

Evil, Suffering & Salvation



A Comparative Perspective in Religions

Prof. Nitin J. Vyas

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M.A.; Ph.D.

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The VVCRF is grateful for his service and this yeoman contribution to the humanity.

Excerpts from the book may be quoted with proper acknowledgement.

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Dedicate to my Parents
Shri Jayantilal S. Vyas
&
Smt. Jasuben J. Vyas

यं मातापितरौ क्लेशं सहेते संभवे नृणाम् ।
न तस्य निष्कृतिः शक्या कर्तुं वर्षशतैरपि ॥ मनुस्मृतिः १२/२२७॥

*(Even in the course of a hundred years, a son cannot repay the
trouble which his parents have
undergone for the purpose of bringing him up.)*

विपदो नैव विपदः

सम्पदो नैव सम्पदः ।

विपद् विस्मरणं विष्णोः

सम्पन्नारायणस्मृतिः ॥ पांडवगीता ॥

What we call calamities, are not real calamities and what we call treasures are not real treasures. Forgetting God is the calamity and remembering Him is the treasure.

- Pāṇḍavagītā

FOREWORD

For the believer, non-believer and agnostic ‘*evil*’, once it is faced, becomes *a problem*. Ivan and Aloyisha are characters in the novel ‘*Brothers Karamazov*’ who raise the problem of evil. The answer that these two brothers give are different: Ivan remains an agnostic before a mountain of evil and his brother Aloyisha renews his faith-commitment, in the midst of the sufferings that he cannot wish away. In the Old Testament we come across a book of Job, wherein the problem of *evil* is brought in a dramatic manner, beginning with the dialogue between God and Satan, centered around the holy man-Job. Victim of untold miseries and calamities inflicted by the Satan-the evil force; broken as he is to pieces this saintly man Job pulls himself together in these words: “The Lord gave, and now He has taken away” (Job 1.21). For Job all the evils did not make him deny God. He turned these evils into opportunities to transcend, to grow and to surrender to the ineffable Mystery. Even his own wife, unable to fathom the Mystery of suffering had only this admonition to Job: “why don’t you curse God and die” (Job 2.9). Those three friends of Job, who visited him, almost reduced to sores and wounds, looked at the suffering of Job and tried to analyze the reasons of these evils. But all their analysis from the view-point of spectators, from outside, could only add to the torments of Job. (Job 16.1)

Yes, Evil is *a reality* and that you and I *cannot* run away from or escape. For a rationalist approaching all realities with a faith in an extensive, omnipotent scientific method, and a verification reducing everything to objective verifiable analysis, evil-apparently, at least – is always a potent weapon against any kind of religious belief.

The attitude of my friend Dr. Nitin J. Vyas, in the present study is not of a skeptic or that of an agnostic. He is not an onlooker

or a tourist facing evil in different forms. His is a *real quest*, a kind of pilgrimage. In all sympathy he goes through sources and resources of the different religious traditions, all the time remaining tuned to the answers that he hears from these different shrines around his own concern-evil. He notes down what he hears on the origin, nature and solution of evil. Thus he does not in a piece-meal style of one who does the language analysis; rather he is well tuned also to the particular world vision, the *Weltanschauung*, the metaphysical positions of each of these traditions. Entering these holy places Dr. Vyas focuses his light on the man of religious attitude- as illustrated in the book of Job-on the ‘*transcendent agent*’ (Ch.VI). His study leads him to rule out any ‘cold stoicism’, and ‘optimistic but blind pantheism’ and ‘pessimism of a disappointing hedonistic nature’ as adequate answers to the problem of evil (Ch. II). Rather to face evil squarely, to enter evil, to develop an attitude of compassion and contemplation is the response that the author gives as his response, so that we can overcome fatality by creative growth, through responsible choices in an atmosphere of freedom.

Perhaps the distinction between problem and mystery of Gabriel Marcel, may be of help as a tool in solving the riddle of evil. For any believer evil is not a problem to be analyzed in a detached manner as from outside as a spectator objectively studying the reality to be analyzed, looking through the lenses of a scientist. This ‘problematic’ approach is not that of any believer, of any religion, studied in the present work. Only in dynamic involvement, in the attitude of an actor, only from within, can one attempt at a solution of this reality-evil. The study before us of Dr. Nitin Vyas states this clearly: “The problem of evil is not essentially an abstract problem as a problem in mathematics”. He goes on to make this new step of saying that the religious approach to the knot of evil is one of ‘*reconciliation and harmony*’ (Ch. IX).

The author has his own preferences as to the analysis of evil

and as to the solution offered by the different religious traditions. Obviously he does not hide the preference to the Indian traditions, holding them better than the Semitic traditions. He does this giving his reasons for this value-judgement. It may be the case, all may not see eye to eye with this value-judgement.

Dr. Nitin Vyas is personally known to me in the sessions of the Indian Philosophical Congress. He is drawing his own very true picture in these autobiographic words: “I recall that a decade ago, I entered the department of Philosophy, Baroda.. Inquisitiveness and love for philosophy were the only factors of my mental makeup”. Yes, this inquisitiveness and love for philosophy so remarkable in that young seeker, is so evident before us in the present study. You are free to agree or disagree with his conclusions. But we cannot deny the fact that long arduous study has gone into the research of this young philosopher.

One more point: In this study we have this additional advantage-we have in our hands, in very clear languages, a short, condensed, introduction into the basic tenets of the different major religious traditions. This book is, for those interested and involved in the dialogue between the followers of different religions, a hand book for their very noble cause, in the growing spiritual fellowship, reaching out beyond the boundaries of this or that particular religion.

Congratulations.

Fr. Dr. Albert Nambiaparambil
Director
Inter-Faith Centre
Via Martino V 26 B
00167 ROMA-ITALY

PREFACE

The present work is an attempt at understanding the problem of evil as dealt with in various religions. The religions which I have taken into account are those of Indian origin, namely, Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism; and of Semitic origin, namely Judaism, Christianity and Islam. I have also taken into account Zoroastrianism.

Each religion discusses the problem of evil in its own way. The aspects of the problem that I have referred to are: the origin of evil, the nature of evil and the solution of the problem of evil. On all these points every religion has to say something of importance. Each religion has its metaphysics and in consistency with that metaphysical standpoint, it discusses the above mentioned aspect of the problem.

The book is divided into three parts. The first part consisting of two chapters, deals in general with the nature of religion as such and the place of the problem of evil in it.

Generally speaking religion has both its transcendental and empirical aspects. It has a conception of Supreme Reality or God as the case may be. It also takes into consideration the nature of the phenomenal world and of the individual self. Especially how the world and the self enter into relationship with God is an essential metaphysical problem of religion. The origin of the evil could be traced with different emphasis either in the nature of the reality or that of the world or of the individual self or man. Evil could be metaphysical or moral or physical in nature with certain further permutations and combinations of these. Howsoever we may begin with the ordinary experiences of evil in our daily life, on reflection we are led into its deeper and deeper metaphysical roots. How far evil could be said to be real and absolute, and how far could it be regarded as merely apparent and relative, how evil is related to good and how far evil could be eliminated from our day-to-day life and also from its deepest roots by following certain moral and spiritual

practices are some of the main issues in religion in relation to the experience of evil. We are mainly interested in the practical suggestions made by religions regarding the methodology of the removal of the evil.

In the second part of the book I have gone into the details of the above aspects of the problem as delineated in the different religions. There are four chapters, dealing respectively with the metaphysical standpoint of each religion, conception of origin of evil, nature of evil and the solution of the evil as found in the respective religions.

The third part divided into three chapters, makes concluding observations regarding the general direction of all religions towards the process of realization of the ultimate goal looked upon as the Supreme God. Here comes the general axiology accepted and worked out by various religions. Then I have tried to make a comparative evaluation of these religions with respect to their contributions to the problem under study. The last chapter discusses the question whether there could be a complete and absolute solution of the problem of evil. The author is of the opinion that though apparently there is no final concrete solution to the problem, yet religions make man hopeful in the realizable possibility of a birth of a new man who is able to transcend his ordinary life pervaded with a sense of dualism and finitude, and thus reach a stage of experience beyond categories of his ordinary lived life. The evil has actually to be fought at two levels in two ways namely, the empirical external action or the spiritual inwardness of the vision. It is the latter with which religion is concerned, but it is not opposed to the former also.

In a strictly secular society as today, it is difficult to grant the problem of the evil and suffering from the spiritual angle. This problem is treated just as purely a natural phenomenon or at best as psychological happenings, which by its very nature calls for elimination of the corresponding hurdles and hindrances. The secularist does not bother at all as to why evil and suffering should exist, why man should be subjected to it and why it is so with the

universe. The present study which puts emphasis on the latter perspective examines and reflects the deepest emotional and intellectual aspects affecting in his distinct religious directions.

In fact the whole issue of evil and suffering is of perennial significance. The consideration of the problem of evil deserves acute and urgent attention in the modern times. The conflict is greater today than ever before. For, in spite of the unbelievable and unprecedented material riches, man suffers from an agonizing spiritual malady. Man has begun to feel an inner void, which he seeks to escape by accelerating an intensifying his pursuit of external things. Sooner or later man yearns intensely to seek a way out. The innate human evolution is retarded due to the increased importance of the material life which has no future. It is the spiritual evolution that is more significant than mere material conditions. Until man evolves inwardly by keeping away from self-centeredness to spiritual search, there can be no end to his sufferings. The task of religion is appropriately aimed at bringing out the potential perfection inherent within man as the means of overcoming the evil.

I may make one clarification. Chronologically Zoroastrianism is far earlier than all Semitic religions as well as Indian religions barring only Hinduism. Still I have placed this religion at the end of each B section of the part two. This is so only for the sake of convenience. Placing the two traditions of Indians and Semitic religions together only make an easy access to gamut of thought consecutively.

I must sincerely express my heartfelt thanks to those without whose help I could not have completed my work. I recall that a decade ago, I entered the Department of Philosophy, M. S. University, Baroda. It was just a period of my amateur studentship full of wonder and naivete with unsteady footings and shaky apprehensions. Inquisitiveness and love for Philosophy were the only factors of my mental makeup. But these were not enough by themselves, as psychic growth and maturity called for much more.

It was here at the Department that I had countless opportunities both in formal and informal learning in life which has helped me derive the sense of clarity and confidence, sustained aptitude and assertion. The horizons of knowledge and wisdom which I experienced here are enough to meet the future varieties and vagaries of life.

Accordingly, I am greatly beholden to my professors. They are Prof. A. G. Javadekar, my guide of the present work, Dr. B. G. Desai, Miss Sunayanaben Divetia and Shri Harihar Prapanna. They have always shown an unreserved care and attention to me.

Equally, I wish to record my feeling of indebtedness to Shri Bhogibhai Gandhi, Prin. Ranchodbhai Patel, Dr. Kamalkant, Prof. A. N. Jani and Prin. R. M. Nimkar. Forever I shall cherish with deep gratitude my close association with them since long.

I am very much grateful to Rev. Fr. Albert Nambiaparambil for kindly contributing a Foreword to the book within a short period of the request. In spite of his continuous long tours as well as the heavy responsibilities as an organizer and a convener of the recently held World Parliament of Religions, he could spare time to go through my work and write a few words for it. I sincerely thank him for the same.

Prof. Prataprai M. Modi, Shri Priyakant R. Joshi, Shri Pradyumn Dave, Shri Ramanlal L. Vyas, Shri Ishwerbhai S. Patel, Shri Dadubhai Patel, Shri Ajit Vyas, Shri Chandrakant Parmar, Smt. Jyotilaben Yajnik and Smt. Sumohaben Medh assisted in various ways while the book was under preparation. My humble thanks are due to them.

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institutions directly and indirectly whose list is too long to be mentioned here. With good wishes and regards to them all.

Painter Tanaji Lane,
Behind Market,
Baroda-390001

N. J. V.

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SECTION - I
RELIGION AND THE PROBLEM
OF EVIL

Chapter I

THE RELIGIOUS QUEST

The pursuit of religion in man has arisen to satisfy the definite need of man. From the time immemorial man discovered that the sphere of his senses was not all. But something more still lay beyond it. The raw material of religion, this 'consciousness of beyond' within man slowly grew from the unconscious mind to the conscious will, emotion and understanding, and thence to the supra-conscious spirit.

Thus, the faith in religion progressed gradually from crude animism, spiritism and ancestor worship to the faith in the supreme universal reality of God. It is a march from crude primitive outer levels to inner search, from ritualistic action to moral action and from moral action to mystical and metaphysical purpose running through all creation.

It is rightly held thus that "religion is man's reaction to the totality of things as he apprehends it"¹. It is the response of the whole being to the call of God.

1. Definition of Religion:

To form an all-acceptable definition of the term 'religion' is not an easy task. For, religion is too comprehensive a phenomenon to

accept a set definition to be an ultimate one. The root of religion lies deeper in the particular complex of feelings, thoughts, habits and strivings which make up the warp and woof of human life. It means that the meaning of religion is not man-made but it is to be explored continuously. For religion is "to effect in some way or in some measure a vital adjustment however tentative and incomplete to whatever is reacted to or was or could be religious."²

(i) Etymological meaning not enough:

Etymologically the term religion is derived from the Latin root '*re legere*', which means rejoining of the man with his original source. It is in this sense, for instance, Christianity asks man to be perfect as our father in heaven is perfect, or as Hinduism speaks of the struggle of the aspiring soul to become divine.

But the common practice to seek etymological meaning is inadequate, leading to too narrow or too wide understanding. Thus, for many, religion is a continuous devotion to the Supreme Being or God or some high ideas as such or some others may identify religious life with many other attitudes and opinions whereas some others take it to be an emotional or aesthetic development.

In this context here, the Sanskrit word '*ādhyātmikatā*' suggests a better deal, which means that religious search leads oneself to higher and higher goal of the spiritual life. This spiritual life is a unique exercise of the metaphysical quest of self-transcendence given to a man. This knowledge of the reality of being of higher and supersensible nature is not to be concluded as a subjective construction.

The spiritual activity or faculty which, Rudolf Otto speaks of as 'universal in mankind',³ is an autonomous, dynamic and intelligent phenomenon of human existence. It is an '*a priori*' consciousness which has its own inner structure. That is, in other words it is "the property of an action or its cause, when the action is exercised or the cause subsists without intrinsic dependence on matter."⁴

(ii) Way of life:

Without taking recourse to history of religion or catalogue of definitions, it suffices for our purpose when we broadly say that religion has to do with a way of life and a pattern of behaviour. But not all our patterns of behaviour are religious. These as described by Prof. Paul Schmidt, are those which are “concerned with human relations, with relation to other parts of nature and with an outlook regarding the whole of nature and life.”⁵

Like speculative philosophy, the religious objective too, is a search of the nature and the structure of the supreme reality and to indicate the relation of this reality to the world process and man. But unlike speculative philosophy, religion is oriented to man’s realisation of a deeper truth of his existence, of supreme and infinite value which commands universality and makes for his being. In other words, “metaphysics analyses the structure of being in itself, while religion tries to discover the meaning of Being for man.” Thus, religion is a pursuit of an infinite value. It is referred to as “a commitment to a kind of quality that purports to recognize a source beyond itself.”⁶ But it does not mean a mere consciousness of value as Kant would have us believe, or a mere form of knowledge as Hegel often urged. There is in religious pursuit a mystical element, an apprehension of the real and an enjoyment of it for its own sake.

2. Finite versus Infinite:

The belief in the all-pervading Infinite and Supreme God is the basic conviction of religion. The finite man’s striving for this is not after a false infinity, but it best satisfies man’s emotional needs and makes for the stability of life. “It invests” to quote, Prof. Mukerjee, “man’s life with meanings, significances and values in terms of a beyond.”⁷

Man must know his duty and destiny and his vital relations to the universe. The roots of this search lie deeper in the hidden depths of the human spirit. Its outstanding trait is its expansiveness, its illimitable quest to experience more widely and profoundly and

perceive in ubiquitous unity with the whole of Being. It is a striving for the union with an Omnipotent Being.

The ceaseless discontent and dissatisfaction felt by man in his finite nature is the genesis for his search of reality. The evocative codes of scriptures or evocative statements regarding God make for such attitudes. This felt experience, which is either revealed or intuited, is indeed very expansive, allowing all the conative, cognitive and affective faculties of the human mind to be indistinguishably harmonised.

3. Human Nature:

(i) Spiritual Aspect:

Unlike other creatures, the human existence has a significance of its own. Man is a more complex organism representing a unique order of reality. Unlike animals which are the slave of circumstances and passing moments, man is capable of standing aside from the process of nature and judges it. He can have an objective assessment of himself and the world.

At the macrocosmic level the unity of matter, life, mind, reason and spirit is not given as a fact. But the same is evidenced at the microcosmic level of man. Human life is a quest for unity. At a lower level it may be an adjustment to the outer environment, but at a higher level the man has an appeal to the demands of spiritual unity.

This rules out the mere mechanical interpretation of human nature. Although man's nature is based on impulses but in higher and more precise form, it becomes the search for better and better purposes. Man's inner call not only decries and rejects conventions by other conventions, rules and ideals, but also it means to live beyond their guidance, control or aspiration. An Upaniṣadic statement substantiates this very much when it says that "true knowledge makes one free."⁸

The fact that insofar as the psycho-physical instincts are concerned, man's being on par with other creatures of the Universe is undeniable. So the proper welfare of the body is indisputable, and in

reality "it is indistinguishable with his spiritual quest."⁹ But this physical welfare is only of an instrumental nature, so as to seek and give a meaning and value to the feeling and discreet experiences of life. Dr. P. T. Raju's contention is noteworthy when he says that "change below man is non-purposive, purposive change which is a result of rational reflection, is peculiar to man."¹⁰

(ii) Qualitative Aspect:

Besides quantitative measurements, it is construed that qualitative analysis is also one of the aspects of human experience. The sage Yājñavalkya was right when he said that "everything is dear for the sake of one's own self."¹¹ It is this nature which makes for valuation, and its avowed aim is the enhancement and enrichment of human life.

This is why, in spite of man possessing physical, mental and moral riches, he has a constant sense of inadequacy. Now, if this is not mechanical and does not originate from material life, then it must be sought for in the depth of human personality.

But for this qualitative distinction man would have remained human animal cut off from cosmic values and potentialities. Notwithstanding the physical environment and biological needs of human history, the superior call of the spiritual nature in man has saved him from mere physicalism and biologism. It is only as a particular human being one is an individual, but so far as this call of spirituality in man is concerned one strives for participation in this universal process.

The struggles and conflicts are inevitable phenomena in the process of spiritual elevation. Thus no imminent factor can exhaust man's self-transcendent nature. It is the unique aspect "which testifies a 'higher' sphere of reality without which most facts of human life would remain unexplored."¹² This concept of 'transcendence' characterises all religious experiences, which involves something of the qualitative difference of human nature.

4. Religion and Value:

Value pursuing consciousness after all is an empirical one, and it has biophysical and psycho-social correlates. Valuational discrimination is an essential nature of human intelligence. It is enough to say at this stage that the transcendental search of religion cannot be identified totally and only with this value consciousness.

The point is that the aim of religion is to have knowledge or vision of Supreme Reality or God. Religion is an experience of the inner life and is to be judged by its own standard. Though this religious experience does not give any final knowledge, it points to the process of dealing with the inadequacies of the above value-pursuing vistas of knowledge. The root of religion lies deeper than feeling, willing and thinking. It is from this deeper nature of its reality that religion probes and evaluates the meaning of the actual status and happening of life.

5. Religion and Ethics:

The pertinent problem is that if ethics also means striving for an ideal, then it is not identical with religion? But the fact is that the ethical system is characterised by human limitations, whereas religion is an attempt "to circumvent or minimise the limitations of what underlies the efforts of man."¹³ It is an attempt of "transcending oneself from narrower, purely biological and circumstantial, yet even hereditary"¹⁴ limitations.

Ethics takes for granted man's finiteness and expects disciplined behaviour. But religion reveals the deeper side of man. Though man functions with conditioned limitations his unknown and greater potentialities cannot be ruled out. In reality, ethics derives its value from religion only.

In fact ethics goes beyond itself into religion. That is in other words, ethics must make religion its basis, else the ethical standard would be just a tolerant self-interest. Dr. Radhakrishnan truly upholds that "the sense of spirituality and longing for righteousness go together."¹⁵

There has been a long history of the close connection between morality and religion. Moral ideals as well as conceptions regarding God have developed gradually from simple beginnings. Both are concerned with the desirable and the Good. Still, religion tends to be superhuman as its source is transcendental reality. To the religious conviction what is highest in spirit is also deepest in nature.

The transcendental realm of spirituality is a drive towards minimising the limitations of 'fact' and 'ideal'. As referred to earlier, this being a qualitative experience, we cannot have an exact quantitative verification. Man continues to struggle to realise the ethical values, and the realised ethical values become spiritual facts.

Morality represents only an imperfect stage of man's revolution. The moral sanctions of religion are thus needed only up to a certain stage. This is why though all religions have a scheme of moral discipline and value, they are also much more than this. It is not enough merely to do good, but one has to be good also. This is a new dimension altogether beyond the reaches of relative morality. Here there are no strife of the conditional world and separation from reality or God. It is religion which enables us to leave our little self behind and effect the way out of its limitations.

6. Supreme Reality:

God or Supreme Reality is referred to as a supreme self-evident power, the original and immutable force behind all creation. It is the Superhuman and Supersensuous Supreme Being who is the vision of eternal life consisting in the transcendence of all the limitations imposed by the temporal world.

This reality has both the immanent and transcendent aspects. Its experience has arisen from man's unique numinous sense of sanctity. There is a feeling of awfulness, overpoweringness, fascination and it evokes emotional satisfaction in man. One experiences this vital power in the deepest centre of one's self. It is only in expression that some speak of it as Father, or as Judge or forgiving Lord.

Religion tries to seek this great power controlling the universe with the feeling at the core of its search. Through subtle discrimination and reflections on issues like birth, life and death, man is led to the one great source. Whatever name one may give to this reality, it has a timeless existence.

7. Religion and Faith:

The faith in this supreme reality is the substance of the things hoped for and the projection of the fundamental aspirations. It is a quest on an everlasting life, a faith that is awakened to itself. It is an attitude of worship and obedience to Supreme Being by which all actions are governed.

The religious words are meaningful 'in faith' and not 'outside faith'. It is not a cognitive achievement so much as it is a matter of personal decision and commitment. It is this commitment which provides the norms of our life and judgement. Man finds as a result of his religious beliefs and practises the enlargement and enrichment of his personality and the deeper flow of his life. Delivering from anxieties and insecurities, the faith enables one to strive constantly to realise the ideal.

8. Religion and Personal Bearing:

Religion is distinctly the experience of an influence which has entered into the individual from a realm superior to himself. Religious experience cannot be understood merely from observed data, for it is also a felt experience. Through faith in the supreme reality, man seeks for the integral fulfilment of every moment of his life. For it, to quote Prof. Macdougall, "he (man) not only makes contact with this realm but also shares in it and in turn can contribute something, however little to it."¹⁶

This quest of religion is as old as man himself. The thirst for the supreme reality is the basic emotional requirement of man, which consists of "all those factors held together by the feeling of sacredness with which they are apprehended."¹⁷ True harmony ensues from the knowledge of the supreme reality and accordingly, one is led to purification, transformation and sublimation.

Thus, one has to make constant efforts to be religious. It is much more than mere faith, for religion has its roots in experience. That is, in the words of Prof. Whitehead, religion is “what the individual does with own solitariness.”¹⁸

Simultaneous with metaphysical reflection thus, religion is also an action in accordance with the result of that reflection. The propositions of the supreme reality point towards something inexhaustible and eternal in man’s experience. Gabriel Marcel appropriately conceived of this Supreme Being as that “which does not allow itself to be dissolved by the dialects of experience.”¹⁹ Man is a part and parcel of this mystery wherein he cannot separate himself from it. The genuine approach consists in man’s direct participation in this experience and not mere pictorial understanding of it.

9. Still religion is not supernatural:

Even if one regards religion to be dealing with transcendent supernatural reality, the very fact of the embodiment of man requires it to be natural. Its belief in the higher principle implies only this, that as life transcends matter, and mind transcends life, so the object of the religion transcends the category of mind too.

No doubt, one has to struggle hard for this spiritual elevation. One’s inwardness has to be pushed to the deepest spiritual limits. To agree with Prof. Raju, “to be an ideal is not necessarily to be unattainable and unreal or unnatural. Only we have to broaden our concept of the natural.”²⁰ Religion is supernatural which only means that it is non-empirical and autonomous in character.

In fact there is no chasm or hiatus in the continuous spiritual activity of man. The secular and non-secular are divided only at face value, in substance they are inseparable.

10. No denial of empiricism:

Empirical approach may disprove certain religious beliefs, but it does not disprove religion itself. Admittedly that religion is concerned with the quest of an ideal, but it does not mean that it is against the descriptive and factual empirical search. For unless the

cosmos is conceived as created and guided by a meaningful power, the objects of the world lose their lasting significance. In its practical aspect religion is a reflective vision and an ever-increasing understanding of the truths already known.

