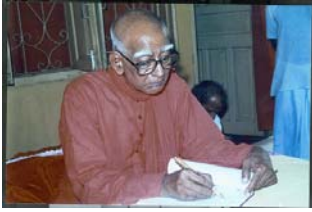




## Point of Departure



Today's scientific world is acclaimed for its rapid accumulation of material knowledge and accelerating progress. But with the same speed the great majority of people are moving away from non-material spiritual knowledge. This term, Spiritual knowledge, should not be confused with specific creeds and sects. All around us we see the social fabric being ripped apart by religious fundamentalism, intolerance, and narrow-mindedness. The acts of violence motivated by religious fanaticism could not have been committed by minds inspired with genuine spiritual knowledge. Those who cultivate the fire of hatred and prejudice in their hearts are imprisoned in the narrow cells of their religions, or what they have interpreted their religions to be. They look upon the followers of other religions with distrust and even malice. Such spite cannot be what the founders of the various great religions had intended as their gift to humanity. Hatred and exclusivity bring harm not only to those who are directly targeted, but also—and to a greater degree—violent fanatics spoil their own spiritual state.



Religion (*dharma*) was given to humanity to provide a civilized path for the reformation of character in order that its adherents might reach the ultimate goal (God). But today, it seems that even religion has lost track of its purpose. Therefore, it is essential, in this current environment of religious crisis, to underscore the similar—in the end, *identical*—underlying concepts of the various religions. By this means it is possible to bridge the ever-enlarging gulf that appears to separate the different religious traditions and between their followers. This “gulf” is actually an imaginary difference. It is often the result of superficial (exoteric) interpretations of a given religion which begin to dissolve when one investigates the tradition at a deeper (esoteric) level. When the various traditions are seen as different statements or paths to the same goal, the very image of religion, as a provider of peace and everlasting freedom, can be re-established. This book is a small attempt in this direction.

## **What is *Dharma*?**

What is religion (*dharma*<sup>1</sup>)? The Sanskrit word, *dharma*, is generally defined as “righteousness” or “duty.” Thus, in its broadest sense *dharma* means performing one’s sacred duty and



following the traditional ethical codes of the community in which one lives. “Dharma is the sustainer of the social life.”

It is also defined as the way to the Higher Truth. Far from being unnatural or contrived, *dharmā* is a natural quality or trait of an individual, an inseparable part of the psyche. *Dharma* is also that deed or duty the result of which is described as the attainment of heaven. Noble deeds, good behavior, and benevolent actions are all *dharmic* in nature. *Dharma* is inner nature, an inherent good tendency, and a daily prescribed moral and social duty.

### ***Dharma as Virtue***

*The Laws of Manu*<sup>2</sup> describe the eightfold attributes of *dharmā*: patience, forgiveness, self-control, non-stealing, purity, control of the senses, wisdom, knowledge, truth, and tranquility. Over the course of time, Jain<sup>3</sup> *dharmā* has also delineated the list of characteristics as follows: right forgiveness, right restraint, right purity, right truth, right self-control, right mortification, right renunciation, right humility, and right celibacy.

For the purpose of making *dharmā* accessible to all people, Sage Manu has simplified and condensed the ten attributes of *dharmā*



into five ethical laws: non-violence, truth, non-stealing, purity of body and mind, and control of the senses.<sup>4</sup> These same moral laws are found in all the major religions, East and West. Let us first consider the ethical laws of non-violence (*ahimsa*) and truth (*satya*).

## Complexity of *Dharma* Ethics

*The Mahabharata* (ch.11/13) says:

*Non-violence(ahimsa) is the greatest of all laws (dharma).*

This principle of non-violence is the essential *dharma* (virtue) for religions based on the *Vedas*, but as well, it is also considered of prime importance in other religions. For example, Buddhism (*Dhammapada*, 17:3) and Christianity (*Bible*, Exodus 20:13; Matthew 5:5, 5:7; 5:21; 5:38-39) also require their adherents to practice non-violence. Taking life, however, is not the only kind of violence that is prohibited. The principle of non-violence also includes not hurting some one's mind or body. Within the Indian traditions, it also entails not doing harm to any living being, including animals. All people in this world agree that non-violence is the greatest *dharma* principle to be followed.



But now imagine a situation in which someone is trying to take our life, or rape our wife or daughter, or start a fire in our house or, steal our money. If we are unprotected and some evil person has a weapon, what should we do? Should we simply ignore that evil person, or just tell him that non-violence is the most important *dharma*? And if he does not listen to, or pay no heed to our plea, should we try to control him with whatever power we have?

