foreign Muslim rulers from the mid 15th century. In fact there was a melding of the good in each

being absorbed by the other without losing their basic features. But the British during their occupation practically managed to reduce the importance of our culture especially in the cities by throttling our thriving ancestral village industries by repressive measures. A strong, proud and resilient nation was thus rendered sterile and even after getting Independence the foreign-educated leaders never tried to bring back our legacy and continued on the path left behind by the earlier regime. The current system does not motivate people to tread an unknown path and hone his skills in tune with Nature. Human beings are happier with material comforts and benefits. Personal aggrandisements and profits are more important than ethics. This has made us self-centred and material minded and upset the natural equilibrium of Nature.

j) Lack of familial support (loss of support to old parent)

Mass movement of people from diverse regions of different continents across the world for jobs or studies to improve career prospects has broken the earlier familial interaction and bonding. The younger generation of children staying with their parents miss the care and love of their elders and suffer greatly in the long run.

When husband and wife have to leave for their work, the toddlers or school going children have to be left in the care of friendly neighbours or servants, which could lead to unsavoury situations.

The impact of modern technology and western culture has caused a deep divide in the relationships between parents and children and due to the limited time they spend together or communicate with each other. Children are busy with texting or playing video games and similarly parents are busy doing housework, exercising in gyms or watching TV serials or spending time with their friends. This causes them to lose their emotional attachment.

Western culture has captured the imagination of the younger generation as they find it more appealing and gives more freedom than the rather laid back attitude of earlier days.

The technologically advanced children often feel that they are more competent in many respects and their parents immature, incompetent or comparatively clueless. This sense of superiority leads to lack of respect for parental authority, and the children may not be willing to listen to the parents' attempts to control and limit their use of technology.

The facilities of instant messaging and social networking sites offered by mobile phones gives independence from their parents' involvement resulting in estrangement that can cause some children to go astray, seek bad company or get into dangerous habits and situations.

k) Less time for family and relatives to be together

This is a problem faced now due to break up of the joint family system, as members move out to work or study in other cities and countries for improving their career prospects. This causes anguish to elder parents and old people due to the loss of emotional closeness of relatives. They cannot enjoy a satisfying and peaceful existence though cash-

rich. They need to fend for themselves, depend on friends or stay in old age homes to cater to their daily needs. It may cause additional expenses and support for elder parents staying in home towns for medical intervention or stay in hospitals.

In a few years this will result in four disparate groups, one under the careless foster parents, another angry and confused group of adolescents without proper guidance or any permanent vocations, a third group of working people sitting at their desks unravelling things which they are not interested in, unhappy, yet doing nothing worthwhile 24x7 all the days of the year and lastly a large group of sick elderly people reminiscing on their wasted life with no one able to resolve their problems.

l) Rise in new and potent forms of diseases and anti-bodies

Conspicuous consumerism, irregular hours of work, lopsided workouts and uncontrolled food habits have started playing havoc with our inimitable body-mind complex and the treasures of Nature. As a result, while we have advanced technologically to hitherto unheard of levels, the masses are suffering for want of clean air, sanitary environment and fresh and safe foodstuff to satisfy their minimum needs. Consequent to improved hygiene and health-care, human life expectancy has improved and improved medical intervention procedures have reduced infant mortality. Advances in pharmacology and new medicines have been able to control diseases but there has also been a simultaneous increase in types of germs resistant to modern medicinal derivatives. We are therefore seeing an increase in percentage of people falling ill in the population these days.

The remedies and inventions touted as miracle medicines or highly beneficial methods to society are being found to be counter-productive. The solar energy which scientists and politicians claim to be heaven-sent solution for pollution free atmosphere will pollute future landfills due the dangerous chemicals like Antimony used in solar panels. This can cause new problems.

Every day one wakes up fearing what new calamities are in store for the inhabitants. The time for atomic warfare is remote seeing that all nations are armed to the teeth with everyone peeping into others' activities. The latest worry is bionic warfare which can be unleashed quietly without others being aware of it in advance, since a nation which uses it will naturally find a remedy to safeguard themselves from its effect.

m) Neglect and misuse of other objects of Nature and its flora and fauna

A look at our environment as of now will illustrate that the once equitable climatic conditions in our planet has deteriorated at an alarming rate. Most of the perennial water sources like ice-fed rivers and wells and springs are no longer evident in the countryside. Large water reservoirs which once served the water needs of living beings till recently have been taken over by modern buildings. In the name of our comfort and ease of living, we have not only been squandering the buried treasures of the world, but are guilty also of converting part of these resources into dangerous and non-degradable matter. The blame for consequential poisoning of our environment and making it unfit for habitation of every living being rests squarely on us.

Survival of the humans has been possible so far because of the existence of sufficient flora and fauna which were the support system which ensured recycling of resources in the world. It is surprising that intelligent human beings never bothered to recognise this aspect and continued to degrade and eliminate them, except while considering their use for their daily consumption. Vast areas of habitations where animals and birds used to graze or nest, without hindrance have been encroached upon and the forest cover which ensured timely rains and equitable climate have been destroyed, all in the name and need of modernisation. Man-animal conflicts which were unheard of in the past have reared its ugly head in recent times.

n) Overpopulation beyond the capacity of the habitat

It took almost 200,000 years of human history to reach 1 billion people. During the last 50 years the world population has doubled from about 4 billion in 1968 to 7.7 billion today. It is expected to reach 8.6 billion in 2030, 9.8 in 2050 and 11.2 by 2100, provided the average fertility rate continues to increase at the present rate. At that time, the current environment can never hope to sustain human existence. Further worry is that most of the human population will not be as healthy as one would like to be to enjoy a decent living.

To summarise, the following are some of the setbacks which come to mind due to technological advances in the last 50 to 80 years which has or can adversely affect our environment and life of inhabitants in the long run:-

Over-population due to increased lifespan of human beings consequent to improved medical facilities available now.

Increase in activity and movement of people and goods(vehicular traffic)which will add to administrative problems and increased pollution

Shift of working population to urban centres

Need for additional housing and resource to cater for increase in population

Shortfall of primary resources and increased unemployment

Possibility of contamination by unhygienic hospital waste and dangerous chemicals

Faster global warming and resultant adverse effects on climate and people

Pollution of water sources and atmospheric air thereby making existence impossible

Mass migration of itinerant masses to developing countries to add on further miseries, pestilence and shortage of food and shelter.

Increase in petty crimes and possibility of frequent riots and uprisings

Reduced tree and forest cover resulting in reduced rainfall, adverse weather and environment.

Reduced farmland areas for cultivation and consequent food shortage.

Displacement of wild animals from their natural habitat and consequent movement into human settlement causing conflicts.

These relative merits and demerits as it affect the existence of human being have been brought out. If we look closely at the activities which has caused these problems it will be seen it is a result of our feeling of self-importance or ego, impatience to find quick solutions, excessive insistence on comforts and luxuries and belittling the efforts and contributions by other living beings by not giving any considerations to other living beings. If only we had taken the path shown by Nature, by going about our activities, they would have been in a much better state. A very much graver portend awaits us if we look at the Universe as a whole which will force us to conclude that these activities cannot go on at this rate for too long. The main cause for this is that our discriminative intellect is good for finding answers to practical and material solutions. But it fails to achieve the purpose of human life, which is enjoyment without disturbing Nature and finding a way for attaining *Moksha*.

A plausible solution is to return to our agrarian lifestyle with moderation, patience and respect for Nature's laws. We shall attempt to study the approach followed by the Eastern ancestors which proved eco-friendly till the last century but needs to be modified.

CHAPTER 5

A POSSIBLE WAY TO CROSS THE RUBICON

Response Inquisitiveness and a precise purpose of life on Earth are two perquisites needed for progress in any life for evolving into something better. While the first one is natural or innate, the purpose is decided by us based on our perception of what is important in one's life. Response inquisitiveness activates the survival instinct in all living creatures to fend for themselves; human beings have the additional faculty of an intelligent brain to find ways to provide for their sense satisfaction gratification in the present set-up but any mishandling can cause untold misery, pain and suffering if it gets out of hand. The ultimate purpose of human birth for most people is to attain Moksha. All should understand that their body and mind are only tools for use in this material world to live comfortably but they have to work in harmony with Nature to achieve that objective. Bhagvad Gita has explained this beautifully.

Whatever modern writers may say, men have always believed in one Supreme Power. Some may pray to many, each of them reflecting one of His specific aspects. Our forefathers believed in the reality of a soul and regarded our existence on Earth and rebirths as a temporary phase while working towards salvation. They found happiness in the way they lived without any remorse.

Let us have a look at what remedial measures we can take for reversing the present trend. The problems adversely affecting our environment today did not erupt suddenly but had begun much earlier. Though deterioration started gradually from the early 1900's we could live with that to some extent so far. In the last 50 odd years it has worsened with increasing development of nations. This can be attributed to the changes in lifestyle followed mostly by highly developed nations.

Many scientists and researchers from the West who are upset are writing about the advantages of Yoga, and techniques employed in Indian/eastern systems of medicine as eco-friendly and extremely effective for bodily health and happiness. It shows that foreigners have now accepted that our culture holds a wealth of knowledge and expertise, which we knew and have always been proud of. Sanatan Dharma is the practical demonstration of everyday life of a Hindu based on the principles propounded in Sacred Indian scripts. A few practices can possibly be modified to provide ease and comfort, but only under the tutelage of an expert. I am saying this because recently we have been giving too much importance to our intelligence and the capability of the human being to alter every aspect of our work and environment. Where we go wrong will be clear once we understand human nature as per the Vedic view.

A follower of Sanatan Dharma is a Hindu, as long as he conducts his life according to the code of ethical behaviour prescribed in Vedic Scriptures.

The inhabitants of Indian sub-continent (known as Hindus originally) have always believed that a Supreme Power, Brahman, created the Universe of objects that we are part of. He is 'Nirakar' or formless, and hence no one can visualise or describe his

appearance. A Hindu is fully aware that his fate is ordained by his Karma but being human he still hopes to get some relief by prayer. Therefore, he invokes and prays to particular deities having the power over such domains to remove obstacles or to realize his wish. Even intelligent human does not have the capability to describe His looks or appearance. Since imagining a formless entity is much more difficult for a layman, specific forms which they can relate to have been named as the minor gods or powers controlling various aspects of this Cosmic power. Just because there are a large number of Gods and Goddesses, it does not mean they follow a polytheistic religion. So, it will be wrong to equate it with a polytheistic religion as many assume.

The beliefs held by Hindus are based on realisations by ancient seers after deep meditation and detailed in the Scriptures. The impacts of these beliefs can be noticed in all activities of a Hindu's daily routine. This is what is known as 'Hindu way of life' or '*Sanatan Dharma*'. The diverse types of people inhabiting different locations and regions within the sub-continent have this common thread of culture running through them unaffected by the beliefs of others in the rest of the world. For a Hindu, every object found on earth, whether a plant or tree, insect or animal, land, air or marine based, is holy and even an inert stone or a piece of wood can be consecrated and be worthy of prayer. The approach of these people was entirely different to others living in other areas outside Indian sub-continent during the three or four millennia BCE like the Egyptians, Grecians and people of southern Europe bordering the Mediterranean Sea. They also worshipped many gods and goddesses and built temples in their honour but their philosophy was more materialistic. These civilisations soon perished initially due to the revolt of Jews and later by Christians.

The Indian sub-continent was one of earliest places of human settlement. Sheltered by the lofty Himalayan ranges on the north and the oceans on the other three sides this land has been free of invaders before the beginning of Christian era, except the brief one by Alexander of Macedonia. There was not much difference in the way the human race progressed from other settlements elsewhere. But the relatively calm and peaceful atmosphere in the region in the absence of intruders, a more orderly civil society under the reign of benign kings took shape. The consequence was the flowering of arts and crafts, architecture and improvement in farming and trade.

The serene environment in the civilised and peaceful Indian sub-continent inspired the learned *Rishis and munis* to seek the Truth and purpose of one's life on Earth. After years of intense ruminations and meditations they figured out that the invisible Brahman, worshipped by all, was the source of creation of the Universe. They also realised the nature and relationship of the objects of Nature with *Brahman*, which proactively influenced them to have a different outlook of life on Earth. These were passed on as *Shrutis* and were later written down as the *Vedas*. This led to development of the Hindu way of life or *Sanatan Dharma* in the sub-continent.

The earliest indication of the Indian way of life is to be found in the Vedas and further elucidated in the *Upanashids*, *Purananas* and the *Itihasas*. The Vedas and the Upanishads explain about the one and only Cosmic Consciousness, overall view of

Nature and its constituents and the interconnection between the two and various other details connected with life on earth. The Puranas highlight the glories of the hierarchy of Gods and the Itihasas throw light on how the spiritual proclivities benefit the existential experience of humans on earth which Sanatan Dharma exemplifies.

Puranas provide a vivid narrative of the Hindu cosmology from the creation of the Universe and the lives and genealogies of various deities, sages and kings, besides various subjects of interest to mankind. These contain the essence of the *Vedas* and have been written mainly to bring people closer to God by popularising the thoughts contained therein. The highly philosophical thoughts contained in the *Vedas* cannot be easily understood by the common people. In their perpetual struggle of existence and pre-occupation with material and sense gratification, they also forget their relationship with God. Hence the various *Puranas*, through stories dedicated to Gods and Goddesses, were written to remind the human beings of their relationship with God and to follow the morals highlighted therein. In these stories one will find references to killing of evil person. These are meant to be understood as elimination of the bad attributes of the person concerned and clearing the path for his salvation. Most of those persons depicted as evil would be seen to have been staunch devotees who gained superior capabilities through penance and thereby getting an inflated ego or some such imperfection. Such sacred texts are meant to exhort people to inhibit their negative tendencies and improve upon their positive attributes for the benefit of the world at large.

Itihasas on the other hand, are narrations of the life of *Avatar Purushas* on Earth and how they upheld *Dharma* in spite of all odds to achieve the purpose of their incarnation. It also indicates how humans are expected to live during their existence on Earth in equilibrium with Nature. These show that the Hindu way of life is part of our culture which gives equal importance to the objects of Nature around us so that their welfare is not neglected or hampered. Proper conduct of our life on Earth also helps to hasten our approach to the ultimate goal of salvation from rebirths.

However, the 'Hindu way of life' is not a rigid set of rules and individuals are free to choose their own path to self-realisation depending on their interests and capabilities as long as it does not go against the basic tenets. The scriptures have highlighted many pitfalls that can befall those who fail to manage their senses and have dwelt at length on remedial measures too. If they deviated from the path it was supposed to create bad karma that has to be extirpated by right type of actions.

In short, the scriptures provide a digest of duties that a true Hindu has to perform, from cradle to grave and if not followed properly to be reborn, till he achieves salvation. A comprehensive study of these scriptures will reveal that the Hindu way of life is not a religion to be blindly/literally followed. A true Hindu, therefore, prefers to go by ethics and morals than by the written law as long as it does not cause hurt or impede the freedom of others rather than strictly follow a rigid set of rules. The later Abrahamic religions like Christianity, Islam and Bahai'sm which evolved from Judaism are also monotheistic but with many differences in their ways of worship, prayer and rituals. These placed greater importance on the moral code as laid down in the Ten

Commandments which was meant mainly to coordinate the affairs of men in a civil society. Attaining salvation did not seem to be their primary aim. It was taken for granted that the bounties of Nature were theirs to enjoy and hence used other living beings and materials for this end. They looked after their needs only to the extent that it benefitted them. With the passage of time, Abrahamic religions like Judaism, Christianity, Islam and the ones that evolved later from them became alienated and segmented into different sects, each one claiming to be the true one.

A comparison between Indian way of life by people of the Indian sub-continent and those followed by others will show that the major difference is in their beliefs which dictate their view of life. Majority of the world's population today are followers of Abrahamic religions. Starting as a set of Ten Commandments based on social morality and ethics to administer and control social structure based on human values. But as far as the inhabitants of the Indian sub-continent were concerned social ethics involved the entire universe of objects as explained in our Scriptures. These sacred texts were important subjects of study in earlier days. These clarify two important aspects of our life on earth. The first one is that our body and mind does not represent our 'true Self' but are only instruments of action and expression to be used by us during one's lifetime on Earth and the second is that all life forms inhabiting this space have equal right to share its bounty impartially. Realising the importance of these two and the continuing prosperity of our land, our ancestors fashioned a way of life for their descendants to follow. Our lifestyles were based on this earlier and that ensured that our planet remained hospitable till recent times. *Sanatana Dharma* embodies that culture and helps to maintain our planet remain hospitable.

Such a product/outcome of many realised seers cannot be compared with other major religions like Christianity or Islam which were founded later by different prophets. We can also notice some revelations made in Hindu scriptures have found their way in slightly different form in some of these religions.

Abrahamic religions like Judaism, Christianity and Islam believed in one God, who or his ministries keep a watch on people not following the rules. Some sects of Christianity and Islam believe in afterlife but unlike the Vedas, they often use the threat of Hell on nonbelievers and wrongdoers.

Records indicate that the period from around 5000 years before Christ till the beginning of Industrial revolution around 1200 AD was a golden era where the focus of human endeavour was the happiness for all creatures and economical usage of raw material to cater for the basic needs of every human being. It was always a case of simple living and high thinking.

A look at the way the creation of the world proceeded shows that it has indeed taken a very long time to put the beings on Earth. Sufficient time and space were given for the different aspects to ensure that the infrastructure was in place before the inhabitants surfaced. It also shows that the transformation of Earth and its nature happened, ever so gently, to keep pace with the evolutionary development of beings inhabiting the planet. The slow growth ensured that the living beings could adapt to changing circumstances

without incurring any damage to themselves or the planet. It will be seen that during their lifetime on Earth every being contributes in some way or other to the upkeep of the planet. All beings lead a routine life from birth to death and then their bodies decompose and merge with the elements. The only thing that sets apart the human race is their craving for liberation from future births. Hindu way of life is only a process to achieve the final goal without upsetting Nature.

As an intelligent human he has the added responsibility to ensure that the environment is kept pristine even as he is trying to evolve into a better person and realise his objective. The diverse moods of nature during the varied seasons have always been a source of enjoyment and motivation for mankind. Mother Nature that has always inspired humans and many of the human innovations in engineering and other sciences is copied from nature or the lives of creatures forming part of our environment. Looking around at the diversity in terrain, climate and the great variety of living beings, our ancestors came to the conclusion that there must be a definite purpose or grand design in creating such a universe of disparate but cohesive group of objects. The seekers in their midst, must have been surprised to notice why some people go through rough times in life while others live comfortably. This perhaps gave them the impetus to ruminate and meditate and find a solution.

The very first action of a newborn is the intake of breath and this continues as long as it is alive and with the last breath it becomes inert- a corpse. During life it survives on the produce of the Earth and these provide the energy for the actions performed during the lifetime. The senses and the ideas in the mind caused by these thoughts provoke actions. These actions under similar provocations need not necessarily be same due to influence of individual gunas he is going through or his state of consciousness at that time. Hence the body-sense-mind complex is only available to the person when he is alive. It means there is some factor in a person apart from his body-mind complex. The difference between life and death is the whiff of breath. So, the breath and the person (entity) are connected. The sages therefore concentrated on the breath to go beyond the mind and perhaps that is when they realised the truth of creation and the unity of all Nature.

In essence, Vedas contain the consolidated eternal truths as revealed to these seers and passed on by word of mouth initially in concise slokas. Vedas cover every subject matter needed to be known by human beings for the conduct of a peaceful and comfortable existence on earth as a civilised society. Nowhere does Vedas mention about any God except Brahman. There is no reference therein of Hinduism either. Upanishads and Brahma Sutra are the later interpretations and explanations of these by later Sages and munis. Puranas, Srimad Bhagavatam or Bhagavad Mahapurana is an important one- a collection of conversation between Parikshat, son of Abhimanyu, and SukaBrahmam, son of Veda Vyasa. It covers the greatness of Narayana, His various avatars and finally the entire story of Lord Krishna. Out of 335 chapters, 100 chapters are devoted to Krishna's doings and stories about the Gods and demi-gods to illustrate the principles contained in the foregoing texts for the understanding of laymen on the right approach to life. It also touches upon the creation of our world of beings and their inter-relationships. The two Itihasas- Ramayana and Mahabharata are epics- one built around Rama and another

about the Kourava and Pandava cousins wherein Vishnu took human births to educate people of their duties in one's life in this world and beyond. Bhagvad Gita is part of the epic Mahabharata and tells that you are in essence an immortal (unchanging) soul encased in a mortal body, yearning to unite with the Ultimate Cosmic Energy or Universal Consciousness and explains the proper way to live and act in this world to achieve that objective. Such explanations and interpretations found acceptance gradually by the communities inhabiting Bharat Varsha, though belonging to diverse and distinct ethnicities. These principles later got translated into the practical way of life or Sanatan Dharma followed by people inhabiting Bharat Varsha and these people are known by the generic term Hindus.

Outsiders consider Hindus as polytheistic because there are many Gods and Goddesses whom they worship. It may seem to others that Hindus worship many deities but only as different manifestations or aspects of the One Brahman, over which these exercise control for solace in that specific aspect which is troubling them.

Since it is difficult for a layperson to conceive of a power without any substance, our wise ancestors introduced deities, in shapes familiar to us endowed with benign qualities, to provide succour from our daily problems. For example, people try to propitiate Vinayaka for removal of obstacles in the path of one's karma, Sri Lakshmi for acquiring wealth or Saraswathi for erudition and knowledge and so on. They however differ in essence compared to the Gods and Goddesses mentioned in Greek and Roman mythology. Puranas portray stories about the origin and exploits of these aspects of Hindu Gods and Goddesses which are aimed at explaining and reinforcing the beliefs of the devotees and the ethical way to conduct one's life. The way of living advised by Sanathan Dharma is hence designed to lead humans to transcend material awareness and desires into a higher plane of spiritual experience to attain moksha finally. The lower order members of the animal kingdom were bereft of intelligence, but they existed and survived because the various stages of evolution helped to fine-tune the changes necessary in the design. The creation of the ultimate human machine was made possible by following this principle. During these innovations done by Nature (environmental conditions) the intelligent human race has come into existence without any damage to Nature. Since Prakriti is born out of the sankalp of Brahman, every part of the former is divine, and that is the reason why Hindus worship every object in Nature. Anything with a speck of divinity in it will not intentionally harm or cause damage to another if it is not in such dire circumstances that it cannot escape acute hunger, thirst or life-threatening actions which might affect it or its progeny. Having been provided with intelligence why should we wish to disturb Nature? On the other hand, we should utilise our intelligence to assist other beings to exist in a better condition while going about to reach our goal.

True followers of almost every major religion are expected to carry out certain rituals and practices in order to attain salvation with the difference that a Hindu has the freedom to choose any of the four paths laid down based on their temperament and abilities as long as the cardinal principles are not vitiated. These are the Karma Yoga, the ideal path for an adventurous person who carries out actions without any attachment to its outcome, the Jnana Yoga or the path of knowledge followed by one who is erudite

and understands the import of the Vedic scripts, the Raja Yoga, the path of meditation as prescribed in Sage Patanjali's Ashtanga Yoga and the Bhakti Yoga or the path of devotion to the Divine, suitable for a lay person or one apt to get emotional easily. One will also notice that these paths are so designed that such actions by the inhabitants do not affect our planet adversely so that it can continue to serve us for a long time as a safe habitat.

A clearer understanding of the nature of human beings and inter-relationship with other objects in the Universe has been made amply clear in our scriptures- the Vedas, Upanishads etc., which constitute the collective wisdom of our past sages. Back then, people lived a simple life utilizing available natural resources to the minimum. But they found the purpose of human existence on Earth and realized the eternal truth relating to the bonding and connection that exists between the objects in the Universe.

If we go back a few thousand years back in our history to the *puranic* times, we will notice that while they wanted comfort and happiness in their day to day life, their primary concern was always the survival and prosperity of all elements of the Universe. They understood that their own prosperity and progress depended on the welfare of each and every one. Eternal truths enshrined in our sacred texts and age-old traditions followed by our ancestors fortify these facts further. They had a realistic appreciation as to how our universe/environment developed as also the significance of our individual status in the universal scheme of things and our relationship with other objects and beings therein. Our ancestors were not only able to decipher the origin and sustenance of the Universe, but they were also able to reveal many facts about the Earth, the planets and the solar system accurately. Many of these including numerical calculations are now being proved to be correct. The few facts mentioned above shows that the way of life endorsed by Sanatan Dharma and envisioned in our Scriptures is the product of a holistic vision and approach. We move to the next Part relating to Hindu Philosophy with the aim of using its 'warp and weft' to sort out the present imbroglio.

PART II

A LIFESTYLE BASED ON THE HINDU WAY OF LIFE

CHAPTER 6

THE ORIGIN OF THE HINDU WAY OF LIFE

Records indicate that the period from around 5000 years before Christ till the beginning of Industrial revolution around 1200 AD all over the world as known then was a golden era where the focus of human endeavour was the happiness for all creatures and economical usage of raw material to cater for the basic needs of every human being. It was always a case of simple living and high thinking. Early cultures like the Egyptian and the Greek had their own ideas about the Divine and philosophy of life. The Divine power was noticed to be hierarchal in the Egyptian and Grecian culture, Greek philosophers are quoted for their wise sayings and Christianity has its own story of creation. But Indic culture has an entirely different philosophy and has its own theory about creation and reality of the Universe. It will be seen that they had deliberated on every aspect of life holistically and explained these in substantial detail in various Indian scripts. These were based on the revelations by seers and wise men who knew by intuition or realisation and laid bare their experiences about the nature of the world, how the Universe was created, how Earth evolved to support living beings, their development and evolution further leading to the evolution of the a human being. Our Scriptures also covered a wide range of diverse subjects affecting different aspects of human endeavour. That it was achieved without the use of any of the technological facilities available today indicate their high mental calibre. One of the first finding was that all objects, sentient or otherwise had a common origin, thereby making every being equal partners of a common world heritage. This would mean that each entity has a function to perform in maintaining and sustaining the planet and its resources and the products of nature are not the monopoly of the powerful few alone. In other words, all will either survive or perish together.

In comparison with the rest of the civilisation in other parts of the earth, featured in earlier chapter, Indians had a safe and secure habitat. Being secluded from others, this civilisation was relatively unknown except for a few like the Mongolian marauders came to plunder the rich Somnath temple. On the other hand, the interest of the Chinese, Tibetans and the East Asians in islands who were influenced by Buddhism, an offshoot of Hinduism, were centred on learning more about the religion. The fertile soil in the Indo-Gangetic plain including the invisible River *Saraswathi* and some of the other river basins in the south (like 80,000 year old human settlements at *Singadivakkam* some 60 miles from Chennai indicate earlier human presence in other areas beside the *indo-Gangetic* plains as well) offered ample opportunities for engaging in cultivation to other nomadic tribes, and these turned later into settlements which prospered into villages and towns. The growth and progress of the humans and the growth of civilisation in the Indus valley and other fertile areas of the Indian sub-continent was similar as in the rest of Eurasia but with minor variations depending on the environment of the different areas. Hence, they progressed much more than those in the Mediterranean regions and they had also more time to study Nature and learn from it. It helped them to delve into

the cause of even smallest ills and miseries which could cause physical and mental suffering and be of grave concern. This perhaps gave impetus to our intellectual forefathers to ruminate and decipher the base reason for regularity of the climatic variations happening around the habitat and the birth, growth and decay of living beings and other matters concerning creation. Prodding further and undertaking deep meditation in solitude some of them realised the prime cause behind creation. Aryan tribes are supposed to have infiltrated into the Indus Valley on or about 1500 BC (but this has been refuted by others) which is also known as the Vedic Age. The lifestyles of people in Indian sub-continent therefore differed from that of others outside India, and the philosophy or way of life they followed was unique and different. Jainism and Buddhism were two religions which originated in the Indian sub-continent as offshoots of the Hindu way of life. Both of these religions share some features including ethical principles of Hindu philosophy though they follow ascetic traditions. Out of these two, Jainism was founded by *Vardhamana Mahavira* and its followers were the native groups in eastern India. Gautama Buddha, who established Buddhism, was a contemporary of *Mahavira* who lived around circa 5th century BCE. Buddhism has some similarities with the *Samkhya* philosophy of *Kapila* which was slightly different in concept to the Hindu way of life. The four noble truths of Buddhism generally correspond to the four truths of *Samkhya*. These two could not hold their position in India due to the extreme ascetic character subscribed by these. Also, they were keen on Nirvana or attaining Godhood while Hinduism gives importance to human life for self-realisation. Jainism has still got a few followers in certain pockets in India, but Buddhism is more widespread in Tibet, China, Thailand, Japan, Sri Lanka, Cambodia and Indonesia as a religion, where it has a large number of followers. Since China took over Tibet and the Dalai Lama escaped to India, many Tibetans have moved and got domiciled in India.

Foreigners have always equated Hinduism as a religion like those followed by them, Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Indians prefer to call it rather as a 'way of life' because there is a lot of difference between them, by pointing out the differences in the aim and the process of arriving at it. Hindus do not have to rigidly follow any set of rules laid down by the religious teachers, but as long as the aim and the basic elements are intact, he can still be a true Hindu. One of the differences stems from the fact that whereas the above-mentioned religions were revelations by 'God' to a leader or a founder of a sect, the realisation of the Supreme Power by some ancient Indian Sages. Another is that according to the founders of all religions 'God' to obey and follow His orders implicitly and conduct himself as a morally responsible member of the community or be punished. Hinduism on the other hand is a benign power and expects human beings to be kind, considerate and loving to every object in the Universe and until he achieves this status or required rebirths he cannot hope to attain 'Moksha'. In other words, he has to become a perfect human in body, mind and spirit (confidence) before he can be free of further rebirths.

Indian way of life was the outcome of a 4-stage process. The first is the revelation by the Sages about the 'Supreme Power' followed by the creation of the Universe of objects which indicate the oneness between all of those. The third is the purpose behind the

creation of the stage of human beings with intelligence and lastly how to achieve the aim of creation.

THE BEGINNING OF THE UNIVERSE AND THE START OF CREATION ACCORDING TO THE VEDAS.

Planet Earth, a very minute part of the Universe that we inhabit is a product of Nature. Millions of varieties of inert objects and diverse species of living beings are part of it. They share Nature's bounty equitably and live harmoniously and their life and survival depend on their fitness. Whereas all beings live and survive on Nature's bounty, mankind however has the ability to design its usage according to their wishes. The diverse moods of nature during the varied seasons are a source of enjoyment and motivation for them but any act to upset the working of Nature can create problems. Mother Nature has always inspired humans and many of the human innovations in engineering and other sciences are copies from nature or the lives of creatures forming part of our environment.

As an intelligent human he has the added responsibility to ensure that the environment is kept pristine even as he is trying to evolve into a better person and realise his primary objective of attaining salvation.

Every being is generally inquisitive by nature and one's growth process can be a consequence of this tendency and humans more so being better equipped to ferret out the origin and sequence of almost every process in the material world by using their thought process. Looking around at the diversity in terrain, climate and the great variety of living beings, our ancestors came to the conclusion that there must be a definite purpose or grand design in creating such a universe of disparate but cohesive group of objects. The seekers in their midst, must have been surprised to notice why some people go through rough times in life while others live comfortably. This perhaps gave them the impetus to ruminate and meditate and find a solution. The result of their realisation is the subject matter of the Vedas.

The very first action of a newborn is the intake of breath and this continues as long as it is alive and with the last breath it becomes an inert dead body. While alive it survives on the produce of the earth which provides the energy for the actions performed. When it dies it disintegrates and mingles with the soil of the earth. The senses and the ideas in the mind caused by these thoughts provoke actions. These actions under similar provocations need not necessarily be similar due to influence of individual gunas he is going through or his state of consciousness at that particular time. Hence the body-sense-mind complex is only available to the person when he is alive. It stands to reason therefore that the person possesses some factor apart from the body-mind complex. We call it the God=element or 'soul' which moves out of the physiological body. The difference between life and death is the whiff of breath. So, the breath and the true person are somehow connected. The sages therefore concentrated on the breath to go beyond the mind and perhaps that is when they realised the truth of creation and the unity of all Nature.

