

SANSKRIT OUR IMPERATIVE NEED

It would be indeed quite unnecessary to mention to the most cultured audience of Sanskrit savants about the glory of our ancient Sanskrit literature which has continuously fed us with the life blood spiritual freedom, whatever might have been the vicissitudes of our political life. When therefore it was found that invisibly for no reason men were beginning to lose interest in this literature, it was realized at once that we are also going the way of lost civilizations. Thanks to our spiritual leaders this threat to spiritual life was no sooner realised met by a definite call to the study of our most ancient Literature, namely the Vedanta (Upanisads), Bhagavad Gita which has become the gospel of Gandhi and Tilak and Sri Aurobindo as it was the gospel of Sankara, Ramanuja and Madhva of old. Ramayana and Mahabharata once again revived interest and reading translations in English at the beginning many a young man not having had Sanskrit education at the beginning had begun to learn the alphabets and study the Gita.

Indian philosophy began to be taken serous note of by the Western scholars and not merely brushed aside. Comparative philosophy and comparative Religion, which are considered to be scientific approaches to the study of language and religion entailed close study of

Sanskrit which was recognized as one of the oldest languages in the world. What was more remarkable was that this Ancient language was not primitive, original and aboriginal, but well-made with its own grammar and metre and one which could be shown to be the matrix from which the others took rise. It was thus known as Devanagari and Sanskrit the language of the Gods (illuminating the mind) and of the cultured (Rsis, seers of truth and reality).

We all know that though the earlier writings of the Buddha and Jina were in prakrts, so called language of the people, later writings needing exactness and precision had to be in the language of Sanskrit. Thus Sanskrit was the language not of the respectability but of clarity and it was more the clarity that gave Sanskrit the lead over the prakrts. However again and again we find this eclipse of the Sanskrit and its coming to its own, and these synchronise with the fortunes of the people. Sanskrit again and again was studied to discover one's roots. Thus it was a reviving function that Sanskrit played down the ages of our History. Its inspiration flowed into the regional languages.

When therefore some say that Sanskrit is a dead language one wonders whether it not Sanskrit that makes dead languages and dying languages rise from their ashes.

This secret of Sanskrit is not in the magic of its language as such but what inalienably it carries with it, the spiritual power that has been imparted to it by the ancient seers of the Veda. We need not indulge in any sort of mysticism here: it is that peculiar quality of the Sanskrit language to grant that spiritual vitality to any thing that it touches. One cannot divorce the Ultimate Cultural process underway in humanity, that process which is for the spiritualizing of man from the language of Sanskrit at all.

The need to study the language of Sanskrit is not thrown only on the teachers and research workers but on every body who would like to be undying in the true sense of the term. Thus in a truer sense than recognized, Sanskrit is the mother of al culture and of all languages.

In an age such as ours – the Age of Science and the Age of Self awareness and the age of the Common man, there are questions raised by people who think that Sanskrit having been one of the oldest cannot have any place. By that token materialism in the only language of science and politics and spirit is an outmoded explanation. This alliance between science and materialism is unholy and not at all conducive to evolution or good life. Whilst man is extending the limits of his knowledge of the outer world, and perhaps even making efforts to know about his own physical body, he is not growing in wisdom that

comes from spiritual culture. Thus knowledge and wisdom have become divorced. The ancient equation that one who gains immortality or the immortal-vidyaya amrtam asnute-is no longer valid, for his knowledge is not capable of making one grow wiser and saner and holier recognizing the Supreme Divine in all things. He is losing faith in religion, that bond between man and God, the Universal Self of all, and lacks the spiritual basis for his life. The gains of science for man enriches his self confidence whilst promoting his impoverishment in his relations with other men all the world over and the spiritual unity that supports all.

