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DHARMA : ITS NATURE AND ROLE IN ANCIENT INDIA

by

J.P. SUDA*

“When the nations of the earth were sent forth one after another, a special word was given by God to each, the word which each was to say to the world, the peculiar word from the Eternal which each one was to speak. As we glance over the history of the nations, we can hear resounding from the collective mouth of the people of this world, spoken out in action, the contribution of that nation to the ideal and perfect humanity. To Egypt in old days the word was Religion ; to Persia the word was Purity ; to Chaldea the word was Science, to Greece the word was Beauty ; to Rome the word was Law ; and to India, the eldest born of His children, He gave...the word Dharma. That is the word of India to the world!”. These words of Annie Beasant are contained in her address on Dharma to the annual convention of the Theosophical Society in 1898. These words highlight two vital points : (a) the pivotal position that the concept of Dharma occupies in the thought and culture of ancient India ; and (b) its all comprehensive nature.

There can be no doubt that the word ‘*dharma*’ constitutes the core of the message of India to humanity. India herself reached the pinnacle of power and glory and retained it as long as her sons and daughters made Dharma the pivot round which their thinking and activities revolved, and also made it the basis of the pursuit of *artha* and *kama*. When they abandoned its principles and began to practice *adharma* in their personal and social life, national decline and degeneration was inevitable. India fell from her high pedestal, lost her freedom to foreign invaders and remained subject to the domination of foreigners for centuries.

Vivekananda, the great Patriot-Saint of modern India, who opened the eyes of America and Europe to the spiritual greatness of India, frequently remarked in his triumphal tour, undertaken on his return from the famous Chicago Parliament of World Religions, that spirituality constitutes the very soul of India, and that if her people gave it up, the backbone of the nation would be broken and the Hindus would become an extinct race in the space of three generations.² This sentiment that

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1. Annie Beasant, *Dharma* (Madras : Theosophical Publishing House, 1964), 1.
2. Vivekanand, *Lectures from Colombo To Almora* (Calcutta. Advaita Ashram, n. a.), 68.

Dharma indeed constitutes the very life-breath of India and is the key for unlocking the secrets of her vitality is shared by other spiritual leaders.

That, *dharma* is the word God gave to India, is borne out by the declaration of Lord Krishna in the fourth chapter of the *Bhagwat Gita*. In the well-known 7th and 8th verses of this chapter, He assures us that whenever *dharma* declines and *adharma* flourishes, He incarnates himself and assumes the human form for the protection of the good and destruction of the wicked³. The entire theory of Avatarhood rests on the view that it is the Divine Plan to secure the victory of *dharma* or Righteousness over *adharma* or Evil in the conflict between the forces of light and darkness, that is constantly taking place in the heart of every individual as well as on the cosmic plane.

PLACE OF DHARMA IN ANCIENT HINDU THOUGHT

So central is the place occupied by the concept of Dharma in ancient Hindu thought that one whole book or *parva* of *Mahabharata*, namely, the *Shantiparva*, is devoted to its exposition. Bishama describes to King Yudhishtira, popularly known as Dharmaraj, the intricacies of *rajdharma*, which is extolled as the refuge of all living creatures and leads to the realisation of not only the three-fold end of life but also to *moksha* or spiritual salvation. *Rajdharma* is believed to be the means of controlling the world like the reins controlling horses. Should *dharma*, as observed by King, get confused, disorder would set in the world and everything would be plunged in darkness and chaos. When the King abandons his royal *dharma*, the *dharms* of all the four classes of society and of the four *ashramas* of life also disappear.⁴ In view of this vital role played by *rajdharma* in life, it is not surprising that the protection of *dharma* was regarded as the most important duty of the King, and the King, himself as the Protector of Dharma. In this connection, attention may also be drawn to the highly significant observation made by Vidur in the course of a discussion with the five Pandavas on the relative position of *dharma*, *artha* and *kama* as legitimate ends of human life. He said that *dharma* was manifestly the highest goal on earth, that it was by *dharma* that the sages of old entered into the *Brahman*, and that it was on *dharma* that the three worlds were based.⁵ The remarks of Vidur are symptomatic of the belief widely held in the country at that time.