In fact the empirical world is a source of due endeavour in realising the Supreme Reality. Empirical existence is only a means to an end of the dynamic spiritual process, which lives and grows in time, though the whole of it is not found at any one part of time. Dogmas and fables, myths and miracles do not help here, if religion is to be the vital factor of life.

11. Religion and freedom of self-determination:

Determination in man cannot be rooted out as it is a common feature of all things in the world. But at the same time the moral dimension in man is invested with responsibility. Making the conscious choice by man brings out this aspect of freedom in the form of self-determination, which is not the case in other animate or inanimate existence.

It only means that though all our volitional acts and decisions are conditioned by causal factors, self-determination with personal initiative and action cannot be denied its value. Freedom in its religious aspect is concerned not so much with the mundane achievements as with the continued consciousness of our constant relation with God.

By free will it is not meant that there is a will or decision which is unaffected by causal or determined factors. But that our volitional acts or decisions while being determined by such causal factors are not wholly shaped or determined by them. Thus, all activities may not be freely originated by themselves, but they are originated in the basic freedom of the self in making preferences.

12. Reason and Intuition:

Reason proceeds by analysis and differentiation, observation and experimentation. It is a critical faculty which handles and controls the objects and its workings. Intuition on the other hand is a simple

and direct perception. It is a total view where the mind in its totality surges forward to know the truth.

Thus the aim of reason being limited and compromising is attainable and optimistic. But the infinite reality being incommensurable with finite intelligence, the nature of religious quest is thus of contemplative character. In other words, religious datum of concrete experiences cannot be ignored as something mysterious and unknowable. The intuitive revelation is the beginning towards the revealing of the mystery of the supreme reality. That is, it is a different level statement, unexplainable by the causal chain of the scientific sense.

By its own virtue, the intuitive search of religion fulfils the human need for perfection. This should not be misconstrued as non-secular, only it does look beyond itself for meaning or validity. According to Prof. D. M. Datta this intuitive quest of religion is "the inner dialectic which makes one constantly strive for fuller and purer views of truth, corrects the sources of self-deception."²¹ Religion being a dynamic experience, it is not so much a rational construction as intuitive realisation.

13. Religion and Bliss/Freedom:

Religion pursuit aims at man's spiritual freedom. It is an attempt at continuous transformation to higher forms. It is an evolution directing to another dimension of life which rests above the earthly pulls and pressures. It is here in the infinite and all pervading pursuit of Supreme Reality or God, one experiences the sense of rest and fulfilment, eternity and perfection. It is a conversation to a vision of unity and light, giving rise to inner bliss and power, joy and freedom. It is the highest state of insight and self-mastery wherein spatio-temporal limitations are transcended. It is the acme of Good. All other goods, including ethics, are only instrumental to this supreme good. This is the supreme exercise of freedom which proves itself in midst of a continued choice of opposites.

It is in pursuance of this philosophic background, the religions of the world present the means of salvation for man, the *summum bonum* of his existence. For these religions the solution to the problem of evil is a most crucial one. It is here they face a serious intellectual problem and a great practical challenge. It is in religions that the problem of evil originates and acquires the most acute form. These religions speak of a plan and teleology, of a moral and spiritual order of the universe. Thus metaphysically man must be aware of the true nature of this supreme reality and orient his life accordingly. In due process of realisation, this religious quest will lead to eternal good and happiness on one hand and save man from psychological frustrations and miseries of the conditional world process on the other.

Notes :

- ¹ *Philosophy of Religion*, D'miall Esward, Calcutta, 1963, p. 12.
- ² *An Encyclopaedia of Religion*, V. Ferm, p. 647.
- ³ Refer to 'Idea of Holy', Rudolf Otto, p.136.
- ⁴ *The Philosophical Quarterly*, J. De. Marneffe, S. J. 1955 (October), p. 66.
- ⁵ "Empirical Theology" in *Hibbert Journal*, Paul F. Schmidt, 1962-63. p.66.
- ⁶ *Introduction to Religious Philosophy*, Macgregor, G. Mifflin Co., Honghton, 1959, p.2.
- ⁷ *Sickness of Civilization*, Radhakamal Mukerjee, p. vii.
- ⁸ *Sā vidyā yā vimuktaye*.
- ⁹ Refer to the famous Sanskrit maxim, Viz., *Śarīram ādyam khalu dharma-sādhnam*.
- ¹⁰ *The Concept of Man*, Allen and Unwin publication, London, 1960, p. 336.
- ¹¹ *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* Dialogue, 11.iv.1-14.
- ¹² "The meaning and significance of spirituality in Europe and India", in *East and West*, Summer, 1961, p. 107.
- ¹³ *A Modern Introduction to Ethics*, edited by Milton K. Munity, Illinois, p. 302.
- ¹⁴ A. R. Wadia, *Essays in Philosophy*, edited by N. A. Nikam, Bangalore, 1954, p. 280.
- ¹⁵ *Religion in a Changing Society*, edited by V. Ferm, Allen and Unwin, 1937, p. 22.
- ¹⁶ *Religion and the Science of Life*, Willium Macdougall, Methuen and Co, London, 1934, pp. 5-6.
- ¹⁷ *Encyclopaedia of Religion*, V. Ferm, p. 647.

¹⁸ *Religion in the Making*, A. N. Whitehead, Cambridge University Press, 1927, p. 6.

¹⁹ *Metaphysical Journal*, Gobriel Marcel, translated by Bernard Wall, London, 1952, p. 181.

²⁰ *Concept of Man*, P. T. Raju, *op. cit.*, p. 370.

²¹ *Philosophical Perspective, A Selection of Essays*, D. M. Datta, Bharti Bhawan, Patna, pp. 74-75.

Chapter II

THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

The experience of evil is the most obvious common lot of animate existence in general and human existence in particular. It is an inescapable universal condition of all living entities. While for the animate existence evil remains merely in the form of its experience, it is in man alone that evil does not remain only a matter of experience. Man suffers not insofar as he is an animal but insofar as he is more than an animal. On account of the reflective nature of man, evil is raised to the status of a problem of evil. In the case of man, religion and the problem of evil, both originate together in the rational nature.

This is how the religions of the world give this problem a place of central importance. The issue for them is, how to account for the seeming contradictions and incoherencies of good and evil in our experiences, and that too in face of the existence of God or the supreme spiritual order? How is one to reconcile between the metaphysical and moral attributes of God on the one hand and the existence of evil on the other? To ask poignantly, how can the suffering person find his relationship with God?

This is the inner paradox of the very problem dealt within this book. Presently it is enough to admit that man's real quest of God is

most desperate only in the darkest experiences. It is thence only the good God responds to evil and suffering by being most near to man.

1. Definition of evil:

Man experiences miseries and sufferings in all their concrete forms and these are inseparably connected with the problem of evil. It is difficult to define clearly and comprehensively the concept of evil or account for its existence by any rational method. But it is understood that as good and happiness is the felt experience which is agreeable to body, mind and heart, evil is diametrically opposite of this and people seek to avoid it. It is an absence of happiness. It is the antithesis of good, that is, it is painful and undesirable, dysteleological and disapproved.

Generally the dualistic sensitivities of good and evil originate from the constant and repetitious feelings of pleasure and pain, happiness and unhappiness. Thoughts and feelings regarding attachment and non-attachment, taste and distaste, likes and dislikes grow out of this stable categorization. As we shall see further, the events and circumstances in themselves are not self-explanatory. They are neither good nor evil, but it is the mental valuation which accounts for the same.

In place of abstract theoretical considerations of the problem of evil versus omnipotent God, we seek a practical religious approach to the concrete experience of evil in the world. In fact all religions, as we referred to earlier, stress the need of liberation from this evil existence which is both metaphysical and psychological. Hence when we look into the constituting substance of evil, the religions trace it to the origin of creation itself, whereas our ideas of evil originated with the birth of moral consciousness in man.

1.1 It has an extensive influence:

Evil has an extensive influence and it has an immense power. "There is", as Schopenhauer said "not much to be got anywhere in the world.....it is evil which generally has the upper hand."¹ To him there is nothing in the realm of reality to which he can give any credit,

security or guarantee. On one hand man suffers from his natural inherent weaknesses and limitations, on the other hand there is a deceptive initial attraction towards evil too. In spite of our struggles and various ways of ending evil and suffering in various aspects of life, total freedom from it is our haunting quest. This search for supreme good and happiness is always a live issue for man.

In fact, there are innumerable conditioning factors for man and they keep on growing unexpectedly and unpredictably in the evolving nature of reality. Accordingly, man confronts various aspects of evil both individually and socially.

Man, on his part, employs many temporary palliatives with long-term and short-term effects to seek release from evil and suffering. But this is no way of removing evil completely. Everyone has to face it in one's relative realm with contextual consequences.

In the conditioned world of cause and effect, evil with all its varieties cannot be denied. One cannot escape it and has to bear it. Life as such, both with man and animal is suffering. No doubt, the types of variability and intensity of evil are multiple. But the distinguishing point is that whereas animals have physical and at best mental sufferings only, man has other dimensions of moral and spiritual sufferings as well.

1.2 It is an essential condition of life:

We noted earlier that the mere theological consideration of the problem of evil in relation to God's goodness and omnipotence is beyond our purview here. For this is too intractable an issue to have a clear conception of it. Again, this attempt at understanding evil with reference to God's goodness diverts the attention from the actual existence of evil and suffering to God, and what is more it makes our analysis mainly of moral evil as superficial.

Thus, with reference to this theological issue, taking analogical explanation of evil as darkness (i.e. it is merely the absence of light) or in amateurish belief of personification (i.e. Satan in flesh) are no proper answers. The concept of the devil is a primitive one and

it means nothing more than an anthropomorphic suggestion. This way we cannot have either a clear understanding of the problem of evil, or its solution as given in the different religions.

Evil and suffering is not a problem that affects man's life intermittently. It is not a chance occurring but constitutes essentially the very condition of his life. This evil appears to be perpetuated in all our strife and struggles and the same evil is "perpetuated in the struggle against other and different evils such as injustice and disloyalty."² That is, evil has myriad forms. So our basic query is with the general problem of evil relating to human life. In contrast to the specific nature, religions probe evil from an evaluative inquiry of intuitive insight. When the supreme reality is all inclusive, even all the descriptive search becomes the part and parcel of the general evaluative inquiry of reality.

1.3 Some varieties of evil enumerated:

To recapitulate evil in general, as it is in our experience means in any sense something that is repugnant and intolerable, and hence worthy of being directly or indirectly resisted or avoided. It represents all that we find as error and disorder, pain and misery etc. etc. In opposition to good which we call happiness or absence of suffering, we would see herein that evil is suffering from, and wanting of, many things.

Again, as there are different views regarding the concept of good and happiness, which are uniquely sought in one's own way; so it is with evil and suffering too? There are different kinds of evil and suffering and accordingly the good or the way out is desired. Besides the natural evil, moral evil and spiritual or metaphysical evil which are examined in detail later on in this chapter, some other kinds of evil could be enumerated as following:

(a) Psychological or bodily evil:

It consists of all pains, privations and discomforts which are the bodily ailments. Often one suffers from nervous and sensuous

breakdown too. This suffering works on the gross plane existence which is divided by the barriers of space and time.

(b) Mental evil:

Our desires, thoughts and mental modifications play much part towards attaining happiness. But disorderly desires always lead to the discrepancy between our illusions and reality. Disappointment here manifests in greed and anger, envy and malice.

(c) Imaginary evil:

Fantasies and imaginations of mind make for many flights in the past or future hurdles and obstructions. Truly man suffers very much when passing through these mental projections.

(d) Volitional evil:

In the tendency to follow animal passions, man very often ignores ethical ideas. Temptations of flesh predominate over the aspirations of the spirit.

(e) Intellectual evil:

Ignorance is also difficult to remove. Improper thinking leads to varieties of evils.

All these various kinds of evil do not have absolute distinction, for they are interrelated in various ways. These are only a few instances of evil occurring to man from known and sometimes unknown realms. If their causes are known rightly, man can free himself from the evil influence in a fair measure too.

But in spite of all these efforts for centuries, man cannot do away completely with the abysmal depth of evil influence. Commonly man knows only the empirical aspects of evil and hence employs, though in vain, only empirical means in search of an absolute way out. Though granted some positive gains, the record of human history proves contrary to man's search for absolute good and happiness. For, merely to take into account the survival value of man's psycho-physical and socio-economic existence, is giving too low a view of human nature. At stake is man's destiny and his masterhood.

Thus, even at this evident juncture of human evolution, man's feeling of emptiness and meaninglessness is great. There is a loss of freedom and spontaneity. Mentally there is much confusion and imbalance, for "stresses arise out of the uneven rates of change."³ Today Man has yet to assert his higher nature.

1.4 Evil in the context of man's higher nature:

Besides its empirical aspects, evil is experienced as the feeling of misery and suffering from man's transcendental aspect too. This indicates in another way that the essential criterion of 'good' and 'happiness' is not only the empirical one of the dualistic nature, but it has a transcendental reference also. The empirical existence of contraries is mainly due to the feelings of likes and dislikes, depending on the cordiality or incordiality of senses. It is the external factors that chiefly count in this pragmatic and practical consideration.

A subtler and conscious spiritual and philosophical attempt is a must for the wholesome happiness and fulfillment of man.

Let us be clearer and deal further with natural evil and moral evil respectively.

1.4.1 Natural evil:

Tennyson rightly called the natural calamities as 'red in tooth and claw'. Horrible earthquakes, devastating floods, famines and pestilences are fraught with terrible destruction and misery to all living beings. In spite of all precautions, the wrath of nature in one form or another is an inevitable havoc which is beyond the control of man. Mill truly opines that "nature functions as if with the most supercilious disregard both of mercy and of justice."⁴ For man, in a way being the part of the vast and infinite panorama of nature is subject to all the processes of nature.

In fact nature is man's cradle as well as the grave. In this respect man cannot be its monarch. Ordinarily the working of the natural forces is essentially neutral which cannot be assumed to be in service of man. Again the idea of evil in this physical realm mainly

arises due to man's maladjustment with nature and his irrational ambitions.

It is admitted that from the larger viewpoint natural laws are neutral and are mainly directed towards the preservation of the universe as a whole including man. But insofar as the problem of natural evil in relation to man is concerned, it is of unique nature. It is an individual matter with subjective and psychological fact. For, naturalism by itself cannot even explain natural things. That is, natural evil is not self-explanatory, and it is beyond the reach of scientific instruments. It only leads to the conclusion that ultimately physical evils cannot be resolved in physical terms only. For a better grasp of the problem of evil, man must embark on a new avenue of understanding.

1.4.2 Moral evil:

If we can understand that the physical experience of evil is the outcome of moral evil, we are led to seek a moral judgment which by its very nature claims to be objective. Moral evil is a tragic sense of suffering due to a difference between what is and what ought to be. It works on the subtle plane of images unlimited by space and time. Moral guilt and moral approval is another dimension in man which has an incurable dissatisfaction and righteous wrath of misdeeds and unmeritorious actions. Moral evil is an opposition to the moral order of the universe.

The individual fails in the process of realizing the moral ideal. It is either the human weakness or lack of courage to pursue a goal or the defective notion of one's good which leads to moral evil. It is in the failure to master the imagination that human servitude resides. It constitutes an impediment to the realization of self awareness. Anyway, the source of moral evil is complex, but mainly it deals with the attitude of the individual towards the world outside and himself within.

One is apt to consider as evil all that comes in the way of one's attainment of the moral ideal. It may be either due to:

(a) The tainted social influences:

Knowingly or unknowingly, along with the good forces, evil forces of the society also play on the incipient impulses of man. Here the man becomes at once the object and the subject of society. That is evil is also defined "by the social structure and one's location in it, by an individual's experience, and by his tendencies to interpret the experience in given ways."⁵ The prevailing injustice and imbalance of the various social aspects and institutions leave much negative influence on man.

(b) Due to Oneself:

Man's mind is the field where the struggle of good and evil has been there all throughout the history of man. Narrow self-interests and cravings, desires and solicitations of lower nature wage war with higher spiritual nature of man.

The divided self of man is at the root of the whole problem. When the man is a self-conscious product of evolution, he is no longer a nature-directed entity. Man is a combination of two forces of the lower and the higher self, the former pulling him down to commit sin and latter pulling him up to do good and virtuous. It is left to man to make a choice between the two. Very often it is the flesh that proves stronger than the spirit.

Moral evil is thus explained in the context of human freedom. To this effect we shall see that all religions accord due importance and significance to human freedom. And so, to arrive at a clear understanding of the issue of evil, we leave aside the non-moral and non-voluntary natural evil as the seat of the problem. If the man is free to act, he must be free to originate evil acts too.

But the very fact of the possibility of free choice both ways, a freedom to do good or evil, evidences that this freedom is liable to be corrupted. It is not that man always opts and strives for good and happiness. When a man falls short of his ideal behaviour, it is moral evil. In other words, as Prof. Grave puts it, "moral evils are not

necessary, but necessarily possible consequences of freedom.”⁶ Moral evil is necessarily a product of human conditioning; still it originated through the exercise of his free will only.

Now the corollary from moral evil, that is by its virtue of being evil, it must be necessarily related to sufferings in some way or other. In case of violation of social laws one faces the respective social consequences of the place and time. But from the religious point of view, moral evil is the transgression of the law of the Supreme Reality. In this latter case of the transgression of God’s law, man looks from the same narrow self-good which has prompted man in the former moral system itself. And what is more when due to the influence of moral evil, one is led by the motive that it is better to break the law than to follow it.

Thus, from the religious perspective moral evil is the complete subjection of the human spirit which is regarded as the crown of God’s creation. It is this metaphysical lapse which is the crux of the unique tragedy of man. For all religions, striving to realise the supreme good or happiness is incumbent on all men. It is the will of God that justifies our quest of good. To disregard this is the basic alienation from reality.

2. Man’s violation:

Thus, unlike nature, man is very much inclined to the breaking of various laws. To some extent he can overlook the physical and bodily laws too. But we see that man frequently violates the social law, the moral laws and the spiritual laws. Constant battling against these evils makes man incapable of enjoying the blessings of life. The lack of moral determination is accompanied by the deficiency in the power of moral appreciation too.

3. Evil lurks in the heart of man:

History of man shows that evil is located in man himself. Prof. C. E. M. Joad also maintains that “evil is so wide spread, so deep seated.....and that evil is endemic in the heart of man.”⁷ It is in the nature of the selfish ego which is much pampered and it works as a

powerful factor in corrupting the individual. Evil dominates in a variety of ways in the individual as well as society.

This evil tendency in the heart of man is a chronic malady. Still, within the heart lies its remedy too. The fact is that man possesses both the divine and diabolical spirits. Thus the covetous, selfish and short-sighted ego causes a sense of separation and self assertion. Such isolation causes faltering, weakness and an impression of confusion and meaninglessness, an understanding of the real human worth.

Man must realise that the remedy lies in him only. So long as the attitude of exclusiveness persists, the problem of evil cannot be solved. The narrow outlook is ego-centric one, which makes man view wrongly as if he is himself the centre of the universe. It precludes man from rising to his higher plane.

Thus the problem of evil from the religious perspective rules out any hedonistic inclination. The so-called definition of good and happiness from hedonistic outlook is a relative and a partial judgement. The world order being a part and parcel of the supreme reality as such, it is a false dignity on the part of man to look for a change in it according to his subjective wants. The defining of good and evil in terms of mere sensuous satisfaction is untenable religiously. This concept of evil is the judgement in the context of some metaphysical or ideal state of being, painfully felt as unrealized in the actual. It is a disquieting spiritual experience.

4. Evil from a higher metaphysical aspect:

We can see by now that the concept of evil from a religious viewpoint is unique and it indicates more than what is suggested of natural and moral evils. It is not merely an opposite of good which would restrict to something bad and immoral etc. The problem of evil by its very nature being a fundamental issue of man's life, it calls for an inquiry of a fundamental nature.

Man has not yet become conscious of the fact that he is a part and parcel of the spiritual reality. He refuses to listen to the call of the eternal within him. Man's present consciousness is limited to

knowledge of appearances and hence he is not aware of his divinity. It is a tragedy that the man is in quest of eternal good and happiness but he lives as though the momentary pursuits and relative goods are all that is enough for his goal. But mere relative goods do not lead him to eternal happiness. If man's nature were limited to the conditional world process, he would have come to harmony and resolution with himself long back.

Sooner or later man has to realise the contingent character of the world and existence. All his attempts at discovering his goal seem to be exhausted. The ultimate concern haunts man as soon as he becomes aware of his existential concern. He becomes conscious of his temporality and finitude. He seeks for a way out when he is awakened to the truth of evil and suffering at a reflective level.

Man feels an innate depravity and dissatisfaction. It is a conflict of disruption and disorder, bondage and suffering. This perennial problem is distinctly spiritual. The material universe is only the medium in some form or other through which the life of spirit can be known, but it is essentially demarcated from it. This private experience is inexplicable by ordinary causality. And again, the logical analysis of this is not possible, for it would lead to the fallacy of infinite regress. Only man is intensely conscious of the gulf between the existing state and ultimate divinity.

From a higher aspect of this experience of evil is a profound drama with a great significance. It is a state of spiritual wretchedness. Although man possesses self-consciousness, he does not know it or have the enjoyment of it. Man is denied the quest of his higher meaning and purpose of life. There is an incompatibility between his constant inner teleology and the acquired variable teleology. In fact man suffers acutely each time when he chases mere fantasies or lesser good. It is setting one's own private will against the universal will of the supreme reality. Man must earnestly dig at the root of the problem.

Thus, the concept of evil from the religious viewpoint means indifference towards the spiritual *summum bonum* or the

metaphysical truth of man. Man keeps away from this basic reflection while dealing in the world of experience. Accordingly he develops a wrong notion of himself. The mere practical mindedness does not lead man to the core of his existence. It would just eliminate any desire to do anything about suffering save out of scientific goal. This would be as rational to cause suffering as to end it. In fact empirical evils are more of the nature of misery and pain than as truly a sense of evil and depravity as it is in the metaphysical perspective of religion. It is the latter approach that creatively explores the basic human emotions.

How is it that man's life is rooted in ignorance and sorrow, guilt and hostility and a sense of loneliness? Until the man strikes at the root, good and happiness cannot be realised. So long as this true understanding of the truth of unity has not dawned, there is continuous discontent. The loss of rapport with a greater cosmic reality makes one glimpse imperfection all around. This is a genuine spiritual discontent which is in no way similar to the peculiar form of anguish which William James⁸ attributes to the 'sick souls'.

The possession of free will by man is of great value. It is man's privilege as well as a great responsibility. Then how are we confounded in our quest of good? Much of it could be reduced to the lacunae in the knower himself. But when religions assert that the ignorance is avoidable, which means in other words that bliss and freedom is possible. But this does not mean that we can create and seek good according to our own sweet will. The supreme good possesses an absolute existence which we can constantly pursue and understand in our quest of it.

Man does follow good, as far as he fulfils his destiny. Denial to listen and follow the supreme reality is the root cause of all evils. It leads to the weakening of the moral fibre of man.

No doubt it is a typically private, ineffable and incommunicable experience. It is this more intense experience which is the basis of reflection.

5. The concept of evil as evolved in the history of religion:

As early as the time of the evolutionary process of the development of the brain in man, the idea, knowledge and experience of evil and suffering have been constantly connected with man.

Fearfulness is one of the most elementary instincts existing in man. The root of this human nature is evident in the fear of evil powers as the first and most obvious aspect of religion in primitive culture. The man was at a very low level of experience. He used to think that diseases and physical ills were due to these evil powers. Thus, while there is no proof, and one could not say definitely, as to who or what a demon was, it was a situation of demoniacal possession. For the primitive man considered good and evil as benevolent and malevolent spirits in the world.

It was a simple polytheism. Its value was that it enabled individuals to come to terms with an otherwise abstract, inscrutable and impenetrable universe. The demonical understanding provided psychological satisfaction to man. The fear was the outcome of ignorance about the laws of nature. But it gave an inkling that the personification of evil in the forms of Gods and Goddesses was due to the fact that evil and suffering arose out of a fundamental conflict and tension prevailing in the universe.

But in the course of time as man gained much knowledge and understanding, the number of deities decreased and there was a growing tendency towards monotheism. History of the human race is a continuous struggle against ignorance either unconsciously or consciously with the ultimate goal of attaining clear and comprehensive knowledge of the ultimate reality. Man seemed to move towards the realisation of an ever greater sphere of good. The newly own power of understanding gave him greater opportunities for gratification. But the increase in knowledge did not mean that man was wiser for positive use and direction.

With the still higher development of the religious consciousness in the proper monotheistic direction, it was not easy to justify the ways of God to man if evil and suffering were to be thought

of as originating in mere malevolent spirit. The weight of moral superiority gained ground so as to be capable of enforcing one's will upon the evil force. Accordingly, the fear of evil powers in lower stages tended to be increasingly viewed with a moral outlook and religion became more spiritual.