Sage Manu advises us for this kind of difficult situation:

*One should not hesitate to dispatch that evil person and we should not care if he is a guru, an old person, a child, scholar or brahmin.*<sup>5</sup>

Under such circumstances, if the individual kills the aggressor in the effort to protecting himself/herself, he/she is not considered guilty of the sin of killing, because in fact the evil person was killed by his own lawlessness. Another example: The killing of a fetus is considered a most heinous act. But if a child becomes dangerously breached in the womb and the mother's life is in danger, it is a moral imperative to sacrifice the child for the sake of the mother's life.

Non-violence, forgiveness, compassion and calmness (*śanti*) are described and prescribed as virtues in the *shastras* and the sacred



texts. However, it is not advised to remain resigned all the time. For instance, one must protect children from evil.

Sage Prahlad told this to his grandson, Bali:

*It is not always good to forgive; neither is it good always to be angry. Even so the scholars spoke about exceptions in forgiveness.<sup>6</sup>*

After having addressed non-violence, we should now consider the virtue of truthfulness (*satya*). In various parts of the *Mahabharata* truth is considered to be “the highest of all moral acts.”<sup>7</sup>

The *Mahabharata* says:

*If we compare the power of truth with a thousand grand sacrifices, the merit acquired by truth will be still greater.*

In the *Tatittariya Upanishad* (1/11/1) truth is given a superior place, and the other sacred duties (*dharma*) are described as secondary:

*Speak Truth. Follow your moral duty.*

In the *Mahabharata* there is a story where the Grandsire Bhishma was lying on a bed of arrows before his death. He teaches the essence and importance of truth, and advises Yudhishtira, the oldest son of Pandu to act only in accordance with truth. Truth



indeed is the essence of *dharma*. Similarly, a great emphasis is placed on truth in Buddhism, Christianity, and other religions.

The literal and essential meaning of truth is ‘that which always is, is permanent, is eternal, and which never lacks.’ In the *Bhagavad- Gita* Lord Krishna explains the nature of truth to Arjuna (2:16):

*The unreal [that which does not exist] never is. The Real [that which truly exists] never ceases to be. The conclusion concerning these two is truly perceived by the seers of Truth.*

Truth is always triumphant; non-truth is conquered.<sup>8</sup> The *shastras* constantly and rightly praise truth. We should nevertheless observe carefully whether there are any exceptions to speaking the truth. Let us consider the situation where a murderer with a weapon is chasing an innocent person with the intent of killing him. If the fleeing person hides somewhere near us, should we tell the truth when the villain asks us the whereabouts of the fleeing person? Should we speak the truth and contribute to that innocent person being killed, or should we speak a lie and try to protect the life of that man? In such a circumstance, speaking truth incurs the sin of violence, and telling a lie incurs the good results associated with non-violence. So we see that there are exceptions—quite apparent ones—to telling the truth.



Again, let us consider another situation: A doctor has advised a sick child to stay away from certain kinds of foods. The child, of course, does not understand the need for such restrictions and desires to continue eating the same foods. By eating the same foods, the child's sickness may get worsen. The mother tells the child that the particular food is not in the house, and that she will give it to him when she goes to the market. In this case, the mother's false speech protects the life of the child. And once again we have a paradoxical example: a non-truth fulfills the law of non-violence (*ahimsa*, literally, non-harming). The same principle is taught in the Holy *Bible*.

Compare this to the following reference from the *Bible*:

*The letter [of the law or dharma] brings death; but the spirit [of dharma] gives life. (2 Corinthians 3:6).*

One must be careful not to commit a crime simply to obey an outward rule.

## **Non-Static Laws of *Dharma***

What do we really mean when we speak of a person's *dharma*? We must that the laws of *dharma* are not fixed. They depend on





the circumstances, culture, the time period, and the upbringing of the person. In other words, culture specific values are involved. Even though speaking truth is our *dharma*, in the actual experience of life, there are many occasions when untruth instead of truth is the appropriate behavior, or *dharma*. It happens sometimes that violence instead of non-violence will protect a life, and this will then be the appropriate behavior (*dharma*). In the *Mahabharata* it is said that in order to protect a family, an individual family member may be sacrificed; to protect a village, a family may be sacrificed; and to protect a country, an entire village may be sacrificed. But to protect one's own soul (*atman*), the whole world should be sacrificed (forsaken).