A passage from the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* also brings out the

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3. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Bhagvadgita* (n. a.), 189-90. Here the reference is to shlokas VII & VIII of chapter IV.
 4. See U.N. Ghoshal, *A History of Indian Political Ideas* (Bombay : Oxford University Press, n. a.), 189-190. See also Zaehner, *Hinduism*, (London : Oxford University Press, 1962), 140-163.
 5. *Ibid.*, 151.

supreme importance of *dharma* in the divine governance of the universe : "He (the Brahman) was not strong enough ; he created still further the most excellent *dharma* ; *dharma* is the *kshatra* ; of the *kshatra* ; therefore there is nothing higher than the Dharma ; thenceforth even a weak man rules the stronger with the help of *dharma* as with the help of a king, thus the *dharma* is called the True, and if a man declares what is true, they say he declares the *dharma* and if a man declares the *dharma*, they say he declares what is True⁶". *Dharma*, thus we observe, is made coterminous with the created world ; *Brahman* was not strong enough to rule over it by himself ; *dharma* was created to remove the deficiency and help Him. Secondly, *dharma* is equated with Truth and made superior to *kshatra* that may be understood as physical and political force which sustains the socio-political structure of society.

According to some commentators on the famous *Brahma-sutra*, an enquiry about the nature of *Brahman* can only follow an enquiry about the nature of *dharma*, and not precede it. Even if this interpretation is not acceptable, there can be no doubt that the knowledge of *dharma* was closely associated with the study of the nature of *Brahman* which was deemed to be the ambition of every religious aspirant in ancient India.

Lastly, it may be urged that *dharma*, along with *amrta*, is the one word which recurs frequently in the entire range of Sanskrit literature. This is because the two concepts cover almost the entire totality of values sought after by man. The observance of *dharma* gives one what has been called *abhyudayu*, i.e. social welfare through the efficient regulation and control of the physical, politico-economic and social environment ; while *amrta* is concerned with *nihshreyasa* or spiritual freedom.⁷ Manu's famous four-fold goal of human life is an affirmation of the contention that *dharma* was an all inclusive value. According to him, the supreme goal of life is *moksha*, or spiritual deliverance from bondage to the lower senses, which can be achieved only if the pursuit of *artha* and *kama* (our wealth-procuring and desire-satisfying activities) are subordinated to the principle of *dharma*. In other words, Manu makes observance of *dharma* the supreme principle of life. All the values man seeks in association with his fellows are inseparably connected with its observance. A society whose members follow its dictates prospers and attains to the highest measure of social security and welfare. On the other hand, their violation is followed by individual social decline and ruin. Modern India has not made any progress worth the name in the direction of social justice and social security and equality because *dharma* no longer rules and inspires our lives. The way to build up a new social order based on the principles

6. See, U.N. Ghoshal, *o.p. cit. supra* n. 4., 23.

7. Swami Ranganathananda, *The message of the Upanishads* (Bombay ; Bharatiya Vidya Bhawan, 1968), 150.

of liberty, equality, fraternity and social justice is to rehabilitate *dharma* in our personal and social lives. If we want to redeem the nation and give the poor and the needy their due, we must spiritualise our political, economic, educational and other activities. This is what Mahatma Gandhi, the Father of our Nation, sought to achieve and achieved to some degree.

VARYING INTERPRETATIONS OF DHARMA

Let me examine briefly the all—comprehensive character of the concept of *dharma*. No single word like religion, law, morality or goodness can possibly convey the deep and rich meaning which this term has acquired in the course of the development of Hindu thought. This is the reason why it is untranslatable in any other language. As Annie Beasant puts it : The term *dharma* covers all those varieties which God gave to the various nations, namely, religion, purity, science, beauty and law. It, thus, includes conformity to law, observance of moral principles, performance of right acts and leading a truly religious life.

Etymologically, the Sanskrit word *dharma* is derived from the root *dhr* which means 'to hold, have or maintain'. The *dharma* of a thing may, therefore, be described as that form or power which makes it what it is and prevents it from becoming something different. Water remains water so long as it has the power of wetting things, and fire remains fire so long as it burns whatever is put into it. What keeps the whole universe in order and everything in its proper place is *dharma*. In the words of Motwani, "it holds together the different orders of life, such as mineral, the plant, the animal, the human and the superhuman; the different stages of physical, vital, mental and spiritual evolution of an individual; the different levels of consciousness, such as sleep, dream and dreamlessness; the different social groups, such as those of teachers, public servants, merchants and manual workers; the different levels of values for different groups in different climes and countries. All those modes of human activity derive their meaning and significance only when integrated into a meaningful pattern, which is *dharma*. *Dharma* is a mode of manifestation of the One into the Many in time and space and of the process of integration of the Many into the One. An adequate understanding of *dharma* demands synthetic vision that can embrace this vast panorama of life as one unified pattern".⁸