In the long history of religion, man sought remedies in magic and superstitions, sacrifices and rituals, miracles and penances. From dread and awe of evil powers, the moral outlook on the problem of evil was a leap by itself. It was here that man looked beyond anything that could be 'given' in the facts of experience. Man did feel tired of his long and tedious outside search. Then he realised that ultimately he must turn inward and dip within himself.

After much development in knowledge today particularly of the causes of evil and suffering, there has been quite a fair reduction in the quantity of pain in the world. Still there remains a surplus of unaccountable evil, pain and suffering. It is this problem which forms the heart of misery.

Notes

¹ "Wisdom of Life", in *Essays*, Saunders Publication, London, 1951, p. 6.

² "Suffering and Its Conquest", A. B. Gibson, in *Philosophy, Religion and Culture*, edited by Ramjeesingh, Bharti Bhavan, Patna, 1968, p. 168.

³ *Future Shock*, Alvin Toffler, Pan Book Ltd., London, 1970, Introduction.

⁴ "Is There more Evil than Good in Nature", in *Approaches to Philosophy of Religion*, edited by Bronstein and Schulweis, New York, p. 227.

⁵ *The Scientific Study of Religion*, J. Milton Yinger, Macmillan and Co., London, 1971, p.139.

⁶ "On Evil and Omnipotence" in *Mind*, S. A. Grave, 1956, p. 259.

⁷ *Good and Evil*, C. E. M. Joad, Harper and Bros., London, 1943, p. 24.

⁸ *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, William James, New American Library, 1958, refer lectures VI & VII.

SECTION - II

THE PROBLEM OF EVIL IN DIFFERENT RELIGIONS

Chapter III

METAPHYSICAL POINT OF VIEW IN DIFFERENT RELIGIONS

1. INTRODUCTION

A mechanical following of the religious faith for its own sake merely does not satisfy the quest of meaning for man. The religious faith needs to be sustained by metaphysical knowledge. Religion is based on a direct experience of supreme reality as well as values.

Thus religions of the world have an identical approach in that they give us the structure of reality which they have discovered. Their theories of reality imply and indicate the place that religion should have in life and thought.

1.1 SUPREME GOD:

Different religions have different names of the one Supreme Reality or God. Everything of the world owes its essence to it. This highest reality is Omnipotent, Omniscient and Omnipresent. Its rule is sovereign. It can be known, intuited and a unique relationship in its own way could be established with it.

No doubt each religious tradition in its own setting manifests

a particular metaphysical aspect of the Ultimate Reality. A combined outlook of this metaphysical search helps us to view various aspects of it, though some other aspects of this Transcendent Reality still remain unknown and inscrutable to man.

The doctrine of the personality of God is indissolubly connected with religious life. Even in religions which mainly hold the impersonal doctrine of God, somehow or other some kind of personality of God comes to be accepted sooner or later. Though it is the lower of human conception, the realisation of God is considered Good or *summum bonum* of human existence.

1.2 UNIVERSE:

All religions agree that the universe is not against the order of the Ultimate Reality. The world does not promise justice, but religions clearly affirm that injustice is not the central fact. Fundamentally, the universe is helpful to the positive fulfilment of man's goal enunciated in each religion.

The cosmological speculations try to know things as they are and find the common origin of the various phenomena of nature in nature itself. The value of the theory of the universe lies not in the explanation of its forms, but on how it contributes to the cause of the religious search.

1.3 MAN:

Man's quest for higher values is the corollary of the metaphysical assumption of each religion. Each religion guides man to liberation or salvation from evil and sufferings of the world.

The man is in various respects the part and parcel of a greater reality. He is a unique creature who can know the order of Reality and perform his tasks. Attaining the highest perfection is the goal of man for each religion.

Man's significance lies in its relationship with this reality. Man has to face and cross over the conflicts and contradictions inherent in the process of attaining this innermost worth within him.

In short, we have observed in part-One of the book that the foundational metaphysical reality of religion is of an infinite nature. It gives man a direction to higher and higher goals of life, leading to the realisation of the 'Highest Goal' of man. Each religion presupposes the freedom of some sort from a sense of bondage and damnation, and thus it leads to eternal peace or happiness. Of course this problem is of profound metaphysical nature. Man is unaware of his relationship with the supreme spiritual reality. Religion is a march which continuously seeks to win over the limitations of man. It is a life of complete conversion which is beyond the ken of ordinary vision.

The urge to know the real nature of the universe in which man finds himself is consequent on some 'suffering' and the 'suffering' in consequence of some evil. Evil and suffering, though a symbol of earthly injustice, has a deep metaphysical relevance and is a part of the divine teleology. In some way or the other the final reality is looked upon by every religion as of the nature of perfection described in terms of the specific religious set of beliefs. Metaphysically evil consists in the apparently irremovable gap between this higher reality and the actually experienced finitude. Evil is seen as tension between the perfect and imperfect, the infinite and finite and the unconditioned and conditioned. Man must make his peace with the ultimate before he can make his peace with himself. Religious practice consists in the sincere and whole hearted attempt to overcome the gap which the metaphysical understanding of the reality as a whole has brought out before the awakened man.

2. The Religions of Indian Origin

(1) HINDUISM

It is a difficult task to formulate the Hindu concept of Reality and Evil which is at once simple and comprehensive. Hindu religious thought consists of various ideas, beliefs and practices. It is based on the varied religious and moral experiences. Thus, diversity of creeds in Hinduism forbids a rigorous definition. Hinduism being an 'open' religion, not only the beliefs regarding the varied manifestations of Reality are admitted, but the various ways of realising it are also taken

for granted. Still, the long history of Hinduism (approximately 3000 BC) does show a remarkable phenomenon of continuity and change. We may try to present certain broad tendencies supposed to be the structural unity of fundamental beliefs of this faith.

Hindu sources are twofold, namely, the basic *śruti* literature (revealed testimony) and *smṛti* literature (the remembered word). The Vedas, revealed testimony, are eternal and they are the result of mystical experiences. The culminating high thoughts of Vedas suggest a still earlier and longer period of the beginning of religious consciousness among Hindus. Though Hinduism recognizes the authorities of the Vedas it is not a dogmatic or authoritarian religion.

Thus, although the sources of moral order rest with the Vedas, they do not imply a permanent status quo. Changed circumstances might call for changes in moral codes, only it is to be noted that these changes do not violate the fundamental principle of the continuity of 'dharma' as the highest ideal. No doubt the content of this idea of 'dharma' is not eternal and unchanging. In other words the reference to the timeless nature of Hinduism (*sanātana-dharma*) only means that 'dharma' as a code of conduct is essential for the well-being of man which is considered to be eternal. What is significant is that in spite of these changes in the conception of 'dharma', Hinduism has maintained "a large comprehensive unity of a living organism with a fixed orientation."¹

As referred to above, we cannot trace Hinduism to any particular sacred book with a set of beliefs or to an individual with arbitrary authority. It is left to everyone to ascertain and evaluate the facts of the spiritual experience. Vedas did not dictate full details of the spiritual quest, but they contained certain main elements which were to be developed and explored later. In short, Hinduism accentuates the ethical and spiritual aspects of man.

(i) Metaphysics:

Hinduism is not merely a set of beliefs and articles of faith, but it is a way of life. It has been dynamic all throughout. The deep metaphysical curiosity of Hinduism is evident from the prevailing

plurality of conceptions regarding Ātman, God-head and Liberation. Despite their varieties and claims of orthodoxy and finality, these views mainly unite in dealing with the eternal spiritual values of life.

Religion and philosophy have gone hand-in-hand in India. The doctrines propounded seem to have both a metaphysical and theological bearing. Since the Vedic period, man has tried to read natural phenomena in terms of and in the language of his own behaviour. The rich personification extended over the physical world. From this naturalistic polytheism developed monotheism, and then monistic trends were apparent since the time of *Nāsadiya-Sūkta*, the ending phase of Vedas. The Upaniṣads contain both theistic and absolutistic conceptions.

The conception of God-head is primarily the impersonal Absolute Brahman. He is the being that appears in the infinite variety of forms perceived in the universe. The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-Upaniṣad* maintains rightly that “to see this unity behind the manifest forms is true perception,”² He is self-existent, eternal and comprehensible. Again it is said in the *Ṛgveda*, “Being is this all, that which was and which shall be.”³

Thus, the noumenal and phenomenal standpoints may be distinct in the Hindu thought. But they are intimately allied to one another. Speculative and metaphysical thoughts reached their zenith during the period of the Upaniṣadic teachings.

(ii) God:

The Upaniṣads speak of *para* Brahman and *apara* Brahman. The former Being is unqualified and incomprehensible, that is, whose nature is indeterminate, unconditioned and devoid of attributes. But it is a goal of higher knowledge (*parāvidyā*). Whereas the latter *apara* Brahman is qualified and comprehensible who is known as *Īśvara*. He is the goal of lower knowledge. In fact these are the transcendent and immanent aspects of the Supreme Reality.

Various issues of cosmological, psychological, metaphysical and ethical nature spring up during the spiritual quest which calls for

the existence of a personal God. Though there are many paths which are different in themselves, these paths gradually converge and lead to the same place.

In this reference one finds the three prominent philosophic Hindu views namely, *dvaita* (dualism), *viśiṣṭādvaita* (qualified non-dualism) and *advaita* (non-dualism) roughly corresponding to the western terminology as deism, personalistic theism and absolutistic monism. Spiritually these are the paths of salvation by action, devotion and knowledge. This is how the indefinably Supreme Reality is relatively conceived as a personal God. *Śvetāśvatara-Upaniṣad* speaks of Him as “the adorable Lord and the Ruler of the world.”⁴

The God has three important functions of creation, protection and destruction supervised over by the triad of Great Gods namely, Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Maheśa. The allocation of functions indicates co-ordination of their duties. The personal God is All-knower and All-experiencer.

(iii) The impersonal nature of God emphasised:

The Hindu philosophy consistently advocates the difference between the noumenon Absolute and the phenomenal world as the former being the perfect while the latter is imperfect. To the absolutist the conception of the personal God is from a limited vision. That is, it is a glorified anthropomorphism in which the Supreme Brahman appears to the finite person with attributes and creative functions. The propensity for assimilation in Hinduism is such that passionate devotionalism has gone side by side. Thus, to the absolutist, the personal God is the highest manifestation of the impersonal reality, whereas for the theist the impersonal reality is really the personal God rather inadequately understood.

The Supreme Being commonly known as *sat* (Existence), *cit* (Consciousness) and *ānanda* (Bliss) is beyond all conceptions. The *para* Brahman is “an Infinite Truth, Infinite knowledge and Infinite Bliss,”⁵ who is again described in *Śvetāśvatara-Upaniṣad* as “partless, inactive, tranquil, immaculate and stainless.”⁶ Any positive description limits Him to the empirical and phenomenal realm when

in fact when He is beyond all creation and creativity, and hence above all relationships of worship or love or praise.

In another sense however his non-dualistic absolutism easily grants theism in that *apara* Brahman is as much an aspect or manifestation of *para* Brahman as anything else. The phenomenal world is a wonderful creation of Impersonal Brahman which is the immutable substratum of everything. Both these realistic and unrealistic trends of thoughts are evident in Hindu philosophy. When conceived phenomenally, the Vedic thought upholds the Supreme Reality as the ground of laws of nature and the eternal moral order. These two aspects came to be harmonised in the later Upaniṣadic period when Brahman is thought of as the “ultimate ground of all that is here and now, it is a determinate being, God.”⁷

Believing thus in the identity of the Supreme Being and universe, the Hindus see Him in everything and everything in Him and worship accordingly. He is the controller of our Spirit (*antaryāmin*), the witness of all our activity (*sākṣin*) and the abode of the whole nature.

(iv) Universe:

The emergence of the world from Brahman is considered as differentiation of names and forms. It is Brahman alone that appears everywhere. *Brhadāranyaka-Upaniṣad* says, “In beginning was only the self in a personal form. He looked around and said ‘I am’ and that was the starting of the concept named “I.”⁸ The world was non-existent (*asat*) but later it became existent (*sat*).

However the universe is not created out of something other than Brahman. The various forms in which creation has taken shape give the appearance of diversity, but Being itself remains a unity. The natural world of multiplicity and differentiations is identified with Brahman. It is the whole universe animate and inanimate. Brahman is both the efficient cause and material cause of the universe. The Upaniṣads⁹ maintain that “the world emanates from the fullness of Brahman and returns to it.” As early as *Rgveda*¹⁰ it is held that the

universe has emerged from a golden embryo and it is shaped like an enormous egg.

(v) It is a sport (*līlā*) of God:

In other Upaniṣadic¹¹ reference, it is mentioned that God willed to multiply Himself and thus became many. This is how He created water and there He placed a seed. Out of Himself He brought out mind (*manas*), the ego-sense, five organs as well as the three qualities of the world of objects namely, *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*.

Through the power of *māyā* Brahman creates the world. *Prakṛti*, conceived to be identical with *māyā*, is the seed of the world. As a matter of fact this *māyā* is understood more as a mystery because it has been variously interpreted. Some philosophies define it as 'illusory' power of God whereas other philosophies regard *māyā* as cosmic energy by which the creator creates the world. For instance, it is with this latter view, the *Bhagavad-Gītā*¹² regards the higher conscious *prakṛti* of God as the source of souls and the lower conscious power of *māyā* as the material cause of the world.

Anyway, the illusory character of *māyā* as enunciated in absolutist philosophy, only suggests the validity of perception. For it the world is transitorily real. *Prakṛti*, *māyā* and the plurality of souls are associated with one another from beginningless time. In spite of these differences there is a consensus that the universe was created out of primal matter, *prakṛti*, and cosmic spirit, *puruṣa*, by means of the action of *māyā*.

Ego or *Ahaṁkāra* is declared to have been the proximate cause of the supreme soul involved in the process of the world creation. Self (*puruṣa*) and non-self (*prakṛti*) are parts of the same Supreme Being, the ultimate controller of the universe in whose mind all things existed before creation.

Thus, there is an essential agreement that the entire cosmos is a spiritual elevation. Again Hindus believe in the cosmic cycle of evolution and dissolution. The divinity is pervasive in the cosmos and

the cosmos in no way restricts the Divine Supremacy. The cosmos is a spontaneous creation of God.

(vi) Man:

The presupposition of the Brahman concept covers the entire universe in all its facets. Here also, as above, the relationship between the self of man and Brahman is understood differently, depending on whether Brahman is understood in a theistic or non-theistic way. But the differences apart, the *summum bonum* for man is the realisation of the fact that his self is not distinct from Brahman. It is an aspect of manifestation of this underlying reality.

Due to this necessary correlation of the self with the Supreme Reality thus, realising the subjective nature of the individual self is significant in itself. In fact *Kenopaniṣad*¹³ rightly holds that “the two principles, namely the objective and subjective are established to be one and the same. The meaning and purpose of the objective reality can be assessed in the context of a knowing person.

(vii) Avidyā constitutes original ignorance:

As seen above with the *māyika* power and the desire to be multiplied God created the phenomenal world. The creation is due to this original act of identification with the world of multiplicity. The individual self of man is also the creation of this primary act of identification otherwise known as an original ignorance. The empirical nature of the self as generally upon is as following:

- (a) Five gross elements namely air (*vāyu*), water (*jala*), fire (*tejas*), space (*ākāśa*) and earth (*pṛthvī*) etc. give rise to physical body (*sthūlaśarīra*).
- (b) Still subtler elements of the physical body constitute the subtle body (*sūkṣmaśarīra*). It is believed that the subtle body functions as the medium through which the eternal and inevitable law of karma works. The physical body is destroyed at death, but the subtle body is connected with transmigration.

- (c) There is the causal body (*kāraṇaśarīra*) which is witnessed in deep sleep. Here there is no conscious identification with the gross body and the subtle body functions only subtly. In fact these two bodies referred above, seem to originate and dissolve into the causal body itself. The phenomenal ego consists of these three bodies engaged in the world of experience which is the doer and enjoyer. The ego is subject to all mutations of the worldly existence. In this context it is said that “the body inhabits both the finite self and the Infinite Self, the former enjoys the fruits of its actions, and the latter is the spectator of its actions.”¹⁴

In the *Taittirīya-Upaniṣad*¹⁵, the self is analysed in another way known as sheaths or coverings of the self. These sheaths, namely the physical (*annamaya-koṣa*), the vital (*prāṇamaya-koṣa*), the mental (*manomaya-koṣa*), the conscious (*vijñānamaya-koṣa*), the blissful (*ānandamaya-koṣa*) etc. represent a sort of symbolic attempt to understand man into his five basically constituting elements.

(viii) The concept of ‘Dharma’:

To Hinduism the concept of ‘dharma’ is a foundational one. There is a consensus that the self is the ground of ethical law (dharma) and so is in close relationship with Supreme Reality. Also, by virtue of its free will, self is invested with moral responsibility. Thus, when all activities of the subject issue from an autonomous self, then the good is to be defined in terms of some kind of perfection of self. This again means that the good is to be consciously willed. *Manusmṛti*¹⁶ rightly maintained that religion (dharma) if observed, protects a man, but if violated, it is a death for man. The term ‘dharma’ is generally defined as “both the supreme moral good and the supreme moral law.”¹⁷

‘Dharma’ technically consists of all actions, qualities, offerings etc. which the scriptures (*śāstras*) teach us as orienting to our spiritual good, whereas in common sense, ‘dharma’ consists of spatio-temporal duties of the individual in accordance with his mental and moral development. Both these are intimately connected in the sense that both derive their significance from the fact of the spiritual value of life.

‘Dharma’ enables man to have the right satisfaction of desires. Prof. Nikam terms it as ‘a regulative principle.’¹⁸ *Bhagavad-Gītā* says that “all desires not inconsistent with dharma are of divine nature.”¹⁹ According to *Vaiśeṣika-Sūtra*²⁰ upliftment and liberation results from this law. The follower of true ‘dharma’ according to Manu is one “who grasps the *śruti* and *smṛti* words with uncontradicting reasoning.”²¹ In the same way the *Mahābhārata*²² proclaims that “the truly called dharma holds together all beings.” Dharma rules accordingly as a norm over world, nature, society and individual existence.

Thus, ‘dharma’ aims at and indicates how in the face of the phenomenal dualistic struggles, dispositions have to be acquired and exercised. It is an integrated scheme of life which seeks prosperity (*abhyudaya*) here and highest bliss (*niḥśreyasa*) or deliverance (*mokṣa*) hereafter. The religious scripture aims to discriminate accordingly. For, there cannot be the realisation of Brahman unless one’s action is founded on appropriate ‘dharma’. The catholicity of Hinduism is evident here, for the texts dealing with ‘dharma’ do not mean to dictate rigid and invariable patterns of life. They only mean to help man attain self-fulfilment and release from the recurring bondage.

(ix) *Puruṣārthas*:

We saw above that the goal of life is two-fold viz. prosperity (*abhyudaya*) and highest bliss (*niḥśreyasa*). It consists of the four values (*puruṣārthas*) of dharma, *artha*, *kāma* and *mokṣa*. In the first half of life, i.e. in the life of studentship (*brahmacarya*) and householder (*gṛhastha*) where worldly welfare is aimed at, one must seek ‘dharma’ (lawful observation of duties), *artha* (livelihood) and *kāma* (gratification of desires). But in the last two *āśramas* of the second half of life, namely hermitage (*vānaprastha*) and renunciation (*sannyāsa*) one must aim at achieving *niḥśreyasa* which is *mokṣa* in another sense.

These desired ends have to be attained through consciously directed efforts. Being a human person is a value, so one has to pursue ends (*puruṣārthas*) in an integrated way. It is not suppression of

desires but cultivating a disciplined self-determination which makes for autonomous and free actions. It is 'dharma' which refers to moral and spiritualistic needs.

(x) The essential nature of Self:

One could visualise that 'dharma' though it means law or righteousness, is difficult to translate or define. Still it indicates a way for *summum bonum*, that is, it is *mokṣa* in the making. If *mokṣa* is total divinity, dharma is divinity under mortal conditions.

Thus, the essential self is not identical with either the body or the mind and so it is free from all limitations and dualism, changes and experiences to which the body and mind are subjected. It is neither the subject, nor the object, nor the act, nor the knower, nor the known, nor the knowing. It is pure Existence, Knowledge and Bliss which is identified with the supreme reality.

The goal of life consists in realising the famous equation of Upaniṣads, namely 'Ātman is Brahman.' Theists would mean the state of highest bliss as permanently joining with God. To them, man is a part of divine essence and shares the eternity of the divine. However, differences apart, the basic assumption is that man's inmost Being transcends his superficial knowledge of himself. It is a state of complete freedom from all attachments and desires, from nescience, karma and finitude. It is an attainment of immortality and an experience of infinitude. This transcendent aspect of reality defies all modes of determination and characterization under human conditions. To *Praśna-Upaniṣad*,²³ there is "tranquillity in this infinite depth of the self and it has no fear of dissolution at death."

The knowledge of the true nature of the essential self transcends the normal states of human consciousness. It is an intuitive realisation achieved through meditation. For this Hinduism mentions three paths of devotion (*bhakti*), knowledge (*jñāna*) and action (karma) corresponding to affective (*icchā*), cognitive (*jñāna*) and conative (*kriyā*) aspects of man's psychological makeup.

Realisation of divinity existing in man is the goal of human existence. Man's order of existence and his activity are not vain, but they have purpose in the total context of the universe.

(2) BUDDHISM

(i) Metaphysics:

The word Buddha is an honorific expression meaning one who has achieved supreme enlightenment and 'transcendental wisdom'. Buddha (563-583 BC approximately) is not merely a liberated one but liberator, one who has discovered the path of Deliverance. He is not only awakened to the Supreme Reality but he also rationally presents the Highest knowledge in the demythologized way.

(ii) All is subject to change:

Like Heraclitus, Buddha too believed that all is subject to change and all is in a state of becoming. Thus Professor Stcherbatsky truly holds that "existence becomes synonymous with non-existence since every fact disappears at the same moment when it appears."²⁴

It is this 'transitoriness' which is the ultimate criterion of suffering. It is said *Samyutta-Nikāya* "Whatever is transitory is painful".²⁵ Everything is subject to annihilation and destruction. The three kinds of sensations namely pleasure, pain and indifference belong to this realm of suffering. So long as desires are gratified one remains attached to the resulting joys, else non-gratification of desires is frustration which brings about anguish and disappointments.

The darker side of things cannot be brushed aside. Though this view seems to be pessimistic, the realistic aspect of the nature in Buddhism is to be fully appreciated. According to *Aṅguttara-Nikāya*²⁶ "*Anicchā, Dukkha and Anāttā* i.e. impermanence, dissatisfactoriness and egolessness are the three characteristics of becoming."

It is one's own immediate intuitive apprehension of truth which is the sole criterion. The urgency is to reflect on the nature of this perception and the deeper insight into the nature of things. Buddha's method is mainly psychological and experimental. He

avoids vain metaphysical quest. Limits of human knowledge are recognized for fathoming the unknown.

Buddha seeks to understand and transcend the conditioned finite existence. Relatively the Law operates ubiquitously but the altered plane of consciousness finds everything to be void. It is outside the sphere of space-time continuum of phenomenal perception. Then only one reaches the timeless and unconditional.

(iii) Optimism:

To be aware of evil and suffering without any pretence or deception is the basic Buddhist principle. It is real and has to be removed as far as possible at all its levels of existence. In spite of Buddha's doctrine beginning with evil and suffering as a pervasive fact, it is only the starting point of his philosophy. Buddha only wants us to know things realistically as they are.

Buddha's mission is to establish goodness and the truth of happiness. This calls for the awakening of the actual assessment of the life and phenomena. This requires shedding the 'delusion' of granting things to the wisdom of seeing the things as they are. Again one has to judge and justify objectively the cravings for life itself. In fact, Buddha's effort is to promote and establish one's personal happiness on a far stronger foundation. His quest is motivated by a determination to solve the problem of evil and suffering.

The four-fold sacred truths (*catvāri ārya satyāni*) namely the existence of sorrow, the cause of sorrow, the removal of sorrow and the way to the removal of sorrow reflect the central urge of Buddhism.

(iv) God:

Buddha's inquiry mainly centred round humanity and human relations. Instead of caring for heavens and its pleasures his goal was confined to the service of humanity. He is not convinced of the transcendental reality of God, the omnipresent, omniscient and omnipotent Being who should be feared, obeyed and loved by men.

This does not mean that Buddha denies God's essence. He is not an atheist in the sense of reproach and condemnation of God's Evil, Suffering And Salvation

existence. Again he is not an agnostic too. Only he believes that queries' like who God is, what He is, and where He is etc etc. are insoluble ones. There is no point in taxing our heads for the same.

Buddha did not give positive statements on such metaphysical problems because he believed that their solutions escaped definition. Again, this has nothing to do with liberation. Reason as such does not prompt to believe in an arbitrary creator who rules the destiny of mankind, giving rewards and punishments for doing His Will on earth. This is how Buddha's "silence was the direct outcome of the awareness of the conflict of Reason."²⁷

Buddha believed that human perception is more important than the solution of certain metaphysical problems. For the latter no longer helps in moral struggle or saving one from painful existence or attaining the *Nirvāṇa*.