As per Vedic Philosophy, there was no world existing to begin with. It was an absolute vacuum or “*Shoonya*” except for an invisible Cosmic Power, *Purusha*. The Universe of objects, inanimate or animate, was created to replace this ‘*Shoonya*’ out of the *Sankalpa* of the *Purusha*.

This primordial energy is variously referred to as *Para Brahman*, *Brahman*, *Purusha* or *Cosmic Consciousness* by Hindus and is solely responsible for creating, sustaining and motivating the actions of the elements in the universe and constituent parts. Even the most advanced human mind could not describe this *Cosmic energy* in any intelligible manner through man-made languages or animal signs (sign language) and had to be satisfied by calling it as *Nirakar Brahman*. This sounds logical too as the human being, though the most intelligent of all creations, is itself a product of that cosmic energy, and hence cannot be in a position to unravel the specifics of that original source in any definitive manner. They therefore interpreted and conceived it as the Ultimate in existence, comprising Truth and Enlightenment and defined it further as ‘pure or Universal Consciousness’ without any colour, quality or discriminating features. *Purusha* is therefore known by the appellation of ‘*Nirguna Brahma*’ in which the qualifying word ‘*nirguna*’ conveys the sense that it is not possible to define/describe its qualities/specifics in terms, expressions or signs comprehensible to the human intellect. In our holy texts, the *Nirguna* is also explained as ‘*neti, neti*’ meaning ‘not this or that’ or alternately as that which is ‘beyond this or that’. That was the only method they could devise to explain something which was inexplicable. Hence, they restricted themselves by specifying or defining its qualities in terms of what it is capable of. They surmised that this ‘causal element’ or the Cosmic Energy was responsible for the creation of the Universe or Nature that we are part of.

Our *Scriptures* then goes on to recount in detail how ‘*creation*’ started from ‘*Shoonya*’ or ‘void’ (emptiness) with the intonation of the primordial sound, denoted by the word “Om” but pronounced as “*Aum*”. This syllable consists of five parts, namely A, U, M, nasal *bindu* and the echo emanating while intoning the same and is depicted by the symbol ॐ in Sanskrit. For Hindus, it is the most succinct of all *mantras*, and one which is revered as the sacred syllable since the origin of the universe. It is intoned in a specific way with its incantation ending in a long drawn out (lengthy) reverberation of gradually diminishing tones. *Vedic mantras* inevitably start and end with this sacred syllable or *mantra* as it is considered auspicious and holy during conduct of any societal activity.

It is said that the letters A, U and M represents the three Hindu triumvirates of Gods, *Brahma*, *Vishnu* and *Shiva* respectively and the symbol ॐ denotes the united effulgence of these deities. Reference to this word or symbol is also found in the *Upanishads*, like *Taittiriya*, *Chandogya* and *Mandukyaupanishads*, where its hidden power is elaborated upon. In the *Mandukya Upanishad*, the sacred word AUM is taken as the bow, one’s soul as the arrow and Brahman as the target. It is said that a man (represented by an arrow) sent from the steady bow of attention and concentration will not swerve from its path till it pierces the target (*Brahman*) and gets fully absorbed with it, indicating ultimate realization of the Truth. It is interesting to note that the

phonetically similar sounding term as 'AUM' is often used and found abundantly in the holy books of religions such as Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism. '*Om manipadmane hum*' in Buddhism is one, for example. *Guru Granth Sahib* states that from *Omkar* the One Universal Creator, Brahma was created, that He kept *Omkar* as his consciousness, and created the mountains, the Ages and the Vedas. The singularity of God is expressed in the saying '*Ek Onkar*'. 'Amen', uttered by the Christians and '*Ameen*' spoken by the Muslims and found in their scriptures are close intonations of the sacred '*Aum*'.

(In *Judaism*, Moses refers to one higher power '*YEHWAH*', as the name of God, represented by the four consonants of Hebrew language to represent God. Moses is supposed to have been told by God, '*I AM WHO I AM*'. This is meant only to show similarity in the thinking of our elders with that of the original settlers in Eurasia in the earlier times.)

According to the Hindu philosophical thought the material world we see around us manifested out of "*Shoonya*" or nothingness, which sounds paradoxical since we have been taught that one cannot produce something out of nothing. In reality "*Shoonya*" only means that whatever exists is something which cannot be perceived by our senses. This is considered to be cosmic power, the basic energy system which is the elemental source from which the entire universe has evolved. (Could it be possibly 'Dark matter' or the black hole which modern scientists talk about). It is known as '*Cosmic Consciousness*' in Hindu mythology to denote that it is not just energy alone but something which is at the same time sentient and discerning.

The world that has manifested out of '*Shoonya*' is known as *Prakriti* or Nature that includes us and all objects, inert and alive, seen around. It is said to have arisen out of the influence or resolve (*Sankalpa*) of the *Purusha* and is considered to be its projection subsisting on the sub-strata of Universal Consciousness. A scientific evaluation of the process of creation of the based on the *Sankalp* of the *Brahman* brings out many salient points covered therein. The word *Sankalp* indicates the presence of a subtle mind which dictated the action of utterance of the word "AUM". This in Hindu mythology is a sacred phrase or epithet denoting three aspects of the Brahman, i.e. Brahma, Vishnu and Siva, controlling creation, sustenance and dissolution of existence respectively. The nuance in the intonation of '*AUM*' is special with an extended '*Aaaaaaaaaa*', a clipped sound of 'U' and a trailing sound of '*Ummmmm*' waning into silence.

Starting from '*Shoonya*' or emptiness, the reverberations caused by the initial emanation of the auspicious sound '*Aum*' resulted in the formation of space or ether, the first of the five basic elements. It replaced the earlier '*Shoonya*'. Air was the next element to be formed which is felt as the ripples of movement in space. The remaining three basic elements of fire, water and earth were created next in that order. A look at the process of creation will show that 'space', the first element created, happens to be the simplest or the least complicated of all matter. Its uniqueness is that it cannot be seen or felt, nor has it any weight or any other significant distinguishing feature. The next element 'air', is a bit more complex, being a mixture of diverse light material gases like nitrogen, oxygen, hydrogen and traces of other gases. This element is also invisible to the naked eye but

can be felt when it moves. It occupies the 'space' and its presence can be ascertained also by some of its chemical characteristics of its constituents. It is one of the elements essential for the sustenance of plants and beings, which populated the universe later. The third element 'fire' is the phenomena noticed during oxidation of combustible substances and usually accompanied by generation of heat and light. Items left behind after combustion are some non-combustible gases and ashes. Fire and heat energy of the Sun play a vital function in supporting life on Earth. 'Water', the next element is denser and most commonly seen in liquid form and in some areas in solid form as ice and snow. This element constitutes the major portion of all plant and animal life. Creation of a host of various inert objects and growth and sustenance of plant and animal life would be impossible without the help of these five basic elements and their derivatives produced by a process known as *Pancheekaran Kriya*. The ultimate purpose is to produce a variety of basic building blocks from which diverse material parts of objects found in nature are fabricated. By this process, the gross factor becomes the building block of the physically observable portion of the body and the subtle part becomes the unseen feature of mind/intelligence portion of the living being. The energy requirement of all living beings come from the Sun and air forming part of '*Prakriti*'.

One can notice that features such as sound, touch, colour, taste and smell are the special characteristics of the basic elements space, air, fire, water and earth in that order and these help the plant and animal life to survive and enjoy their existence. It will be seen that every one of the basic elements, materials or compounds are interminably associated with the survival, ease and comfortable subsistence of plant and animal life. However, the gross and the subtle parts will require a causal body to create a functioning entity. How this happens will be clarified in due course.

By and large, Nature is believed to have evolved out of the 'Five Elements' known as "*Panchamahabhutas*," namely *Space, Air, Fire, Water* and *Earth*, the original five elements which materialized in that order. The entire visible universe with its constituents is covered by the word '*Prakriti*'. It also goes by the expression '*Saguna Brahman*', to differentiate it from the *Para-Brahman* or *Nirguna Brahman*, given that all the constituents of the '*Saguna Brahma*' or *Prakriti* are endowed with qualities that can be spelt out, described or defined by diverse human expressions. *Prakriti* consists of all sentient and non-sentient objects in the world, visible and invisible, and encompasses the inert matter like Earth, rock and living matter from the tiniest to the largest, whether plants, insects, animals or humans. A God-element 'soul' or '*Jivatma*' is present in all living organisms. It does not take any active part in the activities of that being but remains as a passive witness.

The above construct shows the clarity and soundness of perception of our venerable ancestors, the *Rishis* and *Munis*. In the Hindu way of thinking, each and every living object, in whatever shape, colour, design or way of life they assume were created out of the same basic five elements and therefore cannot profess to be basically different from the others. Also, if we study the lifecycle of any plant or animal it will be seen that every individual object in the Universe has been designed to contribute towards the survival and welfare of the rest in some way or the other during its lifetime.

A brief appraisal of the process of creation of living beings will point to the fact that it was not done in a hurry or haphazard fashion and it took many millions of years to create a world of millions of diverse varieties of marine and land-based plants, insects, birds and animals. The earliest living beings which flourished were the marine plants as the Earth was initially fully submerged under water. These were followed by the simple life-forms like fishes and frogs and then increasingly complicated marine animals. In the next stage, some portions of the land surface broke through the surface of water and land-based plants and trees made their appearance. New consumables like roots, tubers, fruits and nuts needed for nourishment attracted a variety of land-based animals, mostly vegetarian, living and getting subsistence off the land. But for the patience and the time that was spent in creation of the Universe we would not have been lucky to have such a pleasant habitat, where every one's needs have been catered for. It is a lesson for us all that to achieve anything one should proceed with patience and caution. These stages of evolution have been mentioned in the ancient Indic scripts as *Dasvatara* i.e. *Matsya*, *Kurma*, *Varaha*, *Narasimha*, *Vamana*, *Parashurama*, *Sri Rama*, *Balarama*, *Sri Krishna* and *Kalki*. The first one is marine-based, next can live in water or land and the third land-based surviving on tubers. Later avatars can be seen to be an improvement in sophistication and development over the earlier ones except the last one which is yet to come. *Kalki* is destined to cause deluge or *Pralaya* of our habitat and the start of another round of creation after a certain spell of time.

The first five *Avatars* mentioned in the *Puranas* happened in the *Satyuga*, the next two in *Treta Yuga*, next two in *Dwapara* with the last expected to happen in current Kali Yuga after the evolution of the human being. Lord Krishna mentions in the *Bhagvad Gita* that He takes *Avatars* to remove evil whenever it arises and to re-establish *Dharma* again. The reason is that with development of the human mind, a person may acquire evil attributes like greed and ego and create impediments in the way of good people following *Dharmic* life. One can see now a gradual degradation of moral values with the passage of time.

The *Hindu puranas* and other contemporary literature and events in those times bring out these facts clearly. *Dharma* or righteousness prevailed in the early *yugas* giving way to minor infringements of moral ethics like lying and cheating and reaching a stage of intolerance such that there is no qualm in mass scale annihilation to achieve one's purpose. The stories mentioned in the *Puranas* are allegorical, talking of vices as evil and good practices as the right way of living. So, these are representations of the bad effect of evil in men and how to eradicate these evil instincts. Individual human being has the freedom to live the way he wants, and he can force his way over others by acquiring capabilities and impose his will, which can upset orderly living. Underlying theme of the stories indicate that our ancestors were aware that with the progress of civilisation and the development of the human brain there was a possibility of people getting wayward which can affect societal living and disturb Nature. Hence, they did their best to find ways and means to restrain the wayward mind. Depending on the stage of life of an individual *Sama*, *Dana*, *Bheda* and *Dhanda* were initially prescribed to get people toe the line and live in harmony with the rest. But a more realistic approach would be to train and habituate people into good practices so that they can live happily. Stories and myths

have been written about great personalities giving the Hindus a feeling that that they are live characters so as to influence people to be good, loving and compassionate with all the sentient and non-sentient objects surrounding us. Such an attitude with support and sustenance of every being will ensure prosperity.

ARCHITECTURE OF LIVING OBJECTS AND EQUILIBRIUM OF NATURE

It is a well-known that planet Earth is host to sentient and non-sentient objects. Plant, animal kingdoms fall under the sentient group. Human beings are the final outcome of evolution from the apes with the addition of a discriminatory intelligence. Someone had explained sentient objects briefly as: "Body is just matter and inert. Infusion of vital air energizes it. When the discriminatory mind is aroused, the body follows its dictates ". It creates an impression therefore that the body-sense-mind-intellect complex is an end in itself, which is far from the truth. This is a fallacy which can provoke people to behave indiscriminately. Also, people tend to forget that all objects found on earth have been created from the same base materials and is therefore basically one, though each may bear unique characteristics.

After water resources and the land mass, plants and trees were the next to appear on Earth. These depended on basic essentials like air, water and chemicals found in soil for their survival and growth. The structural design of the trees and plants evolved depending on where they grew, the type of water or soil based on the limitations of surrounding environment and involved assistance and cooperation of other beings to spread out. Gradual and subtle changes taking place in Nature tend to increase the utility in maintaining equitable and pleasant environment of our habitat.

Trees and plants are rooted to one place and what they breathe in or out differ from other living beings. Their vital functions are carried out by the roots, trunk or stem, branches with leaf and flowers and fruits unlike the type of organs other categories possess. Depending on their survival needs, the plants thrive in those regions and climates where they get ready supply of requisite nutrients. Like other sentient objects they are capable of locating their needs of water, chemicals and sunlight through proper utilisation of their component parts. The configuration of roots, stem, positioning of branches as also shape, colour and structures of leaves, flowers and fruits of trees and plants are invariantly different. They are normally located in specific regions where environmental conditions are ideal for them to flourish. They pass through cyclical phases of shedding or sprouting of leaves, flowering and fruit bearing according to seasonal changes. What they yield during its normal season is generally rich in nutrients needed for the healthy living of local inhabitants. The plant stores its waste in leaves which are shed when it cannot function any further. Trees make their own food by photosynthesis using sunlight to transform simple molecules like carbon dioxide and water into more complex carbohydrate molecules. The growth of plants continues throughout its entire lifetime unlike that of physical bodies of animal organisms which goes on till adulthood only.

As a part of forest or a jungle these trees and plants provide shelter and food for creatures with their yields of edible fruits, leaves and roots. A brief study of vegetation

will reveal that amongst themselves they have no qualms of supporting another's growth, sometimes even providing their own body as base or support for others to live and grow. As a conscientious member of the community it breathes out oxygen-rich clean and unpolluted air and assists in the build-up of ground water levels for benefit of others. The roots probing for nutrients bring out various chemicals from below the surface of the earth, and when the trees shed the leaves, flowers and fruits these make the topsoil more fertile. Trees provide nesting and resting places for the birds beside shelter and shade for many reptiles and animals. Suffice it to say that the absence of sufficient plants and trees will make life on our planet untenable. Like other sentient beings, trees also have an inbuilt survival instinct. Minor cuts to stems and branches are soon covered with sap which hardens in time and prevents exposure to pests. It is instinct that makes the roots travel deep into the earth to look for water and nutrients or use them to fasten the trunk to the earth.

Our ancestors knew that trees and plants were also sentient and alive since early times and that is why these were revered and nurtured carefully. The beneficial effects of various plants and herbs were clearly understood as seen from segregated plots set apart for growth of such plants, which was inhabited by snakes and crawlies. In the south, many old *Nair Tharavads* had such places earmarked which were held sacrosanct and lamps lit at dusk, known as '*Sarpakkavu*'. *Atharvaveda* deals with uses of parts of medicinal plant and tree species for cure of ailments. Modern research has attested to the efficacy of *Ayurvedic* medicines in good measure, realising its effect on physical well-being. Now researchers are extracting vital ingredients from the plant kingdom. Westerners have confirmed the existence of life in plants only recently and that they too feel emotions like other beings, which were propounded by Sir Jagadish Chandra Bose in 1901 AD. It transpires now that the primary cells of both plants and animals have many basic similarities, strengthening our age-old belief about the oneness of all life on Earth.

Almost the same narrative about the oneness and basic instinct of survival, unity within a group or species and collaboration between the creatures of a group can be noticed within the animal kingdom. Each group have the freedom to act within their habitat and when shared they stick to the golden rule of mutual respect while sharing Nature's bounty impartially. Unless forced by hunger or as a necessity to nurture their brood the carnivores will not hunt or kill their prey. Rest of the times the herbivores can be seen grazing and sharing the area where beasts of prey rest or frolic with their young ones. The way diverse species came into existence on the planet and the way environmental changes happened to take care of the needs has already been mentioned.

Unlike the animal species, survival instinct in human beings is less effective and operates only in exceptional cases when it is likely to cause immediate harm or danger. In all other cases the intelligent brain takes over. Out of the sentient lot, they use their intelligence mainly to devise means for increasing their comfort levels or sensory pleasures. They work with that aim in view and on reaching that raise it to a higher level, based on their aspirations. There is however a limit to which the capabilities of the senses and experience of individuals can be enhanced without hurting oneself. It shows that the

objects of Nature, created out of elements emanating from '*Prakriti*', can only understand and appreciate what is happening around at its level of existence only. The eternal truth of creation is not explicitly manifested, and one has to go beyond the highest level of human existence to get a glimpse or to realise that. Very few people understand why humans have been provided with intelligence. Barring a few in earlier ages and the diligent students of our Scriptures, others don't know that it is intended for a higher purpose of realisation or salvation. Seers and sages of old had visualised that we have an existence beyond what we are experiencing during our lifetime. People have to spend many lifetimes on Earth exploring ways of getting to that state of realisation and then only their return trips to Earth will stop. Each human being is unique and possesses different temperaments and qualities and cannot take the same route to achieve the final common aim. Hence our forefathers designed four different approaches *Karma*, *Jnana*, *Bhakti* and *Raja Yogas* to address this problem. In all these practices one's body and mind are differently employed to create conditions and abilities to enable people to realise the ultimate goal.

According to the Scriptures all sentient objects are a combination of gross, subtle and causal bodies. The *sthulasharira* is the physical body created out of gross components of the basic elements and assists the person to carry out physical activities to survive and to create capabilities he wishes by practicing the type of Yoga which enhances those. Their *sookshmasharira* holds the senses-mind-intellect complex made of the subtle portion of the basic elements which collects information and decides the actions to be carried out in support. (*SookshmaSharira* provides for achieving greater capabilities but is also called the *LingaSharira* as it deals with the senses for giving temporary pleasures.) The third part is the causal body or *karanasharira* (*Jiva-atma* or the soul) because it is this which initiates the functioning of the gross and subtle body it inhabits. The gross and subtle bodies disperse into elements on death of the being, But the causal body along with the experiences gathered by the mind during its sojourn on Earth moves to its new abode in a fresh body of its choosing. The new body is chosen for its suitability to organise a new life as per the impressions and unfulfilled desires carried over from earlier birth. During each lifetime, more impressions are added or modified depending on the prevailing circumstances before it moves on to a new body. When the subtle body and mind are cleared of all previous memories, the individual soul attains '*moksha*' by getting subsumed in the *Paramatma*.

STRUCTURE OF A COMPLETE HUMAN BEING ACCORDING TO SCRIPTURES

Though human beings have been provided with intelligence for a specific purpose, some persons use it injudiciously due to certain external influences. Some of the ambiguities arise due to misunderstanding of how various occurrences are interconnected and has been clarified in the *Bhagvad Gita*. The body-mind complex is a creation of *Prakriti*, an *Adhibhuta*, which houses the *Adhiyagna*, the imperishable Soul. The material body is perishable and lasts only one lifetime and should not be identified as the *Adhiyagna*, which will inhabit many more before the realisation of '*who you really are*' sets in. It goes on to say that the body is made of the five *mahabhutas*, the ego, *buddhi*, the invisible self, the ten sense organs (ears, eyes, nose, tongue, skin, hands, feet, mouth, anus and

sex organ), objects of the five senses (sound, taste, touch, smell, sight) and the desires, likes and dislikes, happiness and sorrow and also the awareness which wells up in the mind. Various emotions and actions by the body get further complicated by the interplay of these elements with the three *gunas*, *sattwa*, *rajas* and *tamas*, depending on which one, alone or in combination happen to be in acting at that moment. All actions originate from these three *gunas*. This shows the complexity in taking correct decision due to the illusion that the self is the body under the influence of the overpowering senses. This leads people to commit errors. So, liberation from death as a permanent measure is possible only when every action intended or done is for offering the fruits of action to *Paramatman*, by keeping one's body and mind in control.

Since the nature of being human is much more complicated and encompasses larger physical and psychological aspects, Yogic philosophy sometimes uses the Kosha system wherein these aspects are referred to as sheaths covering five different layers of subjective experience. Layers range from the dense physical body to the more subtle levels of emotions, mind and spirit. In these five sheaths or '*koshas*', wherein the gross body relates to the *Annamaya Kosha*, the three subtle ones to *Pranamaya Kosha*, *Manomaya Kosha* and *Vignanamaya Kosha* and the causal one to *Anandamaya Kosha*. Functions of each of the above five *koshas* detailed below will make this clear.

Annamaya Kosha: This outer sheath is the physical body consists of various internal organs and assortment of systems and subsystems and also the limbs provided for locomotion and action. It is created, fed and nourished by the food that one consumes. The food is produced from the Earth, in turn made up of the five basic elements. *Hathayoga asanas* works primarily on this sheath to keep it healthy.

Pranamaya Kosha: The next inner sheath is composed of life force energy or *prana*, and hence the name. The circulatory, lymphatic and nervous systems are operated by life energy. *Pranayama* techniques, mainly diaphragmatic breathing and alternate nostrils breathing are designed to enhance the proper functioning of this *kosha*. Additionally, fresh air and sunlight are essential to maintain its efficacy.

Manomaya Kosha: The third layer governs the perception of the world received through the five senses. It is also responsible for our sensory and motor activities and day to day awareness stimulated by survival instinct. Since the sense organs are part of this sheath it also makes one feel that it is the physical body which perceives and thereby induces a sense of self, causing egoistic behaviour.

Vignanamaya Kosha: This sheath holds the consciousness and intellect. *Vignana* means knowledge, power of judgement and discernment. Though it is often translated as intellect, here it has a wider connotation and covers the functions of the higher mind including conscience and will. Therefore, it governs one's sense of ethics and morals in addition to acquisition of knowledge by study of sacred texts. Human beings have the ability to direct their own lives because of the presence of this sheath whereas its absence in animals makes them dependent solely on their natural instinct. Persons who can establish awareness in this space can free themselves from unhealthy thoughts and action and thereby control or manage the mind to some extent. Sage Patanjali's Ashtanga

yoga consisting of the eight stages of practices helps in the development of *Vignanamaya kosha* so that human beings can get over their normal failings. As your meditation practice deepens over the months and years, your ability to connect with inner guidance is enhanced. You begin to experience the events in your life, even the painful ones, in a calm and objective manner. Your yogic lifestyle, contemplation, and meditation lead to clarity of judgment, greater intuitive insight, and increased willpower as your *vignanamaya kosha* grows stronger and more balanced.

Anandamaya Kosha: It is the innermost of all the *koshas* and is generally perceived as brief flashes of bliss by disciplined students during meditation.

It will be noticed that the Vedic system considers a human being holistically as a combination of various systems of differing aspects but each contributing to the well-being of the whole structure. (The western system of medicine and the diagnostic methods give more importance to the specific part or system of the body affected and treats or tries to remove the defects in that and often forgets that the body is intrinsically connected to every other part thereof and can influence the functioning of other parts and organs of the body and the mind).

Our ancestors were aware that the gross physical body and the subtle sense-mind-intellect are meant to be used as tools to achieve the ultimate aim of human existence of salvation. They were aware that the gross body of a living entity was an ingenious piece of architecture needing minimum attention that could be depended upon if its energy and hygiene requirements are met regularly. It is only natural that as an operational mechanism it will need to be exercised, provided adequate rest and maintained properly for optimum performance. But life on earth would have been uninteresting but for the effect of certain intangible forces acting on the mind which make actions of each human unique and disparate from all others. Demonstration of diverse emotions by people is the outcome of influence by the three latent *gunas*, *Sattwa*, *Rajas* and *Tamas* but perceptible in varying proportions at different situations. Because wise men of old knew that the gross body was capable of functioning efficiently if properly attended to with right food, proper hygiene and regular exercise, they did not go deep into the intricacies or structure of the body organs except that of external organs and limbs. But the working of the sense-mind-intellect complex, made of subtle part of the basic elements was a different matter. Hence, they went into various problems it can succumb to and recommended procedures intended to moderate, regulate and manage its improved functioning.

PHYSICAL BODY

Functions of various parts of the human body are generally known to everyone who has attended school. Vedic system also never placed much importance as there was no need for laymen to know much more. Our philosophers realised that all objects of Nature are manifestations of energy in different forms related to the Cosmic Energy and that the body was only an instrument to carry out activities as dictated by its accompanying mind which in turn functions according to its unfinished Karma.

According to this philosophy, the body is created out of the gross part of the basic elements, gets activated by the subtle prana and gets nutrients and energy from the food and water consumed and the sunlight. The individual's breath is the external manifestation of prana, where breath is the gross and prana the subtle portion. Our ancestors were aware that it is *Prana* that makes the body alive, active and alert and that it carries out its role by carrying out five different material functions. Correlating this with our knowledge of the body as we know now, the aspirated air acts in five different ways- as *mukhya prana* it enriches the blood with oxygen and as *udana* it removes the waste gases from the blood flowing back (after depletion of oxygen and nutrients to various parts of the body) to the heart respectively using lungs as the interface; as *samana* it guides the movement of food to the stomach where it gets digested and further on to the small intestines where the nutrients get assimilated through the blood capillaries in its walls for further distribution to different organs of the body; as *apana* it assists in the excretion of the residual faecal matter and urine; lastly as *vyana* it distributes requisite nutrients to the cells of the body to fight disease-causing microbes and help in their repair, multiplication and transformation of specialised cells in various organs. *Prana* also plays an important role in the manufacture of various secretions required for the body like semen, chyle, chime, gastric juice, bile, intestinal juice and saliva as needed to support efficient functioning of the body. In fact, the physical body would be an inert matter but for the energy from ingested food and *prana* to make the body alive and perform as per commands of the mind.

On the other hand, there is also a connection between prana and the mind. If one notices the flow pattern of the breath carefully one will notice that it reflects the thoughts and emotions passing through the mind and vice versa similarly. Hence it can be used to make it an instrument for connecting the body and mind in a specific way. This is what Sage Patanjali tried out in the practice of Pranayama. At the cosmic level, *Purusha* is the energy of pure consciousness or 'unmanifest' *prana*, while in Nature it expresses itself as 'manifest' *prana*, the life-force behind the entire creation. When considering our physical existence, *prana* or the vital life-force is derived from the oxygen in the air we breathe. This happens because at the subtle level the element air corresponds to the sense of touch, and through touch we are able to transmit our life-force to others. *Prana* is also the link between the astral and physical body. When death occurs, the slender thread-link of *Prana* is cut off and the astral body separates from the physical body.

The physical body which is made from elements was therefore considered as a gift of creation. Anything gifted to one is not his creation, but something he can use for the benefit/help of any or every person. So, it has to be maintained at all times properly to be of use at any juncture. In the early days of community living, I do not think that lay people knew or were told about the internal organs or their functions in detail but were aware that one's body could render efficient service automatically if fed with food and water appropriately and maintained clean. The local people had learned in the early stages itself by trial and error as to what food to take or avoid. In the earlier days people very rarely depended on transport for short journeys or for outdoor work around town and villages and work on household chores provided sufficient physical exercise

automatically. Recreational games, yogic practices made up for any shortfall. It was a normal routine in the earlier days to have bath after work or exercise so that the body is kept clean of sweat and dirt collected during activity. Sports, martial arts, dances, music and household duties along with basic breathing exercises like *pranayama* kept the people engaged in work, hobby or leisure and therefore carefree, healthy and happy. This proves that our ancestors already knew that our body is a self-healing, self-correcting mechanism needing minimal effort from our side. So, they preferred not to tamper or interfere with the internal working of the organs generally except the use of safe and tested herbal remedies. They were aware that normal human ailments generally categorised under *Vata*, *Pitta* or *Kapha* and each of these needed different style of treatment and preventive care. To serve different types of bodies and keep these fit, traditional preventive maintenance provided for diverse treatments with herbal oil massages and hot or cold-water baths. Though Vedic tradition considered the body as an instrument to gain existential experience till people attain *Moksha*, it never proscribed people enjoying themselves in moderation during daily activities. So, there was no serious lifestyle or modern age diseases and use of natural ingredients and herbal *ayurvedic* preparation could assuage most health problems. The level of natural immunity possessed by individuals was also high as they spent most of their time in the same environment and the organs were kept exercised.

SENSE-MIND COMPLEX

The prime concern of our planet is to ensure that its bounty, whether animate or inanimate does not perish or removed entirely. For example, the changing seasons alter the climate and the environment cause storms, change flow pattern of water in rivers, ground water levels and generally help plants and animal life to survive. This is Nature's way to ensure survival of the planet. All living creatures go through the natural process of trials and corrections till these become a habit and get them accustomed to the environment.

Evolution has been the process of Nature which made it possible to transform features of an object to function under changed conditions. Hence such features caused by environmental factors affecting a generation will get passed on to the next generation. During this evolutionary period from the initial basic cell to complicated forms later, a subtle survival instinct gradually developed to ensure preservation, survival and existence in plants, trees and animals.

Armed with their survival mechanism ingrained in their cells, live organisms needed to possess no other skills except those passed on through their ancestral genes. Evolution had thus provided them with special features designed to safeguard them from adverse natural elements or predatory adversaries to a great extent. Additionally, they were endowed with keen senses to give them sufficient advance warning to evade or escape.

During the latter part of the process of evolution from the apes into human beings, the brain developed further abilities to analyse situations using their powers of observation and experience. People were therefore able to make better decisions and react correctly to evolving external situations. But vestiges of the survival instinct still took care of any

immediate threat of danger to person or physical injury. In most of the cases, however, it is human intelligence which prevails.

Human mind has always been considered as fickle since two people placed under the similar circumstances very rarely came to the same conclusion or decision. Whereas the human body is designed to function automatically with normal inputs, the activities of the senses and the mind and their impact on human behaviour are subject to unknown factors. These upset normal life of people and their probability of attaining salvation. Our elders knew that the human mind though fickle was amenable to change. Its working was therefore studied in greater detail and they came to the conclusion that two major factors, the state of consciousness and the different moods which people went through were responsible for this. So they introduced some procedures to augment the individual's capabilities so that the people could perform duties appropriately as ordained by Hindu Dharma. Such methods were selectively incorporated as part of daily routine depending on the path chosen by them - *Bhakti, Karma or Jnana Marg* by followers of *Sanatan Dharma*.

FUNCTIONING OF THE HUMAN MIND/SENSES ACCORDING TO OUR FOREFATHERS

Actions performed by individuals are the result of decisions taken by their minds based on the predominant signals/information received from external environment by their senses, their earlier experiences and intelligence. Unlike the animal kingdom where basic survival instinct supports survival and propagation of species, it takes care of only the aspect of injury to the physical body in the case of human beings. Behavioural ethics to be followed in society are as per rules devised by the community and the Government.

Activity is a must for survival and growth of a human being and is usually based on necessity which initially starts as an idea or thought in his mind. With the dawn of intelligence, the relative use of the survival instinct which was absolutely needed by the animals became almost redundant in humans to a great extent. When perceptions of activities in the external environment by the senses act on stored experiences in the mind, it evokes memories and possibly desires. Ideas or desires thus formulated or fashioned in the mind leads to decisive actions. So, the mind can be considered as the crucible where varied perceptions react and generate an idea leading to specific action. Long years of evolution have equipped humans with an additional secondary brain capable of discrimination, logical analysis and decision-making. Thus, a human being can definitely work to a plan and attain desired results objectively.

