

Pujya Dr. K.C. Varadachari - Volume -2

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA'S RELIGION OF SERVICE

It is of the essence of any religion to inculcate a method of work which not merely leads to the goal of liberation but follows from liberation. The karma-yoga or the discipline of work that leads to liberation (moksa) is essentially the manner one performs his duties in society according to his station and place in it. Thus we have duties prescribed for the four orders of life, such as the brahmachari (student), grhastha (householder), vanaprastha (retired individual) and the Sannyasi (one who has renounced all social ties). Similarly we have duties prescribed for the four castes or varnas, the Brahmana, Ksatriya, Vaisya, and Sudra - the modern equivalents being the spiritual teacher, the warrior - ruler or political leader, the commercial citizen and the labourer -worker. Each stage of life has its duties, and each vocation has similarly its duties. Of course the duties imply the right or freedom to do them or not to do them. He who does not do his duty suffers in some way. In ancient society the non-performance of duty entailed sanctions, reprobation or punishment and was considered sin. Similarly there are duties attached to an

individual within the family, one's duty to one's mother and father, children and relations and guests and so on. They may vary from one community to another but they do exist and are well-known as etiquette. One who does not treat the poor and the sick kindly, or wantonly takes delight in inflicting suffering even on dumb animals is considered to be uncivilized or uncultured or a brute.

Swami Vivekananda brilliantly analyses these duties in his lectures on Karma Yoga. Man is surrounded by, or enmeshed in, all sorts of duties which have been laid down in the scriptures. Actions which are performed according to dharma or duty are capable of producing good and help in the promotion of freedom ultimately from all these ties or bonds. Actions such as these are vihitam karma or dharma. It is possible to see behind these activities two important features namely the need to perform them with detachment, without any selfish motive or securement of pleasure or as a means to it; It is clear duty is for the sake of duty in the sense that it is the law of nature that makes for harmony both in oneself and in others. Secondly it means that liberation from all bonds only results from the performance of duties regardless of the moral or spiritual constraint it imposes on one. We can trace the supreme enunciation of Buddha who insisted that dharma means the path of liberation which puts an end to the causes of all karmas that bind, for all karmas are motivated by trsna or desire -

unconscious, without beginning and difficult to eradicate. The goal or motive undoubtedly is liberation from all karma - good or bad which all bind. As the Upanisad says, a liberated soul shakes off the good and bad even as a horse shakes off the dust - punya papam vidhuya.

It is true also that Hinduism insists on the cultivation of attitudes of reverence to devas, gods, fathers, pitrs, guests (atithis), elements (bhutas) and animals. These attitudes are sacramental as well as secular. Behind all these is revealed the cultivation of a world-consciousness or cosmic consciousness of the value of every level of life from the inorganic through the organic to that which is beyond the terms of our life. Sacrifices or offerings to this fivefold world is one of the sacramental duties prescribed by the sastras. Therefore they are known as pancamahayajnas which every individual must perform either daily or as occasion demands (naimittika). One seeks no fruit from this except that one does not incur sin by not doing it. Thus there are certain duties which have to be done (kartavyam karma) and there are certain regulations which prohibit us from doing certain actions (akrtyam). In both cases the fruit is non-sinfulness. That by itself is good. This reveals that every individual cannot but do something or desist from doing certain things, and therefore he is always active in a way. To be active and energetic in doing the duty that is in full

accord with one's nature is the best way to realise satya, or sense of existence and awareness and bliss. Svadharma is what each individual has to discover, though one's social position and heredity may help the determination of it, perhaps not always correctly. However it is necessary for a rational being to discover one's svadharma according to one's svabhava and all the while seek to attain the goal of liberation (moksa). It is clear that such a person has greater chances of not being confused according to one's duty, than one who has not sought to determine his own nature and status. When one follows another's dharma it leads to great suffering. In the triple nexus of stage of life, level of life, and nature of one's own life, one has to discover one's duty and no wonder we have discarded this notion for the simple one of pleasure and/or expediency.

Whilst in a society that is undergoing colossal changes thanks to industrialisation, urbanisation, etc, one does not know what aptitudes one has and how they would be useful, the achievement of skill in any profession is difficult. Karma aims at efficiency in the discharge of any work, much more in the case of duty. A duty well-discharged is a matter for satisfaction of the soul. Thus usually the great and oft-quoted maxim - yogah karmasu kausalam. It not only means yoga is skill in actions, but also that it is welfare-producing in all actions - and this welfare is liberation or attainment of svarga.

Therefore it is that the main direction of action (duty) should be welfare-producing (kausalata) rather than mere skillfulness or efficiency. Once this word was misinterpreted it followed that yoga meant Just skill rather than well-being.