Still, Buddhism does not hold a cold mechanical and materialistic view of the universe. The existence of all operative Laws points to the spiritual nature of the universe. It is this spiritual principle which guides all things and leads man to ever higher perception.

Buddha's life search could not find any God, but Buddha could strike the way to deliverance. He kept mum and categorically denied his capacity to make statements regarding the existence or non-existence of God. But he could comprehend that "salvation is possible without and apart from God."²⁸

(v) Universe:

The universe is neither the creation of a cosmic perfect God nor is it the creation of a primordial germ like a cosmic egg. A belief in the first principle is scientifically impossible and philosophically absurd. Nothing arises from a single cause and everything comes out from a conglomeration of causes.

The 'Śūnyatā' which is the ultimate existence (not matter but not things) of all things, fills the universe in the form of infinitesimal particles. The ultimate existence is found in phenomenal objects and

hence these objects are devoid of the essence of reality (*niḥsvabhāva*). *Śūnyatā* is the unreality of the elements as well (*dharma nairātmya*). All things of the world are created in this ultimate existence.

As to the ultimate origin of all things, Buddhism leaves the problem alone. Their possible modes of predication are classified as *bhāva* (*existence*) and *abhāva* (*non-existence*) which are further conjointly affirmed or disjunctively denied. The beginning of this world process is unknown and unknowable. It is an endless cosmic process. Relativity or dependence is an invariable mark of the unreal. It belongs to the region of the empirical truth only (*saṃvṛttisatya*).

(vi) Becoming is all-pervasive

Buddhism grants as its immediate fact the existence of the material world and of living conscious beings within it. The great law subjects everything to it. The whole process consists in the related nature of reality in the form of becoming. Wherever the law of cause and effect has undisputed sway, the beginning of the world is inexplicable.

This analysis of the world experience is not undertaken for its own sake because it imparts rationale to its practical doctrine and discipline. The ethico-philosophical context is central while inquiring into the nature of the world. The analysis and description of matter and mind are from the practical point of view.

Thus, it is referred to in *Dīgha-Nikāya*²⁹ that matter consists of the four chief elements viz. earth, water, air and space. These elements are without any substance (*anāttā*). They arise from complex causes and are conditional in nature. Therefore it is arising and passing away. The world is called as '*saṅghāta*', a conglomeration of things.

This world is essentially the here and now. The momentariness is the nature of conditional things. The phenomenal world consists of perpetual changes.

Still, Buddha maintained that the universe is evolved and not created. It is an ordered universe as the law operates everywhere.

(vii) The universe exists within man:

The higher life is not dependent on the theories as to whether the world is or is not eternal. Buddha lays more emphasis on the ethical approach. He regards the world as the scene of the matter being in a state of constant flux, and hence it cannot be the basis of true happiness.

Ignorance about this nature of the world would result in conflict and disharmony. The matter in itself has no binding or fettering influence. To be precise matter in itself is not to be eliminated but it is the attachment towards it that is to be given up. For the universe is mainly perceived through our sensations. Sense activities cause the world to arise and the world stands as false with the knower thereof.

(viii) Man:

It is the subjective inquiry and not the objective one, that is, the reflection from within that explains the Buddhist phenomenology. Thus, in spite of our being in the midst of the heavy world, the possibility of negating this problem of evil is also suggested.

Who or what is this 'Self' that cognizes the reality of evil and experiences.... In fact, when the doctrine of momentariness is fundamentally accepted, no conditional existence can ever imply permanence and eternity, absolute unity or supreme authority in any sense whatsoever.

This indicates that though the spirit or mind is the reality of man, the limiting distinction cannot exhaust the human being. The real is free from all empirical predicates and relations. This again implies that in spite of all existence entailing misery, human existence alone has the supreme capacity to escape evil and suffering of the world.

(ix) Man's Being transcends dualism:

Essentially man stands above all the dualistic tendencies of earthly conditions. Evil and suffering is an extraneous outcome of the

worldly conditioning. Despite man's passing through sufferings, he has the potential for 'Good' within him.

Being in man transcends man's personality and its components as well as the objects of the world. This being cannot be identified with the cause of evil, pains and suffering. Passing away is the true nature of conditional existence.

(x) The nature of empirical self:

The empirical self is grasping (*upādāna*) bound together in an interaction that ceaselessly changes. There is no permanent self to which one can resort and seek guidance. Nothing knowable is my 'I' or 'self'.

The empirical self of personality is constituted of the five groups. From one point of view the self is simply due to the operation of a law, yet from the other plane of consciousness the law is void and non-existent to the self. The self is neither the subject nor the object, but it is the perpetual process of becoming.

One would like to have a grip of the notion of the self, or to see its foundation and seek some unchanging and permanent traits. But all perceptions whether past, present or future, subjective or objective are seen as "I am not this, this is not mine, this is not myself."³⁰

The psychophysical being has no reality. To *Samyutta-Nikāya*³¹ anything applied to this mutable existence is merely connectional. Again it is said therein that "perfect one has no becoming or non-becoming."³²

(xi) Five graspings of the self:

The five familiar grasping of the self is held together are as the following:

- (a) Form (*rūpa*). It consists of the four great elementary qualities (*mahābhūtas*) together with numerous secondary qualities.
- (b) Feeling (*vedanā*). There are five kinds of content of consciousness viz. pleasant, painful, indifference, bodily (*kāyika*) and mental (*caitasika*).

- (c) Perception (*saṃjñā*). It is of six kinds, one for each of the five senses and for the mind.
- (d) Dispositions (*saṃskāras*). It is conditioning of the self in general.
- (e) Discriminating consciousness (*vijñāna*)

Thus, all mental phenomena that occur do not rest in a single cause such as the ego but in a complex of casual circumstances. These grasping, no doubt, form a recognizable and perceivable object, but basically it has no sustaining and abiding substance.

If the essence of the self consisted of the five grasping, it would have been the most natural and familiar things of the world. But the nature of constant flux of the world indicates otherwise. Thus if nothing is left, then what is the real essence of man? This poser regarding the nature and the essence of the self assumes a new direction. In face of the doom and destruction of the personality, the fact of our fundamental existence remains to be explored.

(xii) The real nature of Self:

Buddha indirectly explained that opposed to 'nothing', 'everything' could be cited as the nature of the self. But again to a layman this 'everything' consisted of the components of the world. Buddha opposed the very view. For him, to quote *Dhammapada*, "the world being *Anāttā*, everything is not the self."³³ Nothing of the world belongs to the self, in reality it is beyond the world.

The upshot of this is that Buddha wanted man to be protected from the opposite heresy of eternalism and nihilism. He would preach the existence of soul if some person possessed a conventional angle, but he would preach of *anātman* if he wanted to impart to his hearers the transcendental doctrine.

It is in the transcendent state, one sees an unborn, unbecoming, unmade and incomposite Being. But for this there would be no escape from the composite world of becoming. It is an unconditioned and timeless abode. Buddha surely refers to this crux

of the spirit essentially when it is upheld in *Mahāparinibbāṇa-Sutta* that “the Self is our light, the Self is our refuge.”³⁴ Such an enlightened one rises above both good and evil and all pairs of opposites.

Though not within the experience of the layman, this is the realisation of a perfect one. Buddha recognized within himself intuitively through deep contemplation that it is in this realised state one is not affected by the Great Law.

(3) JAINISM

(i) Metaphysics:

Jain metaphysics is realistic and relativistic pluralism. It has two purposes namely. (a) a metaphysical interpretation of the universe and (b) the liberation of the soul in view.

Spirit (*jīva*) and matter (*ajīva*) are two ultimate realities. Everything in the world is of the nature of Being. Unity, duality and plurality all are inseparably and inevitably involved in the structure of Reality. Being (*dravya*) is permanent through its changing modes (*pariyāya*) i.e. Existence is endowed with the trio of simultaneous origination, destruction and persistence. So, one cannot describe the substance for all the time. Whenever one speaks of the substance, it is only from the point of view of the particular space and particular time.

Substance is beginning less and independent, self-supported and complete in itself. It is said in *Sūtrakṛtāṅga* that “substance is imperishable and eternal by its very nature”.³⁵ Thus the world is not an illusion, but it very much exists. It is non-eternal with regard to the forms and modes only. But change is as much ontologically real as permanence.

The mentioning of six substances are the expressions of metaphysical curiosity of the human mind, while the nine *tattvas* (or philosophical principles) are the manifestations of ethical and religious inquisitiveness of Jainism. The latter could be mentioned as (i) spirit (*jīva*), (ii) Non spirit (*ajīva*), (iii) Inflow (*āśrava*), (iv) Bondage (*bandha*), (v) Stoppage (*saṃvara*), (vi) Annihilation (*nirjara*), (vii) Liberation (*mokṣa*), (viii) Merit (*puṇya*), and (ix) Demerit (*pāpa*).

These *tattvas* deal with the spiritual malady and its cause, as also with the means to cure it. Thus, a philosophical grasping of nine *tattvas* is necessary to root out totally the obstructions of life. The highest ideal is not freedom from life itself, but freedom from egoity. The self-denial is to be a gradual approach.

(ii) Relationship of epistemology and ethics:

The omniscient soul which pervades the whole universe by its consciousness is absolutely unconditioned. The *Ācārāṅga-Sūtra* holds that the omniscient can “know all conditions of the worlds of gods, men and demons.”³⁶ Thus the realisation of the ideal demands one’s whole hearted attention. But before this final stage is actualized, the *jīva* passes through various stages of unfoldment, depending on the respective type of knowledge viz. *mati* (perpetual and inferential knowledge) and *śruta* (testimonial knowledge) as mediate knowledge, and *avadhi* (clairvoyance), *manaḥparyāya* (telepathy) and *kevala* (omniscience) as immediate knowledge.

According to Jainism “reality” is cognized by *pramāṇa* and *naya*. The former refers to grasping of reality in its totality, while the latter points to an aspect of the Reality with infinite characteristics. Emphasising one aspect of reality to the exclusion of the other aspect would mean biased estimation, which in turn, would affect our ethical judgements. Hence the theory of relativity (*syādvāda*) in Jainism avoids the likely misunderstanding that reality is exhausted by referring to particular *nayas*.

Moral conduct is said to depend on correct knowledge. Ideal life can only be led in relation with right knowledge and that involves truth concerning the ultimate nature of existence. The relationship of ethics to metaphysics is intimate, and it is this which further leads to mystical heights.

Again, realising perfect *Ahiṃsā* (non-violence) is considered as ethical *summum bonum*. It is a religion which is a blessing to all creatures. One with spiritual purpose as an end “should not kill any living being through his acts, orders and consent.”³⁷

Thus Jainism aims at attaining the two-fold armour of sacredness, “one salvation as the goal and the other non-violence for practice”.³⁸ The two concepts presupposed are, one, saving one's self from evil or ridding it of the contaminating matter which calls for sincerest asceticism. And, two, maintaining the purity and integrity of one's self involves practising *Ahimsā* or non-violence towards all living beings.

(iii) The root of the word 'Jin':

It is worth noting in this context that the word '*Jin*' is derived from the root '*Ji*' i.e. to conquer over inner enemies through mind, speech and body. *Jin* is one who has mastered his basic evil dispositions. One reaches this status to the extent one has acquired one's true nature.

(iv) God:

Jainism rejects the existence of a First Cause or the Creator of the universe. Still, it is very far from being purely atheistic, for it posits definitely the divinity of the soul and the possibility of our realising its destiny. Thus, though the doctrine of personal God is denied, Jainism believes in the mighty truth of man becoming the perfect God.

Every soul is essentially divine. In fact, it is completely devoid of all the worldly dualistic tendencies. To be totally free from karman particles is a true spiritual discipline. Redemption truly comes from the realisation of the ideal soul. Jainism regards the soul of the individual as transcendently one with the ideal.

Devotion to God means devotion to the attributes of divinity which one wants to develop in oneself. It consists in the blending of the fullest measure of love and respect for those enlightened souls who have progressed out of these very attributes to perfection. This is the practical aspect of religion which includes reverence and worship of the emancipated souls.

'*Tīrthankara*' or the emancipated one has crossed the worldly life and entered into “rest that knows no change nor ending - a passionless and ineffable peace”.³⁹ This ideal is virtually the

attainment of personal Godhead. Every soul is potentially 'divine'. What is needed is its full unfoldment. One has to cultivate supreme qualities as enumerated in *Tattvārtha-Sūtra* such as "purity of vision, humanity, magnanimity, ceaseless awareness of mind, righteousness, penance, serving others etc., etc."⁴⁰

(v) Universe:

According to Jainism the universe is divided on one hand with material and unconscious world and conscious and spiritual souls on the other hand. It is beginningless and endless. There is no extra cosmic creator or the ruler of the universe. The rational metaphysics cannot investigate the unknown and mystical queries. Instead of asking the questions such as who made the world? How and when? it is better to inquire into the nature of the world.

The Jaina theory of the universe is neither that of creation nor evolution. It maintains that there are six real substances. Besides conscious selves there are non-conscious world with form and matter (*pudgala*), time (*kāla*), space (*dik*), motion (*dharma*) and rest (*adharma*). The last five substances constitute the universe and they are the cause of the events that take place.

Matter ranges in density from solidity to the thinnest sort of existence beyond the ken of senses. It is gross and heavy in the former case, but light and volatile in the latter case. Matter is eternal and consists of atoms which may take any shape or quality, such as earth, water, air, colours, sounds, living organisms of all kinds with their senses etc. The subtlest mode of matter is karma matter. It is the invasion of such matter particles, we shall see later, which influences the course of transmigration.

Of the five mentioned non living substances, four substances have no malignant influence on the nature of the soul. It is *pudgala* alone which is accountable. Thus the '*ajīva tattvas*' (non-conscious principle) in contrast to '*ajīva dravyas*' (non-conscious substances) should mean simply *pudgala* in as much as '*tattvas*' have spiritual significance and so totally accountable for gaining one's liberation.

Out of the two Realities in Jainism namely living and non-living, it is the latter which constitutes the world. It is concerned with inanimate things and it is opposite of living reality in all respects. The union of the self (living) and non-self (non-living) is never so complete as to make their isolation impossible.

(vi) Man:

The fundamental principle of Jainism is that man is a spiritual being. The soul is a pure consciousness and it is not a product of matter in any sense. By removing the matter, the soul becomes pure, a state in which there are no pains, miseries, disease, old age or death. It is a condition of acquiring the native four-fold characteristics (*ananta-catuṣṭaya*) of the soul viz. Infinite perception (*darśana*), Infinite knowledge (*jñāna*), Infinite bliss (*sukha*) and infinite power (*vīrya*).

The self being the spiritual substance, is extended. It is distinct from the body as a matter of fact. But the self is considered extensive, when it appears to be identified with the body and functions in it. The vitality of one or more of the five senses, the power of body, speech and mind, respiration and age are four vitalities of the living organism.

Self is eternal and not originated by its very nature. It is conscious, doer, enjoyer and plural. Consciousness, bliss and innate purity constitute the essential nature of the self. So it does not have virtue, vice, bondage and liberation.

Self is a simple substance, as distinguished from compound substance. Therefore, it is incapable of disintegration. What is not made up of the parts cannot be destroyed in any way.

(vii) Self, the maker of its Destiny:

Self is an active responsible agent and master of its own destiny. The implication is that the nature of the ego-consciousness is not different from it. Happiness and unhappiness, likes and dislikes and so many other modes like these are due to the nature of oneself only. It is the enjoyer and sufferer of good and evils too. The modifications of the self are its own perpetual, continuous, self-

modifications. Both the process of knowledge and intuition viz. the external and internal aspects of the self are not distinguished from one another. They arise from the same original basic foundation of Self.

When the enlightened soul rises higher and higher and ultimately when entirely does away with the matter particles, it is established in its eternal condition of Pure Light. The soul is itself the goal. Spiritual advance is possible through spiritual efforts.

(4) SIKHISM

Guru Nanak (1469-1539 AD) tried to found a consistent and a universal creed which is above the sectarian and parochial considerations of his period. Though deeply influenced by the Indian '*weltanschauung*', Nanak emphasised some points of his own. He had a reforming mission and quest of the communion with the demythologized Eternal. It is primarily a mystical rather than a metaphysical path.

Guru Nanak is acclaimed as the founder prophet of the basic Sikh beliefs. He shows the way which he himself has traversed. Nanak conveys the Divine Truth in *Grantha-Sāheb* exactly as it comes from the Master. This sacred book is the repository of the divine utterances, not only of Sikh *Gurus* alone but also of saints of other religions, who have achieved exalted spiritual heights.

This '*Guru*', accordingly, is the voice of god. His 'word' is a link which makes for unity in disunity. Its task is to effect a union between man and God.

(i) Metaphysics:

The unity of God and oneness of mankind are two fundamental beliefs of Sikhism. The One Primal Being known as *Satnām* exists for all the time. He is self-existent and uncreated, controller and enjoyer. This '*omkār*' is the Highest Truth which is a unchangeable, eternal and immortal. The whole creation springs up from this principle of Eternal Consciousness.

Thus the ultimate dichotomy of the matter and spirit is rejected. Instead of an exclusive dualism, there is the basic identity of all creation. True realisation sweeps aside the sense of duality and brings about an expressible eternal bliss and beatitude.

(ii) God:

Before there was any creation, God lived absolutely in Himself, formless and self centred. The word *Ekankāra* indicates that nothing can be added to the One Absolute God. The supreme God as an indeterminate form was always there as an infinite permanent Reality. He is Perfect, Unborn, Self-luminous and Self-expressed. In his Primal aspect he is conditioned and devoid of all attributes.

Thus, there could be hundreds of attributive names of this one Supreme God. Isharsingh rightly maintains that Nanak left “freest possible choice to man to remember God by any name whatsoever.”⁴¹ God is beyond the phenomenal laws of birth and death. Unlike His creation, “He will not pass away”.⁴² He is totally detached from all that is unstable, mutable or corruptible. He is Truth, Consciousness and Bliss.

There can be no idol or revelation in specific incarnation by Him. He cannot be described appropriately by human conditions. Sikhism is based on this conception of the Formless Being.

(iii) Personal Aspect:

Out of His own volition, the Impersonal becomes personal, so that man could know Him, and through this knowledge established a unitive relationship with Him.

Once God manifested, He first formed Himself into Divine Name, then made nature which He sustains with His own presence in it. The eternal Giver “is no other than the Lord who is manifest in the three worlds.”⁴³ He is omnipotent through his *Hukam* (will). Divinity is pervasive but it is at its best in the human form.

Thus, this revealed existence of God, who creates, sustains and destroys, communicates to man the way of salvation out of gracious

nature. In spite of the duality and delusion created by Him, God calls forth the response that enables man to appropriate the salvation.

God is impartial and free from enmity with anyone. He makes for perfect Justice and gives to all what they need unasked.

He reveals His truth in creation, especially in *Hukam* which orders the creation. *Hukam* is an all-embracing principle which consists of all the divinely instituted laws. In this latter sense, *Hukam* is identical in meaning with the 'word.' The *Hukam* or the will of God being vast and infinite is beyond the range of the human mind. Anyway, nothing lies out of God's Will.

Everything has originated from Him and so He is the destination for everything as well. Because He is wholly unknowable, it does not mean that He is totally beyond the range of human perception.

Experience of God being non-sensuous is not expressible fully. It is an instantaneous, intuitive illumination. It is too personal and an intimate experience. The self is to be emptied of itself, so as to make room for the coming of God. It is 'Name' which is the essence and spirit of the reality of God.

(iv) Universe:

Before the creation of the universe there was darkness for a limitless time. In this undivided darkness, says, *Ādi-Grantha*, "there was neither earth nor heavens, but only the infinite order of the God".⁴⁴ He was there in an indeterminate form. There was neither matter nor mind.

Thus the Universe is His creation when he wishes to manifest. No one but the creator knows the exact time of creation. Man cannot comprehend even the limits of His creation. The mystery of his creation is beyond our reach, in no way can we specially pin-point its first period of creation. Universe has both a beginning as well as an end. So it is not eternal.

The universe is a veritable existence. All things have a real purpose and they are governed by His real laws. His creation is vast and infinite, unlimited and unfathomable.

(v) It is all God's Will:

Sikhism does not propound any cosmology. God assumed the form of the universe, created nature and abiding within it, He revelled in His wonder. Nanak describes this nature as the base of everything that exists. The sun, moon, earth, fire, wind, etc. are realities as we find in nature. They all perform their allotted functions. As everything is within the ambit of God's will, the great diversity of the world does not bring about chaos.

The world is not an illusion but it has a reality of its own. It is phenomenal in nature and it changes constantly. Everything of the world according to *Ādi-Grantha* "seems passeth away."⁴⁵

Nanak presents seven stages of the evolution⁴⁶ of the present universe. Briefly they are as follows.

Nirāṅkāra - Formless

Ekonkāra - One Absolute Being

Hukam - Infinite Ordainer

(To keep the balance of the Absolute Being)

Śabda - Means to express *Hukam*

Bhāna - Individuation, egoism

Qudret - Nature, totality of forms

Māyā - *Moha* (Infatuation)

There are countless worlds and millions of suns and moons. But our earth is one among these worlds and it is the seat of dharma or the expression of God's eternal laws.

(vi) Man:

Man, like the universe, is a reality and within God's law of nature. In the order of God's creation, man's status is highest and he

is at the apex of all living beings. He is a rational being who can elevate all types of actions and ideas which lead to freedom of action. Endowed with free-will, he can discriminate between good and evil. He is free to choose good or evil action.

Thus, as a matter of fact both good and evil emanate from God. Nanak says that "it is through the senses man experiences the dualism of truth and falsity, virtue and vice, purity and impurity."⁴⁷ However man's role is to choose one and avoid the other. He is a self-conscious person with unlimited potential for progressing to God consciousness. He can control both the inner and the outer world.

Again, man stands at the meeting point of nature and spirit. He is a composite being of self and not-self, and so self must be distinguished from not-self.

(vii) Man has a free will:

Qualitatively the soul has all the attributes like God, only its range of activity is limited. God is its original source, so it is indestructible. Being the part of God, it is like the other God Himself. The human life has a rare opportunity to rise or fall due to free will.

When the spark of the individual soul is separate from the universal soul, the human life begins. The human soul is eternal but the body is transitory. The fruits of actions lead to assuming various forms of existence. The Will of God is expressed in myriad ways of his creation. It is when man negates His grace and flouts His Will, the ceaseless coming and going results. Of course, the extent of this Will is inexpressible and incomprehensible for man.

(viii) Man must realise his identity with God:

To have direct and actual communion with God is man's destiny. The soul is of the very essence of the higher spiritual nature. As such *Ādi-Grantha* speaks of it as "the living abode of God."⁴⁸ Identifying with the Real makes one immortal and Infinite. It is a condition of beatitude and complete awareness and harmony with the creation.

The human body is a sanctified instrument for this realisation. One must merge one's mind, ego and consciousness in Him. The self fulfilment requires the cultivation of wisdom, devotion and creative action in accordance with God's Will. One has to constantly remember His Name, and to realise His holiness and power within. When through the path of love if one understands His Will, one's own will no more asserts.

3. The Religions of Semitic Origin and Zoroastrianism

(5) JUDAISM

(i) Introduction:

Judaism (13th century BC) is the religious heritage of the tribe of Judah. From the primitive naturalism, polytheistic background and few moral ideas, it developed into a distinctive and strictest form of ethical monotheism; which made possible the unification of the scattered tribes of Israel.

The history of ancient Israel is the history of prophets. These outstanding personalities were possessed of the spirit of God and they uttered beyond their ordinary human wisdom and understanding. Each one was bound with something eternal and spoke in the context of the Highest Being. They felt that they were the vehicles of some higher primary power and exhorted people the message of God, "You shall be holy, for I, the Lord, your God am holy."⁴⁹

The vision of prophets had an intuitive and practical character. They were freely convinced of their inner connection or communion with God. They were irresistibly driven with an ethical urge of the truth of their indissoluble link with God. Thus, the prophet Moses was confident that God meant him to lead Israel into freedom from Egyptian dominance. He organised Jews for this goal.

(ii) Scripture:

The 'Holy Bible' consists of two parts viz. Old Testament and New Testament. Judaism is confined only to the Old Testament. The

Old Testament has three parts viz. (i) Prophets: Their revealed truth, (ii) Laws: Legislation by prophets and (iii) Sacred writings and popular wisdom as helpful for inspiration and instruction.

(iii) Monotheism:

Thus the truth of revelation is found in an ethical monotheism. His revelation indicates (i) God's own self revelation and (ii) the revelation of His Will, otherwise termed as '*torah*' or God's laws. All ethical codes are derived from God, through which people grasp His Will. There is righteousness and one command. He is the source of life and the true knowledge of Reality.

(iv) Unique Approach:

It was Prophet Abraham who first preached this religion. He revealed that the Lord Jehovah stipulated a covenant with Israelites who were specifically chosen by God of His own accord, with the intention of His plan for their salvation. God offered Israelites a solemn pledge of security and prosperity in return for their loyalty and obedience to Him.

Thus, the personal covenant with Abraham was extended to his descendents for their own salvation. The succeeding prophets repeatedly indicated that Jehovah stood faithfully by the covenant, with due blessings by Him experienced in times of crisis and distress. Relationship with Him is one of promise and theft, depending on the following or non-following of his commandments.