Curiosity and inquisitiveness helped living beings to survive under trying conditions and evolve into an intelligent human. The ultimate object of any idea or desire of a normal human being in the material world is the attainment of the pinnacle of sensual, physical or mental achievement. Though our scriptures never proscribed these and agreed that these could be primary goals during our life on earth, our elders realised that this could not be the only reason for our existence. They visualised that it has to be something more meaningful than eating, drinking and making merry and finally dying. The same spirit of enquiry helped our wise men to ruminate in total silence for years which finally resulted in the *Vedas*. In that process, they transcended the limits of the mind and realised how

our mind functions. Our mind is fickle, and the senses could convey wrong perceptions and that is one of the reasons why humans are equipped with an intelligent brain. It expects a righteous man to only moderate his desires within reasonable limits. Unlike animals whose senses serve them mainly to survive, humans should therefore use their senses effectively to create (and prolong) a life full of enjoyment (which many consider as a synonym of happiness). In the process they should therefore be careful not to exceed the limits, by learning how to manage their mind.

In order to understand the functioning of the mind, consider it as having two parts, a lower mind and a higher mind. The lower mind carries reminiscences of significant events which have affected the individual and every cell of his carries the imprint of the basic traits of his forefathers including the basic instinct. It is this part which gets the first impressions from the perceptions of the five senses. Diverse emotions are caused in the lower mind by such perceptions whereby thoughts are created, resulting in actions by or reactions on various body parts instantaneously. Involuntary actions like sneezing or instant retraction of body part exposed to electrical shock or flame, twitching at the jab of a pin, hairs standing on end due of fear or cold are some of the common occurrences/instances caused by the influence of the lower mind. This is ascribed to the built-in experiences of the earlier life in the deep recesses of one's mind, of which one is normally oblivious about. Most of these actions are inherited from human ancestors who developed these tendencies while they were living in the wild and had to depend on significant individualistic and group responses to ward off unseen but expected dangers. The lower order animals needed only their basic instinct to go ahead in their life, whereas human beings need a logical and discerning intellect to lead a satisfactory existence. Hence during the process of evolution, a gradual transformation resulted in the build-up of a higher mind with better capabilities. Though redundant, basic instinct is used very rarely by humans as the higher mind takes over if paucity of time is not a factor.

Actions taken are deliberate when there is sufficient time to study and understand the significance of various perceptions and impressions created in the mind. The higher mind which has the power of reasoning and discrimination is the part which takes deliberate decisions. There are many factors such as the relative strength of perceptions from the different senses, the environmental conditions at the time and the earlier experiences stored in memory which have to be evaluated before taking a deliberate decisive action. Whenever such perceptions and impressions are considered and reason-cause-effect established, these become experiences stored in the mind. Thus, as the experience grows as also the cause and effect phenomenon is understood, the higher mind evolves further. The capability of the brain increases with proper usage and with improved knowledge and experience one can envision/predict forthcoming events based on current happenings. This is the secret of mind-logic. The higher mind is therefore the cognitive and discriminatory part of the brain. This part of the brain can be considered as the factory where thoughts are manufactured based on the interaction between the external sensory perceptions with the stored memories and experiences, as decided by logic. This explanation does not however clarify why two or more people react differently under

the same situation and environment or why an individual reacts differently at different times while facing the same situation.

No one can vouch for the veracity/reliability of his external sense organs or the decisions dictated by his mind based on such signals, and therefore the possibility of wrong action by the individual can happen which could cause adverse implications on the environment too. As the perceptions by the exterior sense organs that introduce various aspects of nature to the mind are limited, the role played by the mind which is responsible for every action taken by the body could affect the environment adversely. A layperson whose first and direct experience of the external world is through the senses tends to place a lot more importance on these than on the mind. As a consequence, it leads to greater indulgence in the senses with disastrous consequences like having to undergo bodily ailments and making one's life miserable. Sooner or later, when they are badly affected, they feel sorry for their lavish and wanton lifestyle and then only realize the importance of managing the mind.

Unlike the materialism which drives the modern human, our ancient philosophy never gave undue importance to accumulation of material wealth or incessant sensual satisfaction. They realized that once the mind succumbs to unreasonable desires it can only lead a person to misery. Hence, they cautioned against accumulation of wealth beyond what is essential for their needs and laid more stress on enjoying the process of existence by managing their senses within limits. While Vedic science regards the human body as a significant mechanism for carrying out all necessary functions and duties in the discernible world, it does not mind using one's intelligence to live and enjoy existentially, but only in moderation without upsetting the environment. This did not prevent them from enhancing their individual capability for the progress of society and uplifting of the downtrodden. They were aware that the human mind could be treacherous unless contained. So, a lot of thought went into designing methods to contain the mind and the senses. At the same time, they also realised that one of its distinguishing features is its capability of carrying out another seemingly contradictory function of leading one to enlightenment. Scriptures term it as '*antahkarana*' to denote this unique characteristic of the human mind. This is the invisible aspect that deals with every complex function in its entirety under diverse conditions in association with the sense organs, intellect or *buddhi*, *chitta* or memory and *ahamkara* or sense of ego. When the mind is drawn to the mundane attractions by the senses, it causes bondage; but when it understands the true purpose of our existence on Earth it acts without attachment or desire of personal benefit, and this provides a chance for salvation or liberation from future births.

Sri Sankaracharya gave four different names to the human mind depending on its functions. These indicate the extent of activities that can be accomplished by human mind.

- a) *Manas*, for the activity of resolving and doubting
- b) *Buddhi*, when it is used for decision-making and judgments;
- c) *Asmita*, when it asserts consciousness of one's existence; and

d) *Chitta*, the act of remembering previous experience.

'*Manas*' actually exists in layers all over the body or '*Manomaya kosha*'. Every cell, limb or organ holds memory not of this life but also the years of earlier lives. It has no intellectual power or power of discrimination. Discriminatory Intelligence is found only in the brain which can override the survival instinct and memory which pervades every other bit of the body-sense-mind complex.

'*Buddhi*' or intellect provides ideas or thoughts from the data stored in memories in the brain. It cannot function if there is no memory. A person is said to be more intelligent if he can provide more ideas and solutions from the same data. But it cannot use the data stored in the '*Manomaya kosha*' as people are not trained how to use this data. Hence, they use normal intellect to decipher this information and reach nowhere. That is why we often fail to figure out how to live or make life happen comfortably. We have to learn how to manage our mind, emotions, energies and body.

'*Asmita*' denotes 'consciousness of my existence' or the 'I am' state, devoid of the 'I'. This relates to the understanding of realized persons in the higher plane. But '*Ahamkara*' is commonly used in the place of '*Asmita*', by the lay person as the stress in '*Ahamkara*' is on doer-ship as in the term 'I am the doer'. The 'I' in the 'I am' is the all-pervading Paramatma whereas the 'I' in 'I am the doer' indicates the individual body with its trappings. '*Ahamkara*' can be termed 'ego', but there is a subtle difference. Both terms indicate a sense of identity or 'doer-ship', but in case of *ahamkara*, the intellect functions within its limited sphere. Therefore, it indicates only a partial or limited view of life. Such a person can never appreciate another's view of life and nature fully and is therefore a loser in the bargain. He is loaded with ideas about himself, his body and his possessions or about his capabilities. He has no time to appreciate the beauty or merit about the rest of the world.

'*Chitta*' is pure intelligence. It functions without any collection of memories. It does not have to as it is located at the edge of the mind connecting to the basis of creation within us. We can say it is our consciousness or part of divine consciousness. '*Chitta*' is always functioning; else one would not be alive or make life happen. Activation of this dimension of the mind is called '*Isvara pranidhana*', one of the five '*Niyamas*'. According to Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev, *chitta shakti* is about touching that dimension of one's mind that is pure intelligence, which is unsullied by memory, or by identification. It is beyond *ahankara*, beyond *buddhi*, beyond judgment, beyond divisions- simply there, just like the 'intelligence of existence'. We can call it 'discernment' or the 'I am' state, which only a realized person can relate to. *Asmita* is the consciousness of the 'I am' state whereas *Chitta* can be said to be the realisation of the 'I am' state. This perception or discernment is normally evident only in the 'I know' stage, as it does not emanate from the so-called brain but forms part of an activity beyond the working of the brain. The 'I know' stage is subsumed by the soul, when the human entity 'realizes' the truth that it along with other elements of the universe are all manifestations of the Creator or Supreme Consciousness and the physical body is only a tool or implement for action.

In addition, our ancestors knew that the innate nature of persons vacillated between three gunas (*Rajas*, *Tamas* and *Satwa*) which reflected in the outcome of the mind, was responsible for different reactions and needed to be controlled or managed by specific procedures to get beneficial outcome. This will be discussed in detail later.

In short, '*manas*' can be interpreted to mean mind, intellect, thought, purpose or will. Internally it organizes the senses of perception and the organs of action. Externally it acts as the organizer of intelligence, consciousness and the 'self'. A human is gifted with this special sense so that he can enjoy the pleasures of this world or seek liberation and freedom from world objects or *moksha*.

A comparative study of the importance placed on body-mind-senses as understood in normal parlance and that propounded by the Hindu scriptures shows that whereas the former considers it as paramount in deciding one's lifestyle, the latter considers it as a tool or implement gifted by Nature to live in harmony with other objects of the Universe, animate or inanimate.

ENERGY

After the body and the mind, the third vital element needed for the functioning of the human being is energy. Movement, action or growth in our universe of objects and beings is possible when a source of power is readily available. The same is the case with all living organisms. Cells which are the building blocks, of which their bodies are made, need some source of energy to carry out functions such as making proteins. All living beings will need energy to carry out various actions as follows during their life cycle.

Be mobile so that one can search for food, shelter and ward off danger;

Inhale air and use oxygen to extract energy out of the food consumed for growth and replacement of worn-out cells;

Be sensitive to heat, light, sound, taste and smell;

Acquire nutrients for growth of the physical and mental body. Animal organisms rely on plants or other animals for nutrition consuming complex substances and breaking them into small, simple soluble molecules.

Get rid of metabolic waste i.e. carbon dioxide, urine, faeces and sweat;

Ensure growth and development of the physical body till adulthood and replacement of essential dead cells.

Reproduce to ensure survival of the species, which could be result of a sexual union of the parents contributing ovum and sperm (two dissimilar gametes) or asexual where one parent reproduces by itself.

Enjoy one's existential experience.

Two major sources of power readily available in Nature are the solar and the wind energy. Growth of plants and trees, depend on the energy from the sun and the air, using leaves to convert chemicals from the soil into edible leaves, roots, vegetables or fruits for consumption by animals. Similarly, every living being, whether they are land, marine or avian based, depend on vegetarian and/or non-vegetarian source according to availability, taste or preference, all of which depend on sun and/or oxygen in the air to convert food into energy.

A human being has a physical body and in addition a vital energy body, a mental body, an intellect body and a subtle ego body. All of these require power for carrying out their functions properly. To understand it better, let us see what role each of these plays in the activities of a human being.

PHYSICAL BODY

All of us are aware that our physical body comprises of a skeletal framework holding muscles, tissue, blood, limbs, and digestive, respiratory, excretory systems as also various organs including sense organs among others. An individual will not be aware of the activities happening inside when the required inputs like food, water, air and sunlight are provided in time and exercised regularly. It is only when something is lacking, and certain body function is affected that people become aware of it.

We can control the actions by the body to a great extent easily by sticking to a schedule even when minor changes may have to be incorporated at times according to the changes in environment. But the same cannot be said about the mind as it is a very difficult task. Except for our natural instinct every other information are those which we have gathered from various sources through our senses. So, our mind is filled with all sorts of information not necessarily those which are proved or correct or those which we can control since our actions are based on our thoughts generated in the mind by interaction of the signals from senses and the information in the mind. In addition, there are other factors like emotions, feelings and desires of the individual at different times which affect the working of the mind. Hence the sages and seers of old looked at the functioning of the mind in different ways. Still they looked at the body-mind-intellect as one unit with many systems, organs and limbs with diverse functions so that an individual can enjoy an existential life on earth while in pursuit of salvation. According to them if one wants to lead a pleasant life, the period of happiness cannot be limited to fleeting moments or short spells of joy but an extended spell. As in the case of animals, external impulses received through the senses move through neurological pathways and promote an instantaneous feeling of different emotions. If his discriminatory mind can take over, he can stay with the pleasantness or otherwise of the sensory experience for a longer period so that it can travel beyond the neurological system to the *pranic* or energy system where it will pervade for a longer period. This is what happens when a person performs an activity being totally engrossed with awareness.

Vital Energy body

This includes energy for the acts of inhalation; of exhalation and speech; of stomach and intestine; for voluntary and involuntary movements of the body; and for urination, excretion, ejaculation and delivery of progeny. These actions are facilitated by '*Prana*'.

According to Hindu scriptures, *prana* is the intelligent energy of the Universe that pervades all beings as a manifestation of the divine or Cosmic Consciousness. As the elementary principle of *vayu*, it is the fundamental energy that connects the mind, body and soul that enters the being at birth and departs at death. *Jivatma* or the soul exists in the causal plane in the realm of pure thought and ideation. However, it manifests as *prana* in the lower astral plane. Hence in our bodies as our inner consciousness, the experience of *prana* may be said to be the vital manifestation of the soul's presence. *Prana* is supplied by the air and sustained by food, water and solar energy. Infusion of *prana* continues as part of an automated breathing process. The *prana* primes and energizes all the cells which constitute the building blocks for making the limbs, organs and systems of the body via the blood, thereby activating them in order to carry out their intended functions. The vital air, referred as '*prana*' in *vedic* texts, performs five different roles to keep the body functioning efficiently. *Prashnopanishad* describes these as *Mukhyaprana*, *Udana*, *Samana*, *Apana*, and *Vyanavayus* and are commonly called *Panchapranas*. *Mukhyaprana* facilitates the induction of food down the gullet into the stomach and oxygenisation of the blood pumped by the heart into the lungs whereas the *Udanavayu* helps to remove waste gases from the blood returning from parts of the body using the interface of the lungs by exhalation. Moving via the '*Sushumnanadi*' upwards this part also brings out one's voice or the articulation of sound. Situated at the centre of the body or the '*Nabhi*', *Samanavayu* aids digestion of the food and further movement through the small intestines where the nutrients are absorbed by the blood for distribution to various parts of the body. *Apana vayu* moves downward forcing or pushing out urine and feces from the body and is the *prana* of detoxification. Lastly, *Vyanavayu* is the resident *prana* which is spread throughout the body ensuring proper distribution of nutrients to various parts and organs to ensure maintenance of balance and equilibrium in the functioning of the body-mind complex. So, the purpose of the *prana* is to ensure routine sustenance to the body throughout the life of an entity for the entire duration while *Jivatma* inhabits the body.

In addition, there will be energy requirements for some other aspects and functions carried out by the human body which is met from the fresh air, potable water, victuals and sunlight available in the environment.

Mental body – This consists of the mind, which is the seat of our feelings, emotions and desires. It holds vast number of impressions from this life and earlier lives and needs energy to flourish. The reasoning ability and decision-making process of another part 'intellect' which is located within the brain structure can only function when energized. This will be discussed in greater detail subsequently.

Subtle ego body -- Human ego motivates the individual to perform actions for achieving desired result. A hint that this exercises control in/over a human being is evident when a

person feels that his individual intelligence, skill and action are responsible for every achievement he takes part in.

Emotional body -- Human beings emote differently while reacting to varying situations. Emotions like fear, hatred, jealousy, love, pity, compassion are the result thereof. Some of these are called negative emotions as they cause avoidable damage to own self, while others like love and compassion ennoble the individual leading to happier conclusions all round.

The body-mind complex is a one-off item provided to us and is expected to last our lifetime. Our physical body is so designed that it needs minimal care and maintenance. Proper hygiene, timely supply of appropriate food, potable water, and regular exposure to fresh air, sunlight and exercise, are the basic needs of our body to provide satisfactory service throughout our life. A basic understanding of the body function may perhaps facilitate our ability to enhance our capabilities to exist under different environmental conditions.

But the functioning of the mind is very complicated as there are many different and diverse factors which can destabilise its routine functioning. Though modern medicines and medical interventions have achieved some success, the age-old practices followed by our ancestors have proved to be far superior. Our ancestors have delved deep into the subject of the human mind and their revelations have confirmed that the mind is fickle and cannot be controlled. One can only transcend it. We shall study what some of these are in a later chapter.

*Foot note: - Those keen on understanding in detail the how Prana affects the working of one's body and mind and energy thereof may refer to the article 'UNDERSTANDING PRANA' by DAVID FRAWLEY.

INDIVIDUAL SOUL

How the physical, mental and the energy bodies contribute to the performance of the living organism have been covered above. Two critical elements involved in the creation of a complete human being are 'prana' and 'the soul'. We have referred to the 'prana' briefly in the earlier paragraph but the progress of the individual soul in its long journey towards salvation is interminably connected to the activity of the human mind. Hindu scholars had realised long before that though the body and the mind were not directly connected to the soul inhabiting the body, the external influences like the *gunas* on the functioning of the mind had a significant role in creation of good and bad karmas which could delay the process of achieving early salvation. We shall therefore spend some time on their findings before going into the subject of what one's 'soul' signifies.

The most vital aspect which makes this a viable entity, is supposed to be the 'soul' or '*Jivatma*'. It is the passive witness of the actions carried out by the body according to the dictates of the mind which holds all the experiences and aspirations carried over from previous births. These also covered under the term 'acquired *karmas*', accompany the soul at the end of one's life on Earth and later guides it to a suitable body which can be

used for working out unexpended *karmas*. This will be dealt with at length in a subsequent chapter.

Majority of human beings do not have a clear conception about '*Jivatma*'. Interpretation of Vedic texts provides some idea about it. Therein it is portrayed as a manifestation of the *Paramatma* or Universal consciousness which entitles an organism its status as a living existence of the entire body. The physical body-mind apparatus of the organism acts as a vehicle for the soul inhabiting it during the body's existence on Earth. A soul is only a passive witness of the actions and experiences of the body and does not interfere with its functioning in any way. We have seen that it is '*Prakriti*', which covers the five elements, the five *tanmatras*, the five *karmendriyas*, the five *jnanendriyas* and the four psychological categories of *Manas*, *Buddhi*, *Ahamkara* and *Chitta*, that manifests as the body. The '*Jivatma*' is also the imperishable part inhabiting the body being a manifestation of the *Paramatma* or Universal Consciousness. Just as the *Paramatma* is distinct from the *Prakriti*, the *Jivatma* also remains distinct from the physical and psychological attributes. At death the subtle mind with its stored experiences accompanies the *Jivatma* on its way to another body where it expends some of the old *karmas* and maybe add to any new *karmas* created in that life. Another explanation doing the rounds is that the *Jivatma* is not a manifestation of *Brahman*, but it has only a similarity and hence does not merge with *Brahman* when the individual soul attains *Moksha*.

All beings, at whichever level of evolution they may be, possess a soul or individual consciousness which is normally latent and not apparent to anyone. High intelligence in matters concerning life on Earth does not necessarily give anyone the perspicacity to understand the nature of the soul. Only a 'realized' person or those possessing a spiritual bent of mind with a steady aim and purpose can construe the existence and nature of 'soul'. The soul is not 'matter' and hence is devoid of any physical desire unlike the body it inhabits.

'*Jivatma*' is not to be confused as 'ego'. 'Ego' is a false reality that one creates for survival or dominance over others. It is a creation of the human mind which he identifies with his position, appearance, wealth, ancestry and educational, physical and mental potential/competence, which he uses to satiate his desires. Often, we forget that this body and mind that we boast of are not of our making but a gift from the creator. Even the food we consume to satisfy our hunger and the artefacts and assets accumulated and acclaimed as our possession are derived from 'Nature'. In comparison with the immensity of the Universe, we are just insignificant creatures. We can boast of our prowess in many fields but in comparison with Nature's wonders, we are an inconsequential lot. When a person identifies with his ego, he is maintained by a belief that he is better than and different from others. He is not even ready to acknowledge the potency of his soul. '*Aham*' is used in vedic texts to describe 'ego', meaning pride about oneself. Ego can be either good or bad depending on the purpose it is put to use. Ego is beneficial as a power to motivate the individual to be a better person. So, we need not destroy our ego but contain it. As long as the ego does not cause actions which affect others adversely it is fine. Actions dictated by such type of ego do not create bad karma. The soul has to be

seen as the 'true self' or as one's pure conscience. Its potential is perceptible/perceived when, as one's inner voice, it cautions the person to re-think when he is about to commit an unrighteous or unethical act. Unlike the mortal bodies, the soul is eternal.

In the next chapter we shall learn how our actions create karma and affect our progress in life.

CHAPTER 7

ACTIONS PERFORMED BY HUMAN BEINGS AND THEORY OF KARMA

In normal human beings there is a standard pattern of physical and mental growth or decay starting from birth and ending with death just as in the case of other species inhabiting the Earth. But when it comes to health, riches, capabilities and happiness we notice wide variance between individuals. It is common knowledge that the first three elements by itself singly or all together cannot guarantee happiness at all times. That is why we very rarely find anyone in a happy state always. At any moment some people are happy while others may not be so. A hard-won achievement or an unexpected windfall may provide one with some temporary happiness but under similar circumstances another may not be happy. So, there is no standard yardstick for measuring a person's happiness or otherwise. In such circumstances, we tend to compare one's position vis-a-vis others in similar situations, but this is not a satisfactory method. Each and every human follows a specific lifestyle which is unique, depending on what his mind comprehends or gathers from signals transmitted by his sensory organs. Any change in one's mental state or environmental condition at the particular moment can affect the reaction by the mind somewhat and cause it to amend the intended action. State of health, finance and such factors can affect the state of individual's happiness or otherwise depending on how the mind responds to that situation. Even the most brilliant of modern minds have not been able to fully substantiate how the mind functions nor are they aware of how to control its functioning, so naturally a normal lay person can never hope to understand it.

Normally people attribute losses of one's wealth, material goods and comforts or physical disability, illness and mental tensions one undergoes during his lifetime to bad luck or fate. We deem it as due to good luck when a person gains riches or material goods or when they escape from disaster or serious illness. But when it comes to some achievements whether good health or personal accomplishment, it is recognised as due to his hard work. In our midst, we find some people having a trouble-free life while others are going through a bad patch at times. We normally connect 'good' and 'bad' as the two extremes of a scale of happiness and ask, 'Why do bad things happen to good people or vice versa?' This is an age-old conundrum which has no easy or satisfactory explanation. Perhaps it is because human beings, endowed with high intelligence and discretionary powers, can only relate to earthly matters which they can perceive and experience. There are many things happening beyond the limits of their imagination. At best one can only surmise based on extrapolation of known facts learnt during our life.

Before we go into the problem posed above, it is necessary to have a clear understanding of what we mean by 'good' or 'bad'. The world we inhabit is full of contrasts or opposites. Quite often during many discussions, we hear the words 'good' and 'evil' or at times 'right' and 'wrong' to indicate opposites. These are the two extremities of opposite behaviour. While we use right and wrong to differentiate between conflicting societal behaviours or circumstances which can change from time to time in line with the existing trend, the words good and evil are specifically employed when it affects any part of the

creation positively or adversely at any time. Good and bad are terms opposite in content but relative when used in speech or while talking depending on the perception of that individual. An object or event considered as good by one person could be deemed otherwise by another depending on their views of the consequences of that event. For example, rains at a particular time may be eagerly welcomed by a farmer whereas there may be many others who would not relish it (an office goer, student on way to school or a tourist) as it would affect them adversely at that time. There will be many such instances which are hailed by one group but opposed by another group as bad. Or the act of an adult appearing intentionally in the nude in a crowded public place is considered indecent by society whereas such an act in a nudist colony is considered natural. Society has established norms of what is good that is expected of people and evil which they should avoid at all costs. Helping the disadvantaged or destitute is always taken as a 'good' act and committing murder or inflicting hurt on another as 'evil'. Possibility of two different opinions on such cases would be indeed rare.

On the other hand we can quote many instances about miraculous escapes by people in a flood or cyclones whereas many others might have perished, a poor man getting a lottery, a young man in apparently good health collapsing suddenly or any such odd and unexpected instances, for which there is no logical rationale. Since we do not have a proper answer, we ascribe it to fate or destiny as ordained by God to escape further queries. This is surprising too, as most of the people have no clear idea how it comes about.

Our elders ascribed catastrophes and calamities affecting the inhabitants sometimes to good or bad karma purported to have been done by them during present life or the earlier ones. Often their query is that if the God is all merciful, why is it that good people sometimes suffer without any plausible reason, while really bad people seem to enjoy good life and prosper. An in-depth study of what we call difficulties and suffering, or good luck and enjoyment can throw some light on this. Let us look at destiny or fate as lay people understand. In the material world, we come across many events taking place all over. All these events are caused or resulted from acts of nature or inhabitants. Invariably, we also notice that some actions generate reactions, which can, in turn, spawn further actions and reactions. Most of the natural actions like the movement of Earth and planets about another or rotation around its own axis create variations in temperature and climatic conditions and cause day and night or rainfall and seasons and in turn assist in the growth conditions of the Earth and promote the welfare of the inhabitants. Under odd circumstances, nature can also cause havoc and misery to the living beings through thunder and lightning, earthquakes, tsunamis and the like. Reasons for such events are normally not known to lay persons. But now scientists have established that some of these disorders are due to the overreach and faulty actions of some men in pursuit of uncalled-for material benefits and comforts.

Sanatan Dharma believes in the theory of *Karma* which acts as a pointer for individuals to work in tune with Nature during their existence on Earth. Attaining salvation is the ultimate aspiration of any human being who believes in Hindu philosophy and in order to achieve the same he has to ensure that his actions on Earth do not contribute to bad

karma. Our ancient sages and seers had therefore expounded/ elaborated the theory of *Karma* to explain relative reasons for happiness or misery that human beings experience during their sojourn on Earth. It is projected as a 'cause and effect' phenomenon and provides a plausible explanation to satisfy inquisitive minds, albeit not accepted as a scientific one. *Karma* means action in Sanskrit. But in the context of the theory of Karma, it means the imprint left in the cells of his body and mind by any intention or action of the individual. The effect that these imprints play on the life of the individual is also called as the Karma earned by the individual that has to be expended during his current life on Earth, or the coming ones, since we believe in re-incarnation of the soul.

Since nothing in the universe is ever static everyone will be busy doing something or the other. Here we are discussing about human activities and their outcomes, so we have to be clear as to what is meant by action and what it involves. It may be an action by the body or something happening in the recesses of the mind. The first points of contact with events taking place in the external world are our basic instinct and the senses. These send out signals to the brain. Creation of ideas or thought in the mind is the next stage and this leads to commands by the brain to the limbs to act. Depending on the intention and the type of action performed some result will be produced. The end result will normally be in consonance of that idea. Hence intention and action are connected.

This result could be beneficial or disadvantageous to others. The actions which benefit others and society as a whole is considered 'good' karma and the others as 'bad' karma. The karmas so created get added to the account of the person responsible. Hindu philosophy maintains that a person with 'bad' karma in 'his account' at the time of his death will be carried through for as many births as necessary to wipe out outstanding 'bad' karma before he can attain salvation. This is attributed to karmas accumulated through unfulfilled desires during a person's life. Since every action produces some result or other and any effort can lead to fate or destiny, karmas can also define your fate or destiny. Though the words fate and destiny are often used interchangeably, there is a subtle difference. Fate is what occurs when we go against the natural order of the Universe, whereas we shape our destiny by doing the right things.

Every action (intended or otherwise) in word or deed has two components. One is the intention of the doer and the other is the severity/effect felt by the receiver. Whether the result intended is achieved or not depends on many external factors which will be discussed in a later chapter.

All activities are either contemplated or done for getting some benefit which may be physical, mental, material or spiritual. If it is for personal benefit, one must ensure that it does not adversely affect any other being or be detrimental to any aspect of nature. There may still be some acts like killing an animal for one's survival from death or immediate danger which do not attract bad karma but may be punishable under laws of the land. But even certain mental actions create bad karma and the doer has to suffer its consequences either during his current lifetime or in future births. Karmas are classified under the following three heads to understand the effects thereof better.

a) '*Karyaman Karmas*' are those actions that provide instantaneous effects or results. When we talk about action and reaction, the action is the cause and the reaction is the result. When the result is realized immediately, the karma gets nullified. Hence in the case of *Karyaman karmas* the result is experienced straight away and there is no carryover of its effect to a later date.

b) '*Sanchita Karmas*' are those actions where the effects are seen some time in the future; such karmas are held in abeyance till an appropriate time when the doer suffers its effect. *Puranas* cite cases about sages cursing people where its effect is not seen immediately. An example is that of King *Dasaratha* who was cursed by the father of a Brahman boy, killed by the former, though mistakenly, that the King will die of grief due to separation from his son. *Dasaratha* had no children at that time for the curse to take effect instantly. So, it took time for a son to be born for *Dasaratha* before the effect of the curse could descend on him. This clarifies that no one can escape punishment for their errant actions forever. These types of karmas accumulate till they are neutralized.

c) '*Prarabdha Karmas*' are the '*Sanchita Karmas*' carried over from earlier births and take effect in their current lifetime. People describe these as one's fate or destiny, depending on whether it is used in negative or positive sense. Elders say that one's birth in a particular family, in wealth, penury, ailment or type of body is due to his *Prarabdha karma*. One's enjoyment or suffering is reckoned to be the long-term effect of the *Sanchita karmas* of that person created in earlier lives.

In other words, there is a delay in time-period for the results of action to be effective in both '*Prarabdha Karma*' and '*Sanchita Karma*', unlike '*Karyaman Karma*' where the results follow immediately following the deed. There is another category of karma known as '*Aagami Karma*' which are the karmas which accrue from future actions. We are not elaborating on that as it is not central to our present topic.

Since humans cannot exist in this world without performing some action or other these will eventually lead to accrual of some karma. Whether it is good karma or bad karma will depend on the act or intention behind it. As no one can escape from the fate or destiny, the individual has to go through a series of lives till he gets released from all karma. While on the one hand we are depleting our karmas in this fashion, remember we are also adding on more karma. So, there seems to be no end to a being born again and again. There is only one way to escape from karma as advised by *Krishna* to *Arjuna* in the battlefield of *Kurukshetra*. If a person does his bounden duty without any aspiration for personal gain, which means doing '*Nishkama karma*', then no karma accrues to the individual. So, it behooves that humans should do their duty, without any thought of earning any personal benefit.

Under normal circumstances, a properly thought out action for the benefit of the populace generally turns out to be in their interests, provided all the relevant factors work out as planned. Another way of saying is that activities pursued with good intentions will automatically produce positive results. Human tendency does not brook delay and expect positive results forthwith. They are unhappy with delays, but that possibility cannot be ruled out. There is bound to be some time-lag between planting of

a seed and it maturing as a tree before yielding fruits. The action of planting of the sapling is *Sanchita Karma* whereas the act of yielding the fruit is a case of *Prarabdha Karma*.

We are aware that every action result in a reaction. Though we believe and expect good outcomes result from good actions, it does not always turn out to be so. In this subjective world of ours, there are many forces at work, which are beyond our comprehension, and this could be one of the reasons for disturbing results. A way out of any personal injury or material damage would be to take prior precautions. Even then, there are possibilities that we will be adversely affected. Hindu philosophy resolves this dilemma, by explaining that anything that happens to an individual is the result of his past actions only and no one else is responsible. The responsibility therefore falls squarely on the individual for any act done by him or even intended in his mind.

It is a normal human tendency to belittle or gloss over the problems of others placed in similar condition. Only a self-realized soul can realise that. Such people consider every living being in the planet as kindred and feel for them in the same way as he would feel if similar misfortune happens to him. According to the law of karma, good karma is beneficial but bad karma revisits him who indulges in it and invariably does so at the most inopportune time. People have to understand and appreciate the inter-relationship between all the creatures in the universe to realise that we exist not for ourselves only but for all beings of the universe. Therefore, we should not do anything which can cause harm to others in any fashion. Neither should a realized person blame others for bad things happening to them and should be ready to bear the consequences stoically.