This conception of *dharma* as cosmic law, permeating and sustaining the entire universe and binding into some sort of unity the different orders of life and the different stages at which different orders have reached in their spiritual evolution, is based on the theory of

8. Kewal Motwani, *Manu's Dharmashastra* (Madras : Ganesh & Co., 1958), 24.

Evolutionary Spiritual Monism, which may be regarded as the quintessence of Indian wisdom. Annie Beasant also defines *dharma*, in similar terms,, as the Inner nature, which has reached in each man a certain stage of development and unfolding, plus the law of growth for the next stage of evolution.⁹ In short, *dharma* is not an outer thing, it is the inner unfolding of life which moulds all outside it to the expression of itself.

Originally, *dharma* signified nothing more than the observance of vedic rites and injunctions. In the *Mimansa sutra*, *dharma* is described as that good which is determined in accordance with Vedic ordinances. This view is supported by *Kumarila*, according to whom the term stands for Vedic sacrifices leading to good results.¹⁰ In a word, at the time when vedism reigned supreme in our land, *dharma* was identified with what was set down in the Vedas and the Smritis to the extent that the dictates of the latter did not conflict with those of the former. Thus understood, it was easy to define clearly and precisely what it signified. In this sense, *dharma* meant either religion or both religion and law. Thus interpreted, there is little room for emotions, mystic feelings and intellectual powers in its content.

Manu adds a new element to the meaning of this term when he defines it as something which is enjoined by the Vedas and is followed by the learned who are above attachment and antipathy and to which the heart assents.¹¹ But the idea that *dharma* lies in following the customary practices of good people was not widely accepted at that time. The observance of Vedic injunctions continued to constitute the essence of *dharma* for long. Even today a large number of Hindus hug the idea that *dharma* mainly consists in observing the principles and prescriptions as laid down in the Holy books.

At a later date, however, some commentators extended the meaning of *dharma* to cover morality in general and some of cardinal virtues in particular. Brihaspati, for example, regards kindness or *daya*, patience or *kshama*, appreciation of the virtues of others, avoidance of an extreme sort of asceticism, performance of approved actions, and charity, as forming part of universal *dharma*¹². Vishnu counts patience, control of mind and senses, purity, charity, non-injury, kindness, going on pilgrimage, absence of greed or covetousness, and adoration of gods and *brahmins* as forming part of *dharma*.¹³ *Yajnavalkya*, similarly, speaks of

9. Annie Beasant, *op. cit. supra n. 1*, 8, 17.

10. Surendranath Dasgupta, *A History of Indian Philosophy* (Cambridge : University Press, 1921), IV. 2-3.

11. *Ibid.*, 6.

12. *Ibid.*, 9.

13. *Ibid.*, 9.

ahimsa, satya, asteya, indrinigrah, dana, dana and *shanti* as constituting universal *dharma* for all. He thinks that the highest of all *dharma*s is self-knowledge through *yoga*.¹⁴

The *Bhagwata Puran* defines *Dharma* as consisting in the worship of God without any ulterior motive ; it is worship performed with perfect sincerity of heart by men who are kindly disposed towards all, and have freed themselves from all feelings of jealousy¹⁵. Sridhar goes one step further and omits reference to the worship of God from the meaning of *dharma*. According to him, the *dharma* of a thing does not lie in any external requirement ; it arises out of a thing's own nature, and in the case of man, manifests itself as soon as impurities are removed.¹⁶

The idea that an individual realises his true *dharma* only when he sheds off all the impurities is of fundamental importance ; it paves the way for the identification of the concept of *dharma* with the notion of *rita* which signifies cosmic or divine order. *Rita* also means Truth, A person who realises his true *dharma* establishes true relationship with the Absolute. The primary qualifications for reaching this highest of all stages are the absence of the feeling of adwesh or ill-will towards the whole of creation and love for all. It culminates in *bhakti* or perfect devotion to God. We may, therefore, say that *dharma* is that which leads us to ultimate knowledge through complete devotion to God. It cannot be identified with observance of scriptural injunctions and the performance of ritual alone.