Accordingly, the prophet Moses strongly felt the working of God in the great historical event, of about 1200 B.C. which is known as '*Exodus*', when they were rescued from Egyptian captivity. God revealed through prophets and called for self-sacrifice and suffering. The unique approach consists in keeping full faith in this belief of God rather than the intellectual curiosity about Him.

In fact there was no place for evil and suffering, as man was considered and intended to be good. God appointed man "to master the creation and guide its creation."⁵⁰ Instead of abstract conceptions,

the prophets dwelt much on practical nature as to what God meant to man and the world.

(v) Significance in History:

The imperative of the relationship with God is practically based on an appeal to history. This ethical basis remains in social and political aspects, as well as personal aspects for all time. The historical consciousness has been formed for centuries with the idea of future realisation of God. It is the aim of human history as well as the divine plan of salvation.

Thus, the religion renews and regenerates at each turning point of history. The people accept the oral and written codes of their religious consciousness without an external pressure. Instead of the eschatological goal of the salvation of the soul, Judaism concerns itself with the salvation of humanity in history. It is spoken as “a world uniting messianic goal”⁵¹ Instead of mere bliss of the future life, the world history aims at establishing truth and justice, righteousness and peace.

(vi) Emphasis on Faith:

This faith in God is a unique and creative personal relationship by Israel that has influenced it to withstand and survive the crisis and accidents of its total historical march. There is a definite conviction in God with serious ethical agreement.

To be restored to the divine path calls for its persistent following by Israel. The advent of prophets makes for the regeneration of moral vitality. For Israel is “a light to the nations and to carry out the salvation to the end of the earth.”⁵²

(vii) Metaphysics:

(a) God:

Judaism is theistic and believes in a personal God whose distinctive name is Jehovah. He is described in *Exodus* as “one universal spirit immanent in all, without any attributes and dualistic concepts and indescribable.”⁵³ He is devoid of body and not subject to

birth and death. His presence is self-evident. He is in both visible and invisible worlds. Being self-conscious and free absolutely, He gives purpose to everything. He is an all Righteous creator, ruler and saviour of the world. According to Jeremiah, "He is God of knowledge and by Him actions are weighed."⁵⁴

God's personality implies no limitations of Him, as "He cannot be symbols by any name."⁵⁵ He is One only, the everlasting Living God. With God to quote Daniel "there is light all around."⁵⁶

He holds all things in Unity:

Being the creator of all existence, He lays down laws for His creation. There is a unique mystery of divine plan by which all things are held in unity. So to be aware of God and to serve Him are one and the same thing. His attributes suggest further definite moral demands and to strengthen man's trust in God.

A Strict Judge:

It is said that God is "sanctified in Justice."⁵⁷ He judges carefully and expects man to be good. Offenders do not go unpunished. It is said in Psalm that "God judgeth the righteous, and God is angry with the wicked."⁵⁸ His wrath calls for the need of moral action, as he is the moral power of our deeds. Our faithfulness is dependent on the consciousness of God.

For evil and wrongdoing "He is angry God, a consummating fire which destroys evil with holy zeal."⁵⁹

Redeemer:

God redeems man from sin. He fully controls history and nature for furthering His plan. Being merciful by nature, He endows man with the power of perfecting him for the kingdom of God.

God's statement in *Exodus* that "I am that I am"⁶⁰ indicates the immutable personality of God, Who is firm in His designs and fulfilling promises.

He is the final End and the sole means of salvation. Thus, He is not merely an ethnic God of Jews, though it might be so in early times.

(b) Universe:

God is the creator of everything in the cosmos. He is the direct and single power in creation. The universe has sprung into existence solely by His commands.

The universe is good, since goodness is its creator and its final aim. The creative force of God has brought an order in face of the seeming chaotic state of formlessness and void. This is how the creation has no strife and struggle of any sort, and not less than seven times repeated..... "and God saw that it was good."⁶¹ There is a pristine character of the universe when it was created. This suggests unmistakably what sort of knowledge is regarded as primary.

(c) Historical Process:

The created things are contingent and not beginningless like God. The activity of God in creation and the activity of God in history are two aspects of the same process. Thus, the world in itself is entirely due to His choice. The world might or might not have existed as it depends on God's will. Thus, in the words of Prof. Ninian Smart the "Hebrew cosmology itself is not original."⁶² He created the world out of nothing. God's law existed before creation and accordingly He governs the world.

The world is the workmanship of God and expresses His power. He is not so much the God of its (world's) beginning as the God of its history. The world is gradually developing towards perfection. Here there is no cycle of involution and evolution.

(viii) Man:

God freely and dynamically entered into relations with His creation. Providential act is God's self revelation which is not a single act, but a process of development with various stages. According to R. C. Zahner this is "the transcendent unity as the origin of all things."⁶³

(a) In the image of God:

The creation culminated in man which was God's part of contract. Now man as the equal partner, as made in the image of God,

is called upon to fulfil His part. God and men were united in the beginning, which would be so again at the end of the historical existence.

The soul is considered as a divine force within the body with no sensuous nature. It is said in proverbs that “the spirit of man is the candle of the Lord.”⁶⁴ Unlike natural objects, man can reach the One God by virtue of his ethical capacity.

(b) Pleasure not denied:

Creation is God’s expression of His glory and goodness; hence Isaiah insists that “man can legitimately rejoice in it.”⁶⁵ Natural delights and pleasures of life are not intrinsically evil. Barring sinful acts, all human experience is potentially good.

(c) Responsibility for Covenant:

Man must cultivate a personal and social sense of responsibility. One has to fathom deep in grasping the real implication of covenant relationship. Man has to be grateful to God and pray to Him devotedly. Israelites were obliged religiously, socially, ethically, and politically. So it is maintained in proverbs that “In all the ways acknowledge Him.”⁶⁶

His laws (*torah*) are immutable and helpful in resolving various problems. The good deeds are always in tune with His commandments. Heaven is meant for good deeds.

(d) The Nature of man:

In spite of man’s kinship with God, he is also different from Him. If a part of Him is divine, another part is earthly, Man is the combination of flesh (*basar*) and spirit (*ruah*). It is the latter which accounts him as a child of God, helps elevating him to a higher state and makes him a free mortal personality. The lofty destiny calls for continuous striving with sensuous and earthly existence.

It is God’s wish that man’s body is physical and earthly, while the soul is heavenly and divine in essence. Following God and His laws makes him a heavenly being. But in the eternal bliss of salvation both

body and soul are related, as “this is the reward of obedience by Soul and without body no obedience is possible.”⁶⁷

(e) Free choice:

Man is also creative in his own way. He can decide about his deeds and seek the meaning of life. Man’s will has to choose God’s will which elevates him to a higher stature. It is in the activities of man that the kingdom of God appears. The Genesis says that “the soul is free to choose between good and evil, right and wrong deeds.”⁶⁸

In the beginning the soul is pure and without sins and evils. The capacity of free will makes possible the great potentiality of mental, moral and spiritual perfection in the course of history.

(f) Belief in oneself and mankind:

To realise the good, man must have (i) belief in oneself as a pure and free spirit, (ii) belief in the equal dignity of neighbour, and (iii) belief in mankind. All are dependent on God. To be aware of God and doing service to Him are one and the same thing.

Man’s life exists only through God, still it has its own independence. Man’s creative will is not the same as his selfish desire. It is through this ethical power that man can free his existence from its limits.

Generally, Judaism concerns with the life in this world. The service of God is a daily responsibility and a call for here and now. A good life is thought of in terms of concrete existence. Jehovah is a living God who breathes with man in human events.

Restoring this power and peace, loyalty to His laws and brotherhood is the Judaistic goal of perfection. The limited world and its existence cannot quench the infinite potentialities of man. Man’s life extends beyond death, so as to contribute to the plan of God’s history.

(6) CHRISTIANITY

(i) Introduction:

Judaism has strongly believed that like David another Lord would come and reestablish the Hebrew rule. In this background of Jewish religion there occurs a new relationship between the Jewish human messenger and God of the Old Testament. Christianity (30 AD) is linked with the history of Israel. There is the continuity and unity of experience with vital and qualitative development of the Semitic faith.

Life and work of Jesus and the apostles is central here. In place of Israel's providential God, God in Christianity works out a new and definite revealing and healing action. His revelation has been given once for all.

Thus, God gave the Bible wherein he made a definite plan and goal for saving the world and redeeming the man. The New Testament is the source book for the origin of Christianity as a distinctive faith. The New Testament mainly emphasises:

- (i) belief in God and His son Jesus,
- (ii) to obey God's commandments, and
- (iii) belief in the original sin.

(ii) Monotheism:

The God that Jesus speaks of was already revealed before and He was the object of faith in Israel. God's conception is a concrete and simple one and not abstract and metaphysical. It is a spiritual and ethical monotheism.

God is spoken of as our father who looks after our needs. He stands in fatherly relation to mankind and showers his gifts on us all.

(iii) Jesus:

Jesus interpreted the Old Testament in a distinct and unique way. His life and teachings superbly show the quality of the direct relationship with God as implied in the scriptures of Judaism. Thus the basis seems in fact to have been a sense of affinity with God amounting to a direct causal relationship.

Jesus considered himself as the son of God whose advent was to fulfil the hopes of Israel. His death and resurrection pointed the way whereby man could be saved. Through him the barrier between God and man due to sin would be removed. Jesus gave a new message of the complete divine plan for salvation. Rising into new glory, Jesus guides the people. In fact, in the words of Luke “for their rejuvenation he preached a new religion.”⁶⁹ For him salvation is not a certain stage but a dynamic factor of the living life of man.

Jesus is typically Hebrew in his concept of religion. For Jesus it is always the acceptance of His authority as the messenger of God that He has in mind. Jesus is acknowledged for his saving power of God and the new religious orientation. His life is not a mere following of the law but a divine inspiration too. This is how immediate disciples were convinced of the continued power of Jesus and his victory over the tragic death.

Without being doctrinaire, Jesus was firmly saddled in Hebrew religious tradition. He is the believing man who understood God, had His revealed words and lived a life with great obedience and deep discrimination. He preached and practised to establish the moral condition by which God’s rule is perfected. He promised his followers that “He himself would return for the final act of consummation.”⁷⁰ He made them share in his own thoughts.

The divine response is the revelation of the need, it points to urgency and the answer of love by God.

(iv) Teachings in Gospels:

The Gospels indicate the advent of the kingdom of God and Jesus’ own connection with it. He is the will of God predetermined as “the fulfilment of the Old Testament.”⁷¹ Gospels centre on the risen life of Jesus. The saving and significant events of the death and resurrection of Jesus is narrated. His illustrations and parables are suggestive, as these pointedly direct the ethical and man-God relationship. However, it may be admitted that Jesus did not systematise the moral and religious principles in a fixed and decided manner.

Thus, evidently Christianity is a new Gospel and no hypotheses. Jesus himself is the world of God as though filled with blood and flesh. His expression is surprisingly novel and revolutionary which decried the mere ritualistic following of Hebrew Laws.

No doubt it is these two Testaments together (viz. Old Testament and New Testament) which make up the Christian Bible. While the Old Testament is inevitable with basic historic roots, the Christian teaching is mainly centred in the New Testament.

(v) Metaphysics:

(A) God:

The Jewish exile in Babylon was significant as it widened and deepened the conception of God and the true way of worshipping and serving Him. It brought about a greater universalism.

Thus God is a sovereign moral personality and supremely loving one. He is a wise, just and omnipotent creator of the world and the controller of history. He is the eternal personality with absolute will, holy love and goodness. He is righteous, faithful and compassionate. He is a loving, active and energising spirit.

Thus it is said, "He is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty."⁷² Again, "He is right and in Him is no darkness at all."⁷³

a. The Personality of God:

God lives, feels, wills and thinks. He has no limitations whatsoever and He is in continuous communion with human beings. He communicates His commandments.

This spiritual being is both immanent and transcendent. He is creatively active in the world. The oft repeated phrase namely, your heavenly father implied assurance that "He might be trusted to supply all their needs."⁷⁴ Jesus interpreted everything in the light of this fatherhood.

b. God and History:

God is immanent in the history of man; he is loving, striving, suffering and agonising. His love, though undefinable, is goodness imparted to others in self-sacrifice. He so loved the world that "He gave His only son."⁷⁵ True love surpasses one's narrow considerations, and this involves real sufferings too.

As the word 'father' signifies the root of Divine revelation, the word 'son' signifies historical mediation. It is still further justified in the Holy Spirit. The fatherhood of God gives the message of life.

c. Trinitarianism:

God is a triad of fatherhood, sonship and Holy Spirit which are in constant fellowship with one another. Jesus, the son links God with man. The father in heaven, the son on earth and the Holy Spirit continue to exist forever.

Through Jesus, the Christ, the sovereign god appears as redeemer. The Christ is the mediator who atones for sinners and leads them unto Him. Jesus is not a son, but the sun whom God chose and sent "especially to reveal Him."⁷⁶

God is experienced as man's innermost being as Holy Ghost. As an indwelling spirit, it constantly inspires, renews and revitalises the human life.

While Jesus is the external manifestation of God, the Holy Ghost is the internal manifestation of God in man. The three aspects of omnipotent God are revealed in all- harmonising unity.

d. Jesus:

His authority did not come merely from scriptures or from the experts of religious laws. He derived it from the deep devotion to God as the source of his activity. He lived radically the Jewish religious tradition in which he was born. His advent meant the fulfilment of manifesting the mystery of trinity and redeeming man from his original sin.

Messianic Role:

Jesus realised his close and unique relationship with God. As a vicarious atoner for the sins of others, he rendered the role of Messiah. He realised that his suffering would redeem others from sin. He had to pass through the agony of torture and death in order to be fully prepared for the messiah's cosmic role.

His miracles indicated the advent of the kingdom of God which was the special mission of his life. Jesus' own personal destiny and his intuitive conviction of messiah-hood were merged in his own person.

Son of God:

Jesus' goal was to spread good news, to heal the diseased, to bring peace, comfort and hope and to explain the essential conditions of the advent of the kingdom of God. In this he realised God's will and loving concern for His beings. He wholeheartedly loved God and man as himself. Jesus' unique sonship was realised after his Baptism.

He spoke of God as father and as an unquestionable certainty of experience. In face of the temptations of power and glory by Satan, Jesus continued his quest and revealed his sinless character.

Thus, Jesus' virgin birth evinced a new beginning of the human race without the stigma of original sin. He has God-like qualities, though "God was much greater and higher in heaven."⁷⁷ As the son of God, he illuminated the world and removed the darkness of sin and evil. He had the capacity to bear the sins of the world and with the direct action "takes the sin of the world"⁷⁸ on himself.

Son of Man:

As son, Jesus reveals the father God as forgiving sins of men and welcoming them again for His fellowship. He helps men expiate and keep up their confidence for the divine goal. Jesus genuinely shared the normal traits of man; no doubt he was at his best in this.

Thus, Jesus is both divine and human. Along with his divine sonship, he is also the human soul with an embodied and individual

existence. And so as a son of man he must “suffer many things...be killed...and rise again.”⁷⁹ This is the paradox of Christianity.

Evil and suffering are real:

Jesus struggled and faced squarely the evil and the suffering in his own person. His mission presupposed this fact actively and positively and ultimately won over them. Jesus realised that sin called for greater and more precious sacrifice than as it was viewed in Mosaic Law.

He was conscious of the challenge and faced it with an unbroken communion with God. He had spiritual earnestness and ethical seriousness.

Crucifixion:

It is in the act of crucifixion; Christ suffered and endured the evil and sinful deeds of mankind. The redemptions begin in the earthly life which is consummated in His Cross as the ransom, the covenant sacrifice.

This is how Saint Luke pointedly remarked that “Jesus came to seek and to save that which was lost.”⁸⁰ He was fully obedient to God’s will. He said as quoted by Mark “yet not what I will, but what you will.”⁸¹

One must bring sin to the cross and seek forgiveness. One must suffer lovingly, for God exists in all pains. God suffers in all sufferings. It is in cross the divine immanence is evidenced. Fear of death does not remain here. Thus facing the physical reality of evil, suffering and death through love and love only that lends redemptive power.

Jesus rose from the grave and reappeared as the glorified son of man. It was a human tragedy, but it was also a total victory over death. His supernatural triumph is the triumph of all in this and other life. Jesus established a new and eternal fellowship with God.

(B) Man:

Human world is a part of God’s creation and so it is dependent
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on Him. But as the children of God, men have a filial relationship with Him. God is a loving and forgiving father.

God deeply satisfies the human need for inward companionship. Trust in Him endows man with an unlimited power. Man attains peace when he submits himself to His Will. It is how God's purpose is fulfilled. So, Jesus said "for whoever would save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake and the Gospel's will save it."⁸²

a. To Live Righteously:

Man must discharge all his duties. The famous saying of Jesus namely "love thy neighbour as thyself"⁸³ suggests selfless love for others. Man is considered to be a member of society which is a part of the divinely constituted history. God being the law-giver and Judge, man must obey His commandments righteously.

b. Jesus in Centre:

Jesus is a dynamic and concrete personality in Christian ethics. Jesus asserted his relationship with God even amidst great agonies and conflicts. His qualitative and cogent expression of life indicates that God can be known as Father.

c. Freedom and Responsibility:

The loving God trusts man and it is expected of man to lead an ethical life. Man is endowed with the capacity of self-determination. The earth belongs to God. Hence sacrificing self-interest, man must fulfil the divine purpose with his free will. Obedience has significance when there is the option of disobedience. So here it means that man must freely accept God and exercise his liberty with great responsibility.

God alone is all perfect and good. Even Jesus denied his being as wholly good. So Jesus wishes to be perfect as the heavenly father is perfect. This only implies that the soul resembles God but it is not Him.

d. The Kingdom of God:

The creation of the world was good and man too, had good qualities. Originally, he was above sinful existence.

Thus, the kingdom of God is not of the nature of material conquest, but it is a state in the heart of each individual. It dawns in one's inward self. One who is low and poor, struggles and suffers a lot for peace and tranquillity obtains it. The kingdom of God stands above all narrow considerations.

Regaining this state of perfection of man and world is the goal of history. Thus, finally it is hoped that "all kinds of obstructions, bonds, evils and opposites would be won over."⁸⁴ God's kingdom is a message of unity and peace.

e. Eternal life is a Goal:

The man has to work to achieve this goal. Man is given an invaluable freedom of will to be a perfect man in a perfect world. He is made of the image of God. The spiritual freedom will be attained from this conscious obedience to God and service of his fellowmen. The real personality of man never dies.

f. The Holy Spirit:

The Holy Spirit exists in man which is the divine inspiration for limitless virtuousness and creative action. The divine direction is hidden in man's life and experience. Man is free in this domain of spirit. Jesus experienced this and mentioned, "the power of holy soul keeps away Devil."⁸⁵ It is the truth of the kingdom of God that protects against sinners.

(C) Universe:

Christianity accepts the views of the nature of the universe given by the Old Testament. So there is no need to repeat it at length.

God created everything out of nothing. God rules and sustains the world and because of Him we live and do our activities.

It is Teleological:

The creation of the world was done in six days and it serves, "man's purpose."⁸⁶ All things are destined for the good and salvation of man. The world symbolises God's love and desire. The world is not perfect, if separated from God. Then it denies the real unity of God with the world.

External world and its laws rely on God's reason and desire. In course of time both man as well as the world will be blessed with perfection. It is his sign of supremacy.

(7) ISLAM

(i) Introduction:

Before Mohamad's (570-632 AD) arrival, the Arabic people were animistic and polytheistic. Many blind rituals and superstitions were having their full play. Mohamad was sad with his people for the lack of true religious understanding and deeds. His mission of life was aimed at lifting up the Arabs from their degrading paganism and idolatry and led them to the belief in one great God.

The then prevailing Jewish and Christian concepts were crudely interpreted by Arabs. But Mohamad acquiesced to the worthwhile and notable points of these Semitic faiths and proceeded successfully to establish the unity of All-mighty God in place of many independent powers.

Thus, Islam accepts the existence of one supreme power which is only a simple concept of divine government. Mohamad as a prophet experienced this reality, directly and intensely. The whole Islamic revelation is centred around his powerful and influencing personality. It is the typical force of the conviction and belief in one Supreme Being wherein lies the fact of Mohamad's originality.

Mohamad does not accept himself to be the incarnation of God. But he surely and convincingly believed that God revealed to him for the good and welfare of mankind. He only preached this good message of the divine path and hence he is a source of beneficence for the whole world.

(ii) Islamic Message:

The word 'Islam' means to resign oneself to peace. It is a perfect tranquillity in the primary sense. One must do one's duties and voluntarily surrender to His wills, laws and commands. For a Godward match, "devotion to Allah is the fundamental essence."⁸⁷ Those who completely submit to His Will, there exists "no fear for such (people) shall they grieve."⁸⁸

Positively this means that the man has not only to desist from harming others, but he has also to do good to them. Islam aims at both internal and external peace. A true Muslim makes peace with God as well as with man. It is a religious quest of daily active life. The all-powerful God is also loving and merciful. Those who suffer and struggle for the goal, God listens to them sympathetically.

(iii) God is a strict Righteous Judge:

Mohamad was very much aware of God's strict justice. The repeated meditations made him conscious of the impending day of judgement and the horrible everlasting punishments. He realised with anxiety the strict claims of God's judgements. It is rightly maintained by Tor Andre that "Eternity leads a characteristic stamp on Mohamad's belief in God."⁸⁹

Man needs to be submissive and do good deeds. Man must cooperate with Him through good and peaceful relations with his fellowmen.

(iv) The Unity of God:

Mohamad penetrated behind the phenomenon of the universe and realised God's unity as a great Being. Islam is a distinct and unique monotheism. It is a stern service conviction with no abstract obscurantism. Again, this First principle not only rules the world with fixed laws, but he also transcends it.

God is formless. Man cannot even imagine Him in His unique and comprehensive nature. He is one person (*dhāt*), He is also one in qualities (*sifāt*) and also one in action (*af'āl*). All things of the world have one great automatic reason or reality which is one alone. He is Evil, Suffering And Salvation

also known as '*Tauhid*.' None but he alone should be worshipped.

Again, there is no division of the world as here and hereafter. Mohamad bridges these commonly believed two spheres of life, by believing them to be the single whole. Thus, there is no dualism. The God gives things on earth and will give the same hereafter too.

God pervades all through the universe. His is a multidimensional reality. Everything sustains by His grace. He is a supernatural power who gives purpose to everything. He is what he is, the most High.

Thus, He alone is the one and the sole means of salvation. He favours no particular race or nation. His path calls for the highest spiritual consciousness. He is the light of heaven and earth. The innermost soul of man demands trust in Him.

God revealed this holy direction to Mohamad, which the 'Holy Quran' has preserved for mankind. This scripture reveals God's will and gives religious laws and social duties. Whereas the Quran is regarded as the primary source of Islam, Hādith and Ijtihād are regarded as secondary sources.

(v) Metaphysics:

(a) God:

He is an omnipotent One whose name is Allah. This word is derived from Al-ilah which points to His strong nature. He can do anything impossible too.

He is an Infinite and ubiquitous combination in nature, without form and figure. This Invisible Being has all the attributes of perfection.

The omniscient Being is the unique combination of supreme and fearful glory (*jalāl*) and unspeakable beauty (*jamāl*). The former is His creative nature which generates wonder in us, whereas the latter is His nature of love. He is both good and gracious.

No symbol can convey His uniqueness. He is above all physical conceptions and similes. He is of the "nature of life"⁹⁰, "nature of

knowledge”⁹¹ and “nature of power.”⁹²

He is the giver of good (*rabb*), merciful (*rahim*), truthful (*allah-al-haque*) peace maker (*al satām*), eternal (*al hāyay*), and a primal spirit (*al-avval*).

A Sovereign Being:

He is the supreme will which can do anything good or evil. God is the absolute monarchy, so the criterion of right and wrong is what he commands. It only goes to imply that the belief in Allah consists of “sovereign, free and indeterminable will.”⁹³

Thus, the Quran says that God can “guide or astray men by His Will.”⁹⁴ Again, it says that “God misleadeth Whom He wills and whom He wills he guideth.”⁹⁵ In the same way, “He pardons whom He wills.”⁹⁶ God’s will is an absolute overriding one which is unconditionally free.

Islam believes in the inexorable will of God and not in fate. God is the supreme judge of the day of judgement, for ultimately “unto Him ye will be brought back.”⁹⁷

God is incomprehensible:

He, with His essential and eternal attributes, is beyond the reason of man. Because there is nothing like a likeness of Him. He is indescribable and in cognizable, for the Quran maintains that “He does what He intends.”⁹⁸

Still, despite man’s wrongs, God is also gracious and forgiving. Though strong in punishment, he can pardon man altogether too.

He is not affected by belief or non-belief in Him, for all things belong to Him. Whether it is good or evil, right or wrong, it is He who has willed and decreed. Thus, He has “created everything and hath meted out for it a measure.”⁹⁹

(b) Destiny and Guidance:

Destiny (*taqdir*) implies fixed and proportionate share. In fact, God's decree is not to be understood in an arbitrary way. God looks after the material needs of His creatures.