Actions result in good or bad karmas depending on the intention behind the activities, but human nature cannot control unknown factors affecting thought process. One has to understand the influence of these factors and how they can affect our actions. Being resolute and also possessing an indomitable will can help us. Acquisition of knowledge, constant practice and gaining experience in this field are necessary for a beneficial outcome. Our paths are strewn with so many temptations and these should not be allowed to divert us from following the right path to achieve our objective.

What is good or what is bad depends upon circumstances. A material benefit acquired may possibly land a person in trouble, or as it happens sometimes, a wrong decision or action may fetch one a reward. We may feel that what has happened is the result of the action we had initiated immediately prior to that, but that may not be the case. It might be the result of some act we did some time back. Very large numbers of forces are acting in nature at any instant of time and it is not possible for one to control them or guard against every evil lurking around. So, disasters and unhappiness can result. We cannot fully comprehend the working of nature, and often old timers attributed it to one's *mujjanma* karmas. By this assertion, they tried to assuage the distressed mind to some extent by accepting it as God's will, instead of battling against it and making oneself more miserable. This also means that the consequences of each and every one of our karmas need not be immediate and some could be delayed at times. According to Hindu philosophy good and bad things that happen to individuals are attributed to their

errant *mujjanma* karmas, and its effect cannot be completely wiped out though it can be eased to some extent.

Hindu philosophy attributes our good fortune or our sufferings squarely on what we have done or our Karma. Karma can be explained as any action that we carry out in our day-to-day life. Without activity one cannot survive. It may be physical or mental. Good karma results when one is selfless and ready to help the needy and the unduly oppressed or when one acts in support for the welfare of the world at large. Activities carried out to sustain our existence which does not involve or cause harm to others do not cause bad karma. All selfish activities whether in thought or deed which adversely affects anyone else, intentionally or otherwise, can be termed bad karma. Good or bad consequences/fallouts can be expected depending on the doer's intention and the doer is the sole beneficiary of the consequences thereof. However, it is not necessary that the consequences come into effect forthwith. It will come sooner or later, maybe in some later '*janma*' or future birth.

Every human aspires for happiness during their lifetime. But for a human being life on Earth which is a sanctuary for a large number of elements and species with diverse characteristics, freedom from worries and miseries is next to impossible. Three types of miseries described as *Adhyatmika*, *Adi Daivika* and *Adi Bhoutika* are usually experienced by people. *Adi Bhoutika* relates to the sorrows caused by the material world and body and *Adi Daivika*, those caused by fate or destiny. *Adhyatmika* reflects on the miseries caused by our ignorance about the relationship between the man and God. All of these tend to disappear when we realise that our existence is just a manifestation of the Supreme Being.

Some practical methods available to circumvent or lessen the impact of bad effects on the distressed person are dealt with in a later chapter. In order to understand it properly one should study the effect of some of the factors on ones' habits and behaviour. These procedures revolve around controlling and changing our mindset by focusing on God's compassion.

CHAPTER 8

EXTERNAL FACTORS WHICH INFLUENCE OUR THOUGHT PROCESS

It has been made amply clear in the *Bhagvad Gita* and other Hindu scriptures that every individual has to rise above his imperfections and emotions of ego, greed, desire, envy, jealousy, anger, ill will, likes and dislikes, love and hate which afflicts a normal person if he wants to live a contented life. This does not mean that one has to keep aloof from nature and preclude all commitments expected of him during his life. Limiting one's desires, living in denial or detachment are not options because devoid of human emotion there will hardly be any motivation for carrying out any action. But it should be aimed at common welfare and never for self-aggrandisement. Enhancing our physical and mental capabilities without building our ego is therefore one way suggested. By limiting own needs to the basic minimum while utilising our capabilities to mitigate the miseries of others, a person can get satisfaction and escape bad effects of karma. In other words, everyone should perform their duties with diligence and total awareness without expectation of any benefit or reward for himself. As Gita puts it unequivocally, "***Karmanyanaevaadhikaraste, ma phaleshukathachina***" is the right motto to follow. How 'Hindu way of life' attempts it can be seen in the ensuing text.

Long ago Indian Sages during their attempt to learn the mysteries of the Universe also deciphered that the state of mind of human beings decided their existential life to a large extent. Any action taken in any specific situation is initially guided by one's senses, mind, past experiences and personal ego. It cannot however predict that similar actions will fetch similar results another time. This can be attributed to two salient factors - the state of one's consciousness and his moods. Every individual passes through different levels of Consciousness during his existence which can also be affected by divergent *gunas* at odd times. While the former provides different types of awareness, *gunas* are those attributes of nature which exist in varying degrees in all living and inanimate things at different times prompting diverse actions. These affect people and make them behave differently.

STATES OF CONSCIOUSNESS

The universe is never static. During one's life on Earth, no human being can ever remain totally idle. They will be all the time in contact with some aspect of nature observing, experiencing, performing some activity or other and interacting with many diverse elements of the universe in the process. These inputs are necessary for the sustenance and improving the quality of life. These activities may fall within the sphere of material, mental or philosophical advancement, but all these happen during any one of the following four states of consciousness. They are at four levels, each one in that order, taking people closer to realisation.

'*Jagrath*' or the waking state,

'*Swapna*' or the dream state,

'*Sushupti*' or the deep sleep state, and

'Turiyam' or the state of self-awareness.

Certain higher states are supposed to have been attained by 'realized' souls but are beyond the purview of this book.

During the waking state, all the five senses, mind, intellect and the limbs and organs of the body are fully active and alive to the environment and hence capable of reacting intelligently to prevailing situations, according to his capabilities and experience.

In the dream state, the internal body organs function at a 'slow-action' mode with most of the senses in virtual 'standby' mode. Some mental activity may take place, due to emotions while reliving earlier mental or physical experiences during dreaming. This may also cause some incidental physical movement depending on the pleasure or distress occasioned by the dream. In a 'dream' state, every event or part of the dream may appear to be real, which dissolves the minute the dreamer wakes up. Though memory of the events in the dream may linger awhile, the person involved will not be materially affected.

The *'Sushupti'* state is almost total oblivion to the living beings about the surroundings with the mind and intellect totally inert and at rest. The heart, lungs and some other organs will function at a slow pace, to ensure serviceability. There is minimum energy consumption during this state, providing rest to the body as internal organs are in 'dormant-mode' and the mind inactive and still. This is a state of happiness compared to the waking and dream states which are a mix of pleasurable and painful happenings or events.

When one transcends *Sushupti*, he reaches the *'Turiyam'* state. Then the body and mind-sense complex are totally at a standstill and the 'Self' or the soul is fully aware of itself as separate from the body it inhabits. It is possible because of absence of awareness of one's ego in that state. Hence this can be a fully satisfying 'transient' experience that people should strive for. Only 'realized' souls can achieve this state.

An interesting story told about *Shankaracharya* relates to his capability of shedding his soul from his body. He roamed all over the length and breadth of India explaining his *Advaita* philosophy and engaged in discussions with other learned pundits who were propagating different ideologies. All of them were forced to accept his teaching as profound and changed to *Advaita* philosophy. In one such conclave, he was supposed to have been asked a query which needed practical knowledge of sex. *Sankara* was then supposed to have gone into a 'trance' and his soul temporarily left his body to enter the body of a recently deceased householder, bringing that person to life. The story goes on to say that after getting first-hand information about sex, his soul returned to his original body and gave a suitable answer. This is known as *'parakayapravesham'* or movement of a soul to another inert body and back, which is a supernatural capacity which some sages possessed.

THE THREE GUNAS

Another factor which affects the activities of the mind are the three *Gunas*. Every living entity is influenced by one or other of the three inherent qualities or '*gunas*', namely '*Sattva*', '*Rajas*', and '*Tamas*' at different times. These are primordial principles manifested from the threefold split of consciousness or cosmic energy. Every individual has an innate nature being born under a special set of circumstances. Human beings are therefore liable to get a surfeit of any of these three distinct *gunas*. But all of these are present in all beings in some measure at various times. Perception of any activity is coloured by the prevailing quality/mood of the individual at that time. These in turn are linked to purity or spotlessness in case of *Sattwa*, passion, zeal or fervour in case of *Rajas* and apathy, lethargy or ignorance in *Tamas*. According to some, *Tamas* can also be the principle of equanimity which recharges and supports the physical universe. *Rajas*, the principle of organization and activity brings animation and is the harmonious principle of cosmic intelligence which brings equilibrium and cognition to the individual being. *Sattva* is the principle of the wise who is always in a steady state of equilibrium. The moods dictate the type of emotions, thoughts and actions that one gets involved in. These *gunas* may act singly or in combination and in different ratios at any particular moment of time, and hence decide the final outcome and energy level of emotion, thought and action. When in *Tamasic* state one does not bother to react to any activity because of his sluggishness, indolence or apathy, and his inherent capacity to think logically is shrouded. He becomes an easy prey to false prejudices and bad tendencies. His acts are done through delusion without any thought of consequences, loss or injury.

A person in *Rajasic* mood is always hyperactive and quick to react strongly or violently and apt to confront anyone for any presumed mischief or misconduct. His mind seethes with continued upsurge of desires resulting in undue haste which may lead to imprudent actions. When such a person fails to achieve his desires, it leads to agitation of the mind and consequent anxiety and anger. On the other hand, if the person was in *Sattvic* mood, he would never take any action in haste but would consider all the pros and cons coolly before coming to a decision. His mind is tranquil, calm and he has a contemplative/reflective nature and hence is natural and composed. When the mind-intellect functions in the *Sattvic* state, one is serene, his intelligence is pure and unsullied and hence capable of clear and righteous thinking. Obviously, it will result in a logical and sensible solution acceptable and advantageous to all concerned. This is a state of resplendent serenity. Some of us must have been privy to such experience/ instances in our lives.

When *Sattva guna* predominates, our effectiveness and performance peaks. On the other hand, with *Rajasic guna* holding sway, the subject tends to greediness and worry, and with the *Tamasic guna* prevailing he tends to be deluded into inattention and inertia resulting in discomfiture and failure. It should be everybody's endeavour to nurture his *Sattwaguna* and eliminate the other two *gunas* from his nature to the extent possible. In one of the chapters in *Bhagavad Gita*, the Lord explains in detail the various effects of the *gunas* and how to circumvent or thwart the *gunas* and become '*gunatita*', by going beyond the influence of all the *gunas*, an ideal to cherish and achieve. This indicates that he becomes aware of the fact that he is not the *karta* or the doer but

the *gunas* prevailing at that time are responsible for those actions. He then joins the class of the 'realized' men who have attained *Atma-jnana* and proceeds to the state where he can attain *Moksha*.

There may be many other reasons for people to react differently to same activity or events as related in the following paragraphs. However, a person who can maintain himself predominantly in a state of *Sattva guna* will make lesser mistakes in his actions, as he will be in a position to distinguish right from wrong and act accordingly.

In the above-mentioned states of consciousness, a fact that stands out is the relative effect of the senses on the mind. From the 'waking' or fully active stage going up the ladder, the influence of the senses wane gradually and finally gets nullified to such a state that one is not aware of his body at all. He is then in commune with his 'real self', the underlying '*atma*'. This shows how the ancient seers realised that the path to *Moksha* can be achieved by moving beyond the mind by meditating constantly.

Early Indian scriptural texts explain that it is not our body-mind-sense that controls our earthly actions but the previously earned karma *vasanas* which bonds with the *Jivatma*. The 'true self' gets revealed when the underlying psychic energy factor of the *prana* is aroused in us through spiritual practices and this totally extinguishes and gets rid of our 'ego'. The above revelations by our sages have brought out the complexity of the human mind. It enabled them to find remedial measures to at least manage the mind within limits.

EXTERNAL INFLUENCES

There are certain leanings or tendencies acquired over a period of time which becomes part of one's habit. These are often a side-effect of interactions with parents, relatives, teachers, peers and those supportive ideas gathered from books, literature and other media. The relative influences which normally prevail on the individual are that of people whom he loves most and holds in respect. If those who have influenced him most are of high moral and ethical fibre, the result would be constructive. Building up of good character is the responsibility of the mother, the father, close relatives and then that of the teachers. In my opinion, the mother would be the best teacher to initiate the child to good precepts and practices. Starting with the period in the womb and through the breast-suckling stage, the child is in the vicinity and almost total control of the mother. If this period is properly utilized and planned, the training imparted during this time should benefit the child in its future years. Once the seeds of good tendencies are sown at an early age and nourished properly with abundant love and understanding, the result cannot but be the best. Each person has a specific approach to any action or unique view of things he perceives, as motivated and influenced by the inherited leanings and desires. Perception of any matter or activity surrounding it by the sensory organs translates into thought which results in relevant activity. It is normal to expect one's view to be selfish as it is coloured by his ego, which wishes the result to be in his favour. Initially it is in everyone's nature to enhance his physical and material capacities to the full, and it is as it should be to enjoy a good life and to provide succour to the less privileged ones in society.

STATE OF ONE'S COMPREHENSION AND EXPERIENCE

In the material world we are living at present, an exposure to education and travel widens the horizons of one's mind. An agile and inquisitive mind is equipped to appreciate and absorb relevant/pertinent information about a variety of subjects and events and logically analyzes available information to improve one's knowledge and add to his experience. These assist the person to understand the basic problems one comes across and come to a plausible solution which is beneficial to the community in the long run. Many react violently or harshly, in word or deed, to actions and behaviour patterns of others as they are not aware of the intention behind such actions which are foreign to their culture. In such cases, a person with wide experience and learned in the ways of the world would react differently and sensibly.

CRAVINGS, DESIRES AND SATISFACTION

Desires in the mind induce a person to work towards accomplishing that goal. It is a welcome feature as in its absence, existence will become monotonous and listless. As long as such desires are within bounds, it encourages the individual to improve his overall capabilities and to perform well so as to achieve his objectives in the material world; when in excess, the individual is engrossed with the object of desire and then it becomes cravings, a compulsive disorder which will prove to be a bane by causing negative emotions.

In these cases it is one's ego which creates the problem - a false feeling of a sense of superiority and worthiness over others - by equating it to one's physical capabilities and mental calibre. There is no doubt that one can plan and work towards achieving a high level of proficiency in different fields through devotion and ceaseless effort, but one should not forget that there could be others who can perform better. Being jealous of their achievement cannot help you, whereas using it as a benchmark for improving yourself would be a correct step. Those whom you consider lucky are those who have earned good merit in earlier births or by dint of their hard work. So live a pure and contented life and earn a good future.

It is a natural tendency for everyone to be pleased by sensory inputs which give physical or mental satisfaction. It means that your body or mind is reacting positively and comfortably on receiving such sensations. Attainment of material possessions or positions of power also set off within us sensations of pleasure and build-up of ego. All of us enjoy repeat doses of what we like and sooner or later we yearn for many such sensations. This is what desire instils in us. It becomes a craving for more. Whereas fulfilled desire gives you temporary happiness, an unfulfilled desire causes misery. When the object of desire is harder to obtain, one yearns for it all the more even to such a stage of being driven to madness if negated. Similarly if a desire is fulfilled easily, often it can lead to revulsion.

ATTACHMENTS AND POSSESSIVENESS

Desire for a certain material object gets fulfilled when it comes into possession. A stage may arise later that it loses its charm once its use is over that the owner starts neglecting its presence. However if someone else shows interest to possess it then the original owner is not prone to let it go. This shows petty possessiveness wherein ego is the culprit. Even among children such feelings arise, and it would be a wise parent who can inculcate in his children the idea of sharing with other children less endowed as it is doubly enjoyable for both.

Attachments and possessiveness play an important part in our lives. We are all attached to people who are close to us, whether relatives or friends or community or society we belong to. This can be attributed to the original survival instinct in us. It is our belief that those who are closely related to us will have our happiness at heart and will be willing to help us out with our needs and also expect that we will rise to the occasion when they are in need of our help. When attachments become too binding and one is interminably connected, one is not willing to permit each other their personal space or pet desires. This leads to obsessive possessiveness that leads to disaster. Attachment and possessiveness can be very healthy features in our society as long as we do not overdo it.

HUMAN EGO

Humans are endowed with five senses which act as the forward sentinels and their perceptions are responsible for initiation of all bodily action. The power and depth of perception by the senses need not necessarily remain the same always and are subject to variation at times. The ones which are more predominant at the instant initiate the activity or response accordingly. The perceptions generated by the senses travel through a network of nerves and nerve centers to the portion of the brain where earlier memories and experiences are stored. When a matching instance to that prevailing experience is located, the emotion is evaluated and modified to suit subtle differences in condition so as to induce requisite response. Different emotions generally have a given (set) and defined relation to specific actions, subject to the state of consciousness and/or the guna at that instant of the receipt of information. The mind would then accordingly instruct the various organs and limbs to act their part and thus complete the activity or reaction. It could be that this reaction may lead on to another and then another till they fade away due to weak response.

The path from perception by body senses to the formulation and execution of action is a convoluted and intricate process and the factors involved are many. While most of the actions are premeditated or preconceived, being influenced by various factors, there are many others which are intuitive or reflexive and beyond one's control.

We know that the awareness of any activity is triggered by perception by any one or more of our senses. The extent of influence and acuity of perception of each of the senses in an individual is different and it will vary in different species. In the case of a normal human being, the intensity of awareness of objects at greater distances is possible by sense of hearing than by sight, and much lesser by smell. In the case of touch and taste, it is available only with objects in close proximity. The sense receptors are

directly connected to the lower mind. It carries the imprint of one's past experiences, latent desires and individual preferences. These act as motivators in the selection of the objects within the range of senses which is most likely to satisfy those needs. When the dominant sense takes over and the object is selected, the first emotion that comes up in the mind is one which induces involuntary reactions in the limbs and organs causing the body to react. Such involuntary actions are a part of this process inbuilt into the body-mind system for the safety and welfare of the being or a habit ingrained by training. Within a short interval of time, the higher mind takes note of the perception of that activity by the senses and by application of logic and by comparison with stored memories or experiences, it comes out with a specific thought or viable action plan to react to the original event. Though it may seem that many of the activities happening around us are impromptu, one will be surprised to learn that behind even a relatively simple action/reaction based on a sensory perception is the combined handiwork of many factors. The reason why people subjected to the same stimuli react differently are because many factors affect each one's psyche. Each individual's ideas are fashioned according to the exposure to many factors like 'gunas', inborn or hereditary traits or those conditioned by environmental factors.

To understand it, let us take the normal sequence of an occurrence. There are thousands of activities and events taking place at any given time involving many diverse objects. But of the few taking place within the domain of your sensory perception, attention is normally concentrated only on those which are of interest or liked by the perceiver. In certain cases, it could be due to the incongruous nature of an item amongst others within the scene. Anything incongruous catches your senses (eyes) faster. This happens because the energy waves from the spectacle reactivate some earlier memories or experiences stored in the mind or alternately these set off either new or repressed emotions. Diverse emotions may result depending on one's personal tendencies and repressed desires as all the memories stored in one's brain are the end result of one's personal traits, tendencies and desires. It is these emotions which spawn ideas or thoughts in the mind resulting in consequential action. One can attribute the emotions and consequent action as a natural upshot of one's sensory perception. At times, a specific action can cause divergent emotions depending on whether the actor is one you are fond of or otherwise. Our reactions based on positive and negative emotions depend on our affinity or enmity of the perpetrator. Similarly different and opposing reactions might result depending on the mood of the perceiver or the environment at that time. Positive emotions always bring out the good in a person and negative emotions those which are bad and ugly.

EMOTIONS

Emotions are induced as a reaction to external actions or displays and play an important role in the life of an individual. Whether it leads to improvement or downfall and ruination depends on the attitude of the individual. It is unlikely for a person not to be swayed by emotions. Some people may not show external signs of being affected but they must be undergoing turmoil to some extent in their minds. Human nature is and cannot be expected to be unvarying perpetually and hence it is impossible to eliminate violent and impulsive actions *in toto*. Various emotions come into play during the lifetime

of a person but two out of these that affect him most are desire and fear. When carefully and sensitively handled or in moderation, all emotions can be used effectively to better our prospects in both material and mental spheres. An overdose, on the other hand, will cause impulsive actions and cause harm to the person and the community at large. Both desire and fear infuse a variety of emotions in the individual depending on the circumstances prevailing. What can therefore be attempted is to control or moderate it within limits.

Some disturbances and feelings that affect humans are anger, anxiety, compassion, hatred, kindness, love, fear, envy, jealousy, sympathy and pity. These are induced and dictated to a large extent by one's perception. Emotions like anger, envy, jealousy and hatred are negative in character, whereas compassion, kindness and love belong to the category that ennoble the individual. Any emotion that destroys the feeling of oneness among beings is negative and those that promote good feeling are considered positive.

Anxiety and fear are the creations of an uncertain and wavering mind. Many of these arise from the association with earlier experiences and ideas stored in the mind. When brought to the fore due to the interaction of the senses with the content and behaviour of the object of perception, these thoughts (memories) trigger reactions in consonance with those earlier experiences. For example if a person comes across someone who was responsible for some wrong done in the past which he cannot tolerate, anger is the emotion that will rise in the mind. Consequently this will prompt one to punish, rebuke or chastise the doer.

Similarly, a particular scent or fragrance may recreate memories of a familiar person who was accustomed to wearing that perfume and gets a recollection of emotion felt at that time. Identical perception may give rise to different emotions at different situations as it will depend on the attitude, mood, environment or physical ability of the individual to react at that moment. So one cannot specify or predict what the resultant emotion or consequent action will be under those circumstances with certitude. With proper training, however one should be able to control one's mind to a great extent to rein in negative emotions and nurture ennobling emotions even under dire/desperate circumstances. If one looks closely, one will appreciate that it is the originator of the negative emotions who is more adversely affected than the object of his attention. Normally the intention of a person who gets angry is to chasten another, but the desired effect may or may not be achieved depending on the attitude and mood of the one at the receiving end. But the initiator is bound to be troubled in his mind if the expected reaction is not achieved. In the case of positive emotions like love, kindness, sympathy and compassion, it is often directed at those in a receptive and compliant mood and this provides an elevating experience in the initiator.

Fear: The dictionary explains it as a painful emotion, often unpleasant, caused by anticipation or awareness of danger. Alarm, fright and panic are the visible indicators when a person is afraid or on being exposed to impending danger. Fear is the outcome of a feeling of insecurity which emerges in the mind when a person is not sure how the end result of actions will affect him or his near and dear ones, whether of his own doing

or of that of others. The fearfulness will depend on how well or ill-equipped he is in warding off the danger. Out of all human emotions, the primary or primitive one to affect humans has been fear or rather, the fear of the unknown like thunder, lightning, pain or disease and death. On impact from any of these events, his mind is perplexed and starts looking for ways to escape. Horrifying thoughts of disaster cloud the mind and he feels transfixed and lost and could even fall into a coma. Once the event passes off causing minimal damage he heaves a sigh of relief, but would still worry about how to avoid if it happens and thus continue to be anxious looking for a plausible escape route. In order to avert such problems, he has to be prepared to study the how and the why of the event, understand the nitty-gritty of the problem and plan how to circumvent its effect. When he is certain of a sure-fire solution his fear is dissolved. When we are confronted with the possibility of an event of unknown dimensions, the first thing to do is to understand its ramifications and way to resolve it, and then our fear is quelled. Once forewarned about the risk, we can take pre-emptive action to evade its impact and thus negate the impact of fear. In particular cases, as when a soldier is in the thick of battle he may not even get a chance to think of the danger. So grossly is he involved in the process, that he never entertains any fear of death. It is only later after he survives the moment of peril that he visualises the risk he had gone through. Certain people have the tenacity to face the threat with courage and equanimity even when they have advance knowledge of its source or impact, because they have full faith in their power and capability to overcome or offset its bad effects or alternatively, the readiness to face the consequences without remorse. What every human fears most after death is physical pain or incurable diseases. These affect us mentally and psychologically so we weave around us a plethora of sheathes as insurance against accidental death and injury or disability. This is as it should be. For, life is meant to be loved and lived in full of joy and happiness without fear of impending death. An equally significant cause of fear is the loss of our kith and kin which depends on the depth of our attachment to those persons. Short-lived memory is a God-given gift in such circumstances, so that we come to terms with our loss quickly. In this respect, animals are better off because even when they are scared in moments of danger, they are back to their earlier state of unconcern soon after the event, as their acts are based only on inbuilt natural instinct. Their incapability to brood over past events happens to be their saving grace.

Anxiety or Worry: This also falls in the genre of fear but it is more about apprehension and concern of what may befall one or his kindred in an event, known or unknown, yet to take place. The usual signs are increased heartbeat, tension or sweating. As in the case of fear, it forces the mind to work incessantly about distant possibilities and probabilities of the type of troubles that one may have to endure and seeking remedial measures to circumvent them when posed with a problem affecting our lives. A large number of people seem to be affected by stress mainly due to worries on a hundred different fronts because of the complicated life-style one leads these days. One had fewer duties to attend to in earlier days and there was enough time to attend to it. In the present fast-moving and business-driven environment people have to take split-second decisions on various matters and their hands are full trying to keep to complicated time schedules. Naturally stress and strain create many psychosomatic diseases and these cause further

worries aggravating the problems further. Perhaps the remedy lies in recognizing our limitations before venturing on tasks beyond our capabilities.

In respect of both the emotions of fear and anxiety, a firm faith in one's own destiny often helps in easing one's tension to a great extent. According to Hindu philosophy, it is only the body that perishes and the soul is eternal. It is the living body that bonds with other beings in the material world we inhabit and those are also transient as we are. Therefore our affinities, attachments and dependencies are for the period of association during the life on Earth. No one can expect to bond with another for eternity. Instead one should make the available period of togetherness to be happy. This understanding or acceptance can alleviate and deliver us from the pangs of separation from our kith and kin, as also fear of one's own death. Once we understand what death means and that it can happen any time, our mind will spontaneously accept it as inevitable and then the fear of death will recede.

Anger: The most common emotion that afflicts humans is anger, and there is hardly any person who has never been angry in their life. This negative emotion is responsible for most of the problems we face today. If one logically analyses this emotion, it indicates a ridiculous situation because the instigator is physiologically more adversely affected than the one against whom it is intended/aimed. It could have started as a minor error of judgment which gets unnecessarily blown up, eventually leading to display of anger. It may not even be necessary for the adversary to be anywhere near or in sight, but the thought of the event itself is sufficient to evoke this type of feeling. If the subject is in the vicinity, the anger can emotionally upset the person to the extent of his inflicting verbal and physical assault on the other. This emotion is so powerful and strong that it overwhelms you and destroys and obliterates your logical reasoning of right and wrong or the consequences thereof. Even at the physical level, it transforms an angry person to look undignified and unpleasant and send out a vibration that even animals can sense. Besides, the angrier you are, the more you are susceptible to loss of appetite and sound sleep. In a civil society, there is no reason why two people cannot sit together to talk and sort out the reason for controversy or unpleasantness. A calm attitude will probably give a chance to the person who is in the wrong to apologize and make amends, which would be a saner proposition. If one takes a saner view, majority of the root causes of all disagreements will be seen to be petty and should not have caused any violent reaction. Emotions like anger and hatred cloud our judgment and cause feelings of discomfort and wreak havoc in personal relationships.

Enmity, Envy and Jealousy: These emotions belong to a group which is generally negative in character. Enmity is deep-seated dislike or ill-will, which could be mutual, and could result in actions hostile to each other. The reasons could vary from loss of face, material or property at the hands of the other which one is not able to accept. It can raise wild thoughts and plans how to cause harm or hurt to the other in some manner, in order to assuage or alleviate the hurt feelings to some extent. The feelings of envy and jealousy originate when the subject is resentful of an advantage gained by another which he feels he is more entitled or privileged to possess whether rightly or wrongly. These emotions lead one to waste hours of thinking of schemes to belittle the other and lose one's

composure in the process. In case of every negative emotion, whether he is able to inflict/cause misery on the other, the initiator also passes through a period of despair or discontent. Whereas anger also comes under the same category of negative emotions, anger can be double-edged, in that one can be angry at oneself for having missed a good chance or having done something silly and avoidable. It is very rare that anyone has found lasting happiness yielding to these emotions.

Greed and Avarice: Avarice is defined as an insatiable desire for wealth or gain and greed as excessive acquisitiveness far beyond one's essential requirements. Hoarding or shoring up reserves for future at the expense of others comes under this category. Persons afflicted with this malady are self-centred and not willing to think of others as meriting the goods or one who wants to beat others in acquisitions. Both greed and avarice tend to make a person less human with inevitable bad consequences for self in one's way of thinking. This naturally makes the person unreliable to some extent.

Lust: Lust may be explained as unbridled sexual desire or intense longing for bodily sexual act. Intense longing for the other sex and looking for sexual satisfaction with one of another gender can be explained as love, a noble feeling. However when it crosses the limit or goes after forbidden alliances, these are repulsive and damage the institution of marriage and societal conventions. Such practices injure the society and its morality, besides lowering the affected one's standing and esteem, thus making them lesser mortals.

At the other end of the spectrum from those mentioned above are the positive emotions and feelings like love, kindness, sympathy and compassion which are considered as the noble qualities which everyone should aspire to.

Love: Love is a term interpreted in many different ways by people and denotes diverse feelings to different people. It can be physical or bodily attraction, love due to similarity/correspondence of views and approaches that attract people to a person, or sublime love as prevailing between a devotee and his venerated personal God. One can notice a transition or change in meaning of different varieties of love professed by beings starting from a purely physical to mental and then beyond these to the spiritual sphere. In all these types of love, comfort and satisfaction achieved by the people are at different planes, shifting from material convenience and comfort to mental satisfaction or to bliss - a stage of ethereal quality where the one-in-love totally merges with the object.

Ancient stories dwell on the varied types of relationships such as child-parent, husband-wife, or many others of different category. All of these are equally important and venerable and indicate the large varieties of love that can exist between people. These range on the one hand to fraternal love between Rama and his brothers in the *Ramayana*, son's love for parent as in the case of *Bhishma*, pupil-teacher love between *Ekalavya* and *Dronacharya* or *Bhakthi* as shown by *Andal*, *Sage Narada* to *Narayana* and the *Gopikas* of *Brindavan* to *Krishna*, at the other end.

One can veritably state that love is the first ever emotion to rise in the mind of a living being. At birth and the entry of a new being into the world, what it feels is a release from

the trauma of the event, meaning thereby the passage from the comfort of the womb to an uncertain and unknown environment (however limited or small it may be) followed by a feeling of release. This comfort accentuated by the loving caress and warmth of the mother's breast gives a feeling of comfort which gradually turns into love for the mother, the closest living being. The care and the satiation of its hunger and thirst by the act of breast-suckling kindles an escalating and elevating feeling which strengthens the bond of love further between the mother and the child. During childhood, it is the love for the father and kin which follows depending on the latter's interaction with the child. This is a two way affair, and each part bestows and receives love in turn which is related to the affection each has for the other. In all these cases, it is the prevalence of qualities that one likes or desires which is inherent in the other that causes this emotion to emerge. As the child grows up, the likes and dislikes change to some extent and this causes the shifting of the focus to different groups, generally close friends with whom you spend your time. This does not mean that the love for the parents and siblings dwindle, since a person's capacity for love can encompass a much larger circle. With the change into adulthood and emergence of the sex urge, the mental make-up undergoes a further change or transformation. It may initially be a mere physical dimension but after marriage or close encounter and frequency of association with another of the opposite sex, it may stabilize into something which enhances one's nature. This love expands into wonderful spectrum of vibrant colours, of comfort, fulfilment and satisfaction for each other's company, that others cannot dream or experience. These days the word 'love' is used more often and loosely in a material context as expressed in a man-woman physical relationship (or in a recent scenario as same gender relationships) which denotes attraction between two bodies in a casual sexual encounter. In such cases it reflects a temporary illusion of comfort and pleasure and/or a welcome release from body tension unlike the true love which knows no barriers or limitations bound by the material objects or physical comfort of give-and-take between the parties concerned. In an ideal marriage, the love is mutual with each one wanting to give more than what one receives while at the same time without intruding into each other's private space. Love will not work for long if considered as a mutual-bargain agreement. Every kind of love is ennobling and enriching, and it adds to the stature of everyone involved. The saying 'God is love' reflects the universality of true love which binds all living beings of the world.