In this connection, reference may be made to the views of the great saint of medieval India, Tulsidas. In the course of his delineation of *Ramrajya*, he says that the *dharma* which was universally observed by the people in the reign of Shri Rama rested on four pillars : *satya, shauch, daya* and *dana*, which may be rendered in English as truth, gentleness, compassion and charity. In a later context, he identifies *Dharma* with the spirit of devotion to the welfare of others, where he says:

“परहित सरिस धर्म नहीं भाई”

Finally, it may be said that *dharma* is not something fixed and static, one and the same for all things and persons and at all times, but is subject to growth and varies from person to person, group to group and age to age. What is *dharma* for a *shudra* is not *dharma* for a *brahmin* and vice versa ; what is *dharma* in normal times may not so remain

14. *Ibid.*, 9.

15. *Ibid.*, 10.

16. *Ibid.* 10.

17. Tulsidas refers to these four pillars of *dharma* in the *chaupai* following *doha* number 20 in *utrakhand*. The second statement (cited in vernacular) appears in the *chaupai* following *doha* number 40 in the same *khand*.

under abnormal circumstances. *Dharma* in *kaliyuga* is different from *dharma* in *satyuga* or *treta*. More important, than the fact that different persons and groups have different *dharmas*, is the fact stressed by Lord Krishna in verse 35 of chapter II of the *Bhagwat Gita*. Therein, He says that it is far better for a person to perform his own *dharma*, however destitute of merit it may appear to be, than to do the *dharma* of another person, however meritorious it may be. It is better to meet with death in the discharge of one's own *dharma* than to seek glory in that of another ; the *dharma* of another person is full of danger.¹⁸ The concept of *swadharma* is the pivot of Krishna's exhortation to Arjuna to face the enemy in the battle-field and not to shirk fighting.

FORMS OF DHARMA

From the nature and comprehensive character of *dharma* we may now turn to its various forms. Its diverse forms are due to its functioning at different levels. At the highest level, it takes the form of the order of law in the universe. It is because of the *dharma* which is eternally immanent in the universe, that every object behaves in a specific manner and all are held together in a meaningful manner as parts of an integrated whole. It is the cosmic *dharma*, which keeps the innumerable planets in their proper orbits, and makes the sun shine and give light and warmth, the moon coolness and the clouds rain and the earth bear plants and give food, etc. It is because of this cosmic *dharma* that there is the regular succession of seasons and of day and night, etc. *Dharma* has no moral aspect when viewed as responsible for the operation of law in the physical universe at large as well as in the plant and animal kingdoms. *Dharma* comes to acquire the moral aspect only when it is reflected in the human world. Here, it signifies the observance of righteousness, justice, truth, non-stealing, love, charity or compassion, in our dealings with others. In a word, as applied to our social and individual conduct, *dharma* means moral behaviour. It is coterminous with social ethics. To a large extent, it is the same for all the members of a society, however much its specific content may vary from one social group and one country to another social group or country.

At a lower level, we have the various *dharmas* of the different classes in society. For example, there is the *rajdharmas*, or the *dharma* of the king, the *brahmin-dharma*, the *kshatriya-dharma*. We have also the different *dharmas* of the *brahmachari*, the *grihasti*, the *vanprasthi* and the *sanyasin*. These specific *dharmas* show considerable variations. The *dharma* of the *shudra* is to serve others, that of the *vaishya* to produce wealth and hold it as trust for society at large, of the *kshatriya* to defend society and even risk his life in it, and of the *brahmin* to study and

18. See, *Suloka* 35 of chapter II of the *Bhagwadgita*.

preach. Before discussing why these differences arise, we may draw attention to some features of *dharma* as it operate in the human kingdom. In the first place, each type of *dharma* is determined by two different factors, one external and the other internal. The external factor consists of the customs and traditions which regulate the conduct of individuals and groups. It was the traditional *dharma of the raghuvanshis* to keep their word even at the cost of life, and of the brave *rajput* women to perform *jauhar* (i.e., to burn themselves alive) rather than allow themselves to be captured and molested by a victorious enemy. Chivalry was the customary *dharma* of the knights of Medieval Europe. The internal factor consists of the degree of self-awareness and qualities or talents of the party concerned and his ethical code. Both these factors have been taken into consideration by Manu while prescribing the *dharma* for each of the four classes and the four *ashramas* into which he divides the society and the life of an individual respectively.