Far deeper than any social, economic, political readjustment, mankind is in dire need of a readjustment on the spiritual plane. What is needed is then the rediscovery of our roots. **Secularism may be a stop-gap arrangement in the present moment, it is however never to be something that rules out all spiritual values from the ordinary life of man.** The present crisis in the world or rather series of crises, are all due to the purely secular pursuits, whether humanistic or scientific or materialistic, all these ignore the spiritual yearning of man for growth and higher knowledge. There is a spiritual essence which is operating in all manifestations of life in the universe, human or animal, plant and mineral. A spiritual reconstruction of mankind alone can save mankind from self-annihilation. There are

undoubtedly many ways proposed for the rehabilitation of spiritual values and moral rearmaments and so on. However it is in the lives of dedicated souls that we find this spontaneity of individual cultural transformation. The problem of Recovery of Faith is as urgent as any other. How can religion once again become the centre of man's concern in all walks of his life? What is gained in comfort from science is unfortunately bought at great price and the spiritual claims are being brushed aside. However in India as elsewhere science can be hardly a substitute, for religion. There are more things in reality and man than the science can explain. However in the mad race that is on it almost appears that science is winning all along the line. The Vacuum that it is creating in the lives of the human beings by this external expansion is however posing or will soon pose problems of serious concern to secularists themselves. What is the inner restraint that will be laid on men of science under the control of ambitious men of politics not to shatter the world of culture and life and reduce it to ashes and thus turning the universe into a vast graveyard (smasana)? Indian mythology indeed speaks of this vast development at the time of Ramayana and how the Avatar once for all destroyed the destroyers and created a world of culture out the derelicts of Ravana's people. So too was the age of Mahabharata. Science set up for destruction and conquest for secular purposes is moving

inevitably (as the materialists of the dialectical variety say). Our spiritual education alone can rectify the situation and make real peace possible in this world. It is agreed that peace is indivisible, and so one should promote peace all round and at every point of life. Individuals as well as communities and nations have to learn the bitter lesson that the inordinate pursuit of power through science will tend to reduce men to the level of monsters. Education is thus central to our entire development and basic as a programme for peace. But here again what type of education should we encourage. It is to be integral; the secular must be subordinated to the spiritual and the spiritual must be made to express itself through the secular; thus the conflict between the secular and the spiritual should be resolved not by merely limiting the domains of each but by permeating the one by the other. Secularism has a tendency to divide and separate man from man but the spiritual tends to unite the divided not by annulling the same but by integration. This is clearly seen in the very development of the organic. Vedanta (and we have three phases of it) insists that the spiritual govern and determine the birth and growth and goal of sciences.

That these syntheses of all arts and crafts (kalas) have been achieved by the ancient seers of India can well be seen in the Epics and puranas of Yore. Scientific works of rare quality have been produced and written down in

the technical jargon of each science and today research in these branches of ancient science seems to be absolutely necessary. The indefatigable Dr. Raghavan has to be warmly congratulated on his pioneer work but much more has to be done. Sanskrit was capable of evolving technical language to express advanced techniques in almost all the sciences, sculpture, iconography, temple engineering, icon casting, bridge building, metallurgy, etc., So too the planning of towns and drains and raising trees and building hospitals and in general town administration suited to the genius of the spiritual God-centered humanism. Arts also were scientifically explained and music, dance, plays of all kinds and decorations and dress making got treatises. So too taming the animals, elephants and horses and bulls became an art-not only for circus purposes but for spiritual purposes also. Sanskrit as the vehicle of all literature and scientific knowledge has played an admirably role which it can even now begin to play. But it requires the large dedication of men of sincerity and culture who have belief in its intrinsic spiritual power to rise to fullest heights. Of course it has to conquer the spirit of the Indian youth by its abiding spiritual quality.

Our temples in South India played a very great part in our cultural tradition. Barring certain extremist tendencies, it is undoubtedly a capital fact that Sanskrit spiritual literature played as great a role as the

indigenous literature which has also a hoary spiritual tradition. The most important feature that we find is that after the extraordinary collapse of the Buddhist and Jaina adventures against the Vedantic tradition (which one might well refer to their purely humanistic developments if not nihilistic) that Temples became the centre of all life: Temple Culture is not to be interpreted as an idolatrous culture, on the contrary it was to make man ego-centric rather than ego-centric or anthropo-centric. It was as great a revolution as the Copernican revolution. Great temples demanding for their construction and maintenance skills of kinds were dedicated to the cultural development of a peaceful Society. South Indian Religions have had in common, whether of the Saiva or Vaisnava denomination, the quest for inward peace as well as outer harmony between the members of the society or village or town who had each his allotted function which he did in a spirit of spirituality or sacrament. Spiritual equality thus became a realized fact that harmonized without hitch or bitterness with the secular inequality that is organizational. Thus all gained that Peace that passeth understanding. A harmonious society demanding from each of its members his task or kriya which he can do and ought to strive in love to do and do well is bound to stand all the perils of outer attack.