Kindness, Sympathy and Compassion: These terms are meant to express the positive emotions that crop up in your mind on seeing another fellow-being in need of support or assistance in his ordained activity, whether physical, mental, financial or in any combination. These feelings urge the observer to reach out and render all possible support to the needy and such actions are usually done without thought of recompense. Any success in ameliorating another's distress gives a sense of satisfaction at having done the right thing and in turn a happy feeling. Sympathy, on the other hand, is an emotion at a much lower scale or level and may or may not result in any substantial relief to the needy other than some moral support or oral consolation. Compassion is another related term which can be expressed as a sympathetic consciousness to other's distress together with a desire to alleviate. Acts showing neighbourly or brotherly

concern and helpfulness are the results of these positive emotions when devoid of hopes of reward.

In general, each and every one of the above emotions - even those negative ones, at times- in small doses adds to the advantage of the individual in most circumstances. However even the most sublime of emotions – love - if applied gratuitously can bestow negative results. Love indulged in extreme limits leads to possessiveness and in turn to unreasonable tendencies, and hence should be avoided at all costs. Too much of a good thing is bound to end in calamity.

A person in a position of strength, mentally and possibly materially, should generally be a storehouse of these positive emotions. Unless our expectation and desire incorporate others' welfare (interests and happiness), we are being selfish and in that case, there is every possibility of negative emotions arising in one's mind. If we can comprehend the nature of the self in relation to the other beings in the universe and be able to control our mind, we can defeat the tendency of negative emotions arising in our minds. Perception of any activity without any bad intention or emotion allows one to understand the real nature of the problem and hit upon a rational solution.

It is said that the mind is the depository of negative actions whereas positive emotions well up in the heart. This shows that good emotions are inborn in every individual but it is overshadowed by negative emotions which rise in the mind due to perverse thinking. So control of mind is the way forward.

Emotions, even negative ones, can be useful. Anger and desire goads you to action and at times makes you do superhuman tasks. Crying releases the tension born of anxiety and tension. Involuntary rash acts and shouting gives vent to your anger and consequently releases your inner tension. Control of emotions help us to think clearly and logically as your mind is then in a stage of *sama-chittatha*.

It is well-known that bad traits, tendencies and desires cause indifferent or vile emotions and hence result in bad karma. Whether the following action is '*dharmic*' leading to good karma or 'merit' will therefore depend upon the type of emotions created in the mind. The perpetrator here is not the senses but the mind or rather the stored memories therein, for these are the outcome of one's individual traits, tendencies and desires. Consistent good karma can be achieved only by controlling those factors which lead to wanton desires. Temptation can arise at any stage between perception of events and objects by senses till it reaches the mind where the thoughts are formed, which is possible during wakefulness. Perhaps, at times it can emerge during the dream state, but to carry it out one has to be awake. It is impossible to keep the senses in suspended animation except in the state of '*sushupti*' and '*turiyam*', which it is not possible to be in at all times. The period of wakefulness is the time when one is affected by different emotions. So control of emotions is the area one has to work upon.

It is normal for everyone to feel that it is one's 'body' that is responsible for the action. This is so because it is the senses which are part of one's body which registers the events first and then it is 'his' mind which ponders over the matter and 'his' body which acts or

reacts. A solution often suggested to avoid occurrence of bad karma is to disengage the 'ego' from the body and listen to the 'I' in the body. By applying this principle, a person will be able to take a holistic view of the events or occurrences without allowing the intervention of past experiences, traits and tendencies affiliated to the material body. Emotions stimulate the mind, where memories are stored, into ideas resulting in actions, good or bad. The stored memories are a collection of events from earlier periods or lives and these decide whether the resulting actions are good or bad. But to undo those bad memories from the mind would require one to lead a '*dharmic*' life for a few generations, so as to convert one's earlier bad /malevolent traits and tendencies. A better approach would be to control the mind, where the ideas are shaped. In actual practice, people have been able to achieve certain amount of control of the mind, through control of breath (use of correct breathing techniques) and following the path of yoga, a holistic approach to a sensible '*dharmic*' living.

From the above, we can see that our emotions can either cement or wreck the interpersonal equations and relationships depending on our ability to control them.

Notwithstanding the effect of negative emotions to some extent, in the final analysis, the variety of emotions shown by people makes life interesting. It must be remembered that even positive emotions if too rigidly followed will tend to give adverse reactions. It is therefore necessary to be judicious in our usage of emotions for the betterment of society. In an emotionless world, we would just be robots doing tasks in an orderly but listless fashion and existence would be too dull. Emotions are therefore the gateways to a pleasurable and happier existence and besides, it provokes people to appropriate themselves with improved capabilities.

Sometimes our body reacts automatically to help us out of danger to our body mechanism. Otherwise most of our actions are controlled by thought processes occurring in the lower mind. Only when one is able to control one's mind or at least rein in the mind for a short spell to allow the higher mind to take control, can we expect the resultant actions to be satisfying. Only the higher mind has the power of logical reasoning and discrimination. Ideally, all results will be universally acceptable if this faculty of the brain is tempered by positive traits and emotions. Factors which control the activities of the mind along with some methods to guide and control the mind are dealt in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 9

TECHNIQUES TO MANAGE DESIRES AND ATTACHMENTS

We have seen so far how a living being came to exist, its capabilities and limitations and the environment in which it has to co-exist with other inhabitants. From what has been explained in the last few chapters, it will be clear that whereas the animal kingdom can exist on basic survival instincts, human beings exist for the purpose of finding a path to salvation. By using the facility of the mind properly, one can enjoy life on Earth peacefully, co-exist with others and support Nature's process. The design of the internal intricacies of animal and human bodies is fashioned to function automatically. But in humans, the body and the mind are gifts of nature that should be used wisely. While the internal functions of the physical body are automatic (e.g. glands, digestive system etc.), the external body (like limbs etc.) needs preventive maintenance like exercise, hygiene etc. Therefore, the mind has to be managed intelligently so that the human being can achieve the purpose of living happily and find salvation.

The human body-mind complex is an immaculate instrument shaped from the elements, which has been given for use as desired by the owner. Our frailties and the impact on the universe are causing problems if we do not change our current living patterns. Any good or adverse happening in the world therefore depends on us and is our responsibility. We cannot pin it on somebody else's shoulder.

It might be said that single-handedly we cannot improve the situation. If every one of us decides to change ourselves individually for the better, instead of trying to change others, perhaps we can hope for redemption. First of all, let us see how we can improve ourselves.

The factors to be addressed first should be our concern, love and compassion for all objects of the Universe, shedding our ego and limiting our desires. Towards this end, our wise ancestors in their wisdom had recommended a few procedures.

WHAT THE PROCESS OF BREATHING INVOLVES

This is one of the basic, natural functions performed by every living object, starting from birth and ending at death. Normally one is not conscious of it unless there is a restriction or block. If one watches a new-born baby while asleep, one can notice a gentle rise and fall of his abdomen. That is the way one should breathe normally. It is not supposed to be shallow. While inhaling, the lungs should fill out and push the diaphragm down, and make the abdomen protrude and during exhalation retreat to original position. For correct breathing therefore, fill the lower abdomen, middle abdomen and chest in that order. Breath should be taken through the nostrils, forcing the lungs to push the diaphragm in a synchronized movement encompassing muscles of the abdominal wall, the diaphragm and those between the ribs and the neck, and controlled through nerve stimuli from the medulla oblongata. One is aware of his breath only if there is an obstruction to breathing or when he over-exerts. If a person is aware of it, he is over-exerting or it is an indication that his lungs are not functioning properly. The reasons

could be lack of sufficient intake of pure air, air-sacs being clogged, diseased and inefficient due to misuse or ingestion of harmful matter. Then it is time to attend to the problem before it gets worse. However, by practicing certain methods, one can increase the capacity and efficiency of the lungs to some extent.

The act of breathing is automatically and involuntarily controlled so as to suit the activity of the body. In rare circumstances, one may have to make additional effort or take the aid of external apparatus to boost the supply. Under peculiar environments like high altitude where the air is rarer and the oxygen content reduced, we need to force ourselves to take a deeper breath to increase the oxygen content required for running/operating the body systems. In extreme cases, there may also be a need to supplement with additional oxygen.

Once inhaled through our nostrils, the filtered air enters the lungs where a gaseous swap takes place - the impure blood from the body unloads its cargo of oxides of carbon and other waste products and the oxygen from inhaled air passes through by the capillaries in the lungs. Blood vessels in turn distribute these to the organs as per their specific needs. The waste gases - carbon dioxide, carbon monoxide and unused gases in the body, collected in the lungs, are exhaled through the nostrils. Besides supplying oxygen needs for the body and the removal of waste gases, the correct breathing technique also provides a gentle massage for some of the internal organs in the abdomen.

Breathing is a combination of three actions, namely *Puraka*, *Kumbhaka* and *Rechaka* denoting the phases of inhalation, holding in of the breath and that of exhalation. Normal human lungs have a capacity of 4 to 5 liters though the maximum inspired volume will only be approximately 3.5 liters, called the aspiratory capacity. Our intake per breath or *puraka*, is usually around 500 ml and a similar amount is forced out during *rechaka*. On an average we take around 20 breath cycles per minute, while it can be as low as 12 per minute during restful sleep. Ratio of timing between 'in', 'hold' and 'out' stages vary according to need and under ideal condition it is 1: 4 : 2.

Most people breathe improperly and resort to shallow breathing causing accumulation of poisonous waste gases like carbon dioxide and carbon monoxide in the lungs. Consequently, the air intake and the amount of oxygen needed for normal body functions is reduced. The method of breathing of a child asleep is the proper one to follow. It should be deep, slow and rhythmic in normal circumstances. Breathing also affects our emotional state, concentration and stress levels and therefore can be used to regulate our state of mind.

While many of the internal organ functions are under automatic control by related brain-centres, respiration is one activity which can be partially controlled by external procedures like *pranayama*. One can change the rate of respiration, decrease it, intake more or less air, or even stop our breath for a short while, by modifying the impulses from the brain through liberating the mind of unnecessary thoughts. It is a sort of mind control by modulation of our breath. Thus, by the action of controlling or modulating our breath we can liberate the mind and consequently many of our negative actions. According to some old texts, the breath or '*prana*' has five specific functions and are

given names like *prana*, *apana*, *vyana*, *udana* and *samana* based on functions performed. These are meant to assist in removal of body-generated waste gases or for general improvement of the system. *Apana* helps to guide the movement of faeces and urine, *vyana* assists in distributing the nutrients to the organs and *samana* aids in the digestion of food. *Prana* is the inspiration and expiration aspect of breath and *udana* the upward movement of air from the stomach.

Our body structure incorporates a number of chakras at certain nodal points of the body, the seven major ones being *Muladhara*, *Svadhithana*, *Manipura*, *Anahata*, *Vishuddha*, *Ajna* and *Sahasrara* chakras, located along the spinal column starting from the pelvic region above the anus and ending at the crown of the head. These chakras exercise some control over excretory, generative, digestive, respiratory and circulatory, sensory, intellectual and psychological functions along with relevant glands. It may be advantageous to interlink various chakras and the organs they control with the breathing process, by imagining that the breath starts from the *Muladhara* chakra and end with the *Sahasrara* and binding with the organs along the way.

Various *Chakras* and corresponding glands and organs it controls with their locations are as under:

- a) *Sahasrara* Pituitary (in the crown of the head / cerebral region)
- b) *Bindu* Brain centre (top back portion of the head and associated with production of semen.
- c) *Ajna* Centre of facial facade – between the eyebrows.
- d) *Visuddhi* Thyroid, para-thyroid and thymus - located in the pharyngeal region.
- e) *Anahat* Chest region where the lungs and the heart are situated.
- f) *Manipura* Pancreas (Solar Plexus) – located at the navel. The abdominal organs like the stomach, spleen, liver, pancreas and gallbladder are generally located in this area.
- g) *Swadhithana* Ovaries, testicles - the organs of generation. (It may be the chakra corresponding to the endocrine glands which supply hormones and other internal secretions of the system).
- h) *Mooladhara* Perineum - It is situated in the pelvic region between the external genitalia and the anus.

The *Manipura*, *Anahata*, *Ajna* and *Sahasrara* are respectively known as *Annamaya*, *Pranamaya*, *Mano-Vijnanamaya* and *Anandamaya kosas*.

In the 'So-Ham' *pranayama* the person concentrates on the breath as passing from the *Muladhara* chakra to the *Sahasrara* chakra, visualizing the inhaled air as stimulating

or energizing various internal organs associated with and in the vicinity of the various chakras as it passes on its way up along the spinal cord. While doing so, concentrate on the chakras, and dysfunction of any of these internal organs connected with those chakras will get highlighted for necessary correction.

It is therefore one way of creating awareness of the internal organs in the body and effectiveness or otherwise of their functioning. One must remember that these organs play important part in ensuring physical, mental and psychological happiness.

PRANAYAMA OR BREATH CONTROL TECHNIQUE

Besides supporting existence of all beings, the breath cools the body, maintains one's body temperature and aids the massaging of internal organs as secondary functions. Variations in techniques of breathing like Ujjayi (sounding breath), Dirgha Pranayama (filling of lungs starting at the lower end and gradually moving up to the top), Nadishodhana (alternate nostril breathing), Bhastrika (Bellows), Kapalabhati (a minor version of Bhastrika), and Sitkari (cooling one) are different types of Pranayama and breathing techniques. These are done with specific aim of activating precise functions meant to maintain and improve one's health. For example, Ujjayi helps to focus the mind, increase mindfulness and generate internal heat. Dirgha Pranayama relaxes the mind and body, increases oxygenation of blood and more effective purging of residual carbon dioxide from the lungs. Nadi shodhana calms the mind, soothes anxiety and stress and promotes clear thinking. Deep and steady inhalation increases the amount of oxygen drawn into the lungs and facilitates increased absorption of oxygen into the bloodstream which in turn ensures better digestion and efficient conversion of nutrients into energy. This enhances physical performance and endurance.

The mind, which consists of thoughts and emotions, is closely related to the breath. When the mind is calm and relaxed, the breath is smooth and slow. When one is stressed, it becomes fast and shallow. If one is angry, the breath becomes fast and forceful. If in pain, one gasps, in depressed state it sighs and when in anxiety the breath becomes shallow and rapid. A deep breath taken consciously has the power to reduce mental stress or tension and clarify the thought process. During the interregnum the logical mind can rearrange the thoughts for better clarity and come to a practical and feasible conclusion. One can capitalize on this connection between breath and mind to control the mind. Going further this can be used as a pathway to self-realization. Many more steps have to be cleared, however, before we can reach that goal, as will be enumerated later.

The conscious breath mentioned above also indicates awareness of its movement, quality and its interaction with objects (meaning the parts and organs) in contact. As one inhales and one can feel its passage through the nostrils, down the oesophagus, through the dual branch pipes into the air-sacs of the lungs. In the swap of oxygen and waste gases within the lungs, the coursing of the oxygenated blood for delivery to various internal organs and the discharge of the waste gases out through the nostrils, we are seeing a panorama of life-boosting activities going on within our body. A host of unseen

and unsung actors thus provide us a strong base to accomplish an enjoyable and fruitful existence. How often do we ever remember the existence of these organs or appreciate their contributions while we are busy with our material existence? The quality of our living is dependent on their functions and every breath of ours should be cherished.

HOW CONTEMPLATION LEADS TO CONCENTRATION

Mind is fickle. It can very rarely stay focused on one object and flits from one object to another which captures its fancy. This is attributed to the perception of a specific object by the more potent among the senses at that instant. The potency of each sense will vary depending on the relative environment, and hence the perception by the strongest sense gains the attention. Out of the five senses the effect of sight, taste and touch can be curtailed to some extent but it is not so easy with hearing and smell. An individual has to find a strong enough alternative to engage the mind with instant attention. Some of the following are used for achieving concentration of mind:

- An icon, image or an idol, a person cherishes;
- An idea, thought or belief that you are impressed with; and or
- A favourite hymn, prayer or mantra

With habit and regular practice one finally achieves concentration.

According to the person's societal orientation, humans congregate in a place of worship of their choice which can be a temple, church, gurudwara or mosque. The presiding deity in such a place of prayer may take a specific form of an idol, an icon, a holy book or an idea (direction towards a holy place) depending on their religious affiliation. Generally, the more erudite or a true spiritual aspirant will take recourse to prayers or spiritual/yogic exercises in solitude.

A few of the mantras, commonly chanted are mentioned later. These examples are taken from Hindu culture. Followers of other faiths have their favourite ones similarly which they choose during their prayers with the same aim. These mantras are meant to be focussed or concentrated on, without trying to understand the meaning or give your own meaning or it will lead you astray.

When one focuses on it and is fully absorbed, but without getting involved with and engrossed on its aspects, the perceiver is supposed to reach a stage where he becomes the perceived or the object of perception. In other words, you dissolve or become one with that object. This is what happens when you reach the ultimate/last stage of concentration. It becomes easy then for 'the true self' in you, shorn of its egocentric desires, to become one with Supreme consciousness. When one gets rid of his/hers egocentric affinities or sheds the false egocentric shield enveloping the 'true self', he/she becomes aware of his/her true nature and realises that he/she is one of the many souls in this world who have emerged from the same source, the One and only Cosmic Power. When all have a common source there is no cause for mutual enmity or hate. While living in the material world the individual ego shield is the reason for people to consider they are different from the rest, and the external physical features fortify this belief. Majority of stories in the *Puranas* and *Itihasas* are meant to strengthen this belief, the nature of

this Truth and establish the what, why and how we should carry out our ordained duties during our lifetime.

The stages involved in the emergence of thoughts and ideas from the first stage of perception by the senses, then a surge of emotion and sprouting of thought. Each of these activities are motivated and influenced by the doer's predominant intentions, desires and traits. These in turn are the outcome of experiences gathered from previous births, which gets ingrained in one's nature. The subtle mind, carrying this imprint, accompanies the 'soul' to a compliant body which acts as an egocentric shield. The 'real self', as mentioned earlier, is a passive witness to the doings of the body, and it is the inborn and acquired traits that drive the mind and consequently the body to carry out various acts. If this egocentric shield can be eliminated or even suppressed to some extent, then the emotions will be that of the true self or one's real consciousness. Since 'true self' is the same God-element in all, the emotions felt by everyone will be compatible, resulting in common good.

HOW TO CONTAIN THE EMOTIONS

Anger, anxiety, fear, enmity, envy, hate, jealousy, sympathy, love, compassion, pity and kindness are some of the human emotions that people experience in daily life. Emotions are after-effects caused by likes or dislikes. The first seven are negative characteristics and best avoided as these can cause more problems and harm the doer only, both materially and religiously. The other emotions borne out of one's desire to support the needy and deserving on humanitarian grounds are positive and when acted upon equally gratifying for both receiver and the donor. Heart is generally inclined towards good emotions, but bad emotions sprout instantaneously out of the mind and one has to be wary of them. Overall it is necessary to keep a tight watch over one's emotions. Some methods to still our mind or at least to acquire some control over the working of our mind are enumerated below.

WHAT DOES ONE MEAN BY PRAYER?

People looking for material assistance normally look up to the close family or friends who can provide them. For official work or business, they approach those who can render such help. When one is at a loose end and does not know what to do, he turns to our one source of faith, his favourite God. One basic aspect of followers of every religion of the world is the importance laid on the power of prayer. From early childhood one is tutored that daily prayers are important if one has to do well in life, a sincere prayer to God we believe in will fulfill the desires. This is the standard advice given by elders and religious leaders irrespective of the religious denomination we belong to. So, a prayer can be defined as an earnest wish or request incanted vocally or in the mind, to a superior power one reposes his faith in, for succour. British (colonial) education taught that any help sought from any superior is a sort of prayer, but Hindus used this term only when invoking divine power. It indicates the faith in the one and only compassionate super power that He will never let down His devotee. One may not get material help but faith as a saving grace provides a solace for our muddled mind. You might have heard stories of how God responded to someone's prayer and received a job, riches or a child he

wanted. Such results do not happen just by prayer alone. It needs a follow-up by taking proper steps towards the attainment of that goal. So, the prayer provides a motive for working harder to achieve the aim. Some people have misconceived notions. That is why they make costly offerings to attain some beneficial outcome or a few promise offerings when the wishes are fulfilled. In the former case, the devotee is thinking that the offerings will influence Him to grant the favour. The latter case indicates that the devotee does not have absolute faith in the God as he is using the offerings as a barter. These show the mindset of the devotee who considers God as a greedy human who can be bribed for granting favours. To believe that God can be influenced by offerings shows the hollowness of the act of praying. It shows the poor understanding of God and His purpose. God is the creator of each and every bit of the Universe and He has no need of any material offerings from us. What He expects from devotees is honest behaviour, a kind heart and absolute faith. Therefore, the act of prayer has to be done sincerely and with true devotion. An earnest prayer is a powerful tool in the hands of the faithful and should not be wasted for self-gratification but utilised for the benefit of the entire community. Then the act of prayer will become purposeful. Never pray half-heartedly or with negative emotions like anger and jealousy seeking harm to others. Neither should we pray for things which disturb the peace and happiness of others. Praying for the welfare of our enemies will free the mind from any hatred. A prayer indicates a longing to abide in one whom you cherish and be one with, both in thought and deed. One who prays embellishes himself with all the good qualities of the Deity whom he prays to. He wishes to endow himself with those traits which will assist him to be compassionate and loving to the needy and the deprived. It is not for gaining advantage or power for self, but for helping the needy.

Temples were initially planned as places consecrated to energise the area around, where one could sit in silence attuned to the environment and concentrate on His presence. This helps the individual with guidance of the right path ahead. Never hope for instant results, be patient and keep faith in Him. Whether it results in loss or gain, defeat or success, happiness or misery, always hold on to Him - all this will be for good. When we are firm in our faith, things will definitely change for the better.

In effect, prayer acts as a conditioning for the mind. It alleviates our worries and stresses that torment our mind to some extent when unfortunate events happen. The ways of nature are mysterious and even the best laid plans do sometime go awry. A person has to be able to withstand those stresses and a fervent prayer quells the unease of the mind. When one has faith in the powers that be, he can endure trouble. God is like a shock-absorber, and He relieves us from worries, tension and depression, just by opening our heart to Him through prayers. Suppressed negative emotions in the subconscious mind are the root cause of all our mental and physical predicaments; and through prayer, we can sublimate them. Practice of prayer systematically replaces negative thoughts with positive and healthy feelings thus leading to purity and even temperament and ultimately changes the disposition and outlook of the individual.

Regular practice of prayer, consciously or unconsciously, brings forth amazing results. A prayerful attitude arrests the aimless wandering of the mind about unhelpful thoughts

and helps us to concentrate our mind on things at hand. Intense prayer is advised as a means to achieve concentration and deep meditation. Prayer helps us to develop intimacy and bonding with God. The more we get attached to God, lesser is our attachment to the material world; and we make quick progress in awakening spiritual consciousness which finally leads to enlightenment. One's achievements are not because of your effort alone but needs support of God. That is what one prays for - to support one's earnest effort for achieving his goal.

PRAYING AS A MEMBER OF A GROUP

A person is engaged in activity either unconsciously or consciously at all times. All conscious actions need not necessarily bring positive results in every case. A prayer or invocation at the beginning of an activity releases one's mind from stresses so that he can think cogently and proceed in a positive direction. Invariably a well-planned operation with good intentions for the benefit of an entire society or even a small section therein if it does not affect the rest is bound to succeed.

Some persons resort to praying as a group with a common aim, as done during '*homa*' undertaken in the early ages. At present these are conducted as religious festivities managed by a temple or such administration with devotees participating. These often take the form of folk dances and plays with hymns or *bhajans* and songs extolling the glories of deities and intended to invoke their blessings on the society. Generally, the rationale is to achieve the common good of the people and environment. The belief that the 'world is one' is the basic motto as laid down in the aphorism "*Loka-samastha-sukhino-bhavanthu*", mentioned in ancient Hindu scripts, meaning 'let the whole world of beings be always happy'. The happiness or misery of each and everyone in the Universe is so intertwined with others that any good or bad event happening in the world is bound to affect all creatures to some extent and no one can escape from its effect. When praying as part of a crowd, whether in a temple, church or mosque, the combined effect electrifies and sanctifies the atmosphere. All participants feel elated emotionally which intensifies the happiness of the gathering as a whole and creates community-consciousness. A silent prayer with full awareness shows our willingness to follow and abide by His teachings. All other accoutrements are mainly meant to create a genial atmosphere. The basic thing to understand is that even though the Earth is bountiful, nothing is available freely without putting in some effort. Each person is recompensed according to his merit. As the saying goes, success in effort comes from 99% perspiration and 1 % inspiration (meaning divine intervention). No significant result can be achieved without good planning and proper execution which means hard work.

Many saints and prophets have become realized souls through *bhajans* or hymns in praise of God which are their sincere prayers or outpourings from their heart showing their love, devotion and faith. *Mira Bai*, *Tulsi Das*, *Tukaram*, *Namdeva*, *Tyagaraja* and recently *Sri Ramakrishna* are some of those who demonstrated in their lives how one can realize God through prayer alone. Most of the problems we are facing today, either in individual life or in social life, are due to neglect of moral values. We have systematically disregarded vital tenets necessary for perpetuation of prosperous human existence.

Always consider the time spent in prayer as an opportunity to clear the mind of self-aggrandizing and evil thoughts and replace it with pleasant recollections. One should pray for the will to improve your individual accomplishments and capabilities rather than ask for material advantage. This will create such an ambience that one is impelled to refine his basic characteristics and eliminate any negativity remaining within and in effect lead to transforming him into a better human being.

Our daily prayers should include our kith and kin, our circle of friends and the environment of which we are a part which contributes to the good life you are enjoying. This will condition the mind and stimulate a feeling of love and compassion towards all which in turn will remove negative thoughts about others. The result would be greater attention to the care, maintenance and welfare of our natural assets, which is the lifeline of our existence and prevent the wanton destruction of our environment.

SOME MODES OF PRAYING FOLLOWED BY HINDUS

We are heirs to a great variety and system of prayers. It is normal for the child to follow the steps of his elders but on attaining maturity, it would be ideal if he decides on one that suits his temperament and outlook. Various types and methods are in vogue these days out of which a few are outlined hereunder. In all systems, the aim is to channelize one's thoughts to a central point, and thus still the mind finally.

So-Hum Sadhana: *So-Hum sadhana* is one way of reining the mind from normal earthly thoughts that arise without rhyme or reason. It is said that an idle mind is 'devil's workshop', meaning thereby that vague thoughts constantly cloud the conscious mind, and refuses to go away however much one may try. '*So-Hum*' *sadhana* is one method of controlling the mind from normal earthly thoughts that well up in the mind. Another equally good one is *panchaksharanama*, a powerful and edifying spiritual thought involving five syllables. A sort of prayer or any other symbol of godhood that you cherish can also replace '*So-Hum*'. The idea is to keep the mind trained on a specific symbol or thought on which one can concentrate on. This may not be easy at the start, but by constant practice it can be attained.

Even though one is not normally aware of it, the normal act of inhalation and exhalation of breath done by human beings can be utilised to control the thoughts passing through the mind. For this one has to concentrate on the movement or passage of air through the nostrils, the throat, and windpipe to the lungs and the same in reverse for a few cycles. Gradually you change the focus to your throat, and you will feel as if the air is emanating from the lower reaches of the abdomen, rising up and exiting through the nostrils. If one tries and vocalizes the sound '*So*' on the upward passage of air and '*Hum*' when the air exits the nostril, one will experience or discern the sound of '*So-Hum*' emerging/arising from the act of breathing. After a few days of practice, you will find yourself intoning '*So-Hum*' in consonance with the flow of breath without even realising that you are doing it.

Let us now try and understand what '*so-hum*' means. '*So-hum*' is a combination of two Sanskrit words, '*Sah:*' and '*Hum*', meaning '*That I am*'. In other words, we are establishing

the oneness of our 'true self' with the 'Supreme Consciousness'. Here 'true self' stands for our soul and not the physical body which is only a temporary abode while soul is eternal. The coalescing (marrying-up) of the sound 'So-hum' with the act of breathing, or the intonation of 'So-hum' during breathing, gradually transforms into an awareness of oneness of self with 'Him'. Your concentration is now focused on the Supreme Consciousness, and you are no longer affected by normal mundane/everyday thoughts. When properly intoned, it reverberates and lingers ever so long. The intoning of the sound 'So-hum' is powerful enough to destroy one's day-to-day thoughts and to take one out of the false *sansar* (the illusory world) and to turn the outward gaze of the ego-centric *jivatma* into the inward gaze into our 'real self', and bring about a transformation to a state where you enjoy the awareness of the Supreme Self, or in other words, supreme bliss, the like of which you had never experienced before. This change of state does not mean that there will be no more disturbing factors and irksome agitations in your life, but that your attitude towards life will be so transformed that you will no more be distressed as before and will be willing to accept and survive the duress.

WHAT MANTRAS SIGNIFY

A *mantra* is a sacred utterance, a mystical sound conveyed by a word, a syllable, a group of words or a phoneme in Sanskrit, conveying eternal truths which are believed to have psychological and spiritual powers. When accepted with full faith and resolve, it can transform and change one's personal view and approach to life to one of contentment and peace. Starting from a young age, children should be taught to recite these correctly and the theme behind explained in plain language. As they grow older, after reciting these with faith, they start to recognize the underlying truth in all its dimensions. Following the precepts contained and concealed in them the person evolves as a better human being. In order to invoke the power of the mantra the disciple has to practice diligently and meditate on it constantly. Mantras were passed on by a preceptor only to such a student who was worthy of it. This indicates the value and importance of the mantra, and a learned man would not like to transmit them to undeserving pupils.

Some of the most important Mantras mentioned in Hindu religious texts are 'Aum' or *Pranava*, the *Gayatri* and the *Shanthy* Mantras, which are briefly explained below.

"Om" or "Aum"- this universal cosmic sound is the start of creation, and the origin of the Universe and the extant entities. It is also known as the *Pranava* mantra and is incanted in a specific inflection, tone or cadence.

GayatriMantra:

OmBhurBhuvahSvahaTatSaviturVarenyam

BhargoDevasyaDheemahiDhiyoYoNahaPrachodayaat

The wording of the *Gayatri* Mantra, the particularly sacred verse found in Hymn 62, Book III of the *Rigveda*, is supposed to have been revealed to Sage *Vishwamitra*. It is an invocation to the Supreme power, or the effulgence of that supreme divine reality, to

stimulate our intelligence so that we may be able to realize the ultimate truth. That Supreme Power is the embodiment of knowledge and the destroyer of sin and ignorance.

Shanthi Mantras are many as found in different Upanishads. Two of the well-known ones are:

a) 'OmSahaNaavavatuSahaNauBhunaktuSahaVeeryamKaravavahai

TejaswiNavadhitamastu Ma Vidvishaavahai

Om Shaanthih: Shaanthih: Shaanthih: '

This is found in *Taittiriya, Katha, Mandukya* and *Shvetashvatara* Upanishads.

Many of the sacred texts start with the *Shanthi* Mantra mentioned above, invoking the Supreme Power to protect and nourish both the teacher and the disciple. It also enjoins the hope that both accomplish strength and brilliance arising from that knowledge and also that one may not hate another and that there may be peace, peace and peace forever. The above is only a literal translation of the prayer but it has a deeper meaning. It reflects on the holistic relationship between the teacher and the taught in the *Guru-sishyaparampara* of old wherein the venerable guru imparts the knowledge of the *Brahman* in the form of a dialogue between them, culminating in both expanding their knowledge. To achieve this, they have to put in combined effort with a common goal in mind. It underlines and lays stress regarding the importance of close relationship between beings, which is supposed to be one of faith and trust in each other. Such an environment ensures that the student fully absorbs the intent and thrust of the matter taught. Normally when two living beings interact, both learn from each other unless they are working at cross purposes. With such a teacher-pupil like relationship between interacting individuals both can only benefit from such encounters. A true teacher-pupil relationship ensures a bond that never dies.