The second point deserving attention is that conflict is bound to arise between the external and the internal factors mentioned above, and also between *dharma* as determined by scripture and the *dharma* as it is written in the heart of man and his social conscience. The tradition of the *raghuvanshis* required that Rama should not shoot an arrow at *Tarka* who was a woman, but the order of the guru was to kill her. Obedience to the order of the royal priest and the wishes of his mothers required Bharat to assume the royal powers during the period of Rama's exile, but his brotherly devotion demanded a different course. The *Mahabharata* is full of examples of such tensions. It is not easy to resolve such conflicts and find out what an individual should do in a given situation. Different individuals and social groups, thus have their respective *dharmas*.

CAUSES OF THE DIVERSITY OF DHARMAS

Diversity or variety is as much a characteristic feature of the manifested as is unity of the unmanifest *Brahman*; it would lose its rationale and purpose if this variety were to disappear and the universe were to be reduced to an undifferentiated whole. It is essential for the development and perfection of the universe as a whole. As Annie Beasant puts it: "By the multiplicity of parts working together in one harmonious whole; infinite variety of differences and the manifold combinations of each with each, shall speak forth the law of divine thought, until the whole thought is expressed in the totality of that perfected universe."¹⁹ She again observes: "The perfection of the universe is perfection in variety and in the harmony of inter-related parts."²⁰

19. Annie Beasant, *op. cit. supra n. 1*, 10.

20. *Ibid.*, 12.

The diversity of parts is an inherent feature of an evolving whole. Our universe is also an evolving whole and was not brought into existence by one single creative act on the part of God. Living forms emerge into existence one after another. Thus, it happens that at any given period of time there are forms of life of various ages and at various stages of development. In the words of Annie Besant "There are germs (forms of life) younger than minerals, making what are called elemental kingdoms. The developing germs called the mineral kingdom are older than these. Germs evolving as the vegetable world are older than those of the mineral, that is they have a longer stretch of evolution behind them ; the animals are germs with a yet longer past, and the germs we call humanity have the longest past of all."²¹ The implication being that the one, eternal and infinite Life, that is at the source and root of the universe, manifests itself in different grades and stages of evolution. The differences seen in the world are, thus, an indispensable feature of our evolving universe. It is these differences which are responsible for the varying *dharma*, of each part. Further, these differences result from the infinitely diverse ways in which the three *gunas* or attributes of *prakriti* namely, the *tamas rajas* and *sattava*, and their modifications, combine and arrange themselves in individual beings. We may, therefore, say that, to a degree, the *dharma* of a thing is that line of conduct which is determined by the stage of evolution at which it has reached and its inner nature. The *dharma* of a *brahmin* is different from that of a *vaishya* or a *kshatriya* because the former stands at a higher rung of the evolutionary ladder and has a preponderance of the *sativic* element over the *rajasic* and the *tamasic*.

There is yet another element in the full meaning of *dharma*. It is not only determined by the inner nature of a thing and the evolutionary stage it has reached, but also lays down the law of the next stage in evolution. In Mrs. Besant's words : "My *dharma* is the stage of evolution which my nature has reached in unfolding the seed of divine life which is myself, plus the law of life according to which the next stage is to be performed by me... I must know the stage of my growth, and I must know the law which will enable me to grow further ; then I know my *dharma*, and by following that *dharma* I am growing towards perfection".²²

This means that for a true understanding of one's *dharma*, a person must not only know his present stage but also have some idea of the next one. Complete ignorance of the latter is likely to lead him astray and, thereby, delay his evolution.

Since the *dharma* of an individual (or a class) is largely fixed by the stage at which he has arrived at in his evolution and also provides the law for its next higher stage, it becomes incumbent on us to add a few words

21. *Ibid.*, 15-16.