[The same principle is stated in Christian scriptures. *The Bible*: Mark 8:36:

*For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul?].*

The *Bhagavad-Gita* underscores the need for doing one's own duty (*dharma*):

*Better is one's own duty (dharma) performed imperfectly than the duty (dharma) of another performed perfectly. It is better to die performing one's own duty (dharma), for it is dangerous to follow the duty (dharma) of another (3:35)*



Paradoxically, in the *Gita* it is also said:

*Abandon all dharmas; come to Me alone for refuge.  
Do not grieve, for I will release you from all evils.  
(18:66).*

When compared, these two verses spoken by Lord Krishna may seem contradictory in nature to most people. They are forced to think: “Is it good to sacrifice our own self for our *dharma*, or should we abandon our *dharma* and take refuge only in God?” In such a difficult situation, man becomes frozen into inaction. We can see an example of this confusion in the story at the beginning of the *Gita* where Arjuna becomes immobilized by his dilemma.

When confronted with such contradictions, we begin to experience ourselves, that the path of “*dharma is subtle*,”<sup>9</sup> and that “*it (dharma) is unfathomable and too difficult*”<sup>10</sup> for us to comprehend. Therefore, to understand the subtle secrets of *dharma*, we need a Sat Guru (genuine, true, and authentic spiritual teacher) to guide us through these difficult moments. As Lord Krishna guides Arjuna who had fallen in a state of despair when faced with the choice of conflicting *dharmas*—go to war and not be hesitant in killing (perform the *dharma* of a *kshatriya*) or abstain from violence as it is highest *dharma*.



Lord Krishna advises in the *Bhagavad-Gita* (4: 34) to seek the instruction from those who have “seen the truth,” a seer:

*Learn that by humble reverence, by inquiry and by service, the wise who have seen the truth will instruct you in knowledge.*

## **Various Definitions of *Dharma*: *Dharma* as Inherent Nature**

There are other meanings of *dharma* in addition to ‘virtue’ and ‘law.’ These include ‘quality,’ ‘inner essence,’ or ‘nature.’ We cannot separate the inherent quality from the possessor of that quality. If we did that, then, the one who possessed that quality would no longer live. For example, the nature of fire is heat or burning and the nature of ice is cold. Each sense organ also possesses one particular quality. The nature of the eye is to help one see. The nature or quality of the ear is to help one hear. The quality of the skin is the sense of touch; the quality of the tongue is taste; and the quality of the nose is smell. *Atman* (the very nature of the inner self) also has its particular quality: spiritually ascending movement.



## ***Dharma* as Religion**

The Sanskrit word for *dharma* can also be translated as religion. In Arabic this term is called *majhab*, and in English it is called religion; and in Sanskrit it is called *dharma*. The English word religion is derived from Latin language: the prefix *re-* means “back” or “again” and the root *lig* means “to bind.” Thus, religion is that which binds us back to our source, which unites us with God and other human beings (Similarly, we find that the Sanskrit word *yoga*, meaning path or method of union, is related to the English word “yoke”).

### **Returning to the Source through Inner Journey is Our *Dharma* (Natural Tendency)**

Santmat (the path and teachings as taught and practiced by saints) delineates the path of union of soul with the Divine. The teachings of the saints explain the re-uniting as follows:

The individual soul has descended from the higher worlds [the Realm of the Divine] to this city of illusion, bodily existence. It has descended from the Soundless state to the essence of Sound, from that Sound to Light, and finally from the realm of Light to the realm of Darkness. The qualities (*dharmas*, *natural*



*tendencies*) of the sense organs draw us downward and away from our true nature. The nature of the soul (*atman*) draws us upwards and inwards and establishes us in our own true nature.

Returning to our origins involves turning inward: withdrawal of consciousness from the senses and the sense objects in order to go upward from the darkness to the realms of light and sound. [We experience this phenomenon of withdrawal as we pass from waking consciousness to deep sleep.] Another way to express this is to go inward from the external sense organs to the depth of the inner self. (Both of these expressions are the metaphors that signify the same movement). The natural tendencies of the soul (*atman*) are to move from outward to inward. The current of consciousness which is dispersed in the nine gates of the body and the senses, must be collected at the tenth gate.<sup>11</sup> The tenth gate is the gathering point of consciousness; therein lies the path for our return. The tenth gate is also known as the sixth *chakra*, the third eye, *bindu*, the center located between the two eyebrows. This is the gateway through which we leave the gates of the sense organs and enter in the divine realms and finally become established in the soul. We travel back from the Realm of Darkness to the Realm of Light, from the Light to the Divine Sound, and from the Realm of Sound to the Soundless state. This is called turning *back* to the Source.<sup>12</sup> This is what *dharma*



or religion really intends to teach us. This is the essence of *dharma*.