There is great truth in holding that in doing one's duty as such there can hardly be any comparison between one who has done his duty and another who has also done his own duty. One is not superior to another. Swami Vivekananda illustrates this by showing that a householder who does his duty by sacrificing or offering food to the destitute and the needy (athithi-yajna) guest is equal to the sannyasin who renounces the pleasures of marriage with a princess. (Vol., I.p.49-51) Both attain svarga or heaven or liberation. However, we know that changing ages and stages and also vocations impose different skills and sacrifices (yajnas), and the performance of these duties becomes imperative in this contexts of changing society.

Certain well-known writers on ethics in the West have subscribed to the doctrine of doing duty for duty's sake - that is to say one's highest pleasure or joy consists in having done one's duty and not for any other recognition or reward. Further they have recognized the need to define the content of duty according to one's station in society. This latter is a very variable one and requires the definition of duties which may be capable of

producing well-fare or ill-fare. We know how, in the modern context, disappearance of duties is the rule rather than the exception. Hindu ethical writers did, in a sense, define certain unalterable duties linked up with the stable enough nature of the growth of individuals from childhood to old age, and the general type distribution of vocations to which each individual is called. Men are born in society and into one or other of vocations which condition them from their childhood; whether they turn out to be skilled or unskilled in them is a matter that remains an individual problem. Similarly the individuals may revolt against their traditional vocation and take up other vocations suited to their svabhava (nature). Providing for full flexibility, there runs all through the wisdom of defining certain duties which are not conditioned by these.

They are the ingredients that mould character. They are in fact absolutely necessary for the growth of universal benevolence and purification of the social fabric. If it is claimed that the aim of karma yoga is cleansing of the individual of his karma so that real knowledge may arise in him, then the absolute cultivation of the duties of truth-speaking, truth-willing, truth-desiring, (satya-kamata) the duties of charity in mind, and in gifts, kindness and non-violence, non-stealth and non-robbing, become absolutely significant karmas. We may call them specifically necessary for rajayoga in the form

of Yamas (self-restraints). But Svami Vivekananda insists that self-restraint in doing duty is of utmost power, and that selflessness and self-restraint lead to sovereign power and fearlessness.

It is of course impossible to expect pleasurable feelings of love for others as such in doing duty. Duty demands dispassionateness. Not emotion, but stern responsibility is its characteristic poise. “Do thy duty without expectation of reward, without fear or favour.” It is clear then that though dharma sastras and the Upanisads insist on the moral preparations for one and all, and man’s duties are identified with these moral virtues, there are certain basic works which are not merely moral but are also works of divine service.

Service differs from duty in that it proceeds on a different metaphysical foundation. Service normally means work done for wages or return. Services done without expecting a reward or wages are essentially acts of love or affection, reverence and regard. Services that one does for one’s father may be both duty as well as loving service. Similarly service need not be a duty at all, yet one may freely do such work. It may not be demanded even by the dharmasastras, for acts of kindness are essentially free of all constraint or compulsion; the compulsion even of etiquette is absent. However it is waiting on God or on God’s creation that

goes by the name of kainkarya.

Svami Vivekananda's Advaita enunciates that all is Brahman, and service of the all (manyness) is the service of the One. Just as we love the One we should love the many. Whatever by the metaphysical view, advaita or dvaita, monism or dualism, all belong to the One, or all are the One. Service or love of the One means that one is obliged to love all that belong to Him or depend on Him. Therefore service becomes the expression of real religion. By relating oneself through deeds of love with each and every individual, the many of the One, one relates oneself with the One.

Duty, at the level of moral life, is an obligation rather than love. At the level of metaphysical oneness it is but natural for every individual to love every other because of that innate linkage of the one in all. As psychological and social it is dependent on instincts and drives which are the motive forces that connect the parent with the children and vice versa. But at the level of conscious love it is none of these but really spiritual love which gives of itself to the Object of its adoration without any reservation. It is an offering of oneself in all one's parts. Karma-yoga could be extended to include all kinds of help that one renders or ought to render others. However much one may deem this spontaneous sympathy to be natural, the background of the motive or roots, so, to speak, of such sympathy are down below in the original

bosom of unity, or the Oneness that manifests itself in manyness.

When a deeply spiritual attitude is taken up, then every action will be consciously chosen for adoring the principle of Oneness, and thus action becomes worship. In this sense work can become worship. Love converts duty into worship, adoration of the Divine whether it is in the form of father, mother, guest or any other stranger. It embraces all creation in its sweep and there will hardly be any exception to its operation.

Svami Vivekananda points out emphatically that devotion to duty helps us on the path of spiritual progress, and that is because in doing one's duty lovingly one realises the oneness of the whole, and this realisation itself is a gain. The question of duality - I and thou or I and the Other - so much canvassed by certain modern religious thinkers as if it is a novelty for the age, is a question not of divisiveness but of integration. Yoga unites but cannot divide. Actions, like duties, unite but cannot, like non-duties or contra-duties or disobedience, divide. The Yoga of duty is a healing process. Therefore the individual more and more becomes united in a cosmic way and in cosmic consciousness with the whole universe.