Repetition of the word *Shaanthih*: thrice is a pointer to the three concerns affecting beings adversely, namely, physical, environmental and natural causes from which he seeks respite through His blessings.

b) AumPurnamadahPurnamidamPurnatPurnamudachyate

PurnasyaPurnamadayaPurnamevavasisyate

Om Shaanthih: Shaanthih: Shaanthih:

This is from *Brihadaranyaka* and *Ishavasya* Upanishads.

Chanting of 'Om', *Gayatri* mantra and *Shanthi* mantras are means of conditioning the mind. Such chanting evokes a feeling of kinship with the other objects of the Universe. This leads to enhancement of love, affection and attachment to the environment. We can also express it as 'an act of clearing the cobwebs from the mind and filling it with

love'. This state of mind assists a person for progress to the next stage of concentration and thereafter that of meditation. These prepare the invoker to understand and set himself right on the path to self-realization.

Hymns in praise of a Specific Deity: In Hindu classics there are references to many Deities or different forms or *Avatars* in which Supreme God had appeared on Earth to save the believers. It is therefore understandable that some believers relate more comfortably and have preference for a particular Deity. Such people are comfortable with chanting hymns in praise of specific Deity, whether alone or in a group. As long as these are done with fervour and single-pointed devotion, these hymns aid in calming/ stilling their minds and lead them to a state of happiness.

Pilgrimage to Holy Places: One of the most recognized ways to tranquilise the mind of tensions is a visit to a place of worship where devotees gather. The atmosphere created by the presence of a devoted audience enhances the power of adulation and concentration on 'the holy presence', whether a figure, symbol or a holy manuscript. The group prayers are special and sacrosanct since it provides greater satisfaction arising from the kindred spirit that prevails there. It is said that the greater the number of devotees, the shrine becomes 'holier' and the deity more powerful.

The location and various rituals followed in temples are devised to develop physical fitness besides providing mental and spiritual fulfilment to some extent. One must have noticed temples of worship located on hill-tops or deep in jungles. Whereas the temples consecrated within villages were frequented by the local gentry, some of the young and athletic members of society as also the strong-willed elders frequented the out-of-the-way temples located on hilltops or deep inside the forests, which kept them not only mentally but also physically exercised. Some temples had strict regimens of up to 40 days of fast and rituals which they had to follow before worship, thereby inculcating a strict physical and mental discipline.

Prayer in solitude is equally powerful for a person with a clear willpower, but many may not have the determination or the impulse to devote some time for prayer. One of the methods to motivate people, normally averse to praying alone or visiting temples is to initiate them to participate in community-organized programs. *Satsangs* and religious discourses, temple-related celebrations on holy days are some modes for initiating them. This will inculcate a respect for religious customs and get them to follow and practice healthy living habits.

Religious festivals followed within one's household as also those conducted in temples on a larger scale create a friendly atmosphere and help the participants to focus and strengthen their faith in the unity and harmony of all, irrespective of individual preferences. These practices improve one's outlook on every object in the surroundings besides strengthening the bonds within the community.

Swami Vivekananda, when asked 'what do you gain by prayer?', is reported to have replied, "I gained nothing, in fact I lost anger, depression, jealousy, irritation and insecurity".

INFLUENCE OF JOINT FAMILY, FRIENDS AND SOCIAL CIRCLES

Joint family, social circles and friends are some the groups who interact with individuals and change their attitude and behaviour to a great extent. People living together in close proximity as in the case of a joint family or a fraternity of priests, monks and nuns and carry out their duties individually or some actions jointly. They come to a better understanding with the rest and a feeling of oneness and consequently develop attachment and affection. This leads to mutual respect, affinity and bonding. Normally there would be an unwritten law, applicable to and understood by all, which ensures cohesive and comfortable environment. Most of the minor disparities and behavioural patterns tend to get smoothened.

Out of the above three groups, you may not be able to choose the extended members of the family. There may be a common bond due to lineage, but everyone is a disparate individual with their own specific attitudes. Some you may cement with, a few you can ignore but there will be some who you are forced to live with. The effect of these on you may leave distinct impressions which can decide your attitude to life, again depending on your gunas and desires. But the significant feature of a joint family is that one is living in an amiable environment which induces a placebo effect of comfort and convenience. Also, there will be someone close-by to provide a helping hand or right advice. Bonding between members improves as they will be working together for a common cause like activities relating to religious or harvest festival or a family ceremony like marriage, tonsuring and thread ceremony.

Membership of a social circle or club which has same aim or interests will provide similar advantage. In these cases, you are acquiring new friends according to your choice. If the circle of friends is chosen wisely, with similar interests it will turn out to be a good decision where all will only gain.

TOTAL CONTROL OF ACTION - A HOLISTIC APPROACH

Having seen the influence wielded by others on one's personal make-up and character, let us now focus on our own personal contribution. It depends on the competence of our body and mind. Indian seers and sages have maintained that the foremost duty is to keep our mind and body healthy. Condition of these two will decide your own development in your life as also one's contribution to upkeep of your environment. As far as the body is concerned besides proper food and hygiene, exercise is equally important. When normal activities do not provide sufficient exercise for all parts of the body, *Yoga* practices are recommended in our culture. Traditional texts like *Hatha Pradipika*, *Patanjali Yoga Sutra* and *Shiva Samhita* etc. expound various *Yoga* techniques and any one suitable can be followed depending on one's intent or requirement. For a normal person regular practice of yogic exercises like *Surya Namaskar* or some simple ones outlined in *Yogasanas* will suffice. It would be better to get an expert to advise.

A well-known method to achieve control of the senses and liberating the mind was formulated by *Sage Patanjali*, an eightfold step to achieve self-realization. A layman need not go through all the steps unless he is avid and capable of going all the way. The mind

can be made steady and peaceful only if it is cleared of all impurities. To achieve this state, the prescribed method is to clear the mind of possessive thoughts by practicing '*vairagya*'. *Vairagya* is the cessation of '*raga*', the urge or longing for sensual gratification. It can be accomplished by achieving proficiency till the fifth level of *Ashtanga Yoga*, though one has to work harder to clear all the eight stages. Then one becomes a realised soul, meaning thereby that he is in complete control of his body and mind and can attain *Moksha*. The eight steps involved are given below

- a) *Yama* - It is the observance of *Ahimsa*, *Satya*, *Asteya*, *Brahmacharya* and *Aparigraha*. '*Ahimsa*' is non-violence or avoidance of any action which can cause hurt to any other being; '*Satya*' means truthfulness in thought, word and deed; '*Asteya*' indicates absence of any intention or action to take any property belonging to someone else by deceit; '*Brahmacharya*' is to be in control of carnal passion; '*Aparigraha*' is non-acceptance of gifts more than what is necessary for own sustenance.
- b) *Niyama* - enjoins one to cultivate *Saucha* (purity of physical body, thought and life energy), *Santosha* (contentment - free from restlessness due to unfulfilled desires or unattained accomplishment), *Tapas* (austerity and use of one's faculties for heightened potentialities), *Swadhyaya* (assiduous study of the authentic books of knowledge and *Iswarapranidhana* (indicates adoration and joyful acceptance of the Will of God with an attitude of devotion and surrender to the Divine).
- c) *Asana* - is the adoption of a steady and comfortable posture for meditation. It is defined as *Sukham*, *Sthiram*, *Asanam* - in short, a comfortable, stable, upright posture.
- d) *Pranayama* - this refers to the controlled breathing to still the mind and achieve concentration. This is achieved by suitable variation and laying stress of the *Puraka*, *Kumbhaka* and *Rechaka* portions of breathing.
- e) *Pratyahara* - helps in the withdrawal of the mind from the cravings and desires of the body. Senses habitually tend to look towards external objects and the mind follows the senses. This stage is designed to control the mind.
- f) *Dharana* -- is the act of fixing or focusing the attention on a definite object to achieve a state of mental concentration. Under normal circumstances mind needs something to focus on as its object as it cannot remain without any activity. It could be also an object like the flame of a lamp, an image or an icon instead of normal external object, which one imagines as located between the eyes, on which to concentrate.
- g) *Dhyana* - causes stillness of the mind and complete absorption of the mind in itself. As a person's concentration proceeds, there is gradual fading of distinction between the subject and the object. Then the contemplating mind loses itself in the object of concentration, whether it is a form, name or idea.
- h) *Samadhi* - As meditation proceeds and deepens (becomes intense), the mind gets absorbed in the object of concentration or devotion to the exclusion of all outer objects of perception. The three separate categories, "*triputi*", that are present at the start of meditation, i.e. the subject, object and the '*Knowledge*', tend to lose their line of demarcation between the perceiving consciousness, the perceived object and the knowledge so gained, all begin to coalesce into one. This state of absorption, in which the mental being loses its separate identity and takes on the nature of the object meditated upon so completely as to become one with it, is "*Samadhi*". This is the last stage where through silencing of the breath one removes the consciousness of one's physical existence. This results in a state of unqualified blissfulness with unperturbed consciousness. Achieving self-realization is not an easy task for people,

but even if one can get ahead to the sixth or seventh step, it will not be a mean achievement.

It will be noticed that the Ashtanga yoga of *Patanjali* follows a holistic approach involving the body, senses, mind, *Jivatma* and the environment and creates a unifying influence to ease the path to salvation.

CHAPTER 10

HINDU WAY OF LIFE AS PER SANATAN DHARMA

(AS I UNDERSTAND IT & HOW IT CAN HELP US IN GETTING OUT OF CURRENT PROBLEM)

Some significant lessons hidden in the process of creation of our world of objects and their evolution can only be found out by a patient, steady probing and inquisitive mind. Human civilisations came up at different locations in the globe under diverse environments. Ideologies and philosophies emerging were dissimilar. Sanatan Dharma based on ancient Indian Philosophy was a cut different from the rest, because of the peaceful, verdant and lugubrious climate in the region where people had time and patience to delve into the Mysteries of Nature which helped the people to shape their lifestyle. The paramount lessons learnt by them were the need for patience to wait for the natural result of every action, no intervention except to provide immunity only by taking preventive action for immunity and treatment of every living object as an equal partner by allowing them to function independently as their role demands.

We should not go away with the impression that the Western civilisation has not realised the important contribution made by Eastern culture in improving the body-mind complex of many ailments. It can be noticed that recently many western societies have taken to Yoga, Pranayama, meditation and use of indigenous medicines regularly as preventive methods for better immunity. Changes in food habits from over-the-counter frozen non-vegetarian stuff to fresh vegetarian is a recent trend, which indicates the awareness of people to the damage it does to one's body and adverse climatic and environmental conditions. If this builds up at a faster pace, the days of meat farms which is a major cause of climatic changes will be numbered. Once the unholy profit motive has no chance, the cereal and vegetable farming and orchards will flourish to meet the demand. Another advantage would be that the plant and animal life on Earth will revive.

While the Western way of life has improved our comfort levels by introducing new features in our day to day transactions, the western way of thinking, we have seen, gives importance to the physical body and mind, considering these as his entity and using these to enjoy sensual pleasures, comfort and acquisition of material property. They are under the illusion that everything in the environment they live in are meant for their use and convenience, including the live creatures for their consumption as per their interests, forgetting that they also have the freedom to live in peace. This mind-set has to change for ensuring that Earth survives. The plant and animal life have the important function of maintaining and sustaining Nature by ensuring the soil is rich and fertile and converting all dead matter into fertilisers. For this they must have the freedom to live free in their own space without hindrance from humans. It is the greed of man which causes them to trespass into their space. Rarely do they move out of their normal habitat otherwise. We should be grateful to these co-habitants of ours as many of the innovations improvised for our comfortable existence are copied from them and Nature.

Most people are engrossed in satisfying their senses thereby abusing the body and becoming victims of modern lifestyle diseases. Since the complete functions of each and every part of the body, especially the internal organs and how they react to allopathic

medicines today are still not fully known, these could cause complications. Even now the intricate details of interconnectivity and coordination between the internal organs are not fully understood and some side-effects of medicine used for treatment of one disease could upset the functioning of another organ. People resort to allopathy generally for quick results as they are impatient to wait too long for effect. However, the cost of pharmaceutical research is high and takes time which makes medicines costly for even a middle-class patient. So, the pharma companies resort to bulk production to reduce costs and induce doctors to prescribe such medicines unnecessarily. While western practices give quicker remedy for diseases, indigenous medicines are ideal for improving the immunity of the body with the added advantage that it does not interfere with functions of other internal organs.

Many of our current problems are caused due to non-observance of some of the principles outlined above. Some of the modern trends mentioned below which have caught the fancy of people are misleading or detrimental either totally or partially to the environment and is best avoided.

Many advertisements about goods mislead unwary customers and induce them to buy even though there is no necessity.

Galas and events sported for exhibition of new innovations use new business techniques to increase sale of such products. Inaugural sales offering gifts and raffles to attract customers are common these days. Earlier, the quality of the product spoke for itself.

Some businessmen use ego of wealthy people to purchase costly and rare artefacts which are more beneficial if kept in a museum. Ego also influences middle-class people to buy copies and prints to adorn their homes. A few keep a number of possessions which are hardly used. This is sheer waste of money which could be used for better purpose.

Labour-saving innovations flood the market which people tend to acquire which may not necessarily be of good quality. When advanced versions of the same innovations reach the market, we feel cheated for having been impatient.

Often metals like mercury, radium, antimony, arsenic, aluminium, cadmium and lead and their derivatives are used in manufacture of household cooking items which are dangerous or harmful to humans in the long term. This has been noted in equipments like water filters, microwaves, mobiles, TVs and other electronic equipment used by many families these days.

Usage of air conditioners for comfort causes health problems to white-collar workers in offices and dependence on water purifiers and coolers have adversely affected the immunity of urban people.

Progressive growth of industrialisation has amplified the need of mining for larger quantities of coal for power generation and fossil fuels for increased transportation and other requirements. This has raised the pollution levels in highly populated cities and towns to dangerous levels. Whether the blatant use of limited fossil resources for

furthering industrialisation provides commensurable benefits to society is debatable. It is good that we are gradually changing over to alternative energy sources seriously.

Pollution of soil and ground water reservoirs by careless disposal of used equipment with harmful components and contaminated medical waste and time-barred medicines is at an all-time high, making our environment unhealthy. This needs immediate attention.

Current fast lifestyle has impacted our immunity to diseases, and we are easy prey to deadly micro-organisms. Our push for increased comfort levels have forced us to depend on gyms and regular use of costly health-enhancing medicines adding to unnecessary expenses.

Based on recent laboratory and scientific studies, many of the foodstuffs that we intake can affect some of the genes which are responsible for our behavioural pattern. Adverse change in behavioural pattern can be injurious to mental health. Recently there was an article mentioning the change in behaviour pattern due to effect on certain genes when individuals are subjected to jetlag, possibly because it unsettles our biological clock cycle. References in old ayurvedic literature indicate the effect of certain type of Sattvic and Rajasic foods, which can prove beneficial in changing behavioural pattern of individuals.

It is high time to revert to what we learnt from Nature during our existence prior to the western influence on our lifestyle.

As long as man is not aware of his true nature, he cannot comprehend the correct aim or purpose of his life on Earth. Every human being yearns for perpetual peace and happiness. But he is not aware that the springs of happiness lies within, which he searches for in external objects around him guided by his senses and ego. What a person gets from external objects is a sensual pleasure which provides temporary feeling of happiness. This feeling fades soon and then he looks for a repeat dose. People can never get permanent satisfaction and become generally unhappy. After a time, they become prone to ill-health and other problems due to addiction to sensory pleasure, making them feel worse in the bargain. Even our ordained work can prove a drag if it is done without keenness or interest. It may fetch one a handsome reward but what they achieve is only a sense of satisfaction. But when working devotedly and with keen intent, we are enjoying the process and not waiting for the results. So, all the time we spend on work is enjoyable.

The Indians solved this problem through lessons learnt from Nature and their co-inhabitants in earlier days of existence. The evolution of the Indian community proceeded as others did in rest of the world, the main difference was that people lived in a secluded serene environment with hospitable climate. Naturally inquisitive as well as innovative, they followed the example of Nature and decided to stick to its following basic tenets.

- Need for patience and planning down to minute details before starting any venture.
- All creatures from the insignificantly small bacteria to the mammoth animals contribute to the sustenance and maintenance of the environment in some way or

another during their lifetime and even after death and people should not hinder their peaceful existence.

- Diverse species of creatures generally live in peace going about their routine life in the wild. The carnivores do not kill for the sake of enjoyment but only if they are hungry while the vegans do not damage or mess with the plants and trees they depend upon for sustenance.
- Whatever is on offer in the region is available for each one as needed without distinction between big and small or between species, except in very rare circumstances. No creature hoards foodstuff at the cost of others and do so only for their own immediate use or that of young ones who cannot fend for themselves.
- Very rarely are the edible items wasted and the leftovers are consumed by some creature or other or merged with the soil.
- Regularity of the subtly planned night and day cycles and that of seasons and climates facilitate inhabitants to plan their activities and rest accordingly.
- Remnants of dead bodies and droppings of creatures or dead leaves and trunks of plants and trees are subsumed by the soil in time and improve the quality and fertility of the soil. These do not pollute the atmosphere or the soil permanently or pose problems for those inhabiting the terrain.
- People rarely used footwear outside as the soil was virgin and generally uncontaminated. Walking on the rough ground puts pressure on acu-points through which vital energy (known as qi or chi) flow to improve self-healing properties of certain internal organs, thus providing people some immunity.
- Creatures living in their usual habitat automatically get built-in immunity.
- Local produce of grains, cereals, tubers, vegetables and fruits of diverse nature provide sufficient nutrients required by local population to keep them fit and healthy.
- Design and the structure of the physical body and mind are capable of functioning without intervention, provided it is fed, exercised and given sufficient rest in order to carry out their expected functions.
- Herbs, roots, fruits and plants available in local vicinity can be handy to treat minor ailments, as found out by practitioners of indigenous medicines.

As soon as our ancient Sages deciphered the fundamental nature of creation, they turned their attention to the apparent dissatisfaction of humans compared to the animal kingdom. They were aware that our essential nature is one of pure being, consciousness and bliss which are already there in us and felt that it could possibly be our intelligence which is precluding the understanding of our own nature. This led them to study the working of the human mind in detail and realized that containment and sublimation of our mental state were essential which needed the support of a healthy body. The

foundation of our culture, which we now call Sanatan Dharma or Hindu way of life is based on their substantial findings.

Besides those outlined above, everyone uses their observation and learn from their experience. Everybody's experience is bound to be different and mine is recounted below.

Born in a middleclass Hindu Nair Tharawad in the late 1920's, I was put through the normal grind of living as part of a large family with siblings and cousins participating in the joys and sorrows. The affection and attention of the family kept us steady in undertaking all our duties as laid down. If there was any problem worrying us, the elders were at hand to guide and advice on the right path with the result that we always did the right thing. Our hygiene and health were closely watched, timely and wholesome food provided, education and involvement with outsiders closely observed and corrected. This set a pattern of daily activities including sports and sleep, which helped us in our adult life. Participation in religious festivals belonging to other sects was encouraged and made us appreciate and respect others' customs. Some of our festivals were intended to honour Nature and animals. Children were made to clean up, apply sacred ashes to their forehead (*bhasbam*), follow customs and recite prayers at sunset sitting with a lit-up oil lamp under the watch of a senior. This ingrained the habit of prayers in the mind for all times to come. Similarly, anyone coming from outside into the house had to remove their footwear, if they were wearing any, and wash their feet, hands and face. A water-filled bronze '*kindi*' with spout was kept for this purpose at the entrance all the time. It served two purposes - of reducing water wastage and easy cleaning of the vessel. Elders were not particular that children should visit temples routinely but recommended them to join in religious festivals and *satsangs*.

As children, we went with our father on our holidays during sowing, replanting or harvesting seasons. It was fun playing and exploring in the jungles around our fields in company of farmhands' children. We tagged on to them as they were familiar with the land where they normally used to graze our farm's cattle. It gave us first-hand experience of many interesting things about the peculiarities of the flora and fauna around. Simultaneously we got acquainted with agricultural techniques used in those days and learnt how natural phenomena and resources were opportunely utilised to get better yields and use of natural fertilisers for maintaining the quality of soil. As machines were not available easily in those days, ploughing the field was done using ploughs powered by cattle under the control of farmhands.

The time we spent with them gave us a deep insight into their way of life. In spite of the penury, the children were happy, and the elders showed their natural intelligence in overcoming the obstacles ethically and never resorted to cheating or petty bickering. Under proper guidance and in company of peers, children can assimilate a lot of positive inputs about Nature and people. This was perhaps the basis of reintroduction of a sort of Gurukula system at Shanthinikethan by Rabindranath Tagore. The syllabus followed by modern education systems hardly incorporates anything about Nature. This

does not contribute to learning about increased comfort and easy living style in tune with Nature.

The intention was to allow children to decide which one of the four *margs* they want to follow later according to their choice. No child was allowed to be lazy and was encouraged to play outside with friends. They did not mind children getting dirty because they knew it will provide them immunity from local diseases.

To enlighten lay persons about these principles which could not be incorporated in rituals, our elders used the medium of stories with religious characters in Hindu *Puranas* and *Itihasa*. Religious discourses are sprinkled with such incidents culled from these texts to fortify the belief so that the people can conform to these ideals. The incidents depicted therein reveal not only imperfections in the evil characters but those which normal persons are prone to. No one knew about the weaknesses of the human mind better than these sages as will be evident from the contents of the scriptures. They talk of the four *Yugas* or time periods - the *Sat*, the *Treya*, the *Dwapara* and the *Kali* with diminishing time periods, which is their way of projecting that the evolution of matter, started at a very slow pace initially to ensure that all essentials required for existence of a diverse varieties of living beings and gradually speeding up in later stages with the coming of the intelligent human. It also portends the deterioration of moral values as time passes by. For example, in the *Sat yuga*, moral stature of the people was at its purest and supreme, gradually deteriorating with the passing *yugas*. *Rajarishi Harischandra* in *Satyuga* was synonymous with Truth and Honesty. The diverse characters in the epic *Ramayana*, describing events in the *Tretayuga* show that the characters of that era were well trained in arts and crafts with minor moral infractions in ethical living like coveting another's wife but short of committing adultery. But even then, minor transgressions met with severe punishments like inviting harsh curses, though some were nullified later when the culprits atoned sincerely. Telling lies, dishonouring women, cheating at cards and unscrupulous attempts to gain wealth and prestige were some of the improper acts which were considered repugnant during *Dwaparayuga* as highlighted in the '*Mahabharata*'. Even for the insignificant attempt in supporting a lie, *Yudhistira*, a king with no blemish at all had to transit through Hell. I do not have to spell out the total lack of moral fibre shown in the present *Kaliyuga* by some of our people to indicate the extent to which we have now fallen. The stories of the *Puranas* have set me thinking as to why the bed-time stories told to children these days normally end with 'they married and lived happily thereafter'. This perhaps is an indication of the change in attitude of people now who wish to hide the raw facts of life as existing today.

The *Avatars* taken by God are the only characters who are shown as perfect, but even there a few incidents reveal that they are subject to minor infractions from our way of thinking. This indicates that living in the midst of people with bad qualities can rub on the Avatars, but as the story unfolds, these turn out to be in the interest of good people. Some of the evil characters in these tales are highly learned and intense devotees of Gods, like *Ravana* who was a firm devotee of Shiva and well-versed in the Vedas and philosophy. It is meant to show that even educated people can be influenced by desire

and in *Ravana's* case, for another individual's wife, even though he never tried physical force to subjugate her. It shows his sagacity or the knowledge that *Sita's Pativratya* cannot be shaken. It is slightly different in the case of the *Vanara* king *Bali* who forcefully took away his brother *Sugreeva's* wife. It will be seen that all characters personify some important characteristic of a normal human being. Compassion in case of Emperor *Shibi* for a dove hunted by a vulture, the respect for wisdom of the Guru in case of *Ekalavya*, upholding his father's word even at the cost of his crown like *Rama*, respect for elder brother by *Bharatha*, who holds the kingdom in trust till his return are some recounted in Puranas which are worth emulating. *Sabari's* tale of tasting the fruit before giving it to *Rama* was one of pure devotion.

These stories also dwell on various types of relationships between child and parent, husband and wife, fraternal love between Rama and his brothers, Bhishma's love for parents, bhakti or devotion shown by Andal and Sage Narada to Lord Narayana and gopikas of Vrindavan to Krishna, amongst others.

There are hundreds of such incidents strewn all over in old Indian scripts. But nothing can beat the teaching of Lord Krishna in *Bhagvad Gita* on the *Kurukshetra* battlefield, where the human body and mind has been compared to a temple. The relationship between various parts of the body and the actions thereof have been explained beautifully in the Gita which would be worthwhile for the reader to study to show how it is applicable to each person.

Every household had someone senior who was well versed in the art of storytelling who took on the task of telling bedtime stories to children taken from Indian scripts relating to lifelike incidents to bring out the morals to be learned. At a young age itself, children therefore understood the value of kindness, sympathy, compassion, love which they should cherish and to avoid negative emotions like anger, envy, jealousy, enmity, hate, greed, avarice and lust.

Looking at Sanatana Dharma as intended in the Gita, the process followed now is a corrupted version in some respects. The different divisions referred in Gita as *Chaturvarnya* i.e. *Brahmins*, *Kshatriyas*, *Vysyas* and *Sudras* which were meant to identify proper allocations/division of work to people based on their tendencies and capabilities was followed by the rulers of the land at that time. This concept was intended as a tool to facilitate and promote excellence in their duties for the welfare of the community. The people with a bent of mind for studies to understand the functioning of the world were called *Brahmins*, those who took pride in the physical capability to stand up for society were given the responsibility for ensuring the security of society as *Kshatriyas*, people who excelled in the art of trading as *Vyshias* and those not equipped with any of the above abilities as *Sudras*. Though children born into these varnas learnt from their elders and developed their aptitude, it was not always the case, such as *Parashurama* who was born into a brahmin family but became a fierce warrior. Proficiency in different types of duties needed specific dominant gunas - *Satwa*, *Rajas* or *Tamas*. People with different mindsets who preferred different type of duties would

therefore be considered as belonging to such group. Since majority got initiated at a young age to their parental type of duties, invariably they belonged to that class and this became a standard. Since *Brahmins* were supposed to be knowledgeable and worldly wise, they were used as advisers by Kings and nobles and thereby acquired more respectability and influence.

The rulers gave riches and gifts of land to Brahmins for their knowledge, to Kshatriyas who excelled in their work and free rein to Vysyas for fair trading in goods and excellent workmanship in handicrafts. The honours they received were appreciated by the populace. But later the next of kin took advantage of this to show superiority over others and corrupted the system over the years. This supposed superiority then became sanctified as high and low castes. But it did not make one trade or varna superior. This has caused unwanted ramifications in society. Gradually this caste system wherein one class claimed superiority over others came to stay with proliferation of sub-sects in each. Even the renowned *Acharyas* like *Sankara*, *Ramanuja* and *Madhava* who elaborated on *Advaita*, *Visistadvaita* and *Dvaita* on Vedic philosophies contained in the *Prasthantrayas* never gave their views on the caste system in their discussions. This has impacted the working of *Sanatana Dharma* adversely and needs correction.

Fortunately, recent trend bodes well for the future as the old tendency is slowly disappearing. Only when the caste system is wiped out and all men are treated as equal, this tendency will be wiped out completely. After Independence the administration has taken up a process of correction by selecting people based on merit for jobs. There is also a change in the mindset of civil society such as supporting inter-caste marriages. Hopefully, the caste system will be wiped out totally and the true *Sanatana Dharma*, which is upheld now more by the middle and lower strata of society, will reign supreme.

A few important lessons we learnt during my childhood days are put down briefly below.

Respect the elders, teachers and wise people.

A lie does not solve any problem. The liar will always get caught some time or other and end with nasty consequences.

One enjoys everything in moderation. Excess money, ego, praise along with things that accompany them may provide pleasure but can ruin one's character.

Impatience does not facilitate satisfactory outcomes. Prevention is better than cure. Check all the pros and cons before starting any undertaking.

Surfeit of emotions look interesting on screen. One should be wary of negative emotions evoked by external actions and take care not to react in a hurry. Be nonchalant and don't get provoked to act rashly. Those causing positive emotions can only lead one to humanitarian considerations beneficial to society.

Waste not, want not' was something drummed into our ears since childhood. Even unpolluted water which was plentiful in our parts of the country was not wasted.

Human beings are not expected to eat in a hurry. Food has to be digested and nutrients absorbed properly, unlike some animals who have less time to consume being under constant threat from predatory creatures.

Most of our activities satisfied dual purposes. Drawing water from the well for household use and watering kitchen gardens or cleaning and bathing helped us to keep fit and healthy. Similarly, outdoor activities like working in the fields or playing, besides getting our jobs done kept us fit, provided immunity and our Vitamin D needs.

One should not count the chickens before they are hatched. Wait patiently for the result. It will come at opportune time.

Success comes from 99% perspiration and 1 % inspiration.

Household utensils should be made of user-friendly material like clay and bronze and the food consumed should be fresh and made from locally grown grains, cereals and vegetables, spiked with immunity-providing local spices. There is no need for chemical preservatives as salt, jaggery and locally available vegetable oils were more than sufficient to keep seasonal produce like gooseberry, mangoes etc., and certain vegetables for months in their salty and sweet versions.

Except items like fresh vegetables not available in kitchen garden or other easily spoilt items, routinely used provisions were listed and bought once a month. Urgent requirements only were bought as needed otherwise and nothing else. This prevented wastage and promoted better budgetary control.

After the effect of industrialization reached the remote part of the world in the beginning of the nineteenth century and beyond, the plunder of buried materials for facilitating the ease and comfort of human beings continued unabated. Combined with the education system introduced by the British rulers, the lure of comfortable lifestyle and plenty proselytization and conversion of lower castes and tribal people by the Christian missionaries and Muslim hardliners, the basic values held dear by the Indian society took a beating. Despite all atrocities by foreign invaders for over four to five hundred years, majority of the Indian middle and lower class still have faith and respect for the tenets of Sanatana Dharma.

Even about 70-80 years back, the author as an adolescent lived in small towns without electricity, piped water supply and other luxuries like oil stoves, refrigerators and fans. It does not mean that we missed out enjoying our lives. Yes, it is agreed that we had to exert a bit more but that did not bother us. In fact, it helped us to be healthy, fit and energetic. We had sufficient time to do what we wanted, whether studying or playing with friends out in the open, but we always stuck to schedules laid down by elders. There was no dearth of love and affection within the family or in the community. While 'Quit India' movement was on during the nineteen-forties, we youngsters contributed according to our ability. We sincerely believed in national pride and learnt 'Zabani Hindustani' or spoken Hindustani and reached higher levels of Rashtra Bhasha conducted

in those days by Hindi Prachar Sabha. There was also a rush for learning the use of charkha for spinning yarn and getting it woven into 'khadi' cloth for making our shirts.

The new generation has missed out on all these childhood revelries with nature as a companion. Instead they are restricted to indoors unless one is taking part in planned outdoor games in schools or by themselves in gyms, to make up for exercise. Today's generation does not fully understand the sanctity elders had given to the true Sanatan Dharma and the pride of being an Indian. At the same time, very few are knowledgeable or interested in understanding the knowledge buried in our ancient scripts on every aspect practically of benefit to normal human beings. They are coming around now gradually to appreciate yoga, pranayama and the importance of indigenous medicines and topical food in the build-up of immunity of the physical body. Even Westerners have started taking to it in a big way.