Many thousands of years ago when Krishna was teaching Arjuna, there existed only the *Vedic dharma*.<sup>13</sup> Christianity, Islam, Jainism, Sikhism and the other religious paradigms had not yet emerged. There was only one *dharma* (religion) for all. There was not a question of “my *dharma*” as opposed to “your *dharma*” [here the word *dharma* is used in the sense of religion]. Yet Krishna teaches to follow one’s “own *dharma*.” Here the word *dharma* does not imply the term religion, but rather, is used to refer to one’s own inherent tendencies, the inner nature. In reality, the *dharma* of our senses is not really our own *dharma* because following the cravings of the senses only satisfies the nature of the sensory organs. Our optimal *dharma* is to follow the *dharma* of the soul (*atman*) by turning inward and returning to the source. Krishna advises Arjuna to leave the *dharma* of the senses (following the sensory desires) and to seek instead the *dharma* of *atman* (following the inner desire of absolute tranquility and bliss which is beyond the scope of senses), which truly concerns our spiritual progress. Thereby, one becomes established in one’s own nature (self).



The ideas regarding turning back to our own source are not the invention of the author of this book, but are to be found in the teachings of the saints and sages. Here are some quotes from the various saints and sages who refer to the idea of “turning back”:

Sant Kabir says:

*By withdrawing (from the sense organs) and becoming absorbed in one’s own self the infinite light dawns and manifests. . .*

*Turn inward and move forward by gathering your dispersed mind. . .*

*When the water of a vessel (individual soul) merges back into the river (Inner Being; God) then we call this the state of supreme wisdom. . . .*

Guru Nanak Dev says:

*[Beholding] the inverted lotus which is full of nectar [indicating the joyous experiences within], now my mind goes not elsewhere.*

Sant Gulal Sahab also advises to go inward:

*Go inward and see the light permeating within...*

Sant Tulsi Sahab says:

*Turn inward and fly to the greatest heights, and leaving the various realms of existence unite your soul with the Divine.*

Sant Shivnarayan Swami says:

*Looking inward go inward and see the light permeating within...Lo! By closing the eyes behold the burst of light. . .*



Sant Dadudayal Ji asks his disciples to seek the Divine within:

*O benevolent one! Enter in your inner self, and search. He [God] is very near to you. Abandon all your worldly desires and distractions. By inverting your immature consciousness current (which tends to get distracted by senses) get established, in the self [within]...*

Sant Paltu Sahib says:

*There is an upside down well within and there one finds the burning flame of life. . .*

Gosvami Tulsidas Ji says:

*While the world thought that the Sage Valmiki<sup>14</sup> was reciting the name of Lord Ram backwards, he himself became like Brahman. Understand the power of Name. The great poet Valmiki became purified even by reciting Ram's name backward (by going inward).*

## **The Inner Journey Involves Reversing the Consciousness Current**

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century the great Sage Maharishi Mehi compared the ascending of consciousness to a fish swimming upstream. The mind must go inward, which is the reverse of its usual and easy outward path. Just as the fish struggles against the current, so an equal effort must be made to go against the current of the mind. By going inward against the current of the mind, one experiences the divine joy.





In the words of Sant Maharishi Mehi:

*The stream of celestial nectar is flowing from the subtle canal of the sushumna nerve. Like a fish the consciousness current is moving upstream.<sup>15</sup> Like a fish making its way upstream, the mind travels with consciousness away from the senses (the current) with great difficulty. (This will seem to the mind a difficult and “unnatural” course, as the mind is habituated to move toward the senses and the sensory objects.)*

But how exactly this concentration of dispersed consciousness and reversing it inward is accomplished? It is accomplished by collecting your mind within with intense focus. To understand this, we must illustrate examples from the physical substances. Whenever a physical substance is gathered in one place, as it becomes concentrated, gathered in a pile, it moves upward, whether the substance is a solid, a liquid, or a gas. The more subtle substance is more pervasive, its movement is faster, and it is capable of moving higher: water is more subtle than ice, steam is more subtle than water, and electric current or lightning is even subtler than steam.

The mind is inconceivably more subtle and faster than even the speed of light. Physicists have told us that the speed of light is 186,000 miles per second. We can see light, but one does not see the mind due to the subtle nature of mind. This is something to ponder: How fast can the mind travel when it is collected and



concentrated instead of being spread and dispersed in the external world? Now consider that consciousness is even more subtle than the mind and permeates it just as radio waves travel through physical objects. When collected, consciousness has the unimaginable speed. This is how (with the immense energy) the soul is capable of reaching God.