Worship is usually connected with ritual. Most critics of religion nowadays want us to abolish all rituals and deem

them to be not only meaningless but harmful superstition, an imposition on what is simple at bottom - this being the meaning of the word superstition. It may be that worship as ritual has developed on different lines all over the world. The intermediary of mythology usually creates certain forms and patterns of worship and ways of approaching the divine object. The divine object may itself be symbolised in some visual form. Thus, once this formalisation takes the anthropological form, the rituals or acts of worship follow the pattern of adoration of our parents or elders - offering of water, of cloth, of flowers and fruits and other edibles, incense and light and so on. The order of the worship becomes spontaneous manifestation of service to our elder, creator, or progenitor. God, considered in this manner and shaped in this form, is served devotedly. The ritual of devotion is also divya-karma, even as the ritual of sacrifice is a variation of the same. What is necessary for this kind of karma is sraddha or faith in the object chosen for worship or service.

Some religions have adopted just symbols as they did not consider the anthropomorphic representation correct. The adoption of symbols is determined by the meaning attributed to them and constant remembrance of these symbolic meaning. Once this meaning gets distorted then we have worse consequences than that the worship of anthropomorphic representations yield. Grossness is one

result; loss of meaning or ignorance of it is the second serious result. Distortion and disbelief follow as the third result. Even religions which had tried to live up to the connotation or meaning of the symbols and rituals began gradually losing it and also have failed to grow. Growth is the very condition of life and spiritual growth is all important in yoga.

Worship as work is therefore the bhakti -equivalent of karma. However it is limited to the object of devotion alone and tends to be linked up with it alone. On the other hand work as worship is more extensive in its operation and the omnipervasiveness of the Divine is more easily realised than in the former which limits it to a symbol or objective visible form - anthro-pomorphic or quasi-anthropomorphic, where the symbol and form coalesce.

In a wider context service reveals the triunity of yogas where bhakti and jnana fuse into an activity dedicated to pleasing the Divine One. Work as worship reveals love of God in all things and persons: work as skill and efficiency is possible only through knowledge flowing into action; and work as well-being is good in itself. Therefore the ancient thinkers spoke of all the three yogas as ultimately forming one integral Yoga, and also that each yoga by itself would lead to the Ultimate Liberation. For emphasis' sake they held that each by itself is sufficient to lead one to Moksa. As the Gita has

stated, both samkhya and yoga lead to the same result; it is only the unwise who deem them to yield different results. The Isavasyopanisad however puts it clearly : those who follow works (karma or avidya) enter into blind darkness, and those who follow knowledge (vidya) enter, as it were, into a greater darkness: the results of following karma are one and the results of following vidya are another : but when both of them are followed together, karma will lead to conquest over death, whilst jnana or vidya will lead to the immortal.

The three yogas for the three aspects or modes of man's nature are one only, though appearing to be different.

No one can ever give up working, whether he be liberated or un-liberated, Even God does not give up doing works even though he has nothing to gain by it for he is ever-fulfilled. Therefore it is man's nature to work and to be working incessantly. Even those who appear to be non-working are working. Cessation of work does not happen just because there is cessation of desire even, though there would be another kind of life and work. The ideal of mere meditation (dhyana) as comprising only contemplation without working is unrealisable, for dhyana itself is a kind of work (kriya). The Patanjala Yoga speaks of its dhyana yoga as kriya yoga, which is not limited to performance of asanas or poses of the body or the pranayama (breath-control exercises). Therefore karma or activity is the very nature of all

embodied beings. It may well be the nature of prakrti. All that one can choose is the kind of activity.

Just as there are three kinds of qualities, like sattva rajas and tamas, actions also can be of the sattvika, rajasika or tamasika quality. Sattvika qualities produced by sattyika, activities render one happy, intelligent and good, whereas rajasika qualities are produced by rajasa actions, and tamasika qualities are produced by tamasa activities. Character is shaped by the dominance of these qualities, and therefore man is a bundle of these samskaras or impressions made on one's mind and body by the karmas. Karma, as spiritual activity, however liberates and therefore the cultivation of spiritual activity, is all important. Consistent doing of good deeds promotes the spiritual vibrations in man and helps liberation.

Svami Vivekananda affirmed, in this context, the necessity for getting rid of tamas or inertia. India has become inert owing to its devotion to dhyana yoga, or rather its perversion of the gospel of non-work.