22. *Ibid.*, 17.

about the nature and goal of evolution. Darwin, Spencer and other nineteenth century evolutionists spoke of the evolution of the bodily organism, evolution of the species, and of social evolution. They seem to have had no notion of the evolution of the human spirit with which alone the concept of *dharma* is indissolubly connected. That the why the *dharma* of an individual changes with his spiritual growth, even though his physical body does not appear to have undergone any corresponding change. The *dharma*s of the *shudra*, the *vaishya*, and *kshatriya* and *brahmin* are widely different because they represent different levels of the evolution of the human spirit. As a man passes from one *varna* or class to the next higher *varna*, his consciousness develops and he comes to acquire qualities which did not belong to him earlier. In consequence, his *dharma* also changes. According to *Manu* the *shudra* stands at the lowest stage of evolution. He has just crossed from the animal to the human order. As such, he lacks knowledge and judgment. His duty or *dharma*, therefore, consists in obeying his superiors. Obedience, devotion and fidelity constitute his qualities. By steadfastly discharging his duties and learning the lesson of service in the course of several lives, he is born as a *vaishya*. The purpose is to enable the developing soul to acquire new faculties. According to Annie Besant, these are the faculties of justice, just dealing between man and man, shrewdness, frugality, avoidance of waste and extravagance, etc. She declares ; "It is merit in the *vaishya* to be frugal, to refuse to pay more than he should, to insist on a just and fair exchange. All these things bring out qualities that are wanted and would conduce to future perfection."²³

Having learnt to acquire wealth with energy and shrewdness and spend it with careful discrimination and liberality, the soul next takes birth as *kshatriya*. There, it acquires the qualities of courage, firmness, fearlessness and the capacity to lay down life itself in defence of a just and noble cause. It is the *dharma* of the *kshatriya* to protect the weak and punish the aggressor. After having acquired the capacity for self-sacrifice, endurance and fortitude in the body of a *kshatriya*, the evolving soul is born in a *brahmin* family where it learns new lessons in piety, forgiveness, compassion, self-control, purity, etc. Qualities like these prepare him for the final goal of evolution, which is becoming one with the Divine Consciousness. This is the reason why *dharma* is sometimes described as the transcript of *moksha* in the time process and under human conditions, and as the unique privilege of man.

CONCLUSION

Whatever helps the evolving soul to cultivate qualities which bring it nearer and nearer to God and finally enables it to realise oneness with

23. *Ibid.*, 41.

Divinity is its *dharma* ; and whatever obstructs and retards this process of self-realisation or God realization is *adharmā*. To those who deny the reality of the human soul and its potential divinity, *dharma and adharmā* would be words without meaning. They can never transcend the idea that the promotion of personal and social welfare is the highest goal of human life. They uphold the secular philosophy of life according to which the *summum bonum* of life is the pursuit of the greatest amount of happiness. To such person the Upanishadic prayer of

“*Asato ma sad gammya,
Tamsō ma jyotir gammaya,
Mṛityo ma amrit gammya,*”

sounds as mere jargon, as devoid of any significance.

Moreover, the ancient Indians had a very comprehensive conception of spirituality. In the *Bhagwatgita* Shri Krishna declares that *yoga* means skill in action. In terms of *Isa Upanishad*, true spirituality confers on man an all—round efficiency, efficiency in the field of action and efficiency in the field of thought and contemplation. This all-embracing efficiency results from a total or comprehensive vision of Reality which combines belief in both *vidhā and avidyā*. The *Isa Upanishad* points out that he who worships *avidyā* only goes into deep darkness.²⁴ This means that a person who adopts the secular and positivistic view of the world cannot attain real knowledge ; he abides in spiritual darkness. But this *Upanishad* is equally emphatic in declaring that he who delights in *vidyā* only goes into deeper darkness. This means that he who conceives reality as transcendental only and, therefore, unrelated to the world, also fails to arrive at the total truth. Total life-fulfilment comes only when the ‘here’ and ‘hereafter’ are bound together in one integrated whole. This is exactly what the concept of *dharma* teaches us. There is no opposition or incompatibility between the demands of the earthly life and those of spiritual life. The two can and should be combined in an integrated whole, as is illustrated in the lives of saints all the world over. Adapting the famous saying of Kant we may say that *avidyā* without *vidyā* is blind, and *vidhyā* without *avidyā* is empty. In other words, worldly pursuits and activities acquire value and significance only when they are related to a spiritual conception of the nature and meaning of life. Conversely, spiritual meditation becomes barren and fruitless if it is divorced from earthly life.

24. Swami Ranganathananda, *op. cit.*, *supra*, n. 7, 135.