His guidance (*hidāya*) consists of many types. Our reason can be helpful for our own good and protection. God wants all things to reach to a state of perfection through various stages of growth. He gives a complete code of guidance in the essentials of life.

(vi) Universe:

God creates the world out of nothing. Being all powerful, He could do this. He created it in six days and his rules govern the world for the growth and purpose of things. God is good, the world is also good.

(a) It is an intelligent creation:

The world process being run efficiently points to His power and wisdom. None can challenge His action. He gave order and shape to all things from finite particles to heavenly objects. Thus, there is no violation of laws in spite of the unmistakably vast universe. There is no conflict or collision between two things, which in reality co-operate in their achievement.

If man withdraws himself from needless meddling, God has provided enough substance and nourishment to all things in a perfectly required way.

(b) God rules with Laws:

God's laws are immutable and are perfect rationally. His aim is at work all throughout the universe. His laws reflect His desires. By His free will everything is directed. The laws of the universe are His commands.

Thus, inanimate objects are guided by the laws of nature. The animate objects possess instincts and senses. Man must reflect and realise this universal law of purpose and order in the universe which manifests sufficient reason behind them.

(c) It is a Spiritual Universe:

The whole universe depends on Him for order and justice. The human mind cannot isolate itself from this, as in fact “all creatures in the heaven and on the earth submit to his will, willingly or unwillingly.”¹⁰⁰ God’s care manifests all through. He has not created “this (all) in vain.”¹⁰¹

Man cannot separate himself from this harmonious natural order. His grace rules everywhere. It is a real world. But whereas the worldly enjoyments are momentary, the heavenly happiness has eternal significance. The seeker must reflect on this.

(vii) Man:

God is the maker of the whole creation. Man’s place in it is not only the highest but also central in it. For the lord has “breathed something of His own spirit into man.”¹⁰²

Man is constituted of a soul (*rūh*) and a body. The body perishes but the soul survives the death. Allah’s heaven carefully protects the immortality and eternality of the spiritual reality. The Quran does not clearly describe the nature of the soul and the body and their inter relationship.

Both are created from clay and mud and there exists no opposition between body and soul. There prevails an essential harmony.

Still the soul like body is God’s creation and it depends on the mercy of God for its existence and continuance. After creating man from a drop of thick fluid, God “endowed him with sense organs and understanding, and showed him the way.”¹⁰³ Thus, our body and soul are significant in that they do not constitute bondage.

(a) Freedom and Responsibility:

Man is a vicegerent of God on the earth. Everything exists for man’s use. Man has been given free will, an independent initiation to fulfil God’s will. He has to exercise his choice rightly and properly

abiding by His laws. His faculty of reasoning calls for a choice which deals properly with things around him.

It is mainly through the service of man; one carries out God's will. The unity of God implies that one should take care of all the spheres of human activity. Man depends on the Higher Being. The will to act is a unique gift for moral action. It is the ethical life which leads to spiritual development. God has given man the knowledge of things and their qualities. Man's will has to cooperate with God. The soul of man is a commanding spirit, inspires a just and perfect direction.

(b) Relationship with God to be perfected:

While God is infinite, man is finite. Still, the relationship between the two is essentially of two free personalities. Man has to assert and perfect this relationship. Man alone is responsible for his own happiness as well as the happiness of others around him.

In spite of all faults and weaknesses of man, he is also the representative of God, a trustee of free personality on earth. Man should have strict determination in life, which is a means to realise the nature of truth.

(c) A Complete surrender to Him:

Surrender is a voluntary submission of heart, will and reason to His revelation. It is a complete surrender (*tasleem*). Even man's belief or unbelief relies on God's desire and choice and not his own choice.

Ultimately man is humble and finite in his powers. It is God alone who can direct him in the right way. While 'belief' is one great step, righteous living is another step for the goal.

(d) Righteous Living:

Man must entertain good desires and do good deeds. Obedience and surrender are not an outward show but the result of a sincere belief in Him, His angels, divine words in scriptures, prophets, predestination and the day of judgement. One's conduct must evince

equality and brotherhood of man, and must strive for the justice and welfare of the individual and society.

As our knowledge of the world increases, we get the glimpse of His might and power. Man is fully equipped to protect himself from evils and can go ahead to his full development.

(e) To Trust His Goal:

Everything is ordained by God for the cause of man. The Quran maintains that “man has excelled all created beings.”¹⁰⁴

He can uniquely perfect his qualities and attain heaven and its pleasures. God alone can elevate man.

More or less all steps in life, whether internal or external, depend on God’s guidance. God’s grace may manifest in the nature of instincts, sense perception and mental understanding. But God gives His gifts when man trusts and obeys His laws.

Human life is not limited to the mere present existence on earth. It abides and continues afterwards too. Believing in Him, man must carry out his duties.

(8) ZOROASTRIANISM

(i) Introduction:

Approximately about the 6th century BC Iran passed through a critical period. Morality, honesty, magnanimity, gentleness etc. were fast deteriorating among its people. Might was right and the people were oppressed mindlessly. The struggle between well placed pastoral and agriculture community and predatory nomadic tribes was fierce. The tribal’s led the life of brigands and infidels. There were no good rulers, so the settled life was threatened direly.

During such an uncertain period Zoroaster (628-551 BC) appeared. Etymologically, even the name Zoroaster suggested ‘Golden (*zaratha*) light (*ushtre*).’ He realised his prophethood and was in divine communion. The satanic forces against him were defeated. He was convinced that he could lead mankind to truth and purity, as he had received the holy and righteous revelation.

He claimed that he had a direct apprehension of God. He heard the words of the Lord Ahur Mazda and Vohu Manah, the good mind. God is both powerful and benevolent. Zoroaster had full devotion and faith in Him, as he had “received help from Ahur Mazda.”¹⁰⁵

Thus, Zoroaster came with the message of the goal (*armaiti*), lawful existence (*asha*), obedience (*sraosha*) and the ethical way.

(ii) Monotheism:

Oneness of God is central in Zoroastrianism. ‘Ahur’ means par excellence, a primary consciousness. Ancient polytheism was given away and no other God than Ahur Mazda was recognized. He is the primeval and eternal, the originator of the right law. Zoroaster had unbending faith in God and in his own mission.

(iii) Two Spirits:

God desired to manifest by two spirits. Thus, desiring good, Ahur Mazda has “created both weal and woe.”¹⁰⁶ These are two primeval spirits which are in constant conflict with each other. These two spirits are distinct from Him, but they are subordinate to Him. They are known as God’s spirits, which also in fact cause the manifold creation all around us.

Thus, Spenta-mainyu is a good spirit who is the son of Ahur Mazda. It occupies the topmost position in the hierarchy of spiritual beings. It is “the most holy spirit of Ahur Mazda”¹⁰⁷ and through it only one can reach God.

Whereas, the opponent of Spenta-mainyu is Angra-mainyu and it is an evil spirit. It is never considered as an incarnation of God. It also does not possess the dignity of the good spirit. Still, it is only co-eternal with good, but not independent of God.

Both these spirits existed before the creation of the world. They appear to have equal power and have pervasive influence. These spirits are basically opposite like good and evil, truth and falsehood, order and disorder. All activities, may be human, cosmic or divine, are affected by these spirits.

Thus, these twin aspects reveal themselves in man's thoughts, words and deeds. Like light and shade, they always go together. Whereas one spirit has chosen good and righteousness, the other spirit falls for evil and unrighteousness.

In any way notwithstanding this dualism, we will see that in the ultimate sense there is an implied monotheism in Zoroastrianism.

(iv) A choice is to be made:

Zoroaster's mission was foreordained as he was "chosen by God in the beginning."¹⁰⁸ He realised God's holiness, for he had a direct vision of His goodness, truth and eternity. Accordingly Zoroaster was firm that sooner or later one has to make a choice, no one could escape it.

The good mind alone manifests the divine spirit. So Zoroaster exhorted people to select good path. But Zoroaster's relationship with God is of friendly nature and not of servility. This is how he repeatedly asks "to see his God and entities associated with Him."¹⁰⁹

Zoroaster was clear in his mind that the battle between good and evil is unceasing. For him a firm and unyielding choice is a matter of life and death. It is a concrete situation to be faced squarely.

He was again clear that the final victory is of good spirit. Zoroaster rules out dualism in the final sense. There is not much of mysticism here, as it is a very simple doctrine which inspires people to good faith. In fact one would agree with Prof. Ninian Smart's observation that "the prophetic mission and the emphasis on moral values are much closer to Jewish monotheism."¹¹⁰

The five *Gāthās* embody the revealed words of Zoroaster and his immediate disciples. In them we find preserved the oldest as well as the newly conceived pure form of the nature of God. The traditional literature was developed in Pahlavi Script. These scriptures are known as '*Zend Avesta*' which includes (i) *Yasna*-sacrificial canons, (ii) *Visperat* – Invocations and offering, (iii) *Yasta*– praising Gods, (iv) *Vendidad* and (v) *Khordah Avesta*, which is synoptic scriptural book.

(v) Metaphysics:

(a) God:

The earlier Assyrian tradition did have the name Ahur Mazda. Zoroaster did not invent this name all of a sudden. He is an eternal and self-evident God. He is the God of good and all benevolence is due to Him.

He is, to quote Yasta “the creator and governor”¹¹¹ who controls the natural forces. Though He is immanent, he still transcends man and nature.

He is the maker of the right law. In fact He first “created law and created the world accordingly.”¹¹² God is *Asha* (the law) and *Vahishta* (the best reason). He is a living and active being.

God rules the earth and heaven unconditionally. Yasna maintains that God carefully “takes full stock of man’s actions and gives justice accordingly.”¹¹³

Six Characteristics:

God possesses different names which express His qualities and powers. Thus, there are six deities who form the hierarchy of seven celestial beings. Though they are not equal to Ahur Mazda, these deities are worthy to be worshipped. His six characteristics are:

- i. *Vohu-manah* : It is the good mind which guides man in all things and it is the source of good behaviour. It points to the proximity of God. It personifies right thinking.
- ii. *Asha-Vahishta*: It personifies best order and righteousness. It is the rightful action which cooperates with God’s will. Its followers are helped against the evil spirit both in the temporal and spiritual spheres.
- iii. *Khshāthra Vairya* : It is the personification of the absolute power in both material and spiritual world. It represents the rulership of God on earth, His action and His kingdom.

- iv. *Armaiti*: It is the personification of High thought and devotion. It represents God's kind and merciful nature. It gives pure divine knowledge.
- v. *Haurvatat*: It personifies perfection. It disciplines physical, moral and spiritual actions for the welfare of the man.
- vi. *Ameretat*: This personifies immorality. This is the corollary of perfection.

Haurvatat and *Ameretat* are closely related which symbolise the perfection of humanity and immorality. Later on were added the personification of obedience (*Shraosh*) and the angel Aryamana, who try to establish brotherhood between men and God.

All these personifications are known as '*Amesha spentas*', the six immortals symbolising the attribute of the One Infinite Being. According to Mr. R.P. Masani "these are the personified attributes of Mazda and of His activities among men."¹¹⁴

Ahur Mazda is assigned the supreme spiritual position.

Spenta Mainyu – God's Divine powers:

Spenta Mainyu is God's creative desire and active principle of mind. The sacred power is the beneficent spirit which makes for all good and justice in the world. It is a life conserving and life enhancing force. All the amesha-spentas recounted above, are on the side of good spirit. Each of them aims at fulfilling the divine purpose in the act of creating and manifesting the world. They, of course, do not violate man's free will.

Divine Law:

It is the gift of divine wisdom. The moral law is God's will, that it embodies His law of righteousness. Thus, it is He who commands the laws of nature and the laws of morality. Following these laws enables one to form an ideal relationship with God.

Righteous Judge:

God is not limited in any case by the evil force. In actuality the

final judgement belongs to God. Man is judged according to his deeds. Following righteousness or truth is the standard of right behaviour.

(b) Holy Fire:

It is an earthly symbol of His infinite purity righteousness. It is the spark of His divine flame and immortal light which shines in the heart of all persons. It is the energy and dynamism of life.

(vi) Universe:

God, by an act of free will, created the world out of nothing. Then He thought as referred to by Yasna "Let the blessed expanses of the starry heavens be filled with light....and he created the Divine law through which he upholds the sovereign mind."¹¹⁵

The order of creation is from the spiritual and incorporeal realm to the gross and physical realm, bearing everywhere the light of the Supreme God.

(vii) Divine Law is Pervasive:

The world is concrete and real with His glory and might. It is a moral sphere with good and evil potentialities. The laws of nature are the expressions of the divine will. The birth, growth and destruction of living and non-living things are regulated accordingly. The divine law is sovereign and it is the source of good, righteous and salvation.

(viii) Harmony between Spiritual and Material things:

God has created all spiritual and material things and He rules with His sovereign Will. In spite of the opposition between the spiritual and material realms, they are a unitary whole linked together. It is said of this intimacy in Yasna that "things of the world run their course in harmony with the Divine law in adoration with Him."¹¹⁶ There is so much of this cohesiveness that the six amesha-spentas are likened with physical elements. Thus, the Good Mind is identified with cattle, truth with fire, God's kingdom with metals, right-mindedness with the universe, wholeness with water and immortality with plants. This linking was prevailing long before the advent of Zoroaster.

The universe is good and helpful to man. Man must live in it nobly. Though man is qualitatively different from God and therefore imperfect and limited, still it is believed that man can realise the highest truth, and behold the God in purest essence.”¹¹⁷

(ix) Man:

Man is a co-worker and a fellow fighter with good spirit. The soul of man can battle with evil forces and attain ultimate bliss and beatitude. God has made the man and he is good.

First the soul was created and then the body. The soul resides in the human body, and guides its functioning properly. The soul can aim at good things and progress. It is capable of acquiring absolute purity of thought, speech and action with God’s good will.

(a) Free Choice:

Man is at the top of the entire creation for the fight against the evil forces. Being free, he can control himself and other entities. Thus it is observed that “God himself didst infuse life breath into mortal bones.....He didst grant us capacities to act and true doctrines to guide so that one could choose belief at will.”¹¹⁸

Man is God’s principal bastion against the satanic forces. The souls along with Fravasis are created of their own free will gifted deliberately by God. Their goal is to fight the power of darkness. The man being the matter of will, he must discriminate with responsibility. Man must listen to and realise God’s word, for God himself does not force man to choose a path.

Man is capable of choosing between good and evil. Man’s essence lies in ‘intellect and will’ (*Akhw*) which can lead to ‘discriminative wisdom’ (*khrut*). The former is the temporal direction of the soul, while the latter is its religious authority. With intellectual means, man must explore the spiritual reality.

(b) Man's Spiritual elements:

Man is essentially pure and sacred. His five spiritual elements are as follows:

- i. Ahu: It protects the soul and assists in the action.
- ii. Dina: It is man's self-consciousness which helps in developing the mental life and good conduct.
- iii. Baoghangh: It is the intellectual faculty of understanding which is supreme in man.
- iv. Uvani: Soul's nature is eternal, so its existence does not depend on the body. The soul acquires heaven or hell according to its merits or demerits.

After death the soul unites with the fifth element of man's personality viz. Fravashi.

- v. Fravashi: It is the divine quality of intuitive and immortal power, and the highest of the unseen power. Standing with Ahur-Mazda it always works for the good of the soul.

(c) Righteous Living:

Man with his intellect can think and choose good and proper actions. Good demands truthful life in thoughts, words and actions. His revelation and good law aim at liberating man from moral and physical evils. Good mind and reason can guide us for all our righteous deeds.

The development in the individual is a part of the development of the whole community. Slowly everything will match for perfection planned by God.

(d) Physical and Mental health are important:

Man must preserve and increase his physical and mental health. He must seek and promote growth for both individual and collective cause of the entire creation. The pleasures of the senses do not obstruct the goal of the human life spirit. Happiness and pleasures

are natural. In fact the bodily pains and sickness become so for the soul too.

Notwithstanding the acceptance of worldly and visible things, Zoroastrianism also emphasises invisible world and things. Earthly pleasures are not regarded as 'the end' to be followed at the cost of spiritual life. According to Zoroastrianism, human life possesses the dual nature, namely, the physical, and the spiritual. It is their full union that makes for a total personality.

This is why after death, although the body would be decomposed, God would return the physical form to the soul on the day of resurrection.

Notes

- ¹ *Hindu view of life*, S. Radhakrishnan, Unwin books, London p.31.
- ² *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-Upaniṣad* IV.4.18.1.
- ³ *Ṛgveda* X.90.2.
- ⁴ *Śvetāśvatara -Upaniṣad* VI.7.
- ⁵ *Taittirīya-Upaniṣad* ii.1.
- ⁶ *Śvetāśvatara-Upaniṣad* VI.19.
- ⁷ *Ibid.*, III.17.19.
- ⁸ *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-Upaniṣad* I.4.1-7.
- ⁹ *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-Upaniṣad* ii.2.20; *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* i.1.7
- ¹⁰ *Ṛgveda* X.121.
- ¹¹ 'Eko'haṃ bahum syāma' – *Chāndogya-Upaniṣad* VI.2.3.
- ¹² *Bhagavad-Gītā* 7:4-5; 9-10.
- ¹³ *Kena-Upaniṣad* ii.9,10.
- ¹⁴ *Muṇḍaka-Upaniṣad* iii.1.1.
- ¹⁵ *Taittirīya-Upaniṣad* iii.1.26.
- ¹⁶ 'Dharma eva hato hanti dharmo rakṣati rakṣitaḥ' - *Manusmṛti* 8.15.
- ¹⁷ *Foundation of Indian Philosophy*, Balbirsingh, Orient Longman, 1971, p. 49.
- ¹⁸ *Some Concepts of Indian Culture*, N. A. Nikam, Simla, 1967, p. 25.
- ¹⁹ *Bhagavadgītā* 7:11.
- ²⁰ 'Yato Abhyudaya-niḥśreyas-siddhiḥ sa dharmah' *Vaiśeṣika sūtra* I.i.2; VI.11.1; X.ii.8.
- ²¹ *Manusmṛti* 12.106.
- ²² 'Dhāraṇāt dharmety āhuḥ dharmeṇa vidhṛtāḥ prajāḥ' *Mahābhārata*, *Kaṇva-parva* 66:56.
- ²³ *Praśna-Upaniṣad* V.7.
- ²⁴ *The Central Concept of Buddhism*, Th. Stcherbatsky, London, 1923, p. 38.
- ²⁵ *Samyutta-Nikāya* iii.44-45.

- ²⁶ *Aṅuttara-Nikāya* III.134.
²⁷ *The Central Philosophy of Buddhism*, T. R. V. Moorthy, p.8.
²⁸ *Buddhist Essays*, Paul Dahike, Macmillan and Co., London, 908, p. 109.
²⁹ *Dīgha-Nikāya* 11.107.
³⁰ *Majjhima-Nikāya* i. 137.136; *Samyutta-Nikāya* iii.68.
³¹ *Samyutta-Nikāya* I.135.
³² *Ibid.*, IV.384.
³³ *Dhammapada* V.79.
³⁴ *Mahāparinibbāṇa-Sutta* ii.26.
³⁵ *Sūtrakṛtāṅga* I.15-16.
³⁶ *Ācārāṅga-Sūtra* 2.15425
³⁷ *Ibid.*, 1:2; 3:21.
³⁸ *Jainism and Modern Thought*, M. M. Shroff, Bombay, 1956, p. 2.
³⁹ *The Heart of Jainism*, Mrs. S. Stevenson, Bombay, 1915, intro.XV.
⁴⁰ *Tattvārtha-Sūtra* VI.24.
⁴¹ *The Philosophy of Guru Nanak, a comparative Study*, Ishar Singh, Ranjit Publishing House, New Delhi, 1969, p. 120.
⁴² Japji 27.
⁴³ *Oaṅkāra* 25, *Ādi-Grantha*, p. 933.
⁴⁴ *Ādi-Grantha*, p. 1035.
⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 268.
⁴⁶ Refer, *Facets of Guru Nanak's Thought*, Ajit Singh, Ludhiyana, 1972, pp. 29-31.
⁴⁷ Refer, Nanak I.
⁴⁸ *Ādi-Grantha*, pp. 952, 966.
⁴⁹ Leviticus 10:2; 20:7.
⁵⁰ Genesis 1:28-29.
⁵¹ *Jewish Theology*, K. Kohler, New York, 1918, p.8.
⁵² *Isaiah* 49:6.
⁵³ *Exodus* 3:14.
⁵⁴ *Jeremiah* 2:3.
⁵⁵ *Exodus* 4:15.
⁵⁶ *Daniel* 2:22.
⁵⁷ *Isaiah* 5:16.
⁵⁸ *Psalms* 7:11.
⁵⁹ *Jewish Theology*, K. Kohler, New York, 1918, p.107.
⁶⁰ *Exodus* 3:14.
⁶¹ Genesis 1:4.
⁶² *The Religious Experience of Mankind*, Ninian Smart, New York, 1969, p. 369.
⁶³ *The Concise Encyclopaedia of Living Faiths*, R. C. Zahner, London, 1971, p. 11.
⁶⁴ *Proverbs* 20:27.

- ⁶⁵ Isaiah 44:23; 49:13.
⁶⁶ Proverbs 3:6.
⁶⁷ *The Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, J. Hastings , New York, 1951, XI. pp.751-752.
⁶⁸ Genesis 1:26-28.
⁶⁹ Luke 13:34.
⁷⁰ *Ibid.*,13:34.
⁷¹ The acts 21:2; 28:17.
⁷² I Chronicles, O. T. 29:13.
⁷³ Johu :5.
⁷⁴ Matthew 7:11, Luke 11:23.
⁷⁵ John 3:11.
⁷⁶ *Ibid.*,14:6-11.
⁷⁷ Matthew 10:23-33.
⁷⁸ John 1:29.
⁷⁹ Mark 8:31.
⁸⁰ Luke 19:10.
⁸¹ Mark 14:36.
⁸² *Ibid.*,8:34-35.
⁸³ Leviticus, O. T. 19:8.
⁸⁴ Refer 1 Thessalonians 5: 3-6.
⁸⁵ Matthew 12:28.
⁸⁶ Genesis 1:31.
⁸⁷ Quran 13:29.
⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 2:212.
⁸⁹ *Mohammed, the Man and His Faith*, Tor Andre, by T. Menzel, London, 1956, p. 61.
⁹⁰ Q 30:40; 46:33.
⁹¹ Q 6:59.
⁹² Q 35.
⁹³ *Mohammed, the Man and His Faith*, Tor Andre, *Ibid.*, p. 62.
⁹⁴ Quran 6:126.
⁹⁵ Q 14:4.
⁹⁶ Q Ref. 54 and 59.
⁹⁷ Q 36:81-82.
⁹⁸ Q 28:37.
⁹⁹ Q 25:2.
¹⁰⁰ Q 3:83.
¹⁰¹ Q 3:91.
¹⁰² Q 31:20.
¹⁰³ Q 76:2-3.
¹⁰⁴ Q 7:140.
¹⁰⁵ *Yasna* 43:13,14.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 45:9.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 47:2-3.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 44:11.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 33:6-7.

¹¹⁰ *The Religious Experience of Mankind*, Ninian Smart, New York, 1969, p. 302.

¹¹¹ Yasta 3:6.

¹¹² Yasna 28:1.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 32:6.

¹¹⁴ *The Philosophy of good Life*, R. P. Masani, pp. 41-42.

¹¹⁵ Yasna 31:9.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 50:10.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 33:7.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 31:11.

Chapter IV

ORIGIN OF EVIL

1. INTRODUCTION

Where does evil come from? What makes for its being in the world? These issues arise from the fact of evil that exists in the world. In so far as religions are concerned, it is the ethical and metaphysical quest of the origin of evil and suffering that holds greater stakes than mere satisfactory answers of the nature and origin of the apparent empirical evils in their multifarious forms.

In this context it is the volitional aspect of self which concerns more than the cognitive and affective aspects. Man craves for what he lacks. Agreed that 'Will' is influenced by the acquired social contexts, it also directs to a deeper and still incomprehensible part of human nature. For, it is through 'Will' man activates and manifests himself. God cannot be responsible for actions that belong to man.

As a matter of fact when did this evil begin in a perennial problem? No religion can be said to have given a sure explanation of this ultimate issue. There is an undeniable mystery involved in all expositions which attempt to conclude the meaning of the origin of evil from a higher reality.

Either it was ignorance of Reality or disobedience to God, whatever be, man did feel revolted spiritually since the dawn of self-consciousness in him. Accordingly the origin of evil and suffering can be grasped as a barrier to real knowledge and eternal happiness.

Myths such as Māra, Satan, Adam and Eve etc. may remain or may not remain in the ever changing world. And no doubt it is also difficult to outgrow some or other type of such symbolism which in fact helps to blunt the poignancy of man's sorrows and suffering. But with all differences apart, the concept of origin of evil in each religion is relative to its metaphysical theory of Reality. And how evil originated in this respect is looked into in the following chapter.