Sloth or inertia looks so much like peace that people practise laziness or non-doing of any work. Sloth unfortunately like peace has made for the utter degradation of man, has impoverished his capacities, dulled his wit and in every way reduced him to a condition of unconsciousness or indifference. Spirituality may move towards peace but it is not the peace of the

inert and the unconscious. The ordinary man's sleep is *supti*; the spiritual man's peace is perhaps *su-supti* which is *prajna* of the *Mandukyopanisad*. It is better to be doing something even motivated by desire than not to be doing any thing at all.

There have been many who feared the creation or production of effects of actions which have the power to bind man. Since man seeks freedom from bondage, he has to desist from all work or *karma*. The performance of action was considered to be bad. The renunciation of all action was asked to be cultivated, since both evil and good actions do produce evil or good *samskaras* which bind. However much a man endeavours to give up *karma* he cannot help performing actions, so it appears that no man can ever escape from *karma*. Thus too the idea of the *karma* cycle has taken root in the minds of all men.

Sri Krsna once for all rejected the idea of *karma-sannyasa*. If one does his duty it is not capable of binding him for all duty has an inevitable universal character : it is not for himself alone it produces the good, it produces it for all others also. The great Bal Gangadhar Tilak in his *Gita-rahasya* has stated that the *Gita* is a Gospel of *Karma Yoga*. In a sense it is for actions done in devotion to God, and with knowledge of God who is in all things as Self and Lord, and leads to liberation from all other kinds of conduct. Though the goal is *jnana* or *divya-jnana* and it is *jnana* that liberates one from the cycle of

samsara or the round of births and deaths, it is a jnana that achieves or does the naughting (nullifying) of the binding karma. As the Isavasyopanisad states - one must go on doing works for a whole life span of hundred years. If these works are done in the spirit of knowledge that all the moving and the unmoving are enveloped by the Divine or indwelt by Him, there is no possibility of ordained works sticking to man or binding him. There is no other way for man except doing works. (Isa.U.p. 1 & 2)

As already pointed out Svami Vivekananda had insisted on the performance of works even if the same is rajasic motivated by desire. But this activity -passionate activity in the service of God in the world of His creation is necessary for higher knowledge. It is practical wisdom.

Svami Vivekananda laid the greatest stress on the service of man (nara). Man has to be educated so as to know his destiny or goal, and for this he ought to know himself. Men are poor in every way; in India and the East it is a fact that education, property and health are very poor. Illiterate and weak, they have hardly the will to do anything - even to clothe themselves or produce any food for themselves. How can one have any faith in God under such circumstances? Though the poor man is such, yet a rough faith is there which has been sustaining him, just because (sic) there have been paragons of wisdom like the great Sannyasins Buddha, Mahavira, the Rishis

who had renounced wealth and all for the life of poverty. I hey had made life in non-possession noble and admirable. But it is a life of the severest training, self-restraint and independence over the body that is perishable and the seat of all desires. Svami Vivekananda himself advocated this type of life (monkhood) for bands of young men who are dedicated to the service of man, or rather God in men - the poor, the needy, the sick and the homeless the orphans of society. It is the work and duty of a state to see that not one individual is ill, naked, starved, or dies of starvation. But under the domination of the foreigners the conquered are hardly ever attended to at all. The community must undertake this work of rehabilitation of the dispossessed. This too had come into bad times. There is need for the more able-bodied and idealistic to undertake this work. The spiritual man who aspires for his liberation must work for the liberation of these people. Else he is not truly liberated.

The service of the daridra-Narayana - the Godhead who is resident in the poor (daridra), becomes more significant to a spiritual vision. He says

“The only God to worship is the human soul in the human body, of course all animals are temples too, but man is the highest, the Taj Mahal of temples. If cannot worship in that, no other temple will be of any advantage. The moment I have realised God sitting in the

temple of every human being, the moment I stand in reverence before every human being and see God in him - that moment I am free from bondage, everything that binds vanishes and I am free.” (Vol.II.p.321)

This vision of God in all creatures, and most eminently in the human being, is a liberating vision. It is precisely the seeing of all as the body of God, individually and collectively. Each soul becomes invaluable in itself and must be worshipped and served. Whilst it is true that this Vision would do it, the vision has to be cultivated.

“Our prophet-soul is the proof of their prophet-soul. Your godhead is the proof of God himself. If you are not God there never was any God.” (ibid, p,308).

Since God is oneself as Self, it is possible to realise the selfhood of God in everything that is most estimably in the human being. One must seek and find : without seeking for God in all, one hardly can see Him or find Him. This is a great truth of inestimable value which Svami Vivekananda presented, though it is the revival of the wisdom of the Upanisad which stated that one must seek to see the One Divine in all things and all in the Divine, and also that it is that One Divine that has become all. By this triple vision (anudrsti) one goes beyond all sorrow.

yastu sarvani bhutanyamanjeva pasyati

sarvabhutesu atmanam tato na vijupupsate
yasmin sarvani bhutani atmaivabhut vijanatah

tatra kah sokah kah mohah ekatvam anupasyatah.