## **The Methods for Returning to the Divine**

### **Source**

As butter permeates milk, so consciousness permeates the mind. When the mind becomes concentrated so does the current of consciousness which permeates the body and mind. Therefore, the sants have given instruction about the ways to withdraw and concentrate the mind within. Maharishi Mehi elaborates on this in the *Philosophy of Liberation*. The following references are particularly worth studying:

In whatever realm of this universe one lives, it is natural to get the support from the predominant element of that realm.<sup>16</sup> Therefore, one who is dwelling in the physical realm will naturally take support from the material elements. It would be easier to utilize the sensory elements in the method to concentrate the mind.<sup>17</sup> Therefore, to begin to concentrate the



mind, one should make use of *Mānas japa* (mental repetition of the spoken name of God), and *Mānas dhyāna* (focusing on a physical manifested form of God). God permeates all realms of nature and the entire universe. The saints, prophets, sages, all radiant and all benevolent beings are myriad physical manifestations of the Divine Powers on earth. Fixing the mind on one of their images (*Mānas dhyāna*; focus on a divine form) facilitates concentration of the mind and prepares it to enter into the inner subtle realms.

In order to enter into the subtle realms, one must take support of the subtle element. One must therefore practice taking support of the subtle (non-material) element. Subtle support is “the infinitesimal point”. This point is visualized in the middle of two eye-brows. The infinitesimal point is also known as the subtlest of the subtle forms of God. *Bindu* (point) is defined as an indivisible point. It is too minute to be drawn or indicated in any physical way. *Driṣṭi yoga*, the yoga of vision is an uninterrupted concentration on (literally “seeing”) on the infinitesimal point. *Driṣṭi* is the power of seeing. Single-pointedness (intense focus) is attained by sitting with closed eyes and practicing uniting the beams of vision of both eyes. The technique of how to gaze on a single infinitesimal point in the center and concentrating the mind on that point is taught by the



teacher. This is known as *Driṣṭi Yoga*. In this practice it is advised neither to focus forcefully nor manipulate the eyeballs in any manner. The saints teach specifics of this *yogic technique*. By this practice the inner divine vision is opened. This is beyond the sensory dimension of seeing.

When the state of one-pointedness (complete focus) of mind is attained, it is possible to listen to the divine inner sounds which arise from the juncture of the material and subtle realms. These celestial sounds are not audible to the sensory ears. When the subtle state (*sukhma*, non-material) is reached, it becomes possible to perceive the divine sounds of the subtle realm. This sound has the inherent quality of attracting the consciousness to its point of origin. Once that sound is perceived, consciousness is drawn to the sounds of each successive and ascending realm until consciousness reaches the soundless realm (*shabadatita*). This is the realm of God (a State of Transcendence and Bliss). To achieve this, service to and association with a Sat Guru, as well as his instruction and grace are essential. The practitioner must also be diligent in practice.

The path described above can be summarized in the following manner. The four practices are gross to subtle in an ascending order: *Mānas japa*, *Mānas dhyāna*, *Driṣṭi yoga*,



*Nadanusandhana* (Sound *yoga*), and the Soundless *yoga*. The practices of *Mānas japa* (*mantra*) and *Mānas dhyāna* are the worship of the physical, qualified (personal) form of God. (God is perceived in various manifestations of name and form in the gross realm). The practice of the meditation on the infinitesimally small point, *Drīṣṭi yoga*, is the worship of the subtle qualified form of God (where God perceived as the infinitesimal point). Concentration on the divine sounds, *nadas* (other than *Sār Śabad*, the Divine Sound of the beginning, Logos) is the worship of the qualified formless Divine. As this meditation finally leads to the meditation on the *Sār Śabad* (the Original Divine Sound). The meditation on this essential Sound, *Logos, Adi Shabda*, is the worship of the Unqualified-Formless (the transcendent Godhead). This meditation is the culmination of all forms of worship. But without completely mastering all these practices and treading the inward journey, it will be impossible to reach the Soundless state (the realization of the Impersonal form of the Divine). This is the Realm of God and the attainment of *mokṣa* (the state of liberation). Reaching this the aspirant experiences absolute peace and achieves the ultimate goal of human life.