Another error that is obvious today is the understanding of the true intention of rituals in our sacred scripts. Hindu philosophy has never advocated going to the temples for material gains but only to pray for stability of mind to redress our shortcomings. It was meant as a method for steadying the mind to work out plausible solutions. Any sensible person should know that a deity has no need for anything except firm devotion in Him so that the devotee's faith in Him will guide him to achieve that. Token payments are meant for maintenance of the temple proceedings and cost of administration and not for showing off by a devotee. Besides ensuring that the devotee keeps himself healthy as befits the environment, the sound of temple bells and fragrance of flowers and incense gives him a sense of peace and bliss as part of Nature. When used for individual benefit prayer only provide a placebo effect but does not ennoble him. The rituals are meant for a specific purpose, such as improving one's physical or spiritual potential. Therefore, these are to be conducted in a specific manner to get results. Nowadays people have neither the time nor the inclination to find out. The elders who are supposed to guide are themselves ignorant or have mistaken notions. Neither do they approach experts in the field for guidance as they do not want to show their ignorance. So, there is a need to revisit and ensure that people understand why many routine actions are done in a particular fashion. If such imperfections are taken care of, and the spirit of real *Sanatana Dharma* revived to its original glory, it would serve as a perfect foil to save us from many of our current problems. It may not be possible to bring back the environment to its earlier state soon, as Earth has been savaged badly in the last few years. It will take some time for it however to resuscitate itself if we all support it as a team.

The contents of earlier chapters would have shown that the Vedic way is a holistic approach which true followers of Sanatan Dharma are expected to follow. It can help the world to tide over the current travails of our environment to certain extent. However, due to improper guidance by the learned, roughly from the middle ages some errors have crept into the system. To retrieve the past is a Herculean task which can only be attempted by the knowledgeable in the new generation. Since Sanatan Dharma is based on two basic facts in Gita and other sacred scripts, namely 'Karmanyaeva Adhikaraste Na Phaleshu Kadachana' and 'Loka Samastha Sukhino Bhavanthu', all actions are bound by these two principles. This will also serve to find some

workable solution to the current problem without ruffling the feathers of others of foreign ideologies. Based on my experience, Hindus especially the current generation should take affirmative action to restore *Sanatan Dharma* to the earlier glorious level to keep our environment in its prime in the coming years. Also initiate friends to help save the world environment.

APPENDIX A

MEANING OF WORDS WHICH ARE NORMALLY MISUNDERSTOOD

In order to clear any misunderstanding of the narrative, it would be pertinent to clarify what the author has in mind in using certain words and epithets such as God, Religion, Marriage and others, as given in this book.

Religion, Faith and Belief

The above mentioned three words is quite often used interchangeably, but does not bear true connotation with each other. Faith and reason are both spheres of influence but they do not overlap. There is a subtle difference. Belief is an idea of pre-knowledge or pre-understanding that can be verified and tested using scientific methods. Faith is belief without reason. Religion is a collective belief system enshrining some set of core beliefs which a clan or group of people follow involving rites and rituals. This helps them to feel that they are part of a common system and can be a great tool for enjoying their life on earth in peace and conformity as part of a society. It can also indicate one's personal conviction or belief about what he hopes to attain in the stage after death. No one can say with absolute certainty as to what happens after death of the temporal body. If any person carries out actions in their life to achieve the benefits of such a system morally without indulging in such practices necessarily, it will then be a way of life. Hinduism is such a way of life. One need not carry out rituals but follow actions in consonance with those beliefs and he can still be a true Hindu. Such a person sticks to his beliefs and is not swayed by faith. Every religion has its own explanation which the followers of that religion believe as correct. As no one can claim personal experience of life after death, the majority are quite happy to live and enjoy the present in the best possible manner without worrying too much about that stage of afterlife. The nature of enjoyment is hence limited to the physical (meaning sensual), mental or spiritual depending to their individual fancies.

Over the ages, many religions have been founded and some have large following like Christianity, Islam and Hinduism amongst those in existence. The basic tenets of all religions generally concur, with a Super power responsible for creation and preservation, and all the religions generally preach peace and love for all. One of their main intentions is to bring about cohesiveness and unity as a holistic group, thereby ensuring safety, security and well-being of the people forming part of that faction. While the basic ideals are generally the same, the practices and the rituals followed vary to a great extent that it has these days become a source of regular confrontation amongst various groups. This often results in strife and devastation which are entirely opposed to the cherished ideals of their founding fathers of these religions.

People seem to forget that there is no fundamental distinction in the chemistry and structure of the human body and mind, except for the superficial differences caused by the influence of differing environments. One can also appreciate that the faithful of

diverse religions may have different ideas about theories of creation and life after death. Such divergent ideas should have no role to play in the way we live on earth. These beliefs are purely personal and private and meant to be practiced among their religious group. As long as these do not clash within the private space of another group it should not cause any communal disharmony. Problems arise only when one is overly dogmatic about his religion as being superior to another and want to forcibly convert others to their faith. Everyone should have the freedom to practice what he believes in as long as it does not impinge on the private life and space of another individual. It is a false reading or misinterpretation of the scriptures by some fanatics that leads to this situation. Certainly religious communities will have a problem when others indulge in noisy celebrations and rituals without heeding to the comforts of other communities. Most of the celebrations are cultural and artistic and well-received by the contemporary citizens as it adds beauty and variety to the quaintness of a multi-religious society. Moreover, it offers greater interaction between peoples of different communities and religions, in terms of commerce and culture, which knit them into a closer relationship. If only we could adopt some tactics to keep the fanatics and the rabble-rousers at bay, life would be more pleasant for all.

If one studies the sway of religion in the Indian sub-continent in the last 3000 years, what people followed at the start of civilization in the Indo-Gangetic plains gathered force and became a way of life. This later came to be known as Hindu religion though there was no individual seer or prophet who claimed to be the oracle of God to give sermons as in the case of known religions, such as Judaism, Christianity or Islam. If one looks at the basics of any of these religions (considering Hinduism also as a religion for the sake of the point at issue) it will be noticed that each of these religions stress on the fact that all are creations of the one Supreme God. People may differ in their definitions they give of their God, but all will agree that their God is full of compassion and love for all the creation. Love and kindness to all, especially the weak and needy is stressed in all religions, which itself goes to show that hate, anger, revenge and such negative emotions have no place in society. It is up to each one to curb these negative feelings and all religions have chalked out their own way to lead their followers on the correct path. As the saying goes, 'All the ways lead to God', and in this context the God is one for all. No one living has a first-hand experience of God. In spite of professions to the contrary, what they often relate is only their dream or virtual experience of an event that has come to their notice. No one can positively say that his way or approach is superior to that of another. A mature and discriminative mind can and should decide and find his own way of realizing God. One can read and listen to experts from different religions but no one should force or coax another to follow his method.

Hinduism

Hinduism is one system or way of life designed to satisfy the individual doubts and queries about the nature of his life in relation to rest of the world. Therefore it would be better to define it as a philosophy.

Hindu philosophy has its moorings in the Vedas. The texts of Vedas are difficult to grasp for the lay people. Various Upanishads, elucidating the truths expounded in the *Vedas*, the *Brahma Sutra* and the *Bhagavad Gita* are together called the *Prasthanatraya*, and elucidates the basics of Hindu philosophy. These provide inputs for his role in society and for the betterment of Nature. It is not the work of one intellectual but the collected sayings and inferences contributed by many sages over a period of time. It should be understood that Hindu philosophy is not a cut-and-dry treatise but a down-to-earth exposition which gives real-time explanation about the reason and aim of life on earth, soul and salvation and the right approach to practical living. Many eminent philosophers and religious thinkers have come out with their explanations on Hindu way of life.

A large number of Gods and Goddesses are mentioned in Hindu lore. This is one major difference between Hinduism and other faiths which the latter finds fault with. They say how can a Hindu pray to so many Gods? To say that there are many Gods the Hindus believe in, is a fallacy. Hindus believe in one source of Universal Consciousness which is beyond definition. References in the Vedas and Upanishads mention one formless all-pervading God and a few deities as controlling the elements or having some specific qualities. The Triumvirate of Hindu Gods, *Brahma*, *Vishnu* and *Shiva* as also the minor deities are referred only in the *Puranas*, which were scripted much later. The epics and the *puranas* are afterthoughts written to educate and clarify the powers that be for the understanding of common people. These deities represent the qualities of that One Source, which a layman can relate to. So they have credited one each of the major qualities to specific representations of that Universal Consciousness. Different idols represent the personification of one of the special qualities of the Supreme Consciousness and the seeker propitiates that particular deity who can assist in his struggle.

Similarly, the *Chaturvarnya*, which is bandied about as caste in recent times, only meant four different groups who specialized in dissimilar professions or types of activities. It does not mean that the activity of one group is superior or inferior to that of any other group. In fact every such activity is essential, without which the society cannot survive. Every activity accomplished by these groups is noteworthy and important to society and needs fair treatment as far as wages are concerned. But some get paid more and is given a higher status in society, which is unfair to say the least.

The first authentic work defining a perfect human being (in case such an entity could possibly exist) was described in the *Bhagavad Gita*, in the epic *Mahabharata*, purported to be the words or message of *Lord Krishna*, the eighth avatar of Vishnu. It lays down the precepts and practices that a person should undertake during his lifetime on earth to attain liberation or '*mukti*'. It clearly explains the pros and cons of various factors and qualities, and the possible consequences thereof, but never even once puts down vehemently what should be done or followed. In other words, one can say that the series of births on earth that a person goes through in this world are to be used as trials and experiences to improve your calibre and acquire qualities that we expect in a divine figure which is expected to be without any blemish whatsoever. Persons of belonging to many nations and religions have hailed *Gita* as an eminent philosophical work embodying

universal principles. Message enshrined in the *Gita* is applicable for all human beings of this world. The route shown therein makes the follower a better person definitely in this world, whether or not he achieves '*mukti*'. Hence persons born in Hindu households need not necessarily follow similar rituals and customs, unlike those of other religions. Whether that person worships *Shiva* or *Vishnu* or *Ganesha* or any other deity or even all of them or even if he does not believe in God, he still remains a Hindu. In short, such a person's belief is not limited by the external shows, but that he believes he has Godliness in him and he is the creator or destroyer of his destiny and lives by his convictions on the right way of life of a Hindu.

What is meant by the word 'God' indicates.

The epithet or appellation "God" in the book broadly describes the One Cosmic Power responsible for the 'world of nature' as we understand it, and subsumes all names and designations given by men of all denominations without any one of them being superior or inferior to another. At places the word 'Creator' has been used in the sense of 'God', though what we are witnessing around us is not creation of new matter but transformation of 'Cosmic energy' in different forms and used in diverse dimensions. We consider good as something useful or beneficial and evil as those which is offensive and reprehensible. It may allude to character and manners, actions and temperament, discrimination and loyalty or ethical behaviour. God or the cosmic power on whom we put our faith and pray to for succour, is the depository of all things good and pleasant whereas the opposite, evil, is said to be vile, meant to be shunned and reviled. Every entity existing in the world has a God-element which inhabits the mortal body and hence in a manner of speaking all are related to each other in some way. We may be of any shape, colour or species but all have this common factor of kinship.

God is a concept enshrined in the human mind encompassing all that is benign and powerful which provides them moral support during their life on earth. This can take any form based on the belief system followed (normally the one practiced by their ancestors) and it could or may change later according to one's personal convictions based on their studies and experience. Those who are materially inclined and not well versed in the higher philosophies, tend to look upon it as a source of supreme power who they expect will harbour them and their families from evils and mishaps and also grant them their desires in the long run. Such people normally are easily swayed by charlatans who profess to multiply their riches and assets or fall into traps and lose their belongings. There are others who undertake vows, undertakings and sacrifices of different sorts to achieve their desires. These have the effect of improving one's physical and mental health if followed religiously as laid down. The majority however believe in prayers and offer flowers and material offerings to appease and get the favours for their benefit. Such people get the benefit of some calmness of mind, akin to what one gets when you know there is someone dependable to ensure your interest/welfare. Supported by such a conviction, one can put in proper effort to achieve their goal.

God has no specific form and it is difficult for the human mind to concentrate on a formless being. To get over this problem, Hindu scriptures have attributed different

shapes and forms, mostly variations of the human form which people are comfortable with or that of other well-known living objects from animal, avian and/or marine life. In addition, for effect some special qualities are attributed to them, like learning to Goddess *Saraswati*, wealth to Goddess *Lakshmi*, removal of hurdles to *Vigneswara*, and creation, existence and dissolution to the triumvirate of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva, respectively. The devotees therefore offer their prayers to those Divines according to what they desire to achieve. It may sound silly to a mature mind, but try to advise or explain the fallacy, and you can see their tempers flash. Better to let it be, and anyway it does not diminish the purpose of the prayer to whichever divine form you pray, since the object of prayer is to give one the confidence to go ahead and face any trouble, believing all the while that there is a superior power watching over your interests who will get you through. Does it stand to reason that praying to specific Gods or Superpowers of certain religions only will get the benefit of prayer? How can we expect Divine power to discriminate between people based on the human definition of caste, creed and religion?

God is Truth and Love and positive Energy and is an amalgam of all positive qualities that can provide true happiness. Evil is just the opposite. One can imagine a God of good qualities but cannot make a God from good things. The entire Universe, known and unknown are His creation. We humans are the part of His creation. As the 'created' we cannot understand Him fully. However we know that all things which are part of this Universe are supported operated and exists because of His will. It is said that God is Omnipresent, Omniscient and Omnipotent. Mortals can never hope to describe who or what is God in any human language as He is not something which has been created by man. We can at best portray Him as the sum total of all the good qualities and unbounded positive energy that one can imagine. But such a description still cannot encompass all the qualities associated with God. The prime attributes of God that we can be definite about are His compassion and love. We can observe it from the care with which He has fashioned each and every object in the Universe as also the bounties of nature and the ecosystem that He has provided for their happiness and continued survival against odds. Plants and lower hierarchy of animals do not have the need to understand God, for those are creatures of habit and natural instinct that live and sustain due to the traits inherited through their parental genes. They instinctively know what to feed on or what to avoid and how to thwart or escape from danger or the hazards of nature to some extent. But the humans with their advanced intelligence are normally not satisfied with what they have and would like to expand/extend the boundaries of their knowledge and power. Carrying on with this process they finally come to the realization that they can achieve only limited satisfaction in this world and that their fate is in the hands of an unknown power, which is the source and cause of all things happening in the universe. For every being the ultimate aim is happiness. The few realized souls who have attained bliss in their lifetime are seen to have followed different methods and practices to achieve realization. But meditation is seen to be the most common practice suggested by them. All of them seem to have perfected their own set of practices to reach/prepare for the stage of meditation. Realized souls do not need an idol or image to meditate upon, whereas the majority of people need a crutch to support in the form of an idol. The

stories and events woven round these figures give hope to the common folk to follow such practices as advised by them.

God is can never be angry, jealous or revengeful. He has no need to be. He is the One and only who is omnipotent and omniscient. He is all powerful and does not need your help or assistance. We are the ones who need His help at all times. We are part of His creation and because of our ignorance we fall a prey to habits and tendencies which we feel will give us pleasure or gain and power over others. This trend of thought in our mind causes evil tendencies and this conflicts/clashes with the intrinsic goodness ingrained in men. It is this evil in our system that makes us feel that He will get angry at our unintended misdemeanours/transgressions. It is, at best, only a reflection of our guilty feeling. Our inflated 'ego' raises our expectations far beyond our desserts and capabilities, and when assisted by our negative tendencies create/induce feelings like anger, jealousy and greed which are detrimental to our existence itself. Still what one can expect from Him is benevolence or compassion without any partiality provided the individual makes amends for his evil ways.

God is best defined as Universal Conscious which is the cause and reason for the existence of the Universe and the Supreme Energy source. It is said that not a single blade of grass grows or any event happen without His will. All the objects we see in this Universe of diverse dimensions and qualities are all the creation of the Master Craftsman that He is. All are endowed with Individual Consciousness which emanate from Him. Some of us must have seen religious people circumambulations about themselves while praying. This is to indicate that your soul which inhabits your body is the same as the God in the temple. As we ensure cleanliness and purity of the temple and surroundings, our body has to be nurtured and kept pure in mind and actions.

God is '*Sachidananda*', a combination of '*sat*' - pure existence and '*cit*' - pure intelligence or consciousness which produces '*ananda*'-bliss'. He is therefore the model to be followed for achieving bliss or eternal happiness. This is meant to bring home to the mortals to follow a path of pure ethical existence all the time while being conscious of the fact that the whole world is one in spirit.

Chandogya Upanishad explains the Supreme Power beautifully in the form of an advice from *Uddalaka* to his son *Svetaketu* who wanted to be enlightened on the essence of the All-Pervading One thus: "In the beginning there was only this One, without a second. He willed to become many and grow forth. He thus projected the universe from Himself. He then entered into each and every being and everything. Hence all which exist is Him alone. He is the 'real or true self' in every being." In other words, this universe is only a manifestation of that One and Only, the *Purusha*. That is the reason why we should respect and treat each other as one our kindred.

We give credence to caste, creed, race and religious denomination, as also mental ability and material possessions to decide superiority of one over the other. We always try to highlight the differences between two, to discriminate or decide superiority. Whatever the color or the language they speak or the nationality they belong, the perception of everyone will be the same once we erase the traits and tendencies in the individuals. So

it can be seen that no is intrinsically different from another, but it is the inborn traits and tendencies of the people which are responsible for the differences in opinion.

Hence it follows that it is the bounden duty of the stronger elements in the species to support the weaker ones so that everyone has freedom to enjoy their existence but without interfering into the life of another except to the extent needed to satisfy their individual basic needs. In the process one might have to harm, maim or kill another, but it should be ensured it is not done unjustly or for vengeance. Killing or harming for pleasure or profit is definitely no-no. That is what good ethics stipulate. With that basic premise about the life in the planet, the inhabitants would remain at peace vis-à-vis others and facilitate maintenance of the equilibrium of the environment with the wholesome support of each other.

From times immemorial, human mind have been attempting to quantify or give shape to such an all-pervading power, but without any success. At best they could only specify the special attributes or qualities one desired from such a power. This is the reason why these qualities were bestowed on forms familiar to people like humans and other animals, so that people can respond to them easily. These characters were integrated into stories to illustrate the effect of qualities and show how the good qualities finally triumphed over the evil qualities, which create disharmony among the people. These only live in the realm of imagination. This is how the epics like *Homer's Iliad* and *Odyssey* as also the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* originated. Basic intention was to help people to learn from those, avoid unnecessary confrontations and live honourably and in peace. The creation of the Hindu pantheon of Gods can be assumed as the outcome of the principle of personification of these qualities, so that people can relate/recognize their favourites in terms of qualities which they want to appeal to in prayers. True followers of Hindu religion should understand that there is no figure or person, existing in any realm, having all the good qualities that we normally attribute to God. Also there is no power in the entire Universe who keeps account of the good and bad things that people do and apportion benefits or punishments. The only power that reigns is the Cosmic power which showers benefits on all without any partiality whatsoever. Oftentimes we find some people having all the good luck and therefore think that they are the god's loved ones. This is a fallacy, for the only attribute that we can ascribe to God is compassion and nothing else. Otherwise there was no need to provide such a wonderful environment with all that is necessary for living a happy life. If we do not follow the laws of Nature and try to bend it for our selfish motives and in the bargain suffer, we have only ourselves to blame. In other words, we ourselves are the cause for our sufferings. Though there might be some delay before the culprit gets punishment, one can be sure that it will happen in time.

According to Hindu philosophy every individual soul in a living being is considered to be an element of God or Universal Consciousness. But it is not the same as saying that every living being is God. Every living being has limited consciousness and intelligence sufficient to live an enjoyable existence all the while trying to enhance their consciousness to ultimately merge in Godhood. Theory of evolution indicates this process of growth from limited capabilities and consciousness to world consciousness when the realization hits

that all are but different expressions of 'Super-consciousness'. That is the ultimate aim of worldly existence.

It was presumed that God was some superior power with authority to provide your desires if you prayed in earnest. Also that for special requests in different fields you prayed to specific deities like Goddesses *Saraswati* for knowledge and Sri *Lakshmi* for wealth, Lord *Vinayaka* for removal of obstacles etc.

God does not reside in temples but he is present in every being. *Chandogya Upanishad* explains the Supreme Power beautifully in the form of an advice, from *Uddalaka* to his son *Svetaketu* who wanted to be enlightened on the essence of the All-Pervading One, thus: "In the beginning there was only this One, without a second. He willed to become many and grow forth. He thus projected the universe or Nature from Himself. He then entered into each and every being. Hence all which exist is Him alone. He is the 'real or true self' in every being." In other words, this universe is only a manifestation of that One and Only, the *Purusha*. That is the reason why we should respect and treat each other as one our kindred.

This is the mainstay of Hinduism. As per Hindu philosophy every individual soul in a living being is considered to be an element of God or Universal Consciousness. But it is not the same as saying that every living being is God. Every living being has limited consciousness and intelligence sufficient to live an enjoyable existence all the while trying to enhance their consciousness to ultimately merge in Godhood. Theory of evolution indicates this process of growth from limited capabilities and consciousness to world consciousness when the realization hits that all are but different expressions of 'Super-consciousness'. That is the ultimate aim of worldly existence.

Information, Education, Knowledge and Experience

Information is the basic facts or data available about a thing, place or event or occurrence which can assist one to form an idea of what it is. If the amount of relevant information is vast, one can get familiarized with it better. Availability of pertinent information helps one to have a better idea of the subject. Information is the basic material on which education is moulded and the acquisition of knowledge and experience is gradually secured.

Education is a process whereby a person is given training in skills to gain and accumulate knowledge that will assist him to exist and survive as a useful citizen of the world. Such training is imparted in phases, taking into account his physical and mental capacity to absorb the information. Initially these are all in the form of information which is to be retained in memory by rote or by iterative practices. Gradually the scope of subjects he is exposed to covers the art and science streams. These are necessary to whet the child's interest in the many facets of life that he may face in future. From the interest and curiosity shown it should be possible for his teachers and parents to guide him further on his line of future studies. After the school level where the students are spoon-fed, the children should be encouraged to convert the information gathered into knowledge, by assiduous study of literature on the subjects in library books or the net, with guided

assistance from professors. This system is in vogue in western nations whereas, in the Indian context, most of the universities still confine the study to class lectures mostly. This tendency curtails the exposure of students to the great wealth of knowledge available at large, and diminishes the prospects of a better world for him.

Compared to the developed countries, the scope for research in our universities is too miniscule and not well-planned. Though the brain-power of an Indian is not at all inferior to that of a westerner, the latter scores veritable points because of his exposure to much better facilities in their countries. It is time the educationists to wake up and provide a better playing field to the Indian students. At the school and pre-graduate level, the Government should improve the facilities to a much greater extent and leave the running of higher courses to the private stakeholders and educationists.

Just as in case of other spheres of life, it is not everybody who can become a doctor, engineer or any such professional, and we need skilled workers in every field, and youngsters should be welcomed and induced to foray into branches of their choice according to their talent rather than be forced into something for which they do not have an aptitude, just because that is the current field where one can earn more money.

In recent times there has been an information explosion due to the recent technological advances. However to say that it has resulted in increased knowledge is a fallacy. There are quite a few highly knowledgeable persons but they are all experts in their own limited field. The day is not far off when the number of Nobel winners will be in thousands per year, the way art and science is being divided into sections, subsections with still more to come. Finding solution to a problem in future will itself become a problem, because of the number of experts who have to be consulted to cover the entire field.

Pleasure, Enjoyment and Happiness

One of the fundamental aims of life on earth is happiness while engaged in action and a course of increasing awareness. There is an abundance of material goodies in the world we live, which has been provided by the Creator. The most important thing to note is that none of these are our creations, even though we might use our mental and physical energy to convert and modify some of these basic facilities to a different form in which we find satisfaction and enjoyment. One of the unwritten rules, however, is that these are at our disposal for the specific duration of our life in this planet, for we cannot take these material things with us when we leave our body behind when we die. In fact, these goodies are provided for our specific enjoyment here on earth only and revert back to their original form or ingredients in time. An essential fact which human beings tend to forget is that the complete range of available materials are not necessarily meant only for them but is also meant to cater for the needs of every other being, however tiny or insignificant it may be. While everyone can make use of the available facilities to satisfy own needs, it should be ensured that the needs of the rest are least affected. Also remember that the available sources cannot continue forever unless these are replenished by the users. Many of the resources at our command today are the result of actions which occurred millions of years earlier and we cannot ever hope to replenish

such resources in the time at our command. Hence there is a need to take stock of the situation and stop wastage of such resources for immediate gains or petty desires.

The world is always in motion, which is also true of its constituents whether inert or alive. All actions are a change from the earlier position. Some of these result in pain and some in pleasure. What is pleasure or what is pain depends on the being it affects. Pleasure or pain can be explained as a /transient feeling felt by the body of various motions and activities happening within the grasp and reach or range of our sensory organs. Each cell in our body is conditioned by our attitudes, tendencies and in-built inhibitions among other things. Some of these are subtle and some visible. All actions which educe positive emotions like love, compassion etc evoke kindred reactions in our like-minded cells and our body organs react indicating approval by certain measure or signs, such as a smile or by twitching of certain muscles etc. Negative emotions like fear, anger and hatred cause some parts of our body to evoke different signal like tensing of muscles, hairs standing on end and so on. This type of sensations, whether pleasure or dislike is normally transient and goes away (recedes) as soon as the factors which caused them disappear. What remains afterwards is only a faint memory when recalled due to some related situation, and this might then cause a fleeting sensation of the kind we had initially but of milder intensity.

Enjoyment, on the other hand, involves the participation of a greater number of body elements and is no longer short-lived because now the cognitive part of the mind and possibly the reasoning element of the brain are also involved in the process. Thus you are forced to savour or detest the sensations that you are faced with, for a longer period.

Enjoyment is the result of satiation of sensual craving which gives the person a continuing feeling of pleasure during the act. This is also temporary in nature. It is physical and provides a brief exhilaration and a sense of contentment for the time being to the mind. Happiness on the other hand is long-abiding, continuous state and is not connected to the body or the mind, but something beyond, which cannot be described in words. Happiness is a misnomer as it is not possible to be in a state of happiness for ever while living in this planet. Our life offers a few moments of happiness, a lot of pleasurable moments filled with fun and laughter and such periods often interrupted by pain and unhappiness. One gets pleasure seeing a beautiful sight or hearing melodious music or relishing delectable dishes. These indicate satiation of senses and thereafter perhaps a briefly reflection of that event in the mind. Similar is the case when one is in the lively company of close friends and relatives. These are passing moments of enjoyment. Ease of effort, bodily comfort, satisfaction and contentment are the stages you pass through in your quest for pleasure. Normally pleasure arises from projections external to you. Sophistication and complication can also give transient pleasure at times, but true happiness, is difficult to attain. Instant satisfaction is the mood of the present and most people seem to be comfortable with that. Contentment, a state of mental conditioning and control, is perhaps a better alternative to aim for in life. When our aims are restricted and within our capabilities whatever we achieve will automatically give us satisfaction. Contentment can be considered as a restriction of our desires within bounds of our capability.

Happiness usually proceeds from simple actions and does not necessarily need elaborate preparation. This sort of happiness happens also when one is in tune with nature, being part of it and relishing the fact that you are one with nature. This is one state that does not need the help or existence of any external agency, as this is a feeling that wells up on its own accord within oneself and is in tune with his real self. At that time he is totally oblivious of his physical body or his surroundings and he is in commune with divinity. The old-world principles are by and large aimed at this type of happiness.

Consciousness, Awareness and Conscience

These terms are used as meaning almost the same but there is a subtle difference between these.

Consciousness is defined as a state of knowing about something happening within us, which could be a thought, feeling or sensation within us. It is the first stage or beginning of our thought process. Finally it results in the churning of various propositions using one's intellect which gives a definite edge to the final idea. Awareness is the perception of various activities going on around us. We normally refer to external stimuli by the five senses as awareness of a sensation. A person's conscience is a distilled idea of what is right and wrong, etched in one's mind based on the teachings he has imbibed from his culture or experienced in his life. This has also been defined as the superego in psychoanalysis that transmits commands and admonitions to the brain.

Some wise man has said that a human being cannot be said to be 'living' if he is not conscious (has no consciousness) while he cannot be a human if he does not have a conscience.

Consciousness in its basic wakeful state helps us to respond and react to physical requirements arising from survival instinct loaded with ego, entrapped by illusions. This mind-driven entity can also elevate one to higher levels of consciousness or altered states of awareness to pure consciousness.

Seers tell us that consciousness in primary form is only outward awareness. In its stabilized condition it is knowledge and in pure structure it is our inner world that reconnects us with divinity that exists everywhere. This awakening coming from core calmness can cross the limiting parameters of the material world's physical demands and daily struggle of maintaining balance in life.

According to Lao Tze, "The key to growth is introduction of high dimensions of consciousness into our awareness." Aiding this deeper perception is conscience, the voice of the ever-vigilant spirit within us which tells right from wrong. These two attributes are the passport and visa to enter the universe of supreme bliss, the world of nothingness.

In its normal state, consciousness confronted with numerous challenges, often buries conscience that deals with truth, honesty and integrity. Conscience has to be kept alive and active because in confrontation with trials and temptations it can otherwise become

a defence mechanism to justify unjustifiable acts. It requires true courage to encounter fathomless fears, irrational insecurities, abnormal angers and lasting lusts.

Then why do we not pay attention to our conscience? Basically, in moments of confusion and conflicts, decisions and dilemmas, our ego stands as barrier between conscience and consciousness. In our competitive life guided by ego we tend to see illusory images, fail to observe consequences distracted by the external world, and we do not listen to our inner voice. It is better to have our conscience as friendly adviser, because there can be no witness so terrible, no accuser as powerful as our conscience. Introspection is the only way to bring about deeper awareness and positive perception. Pure conscience is light: is love.

Life's experiences are meant to set in motion evolution of consciousness whereas conscience helps us to stay on the right track. Deep down in the darkness of the coal mines, under tremendous heat and pressure, some piece of carbon can change into diamond. A clean conscience takes us closer to Supreme Consciousness.

APPENDIX B

SOME THOUGHTS ON RE-BIRTH OR RE-INCARNATION

Hindu philosophy is perhaps the only school of thought which has dealt with exhaustively on the subject of life after death and reincarnation. According to this theory, the individual soul is separate from the gross body which perishes and gets absorbed into the earth. The soul with the subtle body comprising the crystallized thoughts which define its personality does not perish but waits for and selects a suitable womb to inhabit and be reborn as a new body, so that it can continue to pursue and live out its latent unfulfilled desires and unexpended karmas of earlier lives. When reborn, these act as motivators forcing/nudging the mind to initiate necessary action to provide satisfaction.

Re-iterating what has been stated earlier, *Prakriti* and its constituent elements are inert and hence the body-mind-senses complex which has evolved out of *Prakriti*, consisting of 'gross' and 'subtle' matter, needs an energizing force to activate it. This is provided by the '*Prana*', a constituent of the '*Jivatma*' which is a feature or aspect of the Causal factor '*Purusha*', the one-and-only supreme cosmic force. *Prana* or the *jiva*, the life-giving energy, primes the limbs and organs of the body and energizes them, so that they get the ability to act in response to the commands of thought generated in the mind. The process of thought which provokes action is a deep, complicated procedure and depends on many factors, starting from our senses and the environmental and physical aspects, which we shall consider later. The other part, the soul or '*Atma*', is the God-element inhabiting the body and acts as a passive witness to the activities of the body. It does not actively participate in the working of the body, but acts as the 'conscience' of the entity, indicating the right path to follow. This is why some feel the pricking of the conscience, when one is about to act against the 'code of dharma', the right ethics. According to many of the ancient belief systems, soul is the non-perishable god-aspect in the individual which leaves the body it inhabits, at the end of the body's life cycle, to take birth in this world again (meaning thereby as inhabiting another body or an act of transmigration of soul), and this activity is repeated many times over, each time locating and occupying a new body-mind-sense complex of the same or different order of species, normally one higher, till the soul attains salvation. The reason for this succession of births can be understood when we study the 'theory of Karma', later. After birth as a newborn, the being goes through the stages of infancy, childhood, adolescence and maturity, all the while growing physically and mentally and absorbing new knowledge and experiences so that he/she is enabled to take decisive actions as needed. This stage extends till old age when ones energies deplete considerably. The main purpose of life in this world is to lead a happy and contented life full of happiness all around. During these birth and rebirth cycles every activity in which the entity is involved leaves an indelible impression on its mind as an experience. In the material world we live in, our interaction with nature and fellow beings take place through the body-mind-senses (b-m-s) complex. Our limited knowledge about the working of the universe and limitation of our brain's capability to go beyond a certain limit, however much it may be refined, promotes the feeling that the b-m-s complex is therefore the inveterate decision-maker.