The worship of man by serving him as the embodiment of God who is one only, and the same as that within oneself, supplies a positive activity which could best be expressed by the term friendship or brotherhood. It is possible that those who believe in a mere causal relationship of activity and fruits may not accept the One Divine in all beings as their Self, or atman or living soul, that is waiting to be recognised and loved. However, even they cannot forbear from loving their alike through a natural sympathy or pity arising from mere likeness. They may not ask as to whence this sympathy arises, so strong and so very universal, which makes brothers of men different in race, caste, religion, status, wealth or possession. There is a divine force within each which calls out the divine in others. Most persons are attracted by beauty which is divine: some by goodness: but all by love that is not related to beauty or goodness but to the divine in man. It cuts across even the most difficult divisive forces of wickedness, criminality and sensuality against which the ordinary man revolts. But one who has been awakened to this inward vision of seeing supremely the One divine in all and all in the Divine, he does not recoil from the good or the bad, the sick or the healthy,

the beautiful or the ugly, the sinner or the saint, the eater of the dog-flesh or the jnani. Such is the realisation of the Oneness through love, whose one driving force is to meet the eternal and the immortal in the mortal and the perishable.

There are seers who have taught the revulsion to the things of the flesh so that man may give up pleasure and pursue the bliss that is not of the flesh but of the soul. But that had also led to the extreme of hating the sores of the flesh and leaving those who suffer from sores to their fate without care. What is a discipline for the saint is a cursed lot to the sinner groaning in pain. It is the realisation of the sarira-sariri-bhava - between the souls and God and/or between Nature and the Divine that leads to the passing off of the fear, the delusion and the disgust or recoil. It is crucial for the service of others to realise the same divine Self as calling to the others.

Some philosophers have been at pains to explain how we know other selves or other minds. If each individual was separate and distinct, a regular monad without windows to speak the language of Leibniz, or as the Dvaita Vedanta assumes, then the knowledge that others have selves or minds is difficult to arrive at, except through analogical inference that can give only probability, even when the other gives us a physical verification about his existence. Nor could linguistic communication or gestural language help in proving that the other self, as

self or mind, exists. It is a direct kind of knowing - a kind of saksatkara not necessarily perceptual or inferential or analogical but intuitive. It is clear that all intuition is unmediated by perception, inference or analogy as it arises, but is mediated in a sense by the Divine or God consciousness. This may not be quite clear at the beginning, but as sadhana progresses intuition is that trans-subjective knowledge which goes to the heart of the certainty about the existence of the Divine Other, and also the equal certainty about the existence of other selves within the Divine, or embraced by the Divine. The inter-subjective nature of relationship between kindred souls, known as love at first sight, is simultaneously operating with the trans-subjective revelation of the Divine in all (sarvam samapnosi tatosi sarvah - of the Gita). Our knowledge of God is to be had only through devotion as the Gita again affirms:

“Not by any other than Bhakti is the Divine to be known in this wish and seen and entered into” (Bhaktyaaranyaya sakyam evam vidho’ arjuna jnatum drastum ca ptatvena pravestumca Parantapa).

Love of God is the only means of knowing God and similarly it is love alone that can bring about union between minds. But then it is unselfish love that can do it, or love of God alone that can do this breaking of the barriers between mind and mind, soul and soul. As the

sage Yajnavalkya said :

“not for the sake of the wife is the wife dear but for the sake of the Self (atman) is the wife dear.” (*)

Whilst some writers explain that one loves one’ s husband or wife for the sake of oneself, others see in this not the individual’s self but the Divine One in all, who is the Self of all as the mediating principle of love of all things in this Universe of God. The strongest and ultimate link between man and man is through God-love: that is the means by which one could become inseparably related with one another. The true association that is unbreakable

*Brhadaranka (U.p. IV : 5:5)

(nava are patyuh kamaya patih priyo bhavati, atmanastu kamaya patih priyo bhavati : nava are jayajari kamaya jay a priyo bhavati, atmanastu kamaya jay a priya bhavati ...)

is through God-love, for that has a permanence and sanction which no earthly law could either forge or break.

Actions which issue out of God-love for all human beings are truly emancipatory and detached, and even impersonal. This impersonality is not to be mistakenly identified with the indifferentism of the lower order where love has yet to flower in the soul of the individual.

Much of the love that is cultivated is so very artificial and dramatised that it leaves one with a sense of disappointment and dissatisfaction.