## Understanding the Twofold Nature of the Divine

What do the terms, *qualified* and *unqualified* mean when applied to God? The *Prashna Upanishad* states that in the beginning God created *prana*, that is, *Hiranyagarba*. This is also known as the *world egg* or primal matter, the germ from which the perishable beings are created.<sup>18</sup> The Divine Essence (God) Itself is beyond any distinctions and is without qualities (*gunas*).<sup>19</sup>

The *gunas* (the three qualities) exist only in the *manifested* universe. The essential being of God is beyond any attributes.<sup>20</sup> God (*Brahman*), the Primal Being, is Unqualified (*Nirguna Brahman*). God as the Personal Being (*Saguna Brahman*) is qualified and has attributes. In the *Bhagavad-Gita* (15: 16-17),

Lord Krishna speaks about the Two-fold nature of the Reality:

*There are two spirits (purushas; realities) in this world, the perishable (kshara) and the imperishable (akshara). All beings are the perishable; the unchanging is called the imperishable. But distinct in highest spirit, the Supreme Self (paramatma) thus called who penetrates the three worlds and sustains them).*



The Highest Spirit (*parmatma*) is the most distinct from the two beings (*purushas*). *Prakriti* (Nature, Material substance) in its primal state is congruous. In this primal state, the *gunas* (*sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*) stay in perfect balance. They represent three distinct actions: Creation, sustenance, and destruction. These three, the cosmic attributes or the *gunas* are represented by three manifestation of the Personal God (God with attributes): Brahma the Creator, Vishnu the Sustainer, and Shiva the Destroyer.

Sant Kabir says,

*The infinite impersonal supreme God is like a tree.  
The three Lords (Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva) are the  
branches of that tree, and the leaves sprouting from  
the branches are the world.*

Just as the three *gunas* arose from the Creator; and just as the world arose from the *gunas*; so from one absolute *Dharma* (the Absolute Truth; the Way), a sustaining principle which exists at the very basis of creation, there arose separate forms of religion (*dharma*), including Sanatana Dharma (Vedic),<sup>21</sup> Judeo-Christian, and Islam. The various religions represent the branches of one Tree. These *dharmas*, though they may seem divergent in various external ways, are related in the same way as the leaves and branches of a tree which arise from and are nourished by the same source.



The Holy *Koran* sheds light on the ultimate unity of the Truth:  
*In the beginning all people were of one community.  
Later people created different convictions and paths”  
(Koran 11.10). And “in the beginning people were on  
one Path (Koran 2.2).*

In the known history of mankind, *Sanatana Dharma* is oldest of the major *dharmas*, followed by the other *dharmas*, for example, Judeo-Christian and Islam. Due to differences of geography, culture, and language, these religions appear to be different from one another, but in fact, they are branches of one tree. The belief in the unity of God is the great theme of the major religions.

The *Rig Veda*, an ancient text of *Sanatana Dharma*, declares:  
*Truth is one; sages speak of it in different ways.*

The teachings of all *dharmas*, Vedic, Judeo-Christian, Islamic, Sikhism and other, as well as the words of the saints, great religious scholars and poets, all emphasize this fundamental oneness of Truth.

In the *Katha Upanishad* (5: 13) Yama explains this mystery to Nachiketas:

*As the one air has entered the world and becomes varied in form corresponding to the shape of the form of every object, so the one Inner Soul of all things becomes varied according to whatever form, and also exists outside..*





The Divine Essence permeates all beings yet transcends them. Shri Ram teaches this to Hanumanji in the *Muktikopnishad* (72):

*Oh, son of the Wind! Without sound, without touch, without form, without taste, without smell, and without name or caste, as the destroyer of all misery—this form of mine you should meditate on always.*

In the *Bhagavad-Gita*, Lord Krishna also advises Arjuna to meditate upon his form beyond the perishable and imperishable, which is Absolute and One. The Holy *Koran* is also filled with references to the unity of God. And the Lord's Prayer, the most common prayer of Christianity, addresses God as *our* Father, the Father common to us all.<sup>22</sup> The following quotes from different saints also reaffirm the oneness of God:

Sant Kabir Sahib says:

*My great Lord is one; I dare not say two. If I say two, this pleases not my Lord.*

Guru Nanak Dev says:

*There is only one Lord, the great Lord. By seeing His unity one is blessed with all treasures.*

Sant Dadudyal says:

*I found the beginning and the end within [my heart] and now this mind does not go elsewhere. Now Dadu is colored in the color of the One and is absorbed in that One.*



Sant Sundar Das sees the Divine present in every heart:

*One God resides in the heart of each and every person. Why don't you meditate on that one God? That God helps you overcome misery. Why do you forget that Lord? Four kinds of wealth are with him, eight kinds of siddhis (supernormal powers), and nine kinds of treasure can be obtained from Him. People who pray to any other than this great God have mouths full of dust [wasting away lives], warns Sundar.*

Gosvami Tulsidas says:

*The One [Supreme Being] is unspoken, without form, without name, without birth, the abode of knowledge and bliss.*

Sant Surdas says:

*If the mind wants to find God, it should leave the outward trappings of texts and external worship. Abandon texts and ceremonies; and be truthful in thoughts, words, and deeds! Then one will see the true Lord within one's own self.*

## **Unifying Principles in the Spiritual Path**

*Vedic dharma* has its temples, Christianity its churches, and Islam its mosques. But the real temple is the heart. God is attained within: the path to God lies within one's own self, as all the saints have taught this with unanimity. The inner path begins in *Sushumana*, *ajana chakra* (the tenth gate between two eyebrows).



