

The Secret of India's Greatness.

By His Holiness Jagadguru Sri Sankaracharya of Sri Govardhana Pitha of Puri.

Oneness of Goal.

In India, however, we Sanātana-Dharmis have never consigned the followers of other religions to Eternal Hell! This is because Sanātana Dharma has always taught us that all the various other religions of the world are also paths to the same Goal, i. e., of Oneness with Divinity, which *all* humanity (whether conscientiously or unconscientiously) aspires at heart and endeavours, in different ways, to attain and retain for ever! Of course, differences there are and will always be in the various routes to that Goal, in respect of the *distance* to be covered, the time taken over it, the expense incurred thereon, and so forth; but as to the final goal itself there is not the least shadow of a doubt whatsoever that, according to Sanātana Dharma, *all* paths sincerely followed lead ultimately to the same destination!

Keys of Heaven and Hell.

All other religions come and tell us with an intensity of narrow-mindedness which it is pathetic to see them not merely unconscious of but even priding themselves over and describing as large-heartedness (!), that theirs is the one and only true path and all other paths lead to Eternal Hell! In fact, these people talk to us with such cocksureness on these matters as to suggest that they held the keys of Heaven and Hell in their own hands to shut in or shut out whomsoever they liked or disliked!

Over against this, let us take and study the teachings of Śrī Kṛṣṇa on this very point in the sixth chapter of the *Gītā*.

He had the authority, if *He* chose, to say who could go to Heaven and who should go to Hell. But even *He* did not presume to say—for *He* had not the heartless cruelty and inhuman injustice to say—that such and such people would go to Eternal Hell and would be given no further chance for realizing their error and reforming themselves even in other births!

Arjuna's Query.

Thus, in chapter VI. 37-38 of the *Gītā*, we find Arjuna asking Śrī Kṛṣṇa:—

अयत्रिः भद्रयोपेतो योगाश्रितमानसः ।
अप्राप्य योगसंसिद्धिं कां गतिं कृष्ण गच्छति ॥
कच्चिन्नोभयविभ्रष्टश्छिन्नाश्रमिष नश्यति ।
अप्रतिष्ठो महाबाहो विन्दो ब्रह्मणः पथि ॥

The man who, having faith at heart and having started on this path, but not having sufficient self-control (or not putting forth sufficiently strong efforts), is unable to concentrate his mind, therefore fails to achieve his purpose of *Yoga* (concentrated meditation), does not complete his course thereon and dies in the meanwhile—what will, O Kṛṣṇa, become of him?

I hope the poor ignorant creature stranded thus on the Spiritual path will not, like a sundered cloud, end by being lost to both paths (here and hereafter).

Shri Krishna's Answer.

And Bhagavan Śrī Kṛṣṇa's answer to Arjuna's query (*Gītā* VI. 40-44) gives the characteristic answer of Sanātana Dharma to this question and can be summarised in Śrī Kṛṣṇa's own words:—

न हि कल्याणकृत्कश्चिद्दुर्गतिं तात गच्छति ॥

"No one who is a *Kalyāṇakṛt*, i. e., imbued with noble aspirations and treading the path of righteousness towards God sincerely and with his whole heart, no such person can ever come to an evil end, here or hereafter."

He is thus assured the *certainty of reaching the goal*; the time may be a little longer, the distance greater and the journey more tiresome, but to no one are the gates of Heaven shut altogether and for ever! But we *do* find them shut by all the other religions of the world!

The real position.

It is thus clear that, in respect of the Goal and the path or paths thereto, there are three possible positions that can be taken. (1) That the *paths* are different and the ultimate *Goal* is also different, is sheer injustice and oppression; but this is the position taken by Christians and other proselytisers! (2) That the Goal is one and the path, too, therefore should be the same for all (i. e., that there should be no difference of *Ahikāra*), is impracticable, nay, impossible; but this is the position taken by the impatient "Social Reformers"! (3) That the Goal is the same, but the paths are bound to be and are therefore diff-

erent for different Adhikarīs is the only Doctrine which is both just and practicable? and this is the position taken by Sanātana Dharma on the matter. And this constitutes a mighty factor which makes for the greatness and superior excellence of Sanātana Dharma!

The Second Advantage

Sanātana Dharma has thus this second wonderful advantage, namely, that, not only has it come from the Lord Himself, from the very beginning of the world, but that, at the same time, it also duly caters and provides for all the varied and variegated conditions, efforts and capacities of the infinite multiplicity of Souls that go to constitute Aspiring Humanity! Let us now pass on to, and consider, the third point connected with this questions of *Dharma* in general and Sanātana Dharma in particular.

The Meaning of Dharma.

The word *Sanātana* is easy enough to translate; and it means Eternal; but the word *Dharma* is difficult to translate into English, because there is absolutely no word which can correctly convey, in English, what the word *Dharma* denotes and connotes to us in Sanskrit and all the various languages of India! It may be roughly translated as "*Religion*"; but this is really a very unsatisfactory rendering thereof, because the very conception which the Western mind has of Religion is something very narrow and restricted in its scope, nay, in its very nature too! It is not *all-comprehending* as our Sanātana Dharma is, in the sense that it PERVADES AND PERMEATES *every* activity of ours in *every* Branch and Department of

life, not merely from our birth to our death but commencing long before our birth and continuing its rule over us for long ages after our death !