The vivification of this ideal of service of man, especially the poor man and the sick and the destitute, is to realise the divine in all and as such is of the greatest help to one's own liberation. I believe the service of the downtrodden, the untouchable, the unapproachable, the unseeable, the man suffering from contagious diseases and the sinner removes one of those barriers to love which is one's egoistic self-superiority neurosis. But it should not end up in the contrary neurosis of eternal inferiority. An impersonal sense of the One Divine, and love of Him, would remove this egoistic turn in service. As pointed out luminously by Swami Vivekananda, service should abjure condescension but embrace affection for the individual soul aspiring to move up to Godliness. One should become an embodiment of god to be an exemplar of god-affection which would make the helped person turn towards God. The lover of God should inspire, by his conduct, the love of God in all, mostly those who despise God or have belief in Him. The most important reason for turning away from God seems to be the prevalence of injustice, misery, unmerited poverty and failure, all of which cannot be if there be a just God who is the creator of the universe. This experience of sorrow and suffering is so very

factual that the only solutions are rationalisations of the same. These sinful effects, miseries are said to be purgative of faults, as well as occasions for the manifestation of virtues or rather testing of their strength, and as such god-given gifts. Instead of being deprivations they are the precise conditions for the manifestation of God's grace. All these arguments are dismissed as casuistical, or as special pleadings for the existence of the Divine. An irrational universe, governed by chance, blind and meaningless -such is the veritable conclusion which the despair of man drives him to. Karma becomes a nightmarish blind necessity, and by no means becomes a rational satisfying explanation.

Therefore Karma explains nothing really. A divine way of knowing is necessary to go beyond these explanations; a way which would provide a real satisfying conclusion, and a meaning to our lives. It is in the deeds of love that one performs that one discovers the inner meaning of the omnipresence of God. Man's love for his brother-man or sister-woman alone throws a glow of warmth in an otherwise dark world. Service with love done to the soul in need is verily an eye-opener to the presence of God in simple things. That is the reason why service becomes the practice of the presence of God, which like mercy blesses him that receives and him that gives. Here is a new kind of knowledge given to the man in sorrow, a light that reveals a kind and godly

world, a love that makes the drab divine. This is a service which no words of education can translate adequately. This is itself an educative work. The undivine becomes, by an act of kindness, a divine place. Though it may not transfigure the world at once by a miracle, yet it provides the torch with which man may become aware of the future miracle that might well make this earth a kingdom of God - a world resplendent with love's beauty, goodness, intelligence and bliss. Happiness is fully realised not in pleasure but in the experience of divine love received and given. In fact in the expression of divine love there is no question of asking for even a reciprocation of it by gratitude or satisfaction. Perhaps it is an extreme demand to make to ask for unrequited love as pure love - obviously no man postulates that one should not reveal gratitude or show it to one who does an act of love or service. In spontaneity there is grace and bliss, not in the compulsion of thanksgiving. It would be seen that a new kind of knowledge comes out of love and services done in the love of God, which reveals God in His omnipresence as well as in His omnipotence in dissolving the barriers, that divide man from man.

I am not sure this kind of knowledge through love is intuitive in any epistemological sense. It seems to be mystical, sacramental and divine. It is too sacred to be described in the language of communication useful for

practical and non-loving activities of commerciality. Nor should it be claimed to be 'socialised' knowledge, a new pattern of knowledge discovered by certain group of psychologists as socialized knowledge for it is not mainly devoted to sociality or issuing from it. It can be said to be over-mental or even supramental, but then it does not come about as a vision or an inspired recognition but as an unveiling of the veils, the disappearance of separating walls or rings.

Service of the Divine in men thus opens up new frontiers of union and recognition of that secret unity and identity of the inmost Divine in all things and beings. Therefore the practical method of reaching beyond the fruits of karma, and gaining the fruits of jnana and the fruits of devotional love is possible in the supreme development of this ideal of divine service to Narayana - the goal, and the support of all beings.

Svami Vivekananda has, in his lectures on Practical Vedanta and Karma Yoga, fully illustrated the ideal of service as the modus operandi of divine living both as a means to liberation and realisation of the One Identity present in all beings and supporting them all impartially or impartibly.

Petrim Sorokin develops the concept of creative altruism as a variant of the spirit of service of man, or rather God in men. The socialist conception does not need a theism

to buttress the service of another, or service of oneself through the service of other, or as in co-operation the service of oneself and others for mutual welfare. Creative altruism would mean that merely serving other's for other's sake is not truly creative, for nothing leads to the growth of the other or of oneself or of both. Sociology has yet to demonstrate that such a creativity - in the sense of higher evolution and growth of cosmic consciousness or even the formation of a socialised consciousness as the Collectivist state would project- arise, This being so, the real ideal of spiritual service should truly create an ideal society of godly souls whose realisation is of a truly spiritual cosmic or even trans-cosmic consciousness which we refer to the Divine whose transcendence, as such, is precisely the condition of its superconscious immanence. for other entities and consciousness immanence means the abolition of consciousness itself, or its abridgment or veiling as/a trance of unconsciousness. But real creativity is available only through the service of the Divine in purest love, in simplest acts of helpfulness and sympathy.