2. The Religions of Indian Origin

(1) HINDUISM

The Supreme Reality (*para* Brahman) in its undifferentiated state is beyond being or non-being (*sat or asat*), virtue or vice (dharma or adharma), good or evil (*iṣṭa or aniṣṭa*). The inmost Self of man is one and identical with this Reality. It is a subtle, incorporeal and immortal spirit. But through the operation of original ignorance (*avidyā*), the Self becomes a part of the phenomenal and empirical world which itself is the result of the original ignorance, otherwise known as *māyā*. All dualistic tendencies, including good and evil are resultant of this *māyā*. The questions regarding how and when the original ignorance begins are philosophically untenable.

(i) Evil is due to Māyā:

We have mentioned earlier that *māyā* is a mysterious and magical capacity of God. It is His will of multiplication. *Māyā* is not an external power of God himself and therefore it is difficult to be resisted. It is not proper and enough to make *māyā* responsible for evil and suffering alone, but the realm of good is also dependent on it. Hence the human quest of dharma and order and prevalence of values due to the theory of karma continue in this sphere of *māyā*. With its higher and lower aspects, *māyā* itself makes the possibility for good and evil, liberation or bondage.

(ii) Prakṛiti :

The Sāṃkhya concept of *prakṛti* (Unconscious principle) effectively tenders an explanation for this. It signifies all materialism and change in the world. Here the effect is non-different from the cause. Bondage is the activity of *prakṛti* towards one not possessing discrimination. The union of *puruṣa* (conscious principle) with the subtle body is the cause of *saṃsāra*. These objects conceal the real nature of the soul.

Thus the objects of the world composed of the qualities of *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas* of *māyā* or *prakṛti*, delude all persons. *Sāṃkhya-Kārikā*¹ describes the nature of these qualities in the following way:

Sattva: Representing the qualities of light, goodness, consciousness and happiness.

Rajas: Representing activity, movement, striving and change.

Tamas: Representing coarseness, obstruction and apathy leading to ignorance and sloth. In another way, as against *sattva* representing good. Tamas represents an evil aspect of the problem.

One may distinguish these qualities in thought but these are not separable in reality. Identification of eternal free consciousness principle with *prakṛti* entangles it with the dualistic world of relativity and change. This may work for good as well as evil.

In the same way the *Bhagavad-Gītā*² when Arjuna wishes to know the source of sin, Lord Krishna replying in this respect attributes *rajas* (the constituent of *prakṛti*) as most sinful making for prevention of the right knowledge.

To recapitulate, the word *māyā* could be interpreted differently. But, generally it is admitted that *māyā* concerns itself with the relationship of the phenomenal world vis-à-vis Supreme Reality. From the transcendental sense all dualistic quests have limited and relative existence. They only make way for lower knowledge (*aparā vidyā*).

It is when the self forgets its essential identity, it considers

himself as a separate individual (*jīva*). Avidyā has resulted into the forgetfulness of the 'true' nature of one's own being. It is mentioned in *Gītā*³ that "man has wrongly confused with the body, mind, intellect and pride which are the unconscious internal organs of the self." In other words, the finite soul is deluded by *māyā* and is entangled in bondage.

Evil and suffering are therefore seen as a result of conflict in the creation. Duality is apparent in everything created. Consequently this results in sufferings. The fact is that Being in itself is truly a unity, duality and plurality are only apparent.

(iii) Symbolic Evil Forms:

Since the Vedic times, some personified forms or aspects of God as Śiva or Rudra or the post-Vedic reappearance of Śiva in a multiplicity of forms and images and often described in the form of Kālī, represent evil and destructive tendencies. These forms of God are fearful if one leads sinful and degenerate life but they are helpful in good and progressive works. Again, the Hindu mythology frequently refers to demons and evil beings (viz. *rākṣasas* and *asuras*). They are characterised by "hypocrisy, pride, self-conceit, violence and ignorance."⁴

(iv) Man is responsible volitionally

In fact, it may be pointed out from our metaphysical quest, that it is Avidyā which is the cause of evil. Of course this is not an external creating agent defeating good. Knowledge and ignorance are merely two states of the individual person. Man is attracted to sense pleasures. Thus the physical evil is due to *māyā*, but the moral evil as we have just mentioned above, belongs to the erroneous identity of the self with the body, mind and intellect.

The actions themselves are blind and mechanical in regard to the source of their discrimination. It is the law of action (*karma*) which functions as a meditating link. It eliminates caprice or chance and it tries to explain the inequalities and vicissitudes of life. One has to go through the quantum of reward and punishment which is in

proportion to the nature of the actions performed. Man is endowed with the power of volitional determination, and he is accountable accordingly. Only he is not responsible for all the results of his activities which take place in the external spatio-temporal world over which he has no power to exercise.

Thus, without a rational and conscious self, man is only a creature of natural forces, gross and subtle and so subject to the law of mechanical causation. His psychophysical body is due to the stimulus response mechanism. Desires and passions seek continuous satisfaction, so man is always impelled to activity. It is this conditioning of the will to the fruits of actions that results in the human bondage. In other words, attachment to the finite and perishable things is evil and is the cause of sorrow.

(v) It is a metaphysical error:

The world of existence is said to be beginningless (*anādi*). It is difficult to specify the beginning of the individual soul. Hinduism regards original ignorance as due to metaphysical error rather than moral error. The moral concepts function only after the beginning of the human life.

The empirical self (*jīva*) is the agent of actions and the reaper of their fruits. There is a general agreement in Hinduism that the soul is governed by God and so god is the real agent. However the soul identifies itself with its ego (*ahaṁkāra*) through avidyā and itself as agent. Accordingly the individual self is the product of innumerable preceding births. The succeeding births in this series depend on the nature of actions one does in each life. This is called as *saṁsāra* or round of births.

Man must choose cautiously. Failing to do the right will lead to the consequences of the law of karma. 'Dharma' or duty cannot be escaped. The contents of the Hindu *Dharmaśāstras* point to this realistic approach. Man sins either not doing what ought to be done or by doing what not to be done. His wrongly chosen actions, in defiance of objective laws of dharma invite his fall or moral lapse.

So the origin of evil is mainly due to internal conflicts in the very nature of man, and not due to externally acting agencies. The inner self of the man is the part and parcel of the Supreme Reality. Any moral lapse from this ubiquitous righteous order affects not only the individual self but also the cosmic environment and hence the degradation of 'dharma'.

(2) BUDDHISM

(i) Māra:

Hindu scriptures do personify the concept of Māra as Death, the evil one and it reappeared in Buddhist scriptures too. As all conditioned existence is subject to death and destruction, Māra is thought to have a pervasive influence over the whole world. Again, this concept also symbolised all the mental, physical and social hurdles that a spiritual seeker comes across. Buddha's life was a glaring example of struggle and victory in this context.

However, this idea of Māra should not be misunderstood as the personal manifestation of evil. It has a purely didactic end in view. The crux of the concept indicates that final liberation cannot be realised within the sphere of conditioned and relative existence. Buddha adopted a psychological method for the problem of the origin of evil. According to him, attempting to learn the metaphysical cause of evil is intellectually barren and morally aimless.

(ii) Thirst:

In accordance with the second noble truth, the cause of evil and sorrow of grasping originates from 'thirst' or 'will' otherwise known as *tanhā*. It is a craving which comprehensively compromises within itself all the conscious as well as unconscious volitions. Desire breeds desire and suffering follows incessantly. *Samyutta-Nikāya* says, "where there is the craving of will, there is the cause of grasping."⁵ All grasping is rooted in this thirst which seeks satisfaction now here and now there. "The grasping" to quote *Majjhima-Nikāya* "craves for pleasures, craves for becoming and craves for not becoming."⁶

The fuel that feeds this fire of thirst is attachment and cleaving, craving and grasping. The craving may be for sensual pleasure (*kāma tanhā* /*bhāva tanhā*) and for non-being (*vibhāva tanhā*). It is the maker or remake of the world. It is the craving for existence to life as a whole.

The craving is beginningless and endless in itself. It is causally relative. Life is a ceaseless flow of 'becoming' of this psycho-physical flux. An attempt to seek the first beginning of this cycle is next to impossibility.

Cognition of the exterior world of reality derives through sense organs which again depend on the mind for ideas, thoughts and forms. Clinging tenaciously to the dualistic pull of feelings generated in this process is never satiating and this increases continuously.

(iii) The myth of permanent self:

Thus, the pre-supposed conception of permanent ego-entity gives rise to the desire for a lasting world with lasting pleasures. Conditioned mental tendencies have the illusion of a permanent self which produces a consciousness (*viññāna*) and psycho-physical organism with names and forms and possessing senses as means of craving. The *Samyutta-Nikāya* maintains in this context that the "mass of ill begins with consequent birth, decay and death, sorrow and suffering."⁷

As soon as the craving for some object is satisfied, then it moves on to seek another object of satisfaction and so on so forth. But if the craving is not satisfied, then it is a feverish covetousness for objects and it is full of aversion for all the hurdles in the way of its realisation. It is this clinging through aversion or covetousness known otherwise as the force of '*tanhā*' or 'will' which binds man continuously ever anew to the world of becoming.

(iv) Rebirth:

It is the last desire or craving in a dying being that determines grasping itself and future direction. The act of volition has the vestige of suffering not only in this life but chases in the renewed lives too.

And again it is not the ego or self that transmigrates from the preceding physical existence to the new one. Nāgasena maintains that “rebirths take place without anything transmigrating.”⁸

For Buddha, rebirths occur due to ‘karma’ or actions performed with attachment to the desired objects. Besides, ‘karma’ also means character. It is this that transmigrates in the next rebirth of the mind-body organism.

(v) Law of Karma:

Closely allied with all ‘willing’, it is also called the fruit of deeds. It is a law of causation in the formal sense and it has a material significance too. *Aṅguttara-Nikāya* says that “one must earn the fruits of actions, whether they are good or bad.”⁹ One is liable for an evil act and the result is to be experienced.

As long as there is ‘will’, the law of action results. *Kāma* or desire or will is the expression for existence. It keeps on and on the search for now this will and that will.

(vi) Law of Dependent Origination:

Deriving as it is from the second and third noble truths, the doctrine of dependent origination of things is the basic idea of Buddhism. Everything is relative, conditional and subject to birth and death in the empirical world. ‘This being that arises’ is the causal formula.

Thus, it is from these acts of producing themselves which makes possible a body. Thenceforth follows sensations, perceptions, mental activity and cognition. In short, it is ‘will’ which is the basis of products.

It is in the deep meditation, Buddha discovered the conditional nature of the world of existence. *Dīgha-Nikāya* holds that “in depending on birth arises old age and death.”¹⁰ This abstract law of contingency denies autonomous existence of finite things, though not rejecting their reality wholly. It is a conditional reality.

(vii) Chain of Causation:

Existence, thus, is a chain of unceasing cause and effect. No one can escape it. In fact the chain of causation is precisely what it means to exist. Buddha regarded the process of becoming as the universal principle. Knowing the conditions of this universal principle would automatically clarify the process of becoming itself.

For this Buddha illustrated the twelve spoke causal wheel. It is as following:

- | | |
|---|----------------|
| (a) Disease, old age, death etc. (<i>jarā-maraṇa</i>) | depends on >>> |
| (b) Birth and rebirth (<i>jāti</i>) | depends on >>> |
| (c) Will to be born (<i>bhāva</i>) | depends on >>> |
| (d) Clinging to the enjoyment (<i>upādāna</i>) | depends on >>> |
| (e) Thirst for sense enjoyment (<i>trṣṇā</i>) | depends on >>> |
| (f) Sense experience (<i>vedanā</i>) | depends on >>> |
| (g) Sense object contact (<i>sparsā</i>) | depends on >>> |
| (h) Six sense organs including mind (<i>ṣaḍāyatana</i>) | depends on >>> |
| (i) Psycho-physical organism (<i>nāma-rūpa</i>) | depends on >>> |
| (j) Initial consciousness of embryo (<i>vijñāna</i>) | depends on >>> |
| (k) Impressions of karmic forces (<i>saṃskāra</i>) | depends on >>> |
| (l) Ignorance (<i>avidyā</i>) | |

The last two chains are carried over from the past whereas the first two chains indicate the future existence. The rest, that is, from the chain number three to ten refer to our present existence.

This causal wheel is also known as *saṃskāra-cakra* or *bhāva-cakra* which does not end with death. It is only the beginning of a new life. Nothing in the conditional world is self-born or self-originated. Hence whatever is relative cannot be other than momentary. Nothing can survive this conditional process. Therefore to regard 'I' as a permanent ego is itself, so to speak, the 'original sin'.

This is how old age and death, two basic traits of personality, leave the mark of transiency on life, which in turn, makes life full of suffering. The self is liable to old age, disease, death, separation from all that is near and dear, to good and evil results of actions done etc. and these cannot be outstripped.

Psycho-physical process is one of combustion and it pressurises to retain its feverish heat. Like sowing the seed and reaping accordingly. *Samyutta-Nikāya* mentions that “good actions gather good and evil actions gather evil.”¹¹

The five groups, listed in our metaphysical search of the system, no doubt produce a perceptible form of the self. But the same too, is a part of the ceaseless change. Trying to prevent this rapidly fleeting process is only to be blind to the facts.

Again it has to be noted that in the conditioned sentient existence transformation occurs through the operation of the law of action and its results (karma and *karma-vipāka*). Theoretically Buddhism denies the permanent self, ethically it does admit continuity of personality which is responsible for the moral consequences. Moreover, the conception of good and evil, happiness and misery as solely the outcome of one's preceding actions further strengthens the cause of moral responsibility. Freedom is granted to each person.

(viii) The root of Avidyā:

The cause of evil is ignorance (avidyā). It is our congenital blindness to the truth of phenomenal existence of which we are a part. We do not see its vanity (*sunnatā*) for desire or thirst keeps us bound to the mirage. It is a self-delusion which values everything from its ego-centric desires.

It is not the world and its momentariness that causes the evil and suffering as it is our desires, thirst and attitudes towards these. It is said in *Dhammapada* that “purity and impurity depend on oneself only.”¹² ‘Avijjā’ is a condition under which our present existence

develops. It destroys the inner balance and makes reality appear in a distorted manner.

Thus, because of desires, which can never be satiated, all existence remains sorrowful.

(3) JAINISM

Infinite potentialities are the soul's nature. But the seeming pains and sufferings to man result from the beginningless ignorance and infatuation, impurities and degeneration, brought about by the invasion of matter particles. In fact *Tattvārtha-Sūtra* rightly says that "soul's own passions and karmas cause the bondage for the *jīva*."¹³ It entertains its own desires and predispositions which is the cause of assimilation of *karma-pudgala*. Why and how this union of the karma particles with the self took place is unknowable. Be that as it may, it is more important to strive for their separation.

(i) The cause is impure particles:

When the karman particles manage to enter the soul, the soul becomes impure. Anger, pride, delusion and greed otherwise known as *kaṣāya*, are four impurities of the soul due to which it is ready to absorb matter particles. *Kaṣāya* obscures the native qualities of the soul. The bondage assumes the form of the action body (*karman śarīra*) which furthers the gathering of impure karman particles.

The *pudgala* inflow may be of a good or evil nature, but this absorbing of large quantities of subtle invisible matter strengthens the bondage and hence, the impurities of the soul. The imperceptible and subtle magnetism of the soul's own desiring nature binds it to the physical world.

This signifies the fact that the changes in *jīva* are not only subjective (*bhāvāśrava*). Objective influx (*dravyāśrava*) also takes place simultaneously in the form of entering the infra-atomic particles of matter into *jīva*. The former is the modification of the soul through the five senses and consists in thought activities whereas the latter is the actual physical influx of karman matter in the soul. The subjective influx may be virtuous or vicious. An objective influx may be

auspicious or inauspicious modifications of karma particles. Imperfection is due to the combinations of the soul and non-soul. The cause of the association is the element of desire for the enjoyment of 'good things' of the world.

(ii) The role of passions:

The selfish forms of desire for sensuous enjoyments make room for material influence and its causal nexus. Of course motivation also plays its part, insofar as motive is the limited self and is meant for the finite ends only. The motive of such nature is reckoned to be a factor in the creative forces of the world. This indicates that the evils are not God-given but self-created and self-made.

Accordingly, *Tattvārtha-Sūtra* maintains that "passions are the internal cause of bondage, activities of mind, speech and body are the external cause of bondage".¹⁴ Again the *Tattvārthādhigama Sūtra* holds that "the soul owing to its being with passions, assimilates matter which is fit to form karmas."¹⁵ It is wrong belief, vowlessness, carelessness, passions and modifications of the self due to actions of mind, body and speech, which cause bondage. In short, the cause of evil is not the unconditional and absolute reason (God or Reality in itself) but the conditional and relative factors.

(iii) The union of the Soul with matter:

The union of the activity of body, speech and mind is technically known as 'yoga'. It is the inflow of karmic matter into the soul. The union of the Soul is with '*pudgala*'. The word '*pudgala*' is simply untranslatable and likening it with matter only is not proper. When the soul is invaded by *kaṣāya* passions, it takes on the *pudgala* particles fit for the bondage.

First, it is the mental disposition which causes the influx of karmic matter into the Self. Subjective influx is the alliance of the soul with conscious states generated by attachments and aversion.

Then, the subjective influx causes the physical influx of karmic matter into the soul. It is the concrete interpretation of the soul with good or evil modifications of karma particles.

According to the *Tattvārthādhigama-Sūtra* it is “the impure functioning of body, speech and mind that causes karma matter.”¹⁶ The differences in inflow are due to the differences of acuteness or mildness of desire and intentional nature of the act. The natural functions of the soul tend to be limited in accordance with the nature and extent of the fusion of substances. Thus, *Sūtrakṛtāṅga* also holds that it is “one’s own activity, or an agent or an approval of the deed.”¹⁷ that leads to committing sins.

In all, influx occurs in seventeen ways, viz. five senses, four *kaṣāya* elements, non-observing of five *vratas* and yoga triad i.e. the union of mind, speech and body become entangled with material object.

(iv) Law of Karma:

Unlike the Hindu thought of karma as formless (*amūrta*), Jainism believes it to have a shape. According to Jainism formless things can do neither good nor evil. Thus, karmas act by modifying our tendencies i.e. the desires, emotions, passions etc. It is maintained that all living beings “owe their present state of existence to their own karmas.”¹⁸

Karma or act is different from karmic matter which is attracted by the soul on account of various desires and passions of thought, speech and actions. Karma gathers energy and automatically works it off without any outside interference. Merits as good and demerits as bad are infra-atomic particles of matter. They invade the soul. There are, we shall see further, destructive (*ghātīya*) and non-destructive (*aghātīya*) karmas.

Forms and functions of Karmas:

None of the ‘*pradeśas*’ (spaces) of the soul is left without the particles of karmic matter which are quite subtle. There is actual bondage, duration bondage, the effect producing potency and mass or volume attraction.

The function of the matter is to form the basis of bodies, speech, mind and breath. It also makes possible worldly enjoyment,

pain, life and death. In this way the soul has a crippling companionship with matter.

(4) SIKHISM

Sikhism posits no separate and independent principle of evil which makes the people do evil deeds. It is not a substantial entity which is perpetually at war with God. It is said "God Himself strays man away from His Path through attachment and delusion."¹⁹ This act is 'mystery' and as a matter of fact ignorance and illusion are created by God only. Man finds himself to be devil when egoistic, but, at the same time the God within him fights in many complex and subtle ways.

(i) God permits some evil:

After creating the world and life the Great giver gave us the pill of falsehood which makes us to seek momentary pleasures and forget about 'death'. Only the restrained one can find the truth and love of God. It means, in reality, to test and purify man's faith in Him. His will carries on the play of Existence, by thrusting some persons into evil deeds and others into good deeds.

Everyone is endowed with God's will. This is evidenced when one's inner voice rebels while performing evil acts. But not infrequently, man ignores this voice and does not withdraw himself from this vicious path. He is swayed away by his previous deeds and thus the primary responsibility of evil rests with him.

(ii) The nature of Hāumain in man:

The force of Hāumain (Generally speaking egoism) in man makes him develop God-like attributes and leads him in His proximity. But the same force leads man away from God's will and makes him false, sad and unwise. In fact this 'Hāumain' becomes a challenge to the sovereign all pervasive God's will.

This Hāumain force, though created by God, is a temporary reality. It lasts so long as man tries to realise his will in separation from God's supreme will. This is man's free will and it is quite flexible by its nature. In most of the activities of man it asserts its presence, in

opposition to God's will. It is the feeling of I-am-ness which feeds man's egoism and pride.

Man is a combination of conscious and unconscious elements. Besides spirit, intellect and mind, man consists of five senses and ego. Lust, anger, greed, attachment and pride are part of his nature. The not-self tends to isolate itself from the self. The life of senses and ego is due to this craving for separate existence. Man fails in his responsibility of free-will discrimination. The unconscious elements remain bound up with ignorance. Attachment with these elements of not-self makes man self-centred and self-willed (*manmukh*). The separation from God causes the trouble, for the consequent unlimited desires lead to unhappiness.

The term 'Hāumain' implies a very wide connotation. It may mean pride, ego, arrogance and in short all that which concerns with and about oneself. Often it does produce good, still it narrows one's vision. All personal and social evils can be traced to Hāumain.

(iii) The law of Karma:

The Sikh's belief in the law of karma is the sum-total of 'cause and effect' that prevails in the universe. This is the eternal law and it is unchangeable. In the kingdom of God, nothing fails like success obtained at the cost of the spirit.

Instead of alluding distinctly to the various types of law of karma as in Hinduism, Nanak expounded the doctrine of retribution. It is God's law that positive and negative powers must work together in nature to help divinity to grow in it. It determines the nature of our birth. God being absolutely just, pains of births and deaths are awarded according to one's deeds.

Ultimately everything happens in accordance with God's Will. It is said that "God's will is inscribed in the core of our very being."²⁰ On the other hand, He has shown the seeds of ignorance, inertia and evil within us. He also wills that we should dispel these by awakening the God-consciousness within us.

3. The Religions of Semitic Origin and Zoroastrianism

(5) JUDAISM

Evil did not originate at the time of cosmic origin, but it came later. The man was in a state of perfection in his primal stage and he possessed as Genesis mentions “the capacity to resist any temptation.”²¹ The Old Testament mainly concerns itself with the concrete evils of history axiology of which is sought in the symbolic myth of the fall of man. This causality of evil is presupposed. Still, no doubt, the actual evils of physical and mental nature are attributed to man’s personal sins.

Eve instigated Adam to taste the apple of knowledge, that is, the knowledge of Good and Evil. God did not want man to have knowledge, lest “it should disturb the mental balance of man in his decisions.”²²

But the autonomous will of man rejected the absolute will of God. Then the Lord swooped over the cosmic order and punished deservedly the world and mankind. The self-assertions alienated man from the life of God. And this is how man was inclined towards sin.

Thus, Judaism does deny the existence of Satan, but it was created by God to test the will of man. Hence, it is the nature of man which is the source of evil and not God. In reality, man was forewarned, for God’s word, “presupposes a summons from God to man.”²³ But the covenant was ignored. Man did not live faithfully to It. The advent of prophets meant warning to Israelites in the name of God.

With opposition to God, people have been careless of moral and social obligations. They turned deaf ears to the caution that indifference to Him would bring home hard facts of evil, suffering and exile. The consequences of denial and infringing His Commandments, is fateful; for now as Jeremiha held every man shall die for his iniquity.”²⁴ Still, it is not that God has ceased taking interest in the

human race. In spite of man's sinful acts, God continues His plan for the kingdom.

(i) God created dual forces:

It is God who creates light and darkness, good and evil. In fact, evil and suffering test the moral and spiritual goodness of man. Man cannot escape this challenge. Since the beginning, man is supposed to control the temptations of flesh with the help of the reasoning spirit. The deep trust in the commanding God cannot be compromised with ethical opportunism.

(ii) Historical choice:

God's opposition by Adam is a historical choice and consequently the human history is full of suffering. Besides, men's own actions have been worse still. Men are indifferent to him and stubbornly refuse to listen to Him.

Israelites followed the footsteps of the neighbours and other tribes. They flouted Him in spite of the fact that "God strengthened their arms, they (people) devised evil against God."²⁵ To reject God's hand in the history of the world is a sin and the beginning of all evils and miseries. The exile is a captivity which is due to the wrath of God. People became more idolatrous and indifferent to the will of God. However, in no way Israelites are crushed inwardly or spiritually.

(iii) Free Choice and Responsibility:

Judaism does not accept any mediator or cosmic force for evil or suffering. Man is free. Neither man nor the world is subject to Satan for the display of wickedness.

It is men themselves who do not desire truth, knowledge and mercy of God and they "proceed from evil to evil and they know not the God."²⁶ They are always haunted with the temptation of evil impulse. If one falls, one has to blame oneself only.

The original freedom and purity is brushed aside and one feels guilty due to the denial of God's laws. Man has become solitary, directionless, and separated from God. Though there is no original

freedom, the power of free choice remains because man is in the image of God. The consequence of the knowledge of good and evil is a total experience of physical and moral view or reality.