Our life on earth comprises periods of happiness and suffering. These happen without any prior indication or warning most of the time. Ignorance of our true nature is the cause for our suffering according to wise people.

During its lifetime in this material world, it is normal for all bodies to acquire an 'ego'. This is a feeling that swells in the inert body-mind complex as the doer of all actions that it is responsible for its pleasurable existence. This feeling emanates because we tend to attribute all the enjoyment and benefits that accrue to us during our existence to our mental and physical capabilities, and the failures and disappointments due to our weaknesses to others ill-will and despicable actions. Everybody has the feeling that all the positive effects of their actions are due to their body-centric capability or potential. We often forget that at any given moment there are many unseen forces of nature at work which decide the outcome of any action. But as and when, most of our petty worldly desires are met, we ascribe the positive results only to our actions and resolve, and this grows and entrenches itself as our 'ego'. After a time one starts feeling that it is this ego-centred body that is responsible for all the fruits of action. When calamities and troubles beyond our capabilities strike us and we are in no position to circumvent those, we look towards a supernatural power or God to come to our rescue. We go through a variety of rituals like fasts and penance or prayers and offerings in temples of worship hoping to get succour from these mundane acts without realizing that the God-element is latent in us and it is our karma because of our negative actions that is responsible for our pathetic condition. During our lifetime, we experience many joys and sorrows which leave an indelible impression in our mind. The strength and intensity of these impressions depend on our nature and the play of senses which cause us to aspire for many things, some of which we attain during our lifetime and with many left unsatisfied. At the time of death, the sum-total of all these impressions and experiences act as veil accompanying the '*jivatma*' on its journey beyond. This covering or enveloping shield of the soul comprising of unexpended 'karmas' and unfulfilled desires from earlier births act as the activating or motivating factor in future births even to the extent of selecting a suitable womb and environments to be born in. Most of us are not even aware that it is the causal matter which is the vital component of all living beings which provides the energy, motivation and the consciousness to the entity to live life to the full extent. As a consequence we start attributing the end results of actions to the superior capability and intelligence of our b-m-s complex which emerges as the 'I', 'Self' or the 'Ego'. The 'ego' which starts as pride or satisfaction on the success or achievement initially, builds up to higher levels gradually until the 'ego' finally takes over and dominates all our future actions without any application of mind or logic. However the 'soul' which is only a witness to the actions of the body-mind-intellect complex, still gets the ego imprint due to its association and connection with the body it inhabits, as a covering or envelopment. This ego imprint left in the mind is carried as an attachment to the soul and acts as the motivator during subsequent births of the entity in this world. It is said that the tendencies and unfinished desires influence the soul to search for a suitable womb where these desires and tendencies can find a suitable environment. Every act of an entity results in karma. The outcome of action causes karma which could be good or bad depending on the intention behind the act, the individual thus earning merit or demerit as the case may be. The sum

total of the merits and demerits so earned has to be expended in the existing or subsequent births, before the individual soul can achieve salvation. As karmas are a result of activity, one can say that avoidance of activity is a remedy for escape from karma. But it is not feasible for any person to live without indulging in some activity or other. Even when the body presents an outwardly inactive appearance, the mind will be working and this limited activity is good enough to invite/cause karma. So, for a quick release from the cycle of births and rebirths one has to follow the path of 'dharma' which will lead to accrual of only merit. What a '*dharmic*' path is has been expounded by the sages of the past, in various sacred texts. *Bhagavad Gita* is one treatise/exposition/discourse which explains in detail what one's duties are and how these are to be executed/fulfilled. It means following a lifestyle where every object/being helps and assists in the overall happiness and prosperity of all beings. This can be achieved once we understand that every being/object has the same God-element which is in all others, and therefore all are connected to the same source and is kindred in character.

During its life cycle on earth, its interactions with others result in the acquisition of knowledge and experience and this causes the build-up of new inclinations and longings. This is ascribed due to the effect of senses and emotion-driven desires, and this is added on to those acquired during its earlier lives. The desires are ego-driven and get attached to and shroud the *Jivatma* as a veil which is an additional baggage. The Atma or soul is the witness to the thoughts and actions of the new body-mind-senses complex it inhabits. When the *Atma* acquires a suitable new body it brings with it the baggage of previous experiences, tendencies, desires entrenched in the consciousness of the bodies and the earlier acquired but unexpended karmas of the past births which it acts out in its new life. During its new life, it can expend or add on new karmas depending on the type of life lived. As most religions observe, all are God's children and have equal rights to God's bounty, and much more than everybody's need have been catered for and with allowances to offset the losses due to natural causes. But unfortunately God does not seem to have catered for the greed of the so-called super-intelligent species, called humans. The feeling that it is the body which is the doer causes one to forget the presence of godliness in beings and build-up of the ego. This leads to efforts to establish physical and mental dominance over others and accumulation of nature's bounty into the hands of fewer people at the cost of penury of the rest. This is the main cause for most of the troubles in the world today.

We have seen that action is something that individuals cannot forego/get away from. In the *Bhagavad Gita*, Lord Krishna explains, "there is neither anything that has to be done in the three worlds by Me, nor is there anything left unattained that should be attained by Me; yet, I engage myself in action". A student of nature will see that everything is in constant activity. The Universe survives and sustains itself by activity. The various acts done during one's lifetime result in acquisition of good or bad effects called Karma in Hindu terminology. Good karma earns merit and bad karma demerit, which are enjoyed or expiated in the same or later births till it achieves a clean slate. The cycle of birth and death is supposed to go on till all the karmas are fully expended. If a person engages in activity solely for the benefit of others and without any interest for individual gain, it can

only gain him merit in karmic terms. This can happen when the being realizes that he is not the body but the soul enshrined in the body, or Atma, which is nothing but a part of the Supreme Consciousness. If one were to realize that all beings have an element of godliness in them it means we are all kindred beings, and part of one family. The feeling of superiority over another then disappears and the ego vanishes. The physical strength, endurance, agility and good looks possessed by the body perish at the end of the life-cycle on earth, and only the soul and attachments exist. All our superior abilities of mind and body should be put to use for the betterment of the universe. Then the doer gets salvation or deliverance from further re-births.

Cravings, Desires and Satisfaction

Desires in the mind induce a person to work towards accomplishing that goal. It is a welcome feature as in its absence existence will become monotonous and listless. As long as such desires are within bounds, it encourages the individual to improve his overall capabilities and to perform well so as to achieve his objectives in the material world; when in excess, the individual is engrossed with the object of desire and then it becomes cravings, a compulsive disorder which will prove to be a bane by engendering negative emotions.

In these cases it is one's ego which creates the problem- a false feeling of a sense of superiority and worthiness over others- based on/equating it to one's physical capabilities and mental calibre. There is no doubt that one can plan and work towards achieving a high level of proficiency in different fields through devotion and ceaseless effort, but one should not forget that there could be others who can perform better. Being jealous of their achievement cannot help you, whereas using it as a benchmark for improving yourself would be a correct step. Those whom you consider lucky are those who have earned good merit in earlier births and not their material supremacy. So live a pure and contented life and earn a good future.

It is a natural tendency for everyone to be pleased by sensory inputs which gives physical or mental satisfaction. It means that your body or mind is reacting positively and comfortably on receiving such sensations. Attainment of material possessions or positions of power also set off within us sensations of pleasure and build-up of ego. All of us enjoy repeat doses of what we like and sooner or later we yearn for many such sensations. This is what desire instils in us. It becomes a craving for more. Whereas fulfilled desire gives you temporary happiness an unfulfilled desire causes misery. When the object of desire is harder to obtain one yearns for it all the more even to such a stage of being driven to madness if negated. Similarly if a desire is fulfilled easily often it can lead to revulsion.

Attachments and Possessiveness

Desire for a certain material object gets fulfilled when it comes into possession. A stage may arise later that it loses its charm once its use is over that the owner starts neglecting its presence. However if someone else shows interest to possess it then the original owner is not prone to let it go. This shows petty possessiveness wherein ego is the culprit.

Even among children also such feelings arise, and it would be a wise parent who can inculcate in his children the idea of sharing with other children less endowed as it is doubly enjoyable for both.

Attachments and possessiveness play an important part in our lives. We are all attached to people who are close to us, whether relatives or friends or community or society we belong to. This can be attributed to the original survival instinct in us. It is our faith that those who are closely related to us will have our happiness at heart and will be willing to help us out with our needs and also expect that we will rise to the occasion when they are in need our help. When attachments become too binding as when one is interminably connected that one is not willing to permit each other their personal space or pet desires this leads to obsessive possessiveness that leads to disaster. Attachment and possessiveness can be very healthy features in our society as long as we do not tend to overdo it.

State of Individual (One's) Comprehension and Experience

In the material world we are living at present, an exposure to education and travel widens the horizons of one's mind. An agile and inquisitive mind is equipped to appreciate and absorb relevant/pertinent information about a variety of subjects and events and logically analyze available information to improve one's knowledge and add to his experience. These assist the person to understand the basic problems one comes across and come to a plausible solution which is beneficial to the community in the long run. Many react violently or harshly, in word or deed, to actions and behaviour patterns of others as they not aware of the intention behind such actions which are foreign to their culture. In such cases a person with wide experience and learned in the ways of world would react differently and sensibly.

External influences

There are certain leanings or tendencies acquired over a period of time which becomes part of one's habit. These are often a side-effect of interactions with parents, relatives, teachers, peers and those supportive ideas gathered from books, literature and other media. The relative influences which normally prevail on the individual are that of people whom he loves most and hold in respect. If those who have influenced him most are of high moral and ethical fibre, the result would be constructive. Building up of good character is the responsibility of the mother, the father, close relatives and then that of the teachers. In my opinion, the mother would be the best teacher to initiate the child to good precepts and practices. Starting with the period in the womb and through the breast-suckling stage, the child is in the vicinity and almost total control of the mother. If this period is properly utilized and planned, the training imparted during this time should benefit the child in its future years. Once the seeds of good tendencies are sown at an early age and nourished properly with abundant love and understanding, the result cannot but be the best. Each person has a specific approach to any action or unique view of things he perceives, as motivated and influenced by the inherited leanings and desires. Perception of any matter or activity surrounding that matter by the sensory organs finally translates into thought resulting in activity. It is normal to expect one's view to be selfish

as it is coloured by his ego, which wishes the result to be in his favour. Initially it is in everyone's nature to enhance his physical and material capacities to the full, and it is as it should be to enjoy a good life and to provide succour to the less privileged ones in society.

Human Ego

Humans are endowed with five senses which act as the forward sentinels and their perceptions are responsible for initiation of all bodily action. The power and depth of perception by the senses need not necessarily remain the same always and are subject to variation at times. The ones which are more predominant at the instant initiate the activity or response accordingly. The perceptions generated by the senses travel through a network of nerves and nerve centers to the portion of the brain where earlier memories and experiences are stored. When a matching instance to that prevailing experience is located, the emotion is evaluated and modified to suit subtle differences in condition so as to induce requisite response. Different emotions generally have a given (set) and defined relation to specific actions, subject to the state of consciousness and/or the guna at that instant of the person. The mind would then accordingly instruct the various organs and limbs to act their part and thus complete the activity or reaction. It could be that this reaction may lead on to another and then another till they fade away due to weak response.

The path from perception by body senses to the formulation and execution of action is a convoluted and intricate process and the factors involved are many. While most of the actions are premeditated or preconceived, being influenced by various factors, there are many others which are intuitive or reflexive and beyond one's control.

We know that the awareness of any activity is triggered by perception by any one or more of our senses. The extent of influence and acuity of perception of each of the senses in an individual is different and it will vary in different species. In the case of a normal human being, the intensity of awareness of objects at greater distances is possible by sense of hearing than by sight, and much lesser by smell. In the case of touch and taste it is available only with objects in close proximity. The sense receptors are directly connected to the lower mind. It carries the imprint of one's past experiences, latent desires and individual preferences. These act as motivators in the selection of the objects within the range of senses which is most likely to satisfy those needs. When the dominant sense takes over and the object is selected, the first emotion that comes up in the mind is one which induces involuntary reactions in the limbs and organs causing the body to react. Such involuntary actions are a part of this process inbuilt into the body-mind system for the safety and welfare of the being or a habit ingrained by training. Within a short interval of time, the higher mind takes note of the perception of that activity by the senses and by application of logic and by comparison with stored memories or experiences it comes out with a specific thought or viable action- plan to react to the original event. Though it may seem that many of the activities happening around us are impromptu, one will be surprised to learn that behind even a relatively simple action/reaction based on a sensory perception is the combined handiwork of

many factors. The reason why people subjected to the same stimuli react differently are because many factors which affect each one's psyche. Each individual's ideas are fashioned according to the exposure to many factors like 'gunas', inborn or hereditary traits or those conditioned by environmental factors.

To understand it, let us take the normal sequence of an occurrence. There are thousands of activities and events taking place at any given time involving many diverse objects. But of the few taking place within the domain of your sensory perception, attention is normally concentrated only on those which are of interest to or liked by the perceiver. In certain cases, it could be due to the incongruous nature of an item amongst others within the scene. Anything incongruous catches your senses (eyes) faster. This happens because the energy waves from the spectacle reactivate some earlier memories or experiences stored in the mind or alternately these set off either new or repressed emotions. Diverse emotions may result depending on one's personal tendencies and repressed desires as all the memories stored in one's brain are the end result of one's personal traits, tendencies and desires. It is these emotions which spawn ideas or thoughts in the mind resulting in consequential action. One can attribute the emotions and consequent action as a natural corollary/upshot of one's sensory perception. At times, a specific action can cause divergent emotions depending on whether the actor is one you are fond of or otherwise. Our reactions based on positive and negative emotions depend on our affinity or enmity of the perpetrator. Similarly different and opposing reactions might result depending on the mood of the perceiver or the environment at that time. Positive emotions always bring out the good in a person and negative emotions those which are bad and ugly.

Emotions

Emotions play an important role in the life of an individual. It could cause an improvement or a downfall and ruination depending on the type of individual. It is unlikely for a person not to be swayed by some emotion. Some people may not show external signs of being affected by emotions but even they must be undergoing turmoil to some extent in their minds. Human nature is and cannot be expected to be unvarying perpetually and hence it is impossible to eliminate violent and impulsive actions *in toto*. Various emotions come into play during the lifetime of a person but two out of these that affect him most are desire and fear. When carefully and sensitively handled or in moderation, all emotions can be used effectively to better our prospects in both material and mental spheres. An overdose, on the other hand, will cause impulsive actions and cause harm to the person and the community at large. Both desire and fear infuse a variety of emotions in the individual depending on the circumstances prevailing. What can therefore be attempted is to control or moderate it within limits.

Disturbances and feelings that affect the human mind and result in specific reactions in the body and sometimes beyond one's control can be generally called emotions. Anger, anxiety, compassion, hatred, kindness, love, fear, envy, jealousy, sympathy and pity, are some of the emotions which normally affect human beings. These are induced and dictated to a large extent by one's perception. Emotions like anger, envy, jealousy and

hatred are negative in character, whereas compassion, kindness and love belong to the category that ennoble the individual. Any emotion that destroys the feeling of oneness among beings is negative and those that promote good feeling are considered positive.

Anxiety and fear are the creations of an uncertain and wavering mind. Many of these arise from the association with earlier experiences and ideas stored in the mind. When brought to the fore due to the interaction of the senses with the content and behavior of the object of perception, these thoughts (memories) trigger reactions in consonance with those earlier experiences. For example if a person comes across someone who was responsible for some wrong done to you in the past which you could not tolerate/preempt, anger is the emotion that will rise in the mind. Consequently this will prompt you to punish, rebuke or chastise that person.

Similarly, a particular scent or fragrance may recreate memories of a familiar person who was accustomed to wear that perfume and result in recollection of emotion felt at that time. Identical inputs of sensory perception may give rise to different emotions at different occasions. Why the resultant action is not the same as felt earlier is because it is also liable to be different depending on the attitude or change of mood of the person or environment or the physical inability or otherwise to react similarly at that moment. So one cannot specify or predict what the resultant emotion or consequent action will be under those circumstances with certitude. With proper training, however one should be able to control one's mind to a great extent to rein in negative emotions and nurture ennobling emotions even under dire/desperate circumstances. If one looks closely, one will appreciate that it is the originator of the negative emotions who is more adversely affected than the object of his attention. Normally the intention of a person who gets angry person is to chasten another, but the desired effect may or may not be achieved depending on the attitude and mood of the one at the receiving end. But the initiator is bound to be troubled in his mind if the expected reaction is not achieved. In the case of positive emotions like love, kindness, sympathy and compassion, it is often directed at those in a receptive and compliant mood and this provides an elevating experience in the initiator.

Fear: The dictionary explains it as a painful emotion, often unpleasant, caused by anticipation or awareness of danger. Alarm, fright and panic are the visible indicators when a person is afraid or on being exposed to impending danger. Fear is the outcome of a feeling of insecurity which emerges in the mind when a person is not sure how the end result of actions will affect him or his near and dear ones, whether of his own doing or of that of others. The fearfulness will depend on how well or ill-equipped he is in warding off the danger. Out of all human emotions, the primary or primitive one to affect humans has been fear or rather, the fear of the unknown like thunder, lightning, pain or disease and death. On impact from any of these events, his mind is perplexed and starts looking for ways to escape. Horrifying thoughts of disaster cloud the mind and he feels transfixed and lost and could even fall into a coma. Once the event passes off causing minimal damage he heaves a sigh of relief, but would still worry about how to avoid if it happens and thus continue to be anxious looking for a plausible escape route. In order to avert such problems, he has to be prepared to study the how and the why of the event,

understand the nitty-gritty of the problem and plan how to circumvent its effect. When he is certain of a sure-fire solution his fear is dissolved. When we are confronted with the possibility of an event of unknown dimensions, the first thing to do is to understand its ramifications and way to resolve it, and then our fear is quelled. Once forewarned about the risk, we can take pre-emptive action to evade its impact and thus negate the impact of fear. In particular cases, as when a soldier is in the thick of battle he may not even get a chance to think of the danger, so grossly is he involved in the process, that he never entertains any fear of death. It is only later after he survives the moment of peril that he visualises the risk he had gone through. Certain people have the tenacity to face the threat with courage and equanimity even when they have advance knowledge of its source or impact, because they have full faith in their power and capability to overcome or offset its bad effects or alternatively, the readiness to face the consequences without remorse.

What every human fear most after death is physical pain or incurable diseases. These affect us mentally and psychologically that we weave around us a plethora of sheathes as insurance against accidental death and injury or disability. This is as it should be. For, life is meant to be loved and lived in full in joy and happiness without fear of impending death. An equally significant cause of fear is the loss of our kith and kin which depends on the depth of our attachment to those persons. Short-lived memory is a God-given gift in such circumstances, so that we come to terms with our loss quickly. In this respect, animals are better off because even when they are scared in moments of danger, they are back to their earlier state of unconcern soon after the event, as their acts are based only on inbuilt natural instinct. Their incapacity to brood over past events happens is their saving grace.

Anxiety or Worry: This also falls in the genre of fear but it is more about apprehension and concern of what may befall one or his kindred in an event, known or unknown, yet to take place. The usual signs are increased heartbeat, tension or sweating. As in the case of fear, it forces the mind to work incessantly about distant possibilities and probabilities of the type of troubles that one may have to endure and seeking remedial measures to circumvent them when posed with a problem affecting our lives. A large number of people seem to be affected by stress mainly due to worries on a hundred different fronts because of the complicated life-style these days one leads these days. One had fewer duties to attend to in earlier days and there was enough time to attend to it. In the present fast-moving and business-driven environment people have to take split-second decisions on various matters and their hands are full trying to keep to complicated time schedules. Naturally stress and strain create many psychosomatic diseases and these cause further worries aggravating the problems further. Perhaps the remedy lies in recognizing our limitations before venturing on tasks beyond our capabilities.

In respect of both the emotions of fear and anxiety, a firm faith in own destiny often helps in easing one's tension to a great extent. According to Hindu philosophy, it is only the body that perishes and the soul is eternal. It is the living body that bonds with other beings in the material world we inhabit and those are also transient as we are. Therefore our affinities, attachments and dependencies are for the period of association during the

life on earth. No one can expect to bond with another for eternity. Instead one should make the available period of togetherness to be happy. This understanding or acceptance can alleviate and deliver us from the pangs of separation from our kith and kin, as also fear of own death. Once we understand what death means and that it can happen any time, our mind will spontaneously accept it as inevitable and then the fear of death will recede.

Anger: The most common emotion that afflicts humans is anger, and there is hardly any person who has never been angry in their life. This negative emotion is responsible for most of the problems we face today. If one logically analyses this emotion, it indicates a ridiculous situation because the instigator is physiologically more adversely affected than the one against whom it is intended/aimed. It could have started as a minor error of judgment which gets unnecessarily blown up, eventually leading to display of anger. It may not even be necessary for the adversary to be anywhere near or in sight, but the thought of the event itself is sufficient to evoke this type of feeling. If the subject is in the vicinity, the anger can emotionally upset the person to the extent of his inflicting verbal and physical assault on the other. This emotion is so powerful and strong that it overwhelms you and destroys and obliterates your logical reasoning of right and wrong or the consequences thereof. Even at the physical level, it transforms an angry person to look undignified and unpleasant and send out a vibration that even animals can sense. Besides, the angrier you are, the more you are susceptible to loss of appetite and sound sleep. In a civil society, there is no reason why two people cannot sit together to talk and sort out the reason for controversy or unpleasantness. A calm attitude will probably give a chance to the person who is in the wrong to apologize and make amends, which would be a saner proposition. If one takes a saner view, majority of the root causes of all disagreements will be seen to be petty and should not have caused any violent reaction. Emotions like anger and hatred cloud our judgment and cause feelings of discomfort and wreak havoc in personal relationships.

Enmity, Envy and Jealousy: These emotions belong to a group which is generally negative in character. Enmity is deep-seated dislike or ill-will, which could be mutual, and could result in actions hostile to each other. The reasons could vary from loss of face, material or property at the hands of the other which one is not able to accept. It can raise wild thoughts and plans how to cause harm or hurt to the other in some manner and in order to assuage or alleviate the hurt feeling to some extent. The feelings of envy and jealousy originate when the subject is resentful of an advantage gained or enjoyed by another which he feels he is more entitled or privileged to possess whether rightly or wrongly. These emotions lead one to waste hours of thinking of schemes to belittle the other and lose one's composure in the process. In case of every negative emotion, whether he is able to inflict/cause misery on the other, the initiator also passes through a period of despair or discontent. Whereas anger also comes under the same category of negative emotions, anger can be double-edged, in that one can be angry at oneself for having missed a good chance or having done something silly and avoidable. It is very rare that anyone has found lasting happiness yielding to these emotions.

Greed and Avarice: Avarice is defined as an insatiable desire for wealth or gain and greed as excessive acquisitiveness far beyond one's essential requirements. Hoarding or shoring up reserves for future at the expense of others comes under this category. Persons afflicted with malady are self-centered and not willing to think of others as meriting the goods or one who wants to beat others in acquisitions. Both greed and avarice tend to make a person less human with inevitable bad consequences for self in one's way of thinking. This naturally makes the person unreliable to some extent.

Lust: Lust may be explained as unbridled sexual desire or intense longing for bodily sexual act. Intense longing for the other sex and looking for sexual satisfaction with one of another gender can be explained as love, a noble feeling. However when it crosses the limit or goes after forbidden alliances, these are repulsive and damage the institution of marriage and societal conventions. Such practices injure the society and its morality, besides lowering the affected one's standing and esteem, thus making them lesser mortals.

At the other end of the spectrum from those mentioned above are the positive emotions and feelings like love, kindness, sympathy and compassion which are considered as the noble qualities which everyone should aspire to.

Love: Love is a term interpreted in many different ways by people and denotes diverse feelings to different people. It can be physical or bodily attraction, love due to similarity/correspondence of views and approaches that attract people to a person, or sublime love as prevailing between a devotee and his allowed/revered/venerated personal God. One can notice a transition or change in the meaning of about different varieties of love professed by beings starting from a purely physical to mental and then beyond these to the spiritual sphere. In all these types of love, comfort and satisfaction achieved by the people are at different planes, shifting from material convenience and comfort to mental satisfaction or to bliss - a stage of ethereal quality where the one-in-love totally merges with the object.

In general, each and every one of the above emotions- even those negative ones, at times- in small doses adds/acts to the advantage of the individual in most circumstances. However even the most sublime of emotions-love- if applied gratuitously can bestow negative results/outcome/fallout. Love indulged in extreme limits leads to possessiveness and in turn to unreasonable/irrational/perverse tendencies, and hence should be avoided at all costs. Too much of a good thing is bound to end in calamity/catastrophe.

Ancient stories dwell on the varied types of relationships such as child-parent, husband-wife, or many others of different category. All of these equally important and venerable and indicate the large varieties of love that can exist between people. These range on the one hand to fraternal love between Rama and his brothers in the *Ramayana*, son's love for parent as in the case of *Bhishma*, pupil-teacher love between *Ekalavya* and *Dronacharya* or *Bhakthi* as shown by *Andal*, *Sage Narada* to *Narayana* and the *Gopikas* of *Brindavanto Krishna*, at the other end.

One can veritably state that love is the first ever emotion to rise in the mind of a living being. At birth and the entry of a new being into the world, what it feels is a release from the trauma of the event, meaning thereby the passage from the comfort of the womb to an uncertain and unknown environment (however limited or small it may be) followed by a feeling of release. This comfort accentuated by the loving caress and warmth of the mother's breast gives a feeling of comfort which gradually turns into love for the mother, the closest living being. The care and the satiation of its hunger and thirst by the act of breast-suckling kindles (generates) an escalating and elevating feeling which strengthens the bond of love further between the mother and the child. During childhood, it is the love for the father and kin which follows depending on the latter's interaction with the child. This is a two way affair, and each part bestows and receives love in turn which is related to the affection each has for the other. In all these cases, it is the prevalence of qualities that one likes or desires which is inherent the other that causes this emotion to emerge/materialize. As the child grows up, the likes and dislikes change to some extent and this causes the shifting of the focus to different group, generally the close friends with whom you spend your time. This does not mean that the love for the parents and siblings dwindle, since a person's capacity for love can encompass a much larger circle. With the change into adulthood and emergence of the sex urge, the mental make-up undergoes a further change or transformation. It may initially be a mere physical dimension but after marriage or close encounter and frequency of association with another of the opposite sex, it may stabilize into something which enhances one's nature. This love expands into wonderful spectrum of vibrant colours, of comfort, fulfilment and satisfaction for each other's company, that others cannot dream or experience. These days the word 'love' is used more often and loosely in a material context as expressed in a man-woman physical relationship (or in a recent scenario as same gender relationships) which denotes attraction between two bodies in a casual sexual encounter. In such cases it reflects a temporary illusion of comfort and pleasure and/or a welcome release from body tension unlike the true love which knows no barriers or limitations bound by the material objects or physical comfort of give-and-take between the parties concerned. In an ideal marriage, the love is mutual with each one wanting to give more than what one receives while at the same time without intruding into each other's (private) space. Love will not work for long if considered as a mutual-bargain agreement. Every kind of love is ennobling and enriching, and it adds to the stature of everyone involved. The saying 'God is love', reflects the universality of true love which binds all living beings of the world.

Kindness, Sympathy and Compassion: These terms are meant to express the positive emotions that crop up in your mind on seeing another fellow-being in need of support or assistance in his ordained activity, whether physical, mental, and financial or in any combination. These feelings urge the observer to reach out and render all possible support to the needy and such actions are usually done without thought of recompense. Any success in ameliorating another's distress gives a sense of satisfaction at having done the right thing and in turn a happy feeling. Sympathy, on the other hand, is an emotion at a much lower scale or level and may or may not result in any substantial relief to the needy other than some moral support or oral consolation. Compassion is another related term which can be expressed as a sympathetic consciousness to other's

distress together with a desire to alleviate. Acts showing neighbourly or brotherly concern and helpfulness are the results of these positive emotions when devoid of hopes of reward.

A person in a position of strength, mentally and possibly materially, should generally be a storehouse of these positive emotions. Unless our expectation and desire incorporate others welfare (interests and happiness), we are being selfish and in that case, there is every possibility of negative emotions arising in one's mind. If we can comprehend the nature of the self in relation to the other beings in the universe and be able to control our mind, we can defeat the tendency of negative emotions arising in our minds. Perception of any activity without any bad intention or emotion allows one to understand the real nature of the problem and hit upon a rational solution.

It is said that the mind is the depository of negative actions whereas positive emotions well up in the heart. This shows that good emotions are inborn in every individual but it is overshadowed by negative emotions which rise in the mind due to perverse thinking. So control of mind is the way forward.

Emotions even negative ones are useful. Anger and desire goads you to action and at times make you do superhuman tasks. Crying releases the tension born of anxiety and tension. Involuntary rash acts and shouting gives vent to your anger and consequently release your inner tension. Control of emotions help us to think clearly and logically as your mind is then in a stage of *sama-chittatha*.

It is well-known that bad traits, tendencies and desires cause indifferent or vile emotions and hence result in bad karma. Whether the following action is '*dharmic*' leading to good karma or 'merit' will therefore depend upon the type of emotions created in the mind. The perpetrator here is not the senses but the mind or rather the stored memories therein, for these are the outcome of one's individual traits, tendencies and desires. Consistent good karma can be achieved only by controlling those factors which lead to wanton desires. Temptation can arise at any stage between perception of events and objects by senses till it reaches the mind where the thoughts are formed, which is possible during wakefulness. Perhaps, at times it can emerge during the dream state, but to carry it out one has to be awake. It is impossible to keep the senses in suspended animation except in the state of '*sushupti*' and '*turiyam*', which it is not possible to be in at all times. The period of wakefulness is the time when one is affected by different emotions. So control of emotions is the area one has to work upon.

It is normal for everyone to feel that it is one's 'body' that is responsible for the action. This is so because it is the senses which are part of one's body which registers the events first and then it is 'his' mind which ponders over the matter and 'his' body which acts or reacts. A solution often suggested to avoid occurrence of bad karma is to disengage the 'ego' from the body and listen to the 'I' in the body. By applying this principle, a person will be able to take a holistic view of the events or occurrences without allowing the intervention of past experiences, traits and tendencies affiliated to the material body. It is well-known that bad traits, tendencies and desires cause indifferent or vile emotions and hence result in bad karma. Whether the following action is '*dharmic*' leading to good

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From the above, we can see that our emotions can either cement or wreak the interpersonal equations and relationships depending on our ability to control them.

Sometimes our body reacts automatically to help us out of danger to our body mechanism. Otherwise most of our actions are controlled by thought processes occurring in the lower mind. Only when one is able to control one's mind or at least rein in the mind for a short spell to allow the higher mind to take control, can we expect the resultant actions to be satisfying. Only the higher mind has the power of logical reasoning and discrimination. Ideally, all results will be universally acceptable if this faculty of the brain is tempered by positive traits and emotions. Factors which control the activities of the mind along with some methods to guide and control the mind are dealt in a later chapter.

Notwithstanding the effect of negative emotions to some extent, in the final analysis, the variety of emotions shown by people makes life interesting. It must be remembered that even positive emotions if too rigidly followed will tend to give adverse reactions. It is therefore necessary to be judicious in our usage of emotions for the betterment of society. In an emotionless world, we would just be robots doing tasks in an orderly but listless fashion and existence would be too dull. Emotions are therefore the gateways to a pleasurable and happier existence and besides it provokes people to appropriate themselves with improved capabilities.