Vivekananda's Religion of Service emphasises the genuine ideals of Hinduism in relation to society and the individual. It really shows how he tries to integrate the triple levels of Vedanta, the Oneness of the Absolute Divine Brahman and the immanence of that One in all the embodied creatures, or rather the souls which are in the

relation of bodies to that One Divine Being, and the mutuality between these many bodies of the Divine in society, drawing out that latent oneness into expression. This gives the picture of the ascent of the souls to their recognition of oneness in and through service of other souls equally placed in relation to that One or God. It also reveals the descent of the Divine embodying Himself in the many which reveals His supreme lila or play of the Oneness in and through the many. It finally reveals how the Oneness, which is transcendent to all the many and their support, is to be experienced beyond the terms of duality and embodiedness or organic being in that Union or Yoga of mystical oneness or identity, which no mental or sensorial experience can translate into normal communicable language.

Ancient thinkers have, in different ways, stressed the organic oneness of the world with the Divine, through whom all attain spiritual emancipation. **The world is the occasion for the fullest experience of that which is apparently contra-divine but which glows, as one draws one's inspiration from the Divine who is One in all, with a transcendent splendour and renders even this transient existence a thing of beauty and wonder.** Therefore is it said by the Sage Kapila : Prakrti or Nature binds as well as releases the purusa. Or as the other saying goes - the mind alone is the cause of both man's bondage and emancipation: manaeva manuyanam

karanam bandhamoksayoh - Maya too ensnares the individual and liberates him, or rather one is under the sovereign rule of Maya when deluded or ignorant about it, but one becomes a master of Maya when knowledge dawns in Him, and that knowledge is a gift of the Divine.

In any case the call to service of man in all ways, spiritual, mental, vital and physical is necessary for true liberation, not only of the person served but also of one who serves.

Some attempts are of late being made by certain scholars to say that Svami Vivekananda's religion of service is a kind of secularism rather than something following from spiritual conceptions of Sankara. The spiritual concept of Sankara is based on the notion not only of the Advaita but also of the illusory nature of the world or the appearance. The concept of social or spiritual service is held by these scholars to be contradictory to the spiritual attainment of liberation from the world. But it does not seem to be that alone, but the attachment to the dogma of maya that seems to be given the go-bye by this doctrine of service. Surely if, there is only one God or Being then there can hardly be any one to serve or be served by. Service and love seem to demand duality which seeks to be overcome by identity. This is the nemesis of illusionism. Svami Vivekananda essentially was, they claim, a secularist and a patriot rather than a spiritual being like his Master Ramakrishna Paramahansa. Prof

Tiwari claims ‘Secularism is indeed one of the driving forces behind Vivekananda’s activities” and by secularism he means ‘tolerance’ it means ‘a direct negation of everything that Vaidiki Ethics stands for; and he dubs Rabindranath Tagore’s ethics as aesthetic secularism, Gandhi’s as ethical secularism, Aurobindo’s as mystical secularism. “Similarly an analytical study of the systems of Ramanuja, Vallabha, Madhva, Caitanya and other exponents of the Bhakti school - not to speak of aberrations like these of the Tantrikas -reveals a trend in the direction of secularism.” (p.27 Secularism and Materialism in Modern India. B.G. Tiwari.)He holds that “Sankara’s ethics is simply Vaidika ethos in its most consistent form” (ibid.p.17) Secularisms is any attempt to cater to the impulses of the ‘natural man’ while Vaidiki culture exists for the ‘ethical man’ (p.28)

Some of the statements made by Dr Tiwari betray an utter disregard of all that the Vaidiki thinkers stood and lived for. It is sheer absurdity to say that Sankara stood more loyally by the Vaidiki spirit of that quarter-nary of castes, ends and ashramas, which all the while speaking for their very illusoriness, and claiming that it is their illusoriness that has to be discovered in the ethical practices or duties they enjoin. In fact it is the basic concept of ethics or dharma that it is decidedly a ‘devotion to duty’, a duty that has become almost an act of love (bhakti) because of the metaphysics of organic

union or spiritual unseparateness. Not having understood the metaphysics of this relationship nor made any effort to understand it, Dr Tiwari pompously claims that all activity is secularism. No one asserts that bhakti replaces karma, but bhakti is the culmination of duty - except in the bargaining mimamsaka. Bhakti is a means to moksa, not enjoyment. Further Sri Ramanuja clearly enunciated that it is knowledge that grows into Bhakti, or becomes devotion to the Ultimate, so that one realises one's union with the Ultimate which is the Self. Self realisation is the realisation of the Self of the Universe or Reality as such, not merely the ego which ordinary ethics seeks to manifest in and through ethical activities.