It was asked recently by an eminent writer as to wherein

lay the strength of the Indian Society, one could well say it lies in the spiritual unity that pervades all the functions of the men dedicated to God in the temples. Once the temples are made weak it will not be long that our society will fall even like the mounds of Buddha.

Practical religion and culture were the concern of temples and the restoration of the temples to their pristine function is one of the major concerns of Modern Administration of the temples. The training of competent Vedic Scholars in the temples is almost an immediate *number one* concern. In an age where technocratic developments are disrupting the original forms and shape of the members of the different people engaged in the diverse occupations necessary for the efficient working of the temple, a determined effort has to be made to attract the best of men to take up this work of the temple to fill in the gap. Thus the investment on the temple reorganization of all sorts of functions and needs to suit modern conditions too without much distortion or without and possibility of distortion of the ancient ideal is bound to be a very sound investment on the spiritual side. We need scholars in Sanskrit in large numbers not only for daily needs of the temple but for spreading Sanskrit Culture in its spiritual purity to one and all through reciting and expounding the great literature to all. Surely the Tamil and Telugu literatures will have their role to play but they would also profit by

this integration of themselves with Sanskrit. A new dynamic spiritual revolution once again centered round the temple which resembles more and more an autonomous University will transform the minds of men and turn them away from the glamour of duel, strife and competition, and war. Cooperation is the central concept of the Temple Culture and we are realizing that it is by far the best solution to human affairs. It however can never gain the spiritual strength if it remains as an attractive humanistic ideal or political solution of our economic needs. A spiritual call to the inward unity of all and towards cooperation for realising inward peace as well as outer harmony is about the only plausible solution. Look at the great monuments and cities like Kanchi, Srirangam and even lesser cities like Tanjore and Tirupati, we have the visual picture of a great peace and harmony brooding over all minds soaking men in the purity that peace and harmony grant.

Sanskrit literature has done so much and it can do very much more in the future. The future of the world is linked up with the rise of not a new ideology but an old resurrection of Sanskrit to her prime place as the language of Culture in a sense that others are not. It is therefore with a sense of deep responsibility that I am constrained to plead for a great effort on the part of everybody not to brush aside lightly the great tradition of religious knowledge that has been perfected in India and

enshrined in the Divine language of the Sanskrit Sarasvati. It is capable of granting not only the philosophic facility but also material happiness based on dharma. It is one of the basic commitments of our Republic to pursue the paths of peace and truth and happiness that are compatible with and issuing from Satya and Dharma.

Rightly our Motto recognizes our traditional aims and goals. Through knowledge of the Highest Brahman alone can peace be everlasting. Truly also our sages have taught that through unceasing to our work in the spirit of utter dedication to God which thus includes selflessness or desirelessness, we should live for a hundred years. Our tradition has not preached pessimism but a divine optimism a world saving purpose has informed the least of our yogic endeavours. Our culture breathes the very atmosphere of a meaningful world. To one who has learnt from his babyhood to breathe the air of wisdom as provided in the temple and its arrangements, the world wears a different aspect and happiness seems to be compatible with human life and material welfare. Whether it is in the Ashrams of Rishis or in the sanctum of our Temples the atmosphere is of sacredness and holiness of all life.

It is necessary that this vast knowledge of the Ultimate is open to one and all who can profit by it. It is no longer to

be kept in the secret vault of human hearts or caves but brought to the doors of all. This is a task to which all can agree. The Sanskrit Research Institutes must play a magnificent role and the progressive temples like Tirupati should earnestly carry on the task of making the recondite knowledge available to all. However it is a fact that with all these amenities offered so few come forward to take advantage of them. However the seeds of this endeavour will in the sunshine of the liberal policy of temples and generosity of astikas believers in Sanskrit Tradition bear germination and grow into trees that shall grant shade to all types of art and craft.