Israel is a nation elected by God. It is a grave responsibility for it to suffer the great cause of God. But the discord within man has resulted in great internal conflicts in Israel, leading from one historic stage to another.

(iv) The Error of Judgement:

The defiance of man is an act of aggression against God. Man departs from the divinely revealed law, willingly or unwillingly, by indifference or indiscretion. The event of eating the forbidden fruit is symbolic of the test of man's conscience. Thus whenever the commandment is defied, one's conscience comes alive. One experiences the living awareness of God when one is in proximity with Him.

It is 'sin' that takes over man's fate, as it is said, "man does not fall into the sin of his fate, but into the fate of his sin."²⁷ Again "you have sinned"²⁸ points out that evils arise from man only. There is an evil eye and evil inclination and evil deeds. One reaps the consequences of one's actions.

(v) Human Soul - the Source of Evil:

Thus, evil originates from the human soul. One often makes confession of the guilt as "against thee and thee only have I sinned."²⁹ However, there is no earnest will to subdue it. Man is deprived of peace and security due to this separation from God.

The ego makes man feel that he is the centre of existence and he flatly rejects the dependence on God. Perverted vision of the life and history is the lot of man. He also becomes powerless to fulfil his aims and aspirations. Peace and security are lost, individually as well as collectively.

Man alone is answerable for his misdeeds and sufferings. God has revealed His Will and commands, fulfilled the promise on His part. But on his part man has defied Him. This is his own making.

(6) CHRISTIANITY

Christianity emphasises the original sin. Man has transgressed God's commandments and the moral principles of life.

Like Judaism, Christianity also holds that evil and suffering are the result of the direct activity of the devil or devils. The devil's aim is to lead man astray from the trust in God. He is the rebel, the king of darkness who rules with evil powers.

With this Satanic influence, Eve incited Adam to eat the forbidden fruits and hence the fall of man and the consequent evil and suffering. Succumbing to temptations is the degradation and tragedy of the image of God within man. Still, the breach and disharmony in the form of Devil or Satan was already there before man, it did not originate in man. Taking this for granted, man is required to encounter it and overcome it.

(i) Satan Emphasised:

Thus, sin originated with Satan and not with man. The Bible makes two references viz. 'great heavenly creature'³⁰ and 'that of Lucifer.'³¹ The devil existed long before the fall of Adam. He seems to be one of the powerful heavenly princes and the earth was assigned to him as his special province. This devil, known as Lucifer was in the proximity of God which caused in him a vain ambition. He felt that he was equal to God, so he defied God and tried to establish his own authority. God did not remove him and Satan set up his kingdom on earth.

The Satan opposed God and allured God's people. He is described as a 'wicked one'³² 'an adversary'³³ 'a liar'.³⁴ Again he is called 'the God of this world'.³⁵ When Jesus repeatedly spoke of 'enemy' and 'devils' he was drawing attention to the power of evil in the world. Thus it is said in Revelation "that old serpent called the Devil and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world."³⁶

The Satan is something personified as a power external to man, who is the source of evil. His exact origin is unknown. He is somehow there in the world and man is swayed away by his

temptations. He promised man the knowledge of good and evil which he exploited for his own sake. He did not view good from its own intrinsic virtue, but from the abysmal state of evil only.

(ii) Original sin and Fall:

The sin of the first man brought forth death in the world. The knowledge of good and evil made Adam and Eve recognize their nakedness. It is the beginning of the 'fall' of man and sinfulness of the world. God had forbidden this knowledge but the man preferred his self to God.

Adam, the king of earth, had full freedom to make himself happy or miserable but he chose death and bitterness in place of blissful and innocent ignorance. The worldly knowledge of good and evil is no divine knowledge. Adam's sin was the original one and it became the cause of all sins and evil deeds.

(iii) Sin:

It is an insult to God which denies His love and grace. Due to this, the fellowship between God and man is interrupted. Sin has reversed the basic nature of man. It is the root of all sorrows and troubles. Mere 'worldliness' is against the good of man. Its influence is pervasive in the human society. Man was not careful and he sinned knowingly. The paradise of man has turned into hell.

There is the 'physical death'³⁷ and there is the 'spiritual death'.³⁸ Man is ever lost deeper in the darkness. He tries hard in vain to regain the original state. Still, man asserts his own right and power and does not obey God's laws.

(iv) Free Choice

Instead of God's plan, man follows his own and thus he is heading towards chaos. He has no will to learn and follow God's laws. Man made this choice, but "by the offence of one, judgement came upon all men to condemnation."³⁹

Man is divided against himself. He has not only denied God's will, but now following it appears to be beyond his capacity. Man's will

is not fully evil in itself, but it is tainted in many ways. Man understands his ethical duties, but he feels incapacitated.

Man has misused the power of his unique free will. And clearly the cause of sin is man and not God.

(v) Self Assertion

Man, in his self-asserting nature, felt that he could make his world without the help of God. This is depravity, for one is absolutely wrong in believing that one's own knowledge, deeds and efforts can save him.

It is the devil who tempted mankind from God and turned everyone to his own way; and the Lord "hath laid on him the iniquity of us all."⁴⁰

(7) ISLAM

Angel Iblis, whose name appeared as one of the Satans in Judae-Christian tradition, is the chief *jinn* (devil) in Islam. He is the enemy of man and misleads him. Iblis is wrongly mistaken as an angel, for it is he who "spreads evil and sin and makes man to do lowly things."⁴¹ The devil disliked Adam's status and was bent on dissuading man from his special relationship with God. Iblis with other devils tries to influence man with their evil intentions. God would have destroyed the devil, but he begged to be left alone. Though God permitted his existence, He controls the devil's activities. Adam's transgression of God's commandment is not considered as sin. It is, no doubt, a fault by man.

The concept of God in Islam is unique and all powerful. The problem of evil is to be viewed in this context. Islam deals with evil and suffering in a simple and direct way. It does not accept original sin and hereditary depravity. Thus, through Satanic and devilish influence, man turns to good or evil when he grows and is conscious of things around him.

Thus the Jinn is described as "the open enemy of man."⁴² He has rebelled against God and now tempts man in his favour. But he runs away from man once his target is achieved. The Jinn behaves as

if he is all-powerful and dupes man with rosy pictures.

The distrust in God leads to many evil deeds. It is a moral guilt and an opposition to God's wishes.

(i) God Himself lays Hurdles:

The concept of good presupposes the possibility of the existence of evil. Evil exists for the sake of good. Along with good, the Omniscient Lord has also put some hurdles on the path of man. His idea to serve man only, for man is capable of achieving opposites. It is he who has endowed man with all his activities.

Thus, man's will activates itself in relation to external objects. It pursues itself in many activities. Here too, this will is desire which arises in us from imagination and belief; and this belief is not optional but comes to us from without.

Hence, man alone can help himself, for it is beyond our mind to seek as to why God did what he did. Our probing may mean the denial of God's sovereignty.

(ii) Man is Irresponsible:

The trust in God is to be freely chosen and accepted, for it is who has given man all his actions and thoughts. But the pride in man prevents him from realising this dependence on God. Every evil action is rejection of God's justice and balance. The unrighteous and evil minded gets no guidance from God.

(iii) Evil is man's free choice:

Man is free personally with free will which man accepted at his own cost and responsibility. Free will is God's trust in man, for it is said, "verily we proposed to the Heavens and to the earth, and to the mountain to receive the trust but they feared to receive it. Man undertook to bear it, but hath proved unjust and senseless."⁴³ Thus, man distrusts God and all his evil and sufferings are due to him only.

One opposes God, God "maketh His heart narrow."⁴⁴ For such a man 'will have no protector or intercessor on the day of judgement.'⁴⁵

In fact God is good and merciful. It is said, "Whatever of good befallerth a man it is from God, whatever of evil befallerth a man it is from himself."⁴⁶ Again, "Allah wrongs not men at all, but men wrong their own soul."⁴⁷ Man has to make discrimination of right and wrong by his free will, for "God is not set over men to arrange their affairs."⁴⁸

(iv) Everything is predestined

The divine law of reward and punishment is a natural law. It is applied universally in the spiritual realm. The creation is operated by '*Taqdir*', God's law of predestination. He considered about both good and evil long before their existence. It means that there is a general supervision of human actions by divine intelligence.

To befit the dignity of man, he is endowed with certain eligibilities and free will. But when one misappropriates or misuses this power, evil and sufferings result. In fact, man being in the image of God some traits do resemble Him. Now, one does proper actions or does not. And it is in this context only good or evil results.

(8) ZOROASTRIANISM

Evil and suffering are real and positive, for they have been created by evil and demonic spirit. The evil spirit constantly opposes and competes with the good spirit.

The personified evil spirit is Druj, who opposes Asha or righteousness. He works for chaos and disorder against God's rule. From the very beginning the evil spirit has chosen to operate against the holy and good mind. He is an arch betrayer who dissuades man from good spirit. He tries to imitate the good creation of God.

Thus the all pervading evil on earth has wider context as, "the struggle between good and evil in the cosmos was reflected in the struggle within a man's earth."⁴⁹

Pahlavi texts commonly refer to evil as *primaeval* in its origin. It is neither relative nor brought into existence by man. It has its own real personality. No doubt, evil increases when man is only controlled and won over by flesh and senses, but this in itself does not originate evil.

(i) The Evil Spirit - Aṅgrā Mainyu

The evil spirit known by the name Aṅgrā Mainyu is an independent being and co-eternal with good spirit. It can be conceived in the mind, though cannot be seen with good spirit. It does not exist materially, but its nature can be thought about and understood.

From the very beginning, it existed in abysmal darkness. It envied and hated the good spirit. From the beginning of the world's creation, the evil spirit tried for its destruction. It waged a continuous war against God and His creation. It is the source of all evils and sins, gloom and darkness.

Thus Aṅgrā Mainyu is the source of all evil things. It is also known as 'Druj or lie' falsehood, which opposes the good spirit. It is an evil power. All that harms the living realm belongs to evil spirit. Its malicious nature has "introduced corruption and disease into the universe."⁵⁰ It is "the fall of death"⁵¹ and "the doer of evil deeds."⁵²

God has permitted evil spirit to exist in His creation only temporarily. In fact, man must be thankful to God, for evil spirit would make for a good training to man.

With the advent of Druj or Lie, the intimate and harmonious link between the material and spiritual world was already weakened. Now Aṅgrā Mainyu introduced death in it. Thus, it is said in Yashta, "when the world was created, Aṅgrā Mainyu attacked it."⁵³ Whatever the good soul tries to do, the bad soul tries to undo it.

The evil spirit while opposing the Omniscient, does not foresee its own final defeat. It has no knowledge of the coming events. In spite of its shrewdness, it is not aware of its own future. It is not prepared for its impending doom.

Thus, the evil spirit only knows and wills to smite. Darkness and disorder are its nature. It has freely chosen falsehood, death and destruction as its main activities.

There is a constant attempt by evil spirit to change the good creation into the evil one. It attempts to prevent God's redeeming and renovating actions for His world and creatures. It persistently strives

“to wrest the supremacy from the hands of Ahūr Mazdā for the idea of revenge cats like a cancer into his heart.”⁵⁴ It is this spirit only which gave man wrath, contempt, ignorance and desire. Man is deviated from the path of good.

(ii) Demons in the Service of Evil Spirit

The scriptures refer to numerous demons. We would discuss only the chief ones. Each demon is allotted a special assignment. When men are unguarded and unaware, the demons attract them to their dark realm of activities. They do their tricks in such a beguiling way that no one would distrust them.

Like the various personifications of God, the evil spirit is also personified in various ways. They oppose appropriately the different personifications of God. Thus they are:

- i. *Druj*: It is the embodiment of evil. It is devilish by nature.
- ii. *Aka Manah*: It is the evil mind which opposes the good mind.
- iii. *Indar*: Adversary to Asha Vahista, the best order or righteousness.
- iv. *Saurva*: Adversary to Khshathra vairya, the absolute domain of God.
- v. *Taromaiti*: It is a foe of Armaiti, and tries to defeat devotion to God.
- vi. *Astovidhotu*: It is the friend of death which awaits all creation.
- vii. *Kunda*: The demon waiting at the gate of hell.

Thus, all these are the offspring of evil spirit. They dissuade man from worshipping the one God.

(iii) Error of Judgement:

The evil spirit freely chooses its own activity and tempts man to do wrong actions. Evil has no substance in itself that is to mean that the existence of this evil power is by choice only. It brings misery upon itself and upon its followers.

Thus, when by free will, man chooses to follow the lower elements in the soul, he becomes a sinner and hence imperfect. Animal instincts in man degrade the soul. God's will, which is also the moral Evil, Suffering And Salvation

law, is flouted. And this is a sin.

Once influenced man does not fight with evil. It is not so much disobedience to God as an error of judgement which leads to the origin of evil and sin in the world. The devil is mistaken for the creator.

Man succumbs to evil temptations and indulges in evil thoughts, words and deeds. He becomes an opponent of God and acquires demerits. It is God's wish that man strengthens his will and overcomes this evil spirit

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- ¹ *Sāṃkhya-Kārikā* of Īśvarakṛṣṇa, stanza XIII.
 - ² *Bhagavad-Gītā* 3:36-40.
 - ³ Refer *Gītā* 3:27; 18:53.
 - ⁴ *The Basic Beliefs of Hinduism* - Y. M. C. A. Publication, Calcutta, 1955, p. 74.
 - ⁵ *Saṃyutta-Nikāya* XXII. 82.
 - ⁶ *Majjhima-Nikāya* 1.
 - ⁷ *Saṃyutta-Nikāya* ii.1-2.
 - ⁸ *Milindapañha* 71.16.
 - ⁹ *Aṅguttara-Nikāya* V. 288-291.
 - ¹⁰ *Dīgha-Nikāya* XV.
 - ¹¹ *Saṃyutta-Nikāya* I. 227.
 - ¹² *Dhammapada* V.165.
 - ¹³ *Tattvārth- Sūtra* 8:23.
 - ¹⁴ *Ibid.*, viii.3.
 - ¹⁵ *Tattvārthādhigama-Sūtra* viii.
 - ¹⁶ *Ibid.*, vi. 14.12
 - ¹⁷ *Sūtrakṛtāṅga* 1.1.2.26.
 - ¹⁸ *Ibid.*
 - ¹⁹ Sri Rāga Māster 3.- Gopal Singh, p.73.
 - ²⁰ Japu M.I.
 - ²¹ Genesis 2:17.
 - ²² Refer *Ibid.*, 2:16-17.
 - ²³ *The Religion of Israel*, Albert Gelin, Burns and others, London, 1959, p. 30.
 - ²⁴ Jeremiah 31:30.
 - ²⁵ Hosea 7:13-15; Isaiah 1:2; 30:9.
 - ²⁶ Jeremiah 9:5.
 - ²⁷ The essence of Judaism, Leo Baeck, p.162.
 - ²⁸ Deuteronomy 9: 16, 18.
 - ²⁹ Psalms 51:4.
 - ³⁰ Ezekiel 28: 14, 15.

- 31 Isaiah. 14:12, 15.
- 32 Matthew 13:19.
- 33 I Prter 5:8.
- 34 John 8:44.
- 35 Corinthians 4:4.
- 36 Revelation. 12:9.
- 37 To the Hebrews 9:27.
- 38 Ephesians 2:1.
- 39 Epistle to Romans 5:18.
- 40 Isaiah (O. T.) 53:6.
- 41 Quran 21:82.
- 42 Quran 2.208.
- 43 Quran 33:72.
- 44 Quran 6:126.
- 45 Quran 6:70.
- 46 Quran 4:79.
- 47 Quran 4:78.
- 48 Quran 10:108.
- 49 *The Religious Experience of Mankind*, Ninian Smart, New York, 1969, p. 309.
- 50 Vendidad 22:2; 9:15.
- 51 Yasta 3:13;13:71.
- 52 Yasta 19:97.
- 53 Yasta 13:77.
- 54 *History of Zoroastrianism*, M. N. Dhalla, Oxford University Press, p. 394.

Chapter V

NATURE OF EVIL

1. Introduction

Once evil has originated, human life is associated with all the effects of the basic evil of finitude. Man is conditioned in every way and has to live a continuous wretched existence. Ambiguities and contradictions characterize his being. The dawn of the moral consciousness makes man realise the deeper schism that marks between him and the perfect being. It is not a mere bondage or a mere sin, but a felt bondage or a felt sin. Man not only suffers, but he is painfully aware of this evil and suffering.

Thus, we see in the following chapter of the 'nature of evil', that each religion necessarily concerns itself with the problems of human personality and existence. Man is involved with the world and its activities. This world is not the world of goodness although it is involved in it. The world belongs to man as well. Very often it is man who deliberately dissociates himself from goodness as he knows it. He not so much chooses evil as acts out evil in his person and accordingly threatens himself with all its consequences. Man thinks this to be the ultimate finality of his nature, and hence feels bound by the eternal limitations leading to damnation.

2. The Religions of Indian Origin

(1) HINDUISM

The description of evil and suffering generally as 'illusion' by the Hindu scriptures does not mean that evil is not an actual experience. In fact since the Vedic and the Upaniṣadic times, it has been upheld that to be born with a physical body itself leads to evil and suffering. Of course, broadly speaking, this realm of evil belongs to the world of *māyā* and *saṃsāra*.

(i) Evil has relative existence

The grim side of the temporal world and existence is not ignored by Hinduism. Though ultimately it is not real, it is real enough if looked at relatively. So long as the oneness with totality of being is not realized, evil is a part of *māyā* which is manifest in the evanescent world.

All human experiences produce pain and misery either directly or indirectly. The world appears to be of conflicting opposites, of evil and good, of pain and pleasure etc. Thus in Hinduism evil has been traditionally classified into three kinds, technically known as '*duḥkhatraya*'. Thus evil and suffering may arise from spiritual causes (*ādhyātmika*), natural causes (*ādhibhautika*) and from supernatural causes (*ādhidaivika*). Again, the concept of incarnation¹ also implies that Hinduism does not underestimate the harsh realities of suffering.

There prevails a constant dissatisfaction. No pleasure is pure and unmixed, as sooner or later it leads to pain and suffering. This understanding of evil is characterized as "the relationship between the two conflicting principles of the universe, the urge to life and the urge to death."² In reality, these two principles are aspects of a single non-dual being looked at from different sides. It is the empirical life which is the life of bondage wherein suffering seems to be inescapable.

(ii) An act of indiscrimination:

Man is ignorant of the fact that sensuous pleasures are

inseparable from pain and misery. Succumbing with the attachment to the sensuous and particular self at the cost of higher self leads to heteronomy of the will (*para-dharma*). 'Śreyas' (beatitude) which leads to eternal bliss and 'preyas' (enjoyment) which makes for temporary pleasures are brought into antithesis with each other. Worldly impulses and inclinations find their way easily and the true discrimination is lost sight of. Thus the *Gītā* says, "to them the world is without any basis and is false; it is without God."³ Further, *Gītā* mentions "that such persons do not possess "purity, right conduct and truth."⁴

(iii) Cycle of births and deaths:

Bondage breeds incessant suffering. Expectation of attaining greater and greater pleasure strengthens bondage. Human bondage is co-extensive with the empirical life. As long as the elements of finitude cling to the soul, it changes its roles from one birth to another birth, the results of wrong choices and evil conduct lead one to assume lower and inanimate births too.

This migratory process is called as *saṃsāra-cakra*. Man is subjected to cravings and passions which bring about various limitations. Actions are performed under nescience. It is not the absence of knowledge as such but the distortion in the perception of reality. This could be better understood in another context when it is said in *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-Upaniṣad* that "hunger is death."⁵ Here, hunger is identified with the continuous in satiating desires, cravings which demand immediate satisfaction and are unconnected with the environment. The subtle body of the soul with its five vital forces, the mind and intelligence revels in narrow selfish desires which always remain unfulfilled and lead to darkness. Such a state is difficult to overcome.

(iv) Man is ignorant:

The personality with such components makes the embodied self (*jīva*) think "of oneself as the actor, which in fact is due to the functioning of the body through the impulse of matter."⁶ It is man's own 'avidyā' which is the root cause of this deprivation of his

existence. This knowledge of being other than Brahman is ignorance, and it is necessarily relative only. The pulls of hatred and attachment "lead inevitably to distorted action and inadequate understanding.....they prevent an individual from seeing the whole picture."⁷

(v) The breach of moral law:

Thus the moral evil (*anṛta*) consists in defying the Truth which pervades and sustains the universe. Suffering comes when the law (*rta*) is broken. Human limitations, not unoften, desist from fulfilling the responsibility and man falls far short of the objective spirit of moral law. There is an inevitable operation of the law of karma. As long as the sense of ego governs our consciousness, the acts are bound to be sinful. The *Gītā* describes such persons thus, "the wicked ones who cook for themselves alone eat sin."⁸

Primarily there is only one evil, but it has numerous forms. Fundamentally, it is the self-centered desire which runs counter to the spiritual law of the universe. Physically evil is the disease and privation, psychologically it is insanity or abnormality, ethically it is badness, ill-will or wrong, religiously it is a sin and spiritually it is ignorance.

One establishes one's own selfish will against the universal will of God. In fact this is violation of one's own true nature which is of a piece with Ultimate Reality. This disharmony, thus, is not only individual and social but extends to the kingdom of God whose laws are set aside.

The Hindu thinking in general substantially admits that the sinner harms himself. All sins are grouped under desire (*kāma*), anger (*krodha*), greed (*lobha*), delusion (*moha*), pride (*mada*) and malice (*matsara*). Sins are also classified as sins of thoughts, speech and action.

(vi) Man has become finite:

Finitude makes for finite knowledge and limited power. It brings about the dualistic experiences of good and evil, righteous and

unrighteous actions. The pursuit of temporal goods leads to sorrow and suffering. It is said in *Kaṭhopaniṣad* “ignorance makes one to choose the agreeable or pleasant (*preya*)”⁹

The self of man is ‘*puriṣaya*’, that is, it is imprisoned in the body. The body and its constituents make for individuality. This individuality (*jīva*) becomes bound when it involves itself with a transient and impermanent world and consequently with inappropriate actions (*adharma*). Association with different gross and subtle adjuncts of the not-self (*prakṛti*) restricts the self. The ignorance is not merely a lack of the knowledge of objective truth, but a positive inclination to act contrary to truth. Actions performed, in this way, destroys the creature and entails fear and death.

‘Evil’ is of the nature of the opposition of the finite to the infinite. Its constant struggle continues in this battlefield of the world. The whole course of evolution, from matter to life, from life to consciousness, from consciousness to reason, depends on struggling to come to its own. Evil is not real ultimately, else it could not be destroyed.

For Hinduism, problems of existence are mainly problems of harmony and synthesis. Liberation is only possible when the parts are seen to be parts, and Brahman or God is experienced as the sole truth.

(2) BUDDHISM

The dictum that everything is full of evil and suffering is the substance of Buddhism. It is rooted in the world structure as a whole as well as in parts. Whatever is momentary is of the nature of suffering. Thus it is not restricted to the human world but spreads over all six abodes of existence or ‘*Gati*’ as technically referred to.

(i) Man has many sufferings:

It is said in *Āṅguttara-Nikāya* that “there is no immortality of anything born.”¹⁰ Man’s life is brief and a trifle fleeting. His suffering may be both physical and mental and it may come from within and without. To specify in short, it is as follows.

- a. Birth: (*jāti*). With it five aggregates unfold and renew their ever-changing pattern. Birth itself is a misery because it is the basis for all the suffering we come across.
- b. Ageing (*jarā*). Here there are falling faculties, senility, loss of memory etc. It is also a foundation of suffering.
- c. Disease (*vyādhī*). The unpleasant experience of serious, excruciating nervous and physical ailments to which mind and body are subjects.
- d. Death (*maraṇa*). It is rightly said in *Sutta-Nipāta* that “mortals are in constant fear of death, lest they would die.”¹¹ Insecurity of life always haunts the mortal being.
- e. Sorrow (*śoka*). It is an inward burning yielded from various worldly objects.
- f. Lamentation (*vilāpa*). It is the outward sign of sorrow and grief often evidence.

It is when man craves for individuality and looks for his separate identity from this all-encompassing flux, that is the beginning of all turmoil and greed. This gives place to possible evil manifestations viz. craving for sensation, prolonging the span of life and a desire for personal immortality. This craving for various types keeps one rooted in worldliness.

(ii) Process of becoming is continuous and pervasive:

There is a comprehensive universal process of becoming which yields everything. In its sphere whatever has had a beginning, death is inevitable to it. Becoming is the function of sensibility, sensibility is the function of wanting and wanting is the function of ignorance.

The law of moral causation centres in the action-reaction nexus. Thus the being is reduced to action-physical, verbal and mental, and this makes for the continued existence. Thus, we referred earlier that personality is only a heap of productions (*saṅghāta*). These productions are either purely corporeal or due to function of senses or due to action of reason. Death dissolves the personality.

The world of existence is constituted of the constant
Evil, Suffering And Salvation

succession of the flux of reality. Every Being wanders in various realms namely, “the realms of hell-world, animal kingdom, the realms of shades and human and godly realms.”¹²

In modern western philosophy Descartes’