Svami Vivekananda really propounds that real bhakti or parabhakti is a sequence or consequence or product of Chit-Absolute,

“Absolute knowledge is manifesting itself in its highest and infinite love in the supreme Lord.” (Vol.V .p.433)

This is identical with a statement of Ramanuja - Semusi Bhaktirupa: knowledge of the form of devotion to the highest Being. Thus activity becomes also worship of the highest Being - an Art of beauty. It is delight in creativity and creation in Delight. True Art has this nature.

Activity of the ignorance is governed by the disciplines of dharma -caturasrama, caturvarna, caturvidha

purusartha, and perhaps even the fourfold states of consciousness or awareness and so on. But Activity which flows from divine realisation of the Oneness of the Self in all, and as a creative expression of that realisation, is also a Yoga. Sankara knows nothing of this, for all activity has been equated with Avidya - Ignorance. A man of vidya is said to give up or renounce all work and be a contemplative alone.

Sannyasins are those who have to renounce all activity - nitya, naimittika and kama according to some - some hold that they should renounce all Vaidiki karma - yaga, yajna and others prescribed by the sastras whilst performing the nitya vidhis. But in any case they are without work, except meditation (yoga), or mentations. Renunciation of all activities or duties is sanyasa: but they have also certain duties prescribed for their asrama. So they cannot and should not give them up. But there is no doubt that all duties are moksa-directed and motivated. And this is the reason why Svami Vivekananda insists on the universe-service of all men - manavaseva - as verily the service of God in each one of them. Service thus takes on not the form of a duty but an act of awareness, a practice so to speak of the presence of God in each and every human being high or low, healthy or otherwise, to each individual one should attend according to his need, physical, vital, mental and/or spiritual, without seeking to receive any word of

thanks.

If secularism means an opposition to the doctrine of quietism, and this was surely what all the followers of Svami Vivekananda and also his successors have practised and taught, it is amazing that one who has read his upanisads should turn a blind eye to the self-same upanisads which teach the three Da-s - Dana, Daya, Dama, and also that one must go on doing works for a hundred years and no other way is there for man. Works done in knowledge and for knowledge of the One in all do not bind man. Indeed it is the misfortune of ill-equipped knowledge to run hastily to pervert the original teaching of the Upanisads. Svami Vivekananda shows that karma-yoga ethics is for the householder, whereas the yoga of service of God in each individual through love is for the sannyasin primarily, but generally for all. Karma grows into love, even as knowledge grows into love which is mystical and divine. It is not a catering to the natural man but to the divine man, and though our western scholars may not appreciate it there is no reason to hold that divine activity includes the ethical and in no sense denies it.

It may be that certain serious criticisms such as the direction to his sannyasis to give up seeking individual salvation (mukti) is contrary to the rules of Sannyasa of the Sankara order (Tiwari : p.47). Svami Vivekananda is

said to have convinced his fellow monks to accept

“the collective concept of spiritual realisation through public-spirited service as higher than the idea of individual liberation and realisation of the Atman through severe penance and meditation in a life which was indifferent to the sorrows and sufferings of one’s fellow men.” (ibid, p.47)

Dr. Tiwari holds that Svami Vivekananda’s religion was a ‘secular religion of social consciousness.’ But it must be said that an integral Study of his entire writings does not leave this impression at all. On the other hand it is clearly seen that whether it is collectivist salvation or mukti that he has as an ideal, or ceollectivist socialistic service ameliorating the lower two purusarthas of artha and kama and kaya, the major note is the supreme necessity to infuse spiritual vibrations into whatever service one does in the consciousness of the One Ultimate Spirit or Brahman.

A fashionable modern lobby among scholars is to discern differences between a Master and his disciple, and to try to find out where the latter has made deviations. Deviationism is also a witch-hunting process. Dr Tiwari indulges in this. Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa was purely a yoga Guru of New India (p. 130). His realisation of the Ultimate Absolute Experience revealed that each individual must realise his

own self or liberation and this cannot be done in a collectivist way. However whilst the emphasis on the Sannyasins monks was to realise the Divine in all and all in the Divine, and this could be best achieved in the context of the social or spiritual service of Society, it was not precluded at all that each individual must hold the lamp unto himself.

If the Buddha long before the Christian missionaries inculcated the doctrine of loving service of all life as one expressing the manner by which right feelings could be cultivated, Svami Vivekananda also saw in this the way of Yoga of Divine Recognition of the divinity in all aspiring towards divinity. It is true that God is not in need of any service but His call from each is a call from the infinite which has to be responded. Vaidiki ethics aims at this end also. To divide dialectically Vaidiki and the Divine is unfortunate for ethics as such.