One Faqir has said:

*O aspirant! Why are you wandering aimlessly outward (in the mosques, churches, and temples)? The path lies within, begins in sushumna, for meeting with the beloved (Lord.)*

Furthermore, it is said

*The deluded one does not understand that, although Mohammed is manifested and seen, Allah is unseen.*

Sant Maharishi Mehi says:

*Look for and search for God within yourself, within your own body. God resides in your heart—look for Him there. The white point shines straight ahead and twinkles. You must concentrate in sushumna by leaving the restlessness of the mind behind.*

*Where the subtle sounds vibrate in the ajna chakra, stay and make your dwelling. The door is subtle and sushumna is the point or window. With great effort, you can go through.*

## **In Reference to the Inner Spiritual Practice**

The inner spiritual practices of the major *dharmas* or religions, though seemingly diverse, have the same purpose and goal. *Japa* and *dhyāna* exist in some form in different religions. In Islam these are called *zikar* and *fikar*; in Christianity they are known as chanting and meditating. The beginning of *dhyāna* pertains to the physical form of the object of worship. The Sufis of Islam tradition meditate on the form of their spiritual teacher



(*murshid*). They become so absorbed that they even forget their physical existence. The similar experience is told in a story of the *Ramayana* where Sutikshna Muni became unaware of his body while meditating on Shri Ram.

The practices similar to *Driṣṭi yoga* and the *yoga* of Sound are also described in the Sufi tradition, where they are known as *saglenasira* and *sultanulajakar*. Through these practices the Sufi attains the divine states and ultimately merges in Allaha. Christian and Jewish mystics have also spoken of the same types of experiences in terms of the divine glory and celestial inner sounds.

The experience of Divine Light and Divine Sound are the arms of God which embrace the aspirant who practices them, as a child is embraced by the two arms of his father.

Lighting oil lamps in the temples, churches, and mosques, ringing bells, singing, praying out loud to extend our voice to God—these are all outer symbols of the inner experiences of divine light and sound.

Throughout this book, references to *Mānas japa*, *Manas*, *dhyāna* and *Driṣṭi sadhana and Nadanusandhan* (Sound *yoga*) are given.



In general, all sacred traditions have these four practices, usually with different names and different emphasis, perhaps, but still present. This progression of practices is a clearly marked path to God and is open to all—it does not discriminate among people of different races, religions, or sex (male or female).

The water of the ocean rises up in mist to form clouds. Then the clouds rain on the tops of the mountains, but the water cannot stand still there. It rolls down into small rivers, which merge with large rivers, and finally the water of the rivers makes its way back to the ocean. At this point in this cycle the water is no longer known distinctly as “river” because merging in the ocean it becomes the ocean. In the same way, the individual soul, having separated from God, wanders through 8,400,000 forms of life<sup>23</sup>. Once the soul has received true instruction from a genuine teacher, and practices the four forms of meditation diligently, it finally realizes God and becomes one with Him. The cycle of birth and death then comes to an end.

Gosvami Tulsidas says:

*As the water of a river merges with the ocean and becomes one with it, so the individual [in God] leaves the cycle of birth and death.*

Santmat teaches and spreads this knowledge of how one can find and merge with God. This tradition is not based on any one



particular saint. Santmat is an ocean, a universal tradition. In the ocean many different rivers are merged. In the same way, the voices of all the saints become one voice.

Gosvami Tulsidas says,

*Santmat is the unified way of all saints. It is devoid of discrimination and supported by the Vedas, Puranas, and sacred texts.*

Caste and class do not exist in Santmat. In it Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Jews, Christians, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis, and Bahai's are all brothers and sisters. Santmat understands the world to be one family, and therefore, Santmat unifies and harmonizes all spiritual traditions. It is hoped that by reading this book, the reader will reach the conclusion: Within the various religious traditions of the world there exists the one essential Truth and similar essential practices. The various *dharmas* are in essence one *Dharma*, and the path for anyone who wishes to reach God is one.