Jurisdiction of Dharma.

Thus, as regards the various Departments of Life and Knowledge coming under the jurisdiction of Dharma according to the Sanātani Scriptures, the very conception thereof is absolutely foreign, nay, apparently even impossible, to the followers of these other religions which (like the proverbial "nearly-empty vessel") make such tremendous noise around us ! To them, *Dharma* is something of an intensely narrow, cramped, cabined, restricted and circumscribed, character; and this is why there is no word in English for correctly translating all that the word *Dharma* means to us. Our Sanātana Dharma defines *Dharma* thus:—

धारणाद्धर्म उच्यते ॥

(i. e., *Dharma* is that which prevents us from going down or ruining ourselves in any manner or respect whatsoever and makes for our welfare, progress and uplift all-round). It is not something very small and circumscribed (like "Religion" in the western sense and application of the word), but really and thoroughly all-comprehending, as it knows no limitations of any kind whatsoever !

Its Contents.

For example, besides the fact that our Vedas themselves deal not merely with the means required for the attainment of Happiness and Joy in a future world, as the Scriptures of other Religions too profess to do, but also prescribe the necessary means for the securing of

Happiness and Joy on the physical, material and other so-called purely "secular" planes too of life (during this life itself) there is also the eloquent fact that the very names of our four Upavades, i. e., *Āyurveda* (which includes Anatomy Physiology, Medical and Sanitary Science and Surgery), *Dhanurveda* (including Archery and other Military Sciences), *Gāndhārvaveda* (including the Science and Art of Music) and *Śhūpatyaveda* (i. e., Architecture, Engineering, Sculpture, Drawing and Painting) will suffice to show how wide is the range of Sanātana Dharma's jurisdiction ! Similarly, the inclusion—within the *Vedāngas*—of व्याकरण (Grammar), छन्द (Prosody), शिल्प (Lexicography), ज्योतिष (Astronomy) and other such departments of what modern western world would call purely "secular" knowledge, will also clearly show and conclusively prove this very same unique feature of Sanātana Dharma !

An Illustration.

Thus, for instance, we find the *Manusmṛiti* and other sacred scriptures of Sanātana Dharma telling us:—

नाप्सु मूत्रपुरीषे कुर्यात् ॥

"Thou shalt not pass urine and stools in reservoirs of water" ! If and when a Westerner reads the English translation of a passage like this, he jumps up at once and says:—"This is a matter of purely Sanitary Science; what has this got to do with *Religion* ?" And our reply is that, just because it *has* to do with our welfare and happiness (in any plane of life), therefore, it is *ipso facto* a part of our *Dharma* (as defined and explained already) ! And, similarly, it needs no elaborate pointing out that it seems almost impossible even to con-

ceive of the Western world ever recognizing the study of Grammar, Prosody, Lexicography, Astronomy and other such "purely secular" departments of knowledge so necessary and inherent parts of *Religious* study.

But our Sanātana Vaidika Dharma includes, within its all-comprehending jurisdiction, all departments of knowledge (including all branches of what, in modern terminology, we speak of as the *Positive Sciences*)! It is, therefore in the fitness of things that our Sanātana Dharma, which has not merely existed from the time of Creation but has to and does cater for all kinds of Adhikaris (as we have already shown), has therefore naturally made all the necessary provision for all the different activities of life by going into detailed disquisitions on all the varied requirements thereof and setting forth an all-embracing and thorough-going system of injunctions and prohibitions, correct and faithful adhesion whereto is not only intensely and extremely useful but also positively and absolutely necessary for the attainment by us of all-round Health, Strength, Peace, Happiness and Joy (of Body, Mind and Spirit)!

Sanatana Dharma and the Positive sciences.

Undoubtedly, it is this very fact that is responsible for the intensely wonderful and immensely gratifying confirmation which the precepts of our Sanātana Dharma have been systematically receiving of late—on their intrinsic merits—from Modern Science

in *all* its multifarious branches. It is clear, therefore, that the Sanātana Vaidika system was based, not merely in its general plan and outlook but also in every one of its details, on a thorough-going and thoroughly scientific basis of the most unexceptionable and far-reaching character, which took into account *all* the various phases and aspects of life (physical, material, mental, intellectual, moral, political, industrial, economic, psychic, Spiritual and so forth)!

Their Historical Relationship.

And, on the Historical side, too, this fact is splendidly confirmed by the researches carried on by Professor Demorgan and other intellectual stalwarts in Mathematics, Medicine, Chemistry, Acoustics and other departments of "Positive" Science, whereby it has been established, beyond all possibility of doubt, that all the various branches of Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Medical Science and other "*Exact*" Sciences (which we moderners pride ourselves on as our great speciality) really went out of India to Arabia, Egypt, Greece, Rome and other parts of the Western world and that, even now there are huge lots of not merely advanced but even *elementary* material in these Sciences, as described in our Ancient Scientific Literature, even the *fringe* whereof the most *advanced* researches and discoveries of Modern Science have not yet reached and are yet to negotiate!

