

Sanatana Dharma.

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All endeavour on the part of man, nay, of every conscious being, will be found to have for its goal one of three things, to live, to know and to enjoy. All endeavour will persist till a stage is reached beyond which no higher life, no higher knowledge or no higher enjoyment is possible. Such a stage is said to be the State of Liberation or *Mokṣa* and all endeavour calculated to lead on gradually to that state is known by the name of *Dharma*.

Who can confidently tell us that a particular road leads to a particular village ? Certainly he who laid the road himself and also he who, without the need to travel the road himself, sees clearly from a great height both the path and the goal simultaneously. Certainly also he who has himself trodden the path and reached the destination. Similarly, we can get correct and accurate knowledge of the path of *Dharma* from God Himself, who has laid it down for the guidance of His creatures and directly perceives both the path and the goal. We can get such knowledge also from those who with implicit faith in the Word of God trod the laborious path and reached the goal, though at one time they were also like ourselves. The Hindus believe that the direct teachings of God, the Path-layer, are the Vedas or *Śruti* and that the teachings of the perfected Sages are the Dharmaśāstras or

Smṛti. These with the subsidiary literature written to elucidate, amplify or illustrate them form the sacred literature of the Hindus.

The deep faith of the true Hindu in the capacity of that literature to guide him aright is not a thing to be lightly disturbed unless you are able to prove (not merely allege or vociferously shout) that it is mistaken and unless you prove also your credentials to offer a substitute. I may state here that no objection has been raised during recent years which has not already been raised, perhaps more effectively, before and answered by our ancient thinkers, and that reason and experience have always confirmed and never contradicted the teachings of that literature. It is idle to envy it, to abuse it, to quarrel with it or even to burn it. It is as useless as to abuse the law of gravitation when you slip and roll down a flight of steps. You may burn all the books (and all the book-writers also, if you want) that tell you about that law and be foolish enough to think that you have had your revenge for its mercilessness in felling you. But the law, if it knew to do so, will simply smile at your silliness and continue to be as good and true as ever before and to rule and guide the universe undisturbed by your childishness. By destroying such books or authors, you can *never* destroy the law of gravitation.

You will, on the other hand, only deprive yourself of the knowledge of its working and of the opportunity of utilizing it in many ways for your own betterment. The loss is only yours, for your knowledge of the Law and its working depends upon those books; the law certainly does not depend for its existence upon those books. Those who get their fingers scorched may well resolve on amending all the scientific books by scoring out the sentence that fire will scorch or by interpolating a sentence that fire shall not scorch; but they can never make fire incapable of scorching, for it is its *dharma*. To the true Hindu, his religion is true, not because somebody has said it, nor because it is recorded in such and such a book, but only because it is Truth itself. Religion, if it is Truth, can admit of no variation. Any the slightest variation from the truth that two plus two make four is a falsehood, however high or powerful the authority may be that chooses to proclaim it. Our religion is as true as that arithmetical proposition, for both are inherent or God-ordained truths and are *not* convenient conventions invented by man to suit his temporary needs. *Dharma*, as we understand it, does not depend for its validity upon the military strength of its adherents, the intellectual

acumen of its exponents, the increasing number of those who profess allegiance to it, or any other extraneous circumstance. It is not a matter for the majority of any set of voters to decide whether fire shall or shall not burn or whether two plus two shall or shall not make four; for these truths do not, for their validity or operation, depend upon the approbation or disapprobation of anybody, however great the latter may think himself to be.

Truth is not, like politics, a matter of expediency and adjustment. If it descended to that level, it would cease to be truth and would forfeit all claims to our allegiance. As characteristically put in Sanskrit phraseology, the Divine Law is *Śāstra*, "that which rules", and not *śiṣya* "that which can be ruled" in, out or round about at our will and pleasure. It is inviolable and immutable. The Hindu Dharma, therefore, glories in the highly significant epithet of *Sanātana*, Eternal, True for all times and irrespective of the fact whether the whole world owes allegiance to it or whether there is not a single soul in the world who cares to be guided by it. May God grant us the sense to appreciate and the strength to follow its dictates!

24 / All those who have left this world, and all those who are to come, will have never found their desires fulfilled, they could not see an end to them. Realizing this, a wise man does not run after worldly power and prosperity; for he has the light of true knowledge within.

✓ Triple is the gate of hell, destructive of the Self—lust, wrath and greed. Let, therefore, man renounce these three. A man liberated from these three gates of darkness works out his own salvation and thus reaches the highest goal.

He who having cast aside the ordinances of the scriptures, follows the promptings of desires, attains not perfection, nor happiness, nor the highest goal. Therefore let the scriptures be your authority in determining what ought to be done and what ought not to be done. Knowing what has been declared by the ordinances of the scriptures you ought to work in this world.