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<sup>1</sup> The Sanskrit word *dharma* means “sustaining principle.” The word *dharma*, often translated as *religion* in this book, is used by Santsevi Ji throughout this work. *Dharma* has no one meaning in English. It means “sacred duty,” “the principle or law that orders the universe,” “Truth;” *dharma* is both the path and the Goal. Religion, considered as *dharma*, is the path (conduct and teachings) which puts one in conformity with the true—and usually unseen—reality. *Dharma* is what makes one fit to have a vision of the Ultimate Reality.

<sup>2</sup> “The *Laws of Manu*” is the English designation commonly applied to the *Manava Dharma-sastra*, a Sanskrit compendium of ancient sacred laws and



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customs held in the highest reverence by the orthodox adherents of the Vedic *Dharma*.

<sup>3</sup> Jainism was originated in India. The main doctrine of Jainism is non-violence.

<sup>4</sup> “*Ahimsa satyamsteyam śouchamindriya nigraha.*” From the *Laws of Manu* (10/63)

<sup>5</sup> *Laws of Manu*, 8/350 [Generally speaking, it is a heinous act to harm a guru and a brahmin, but in confronting evil Manu does not make any exceptions.]

<sup>6</sup> *Mahabharata, Vana Parva*, 28.6.7

<sup>7</sup> *Mahabharata, śhanti Parva*, 162/164

<sup>8</sup> “*satyameva jayate nānratama.*”

<sup>9</sup> “*sukshmāgatirīhi dharmasya*”

<sup>10</sup> “Truth of *dharma* lies hidden in cave [of the heart]”

<sup>11</sup> The physical body is known as the city of nine gates, the seat of senses: We experience the material reality through the openings of two ears, two eyes, two nostrils, the mouth, and two excretion organs. The tenth gate, between the eyebrows, is invisible and is the gateway to the celestial realms.

<sup>12</sup> It is interesting to note that the mystical traditions of medieval Judaism, *Kabbalah*, are based on the metaphor of *Teshuvah*, the return.

<sup>13</sup> *Vedic Dharma* or *Santana Dharma*, generally referred to as Hinduism is considered to be the most ancient of all religions. By definition it is timeless and has no beginning in history.

<sup>14</sup> Sage Valmiki had been a criminal when he was approached by the great sage Vyasa. Vyasa asked Valmiki to repeat the name of *Ram* (a name of God). However, Valmiki was of a criminal mind and refused to speak God’s name. Vyasa therefore told him to repeat it backwards (MRA), which Valmiki agreed to do. Ram when recited backward becomes *Ram* again. Valmiki continued this repetition until he became radiant with spiritual power. He then wrote the great epic *Ramayana*.

<sup>15</sup> The *sushumna* nectar spoken of here is the divine nectar which is experienced by going inward. The experience is one of intense bliss and happiness.

<sup>16</sup> Shri Santsevi Ji uses the word “realm” to describe the various planes of existence. The gross realm is the everyday world that we live in; a subtler realm is called an astral world by the west. The heavenly regions would be yet another realm. These realms are experienced within in the states of deep meditation.

<sup>17</sup> Gross element here refers to elements of the mind and its relation to the senses.

<sup>18</sup> The *Bhagavad-Gita* with the Commentary of Sri Shankaracharya, p. 410.

<sup>19</sup> From the inchoate state (*Hiranyagarbha*; golden egg; the womb of all manifested creation) emerged the three *gunas*, or qualities. [In traditional Hindu cosmology, there are three *gunas*: *sattva* (lucidity), *rajas* (active), and *tamas* (passive or dark inertia). On one hand, these *gunas* represent the principles of



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physics, in that every material object, however fine, is the result of a certain combination and “crystallization” of these three qualities. On the other hand, the *gunas* are the language of metaphysics since these qualities are also principles of “activity,” that is, human states and principles of world creation can also be articulated by means of the *gunas*. Everything that results from the combination of these *gunas* is what is meant by the term “qualified.” That which is beyond the *gunas* is the unqualified. This is comprised of that which exists before the *gunas*, both in time and in priority.

<sup>20</sup> “The sun does not illuminate that (the eternal state of the Supreme Spirit), nor the moon nor fire. That is My supreme abode from which those who reach it never return” (The *Bhagavad-Gita* 15:6).

<sup>21</sup> The essential Truth, Sanatana Dharma is the foundations of the religions born in India: Jainism, Buddhism, and Sikhism

<sup>22</sup> The prayer Jesus spoke was modeled after the central prayer of ancient Judaism (the *Shema*): Hear! O Israel. The Lord Our God, the Lord is One. “*Adonai Eloheynu*” is Our God in Hebrew.

<sup>23</sup> According to certain texts of Hinduism the soul wanders through the cycle of thousands of life forms before attaining a human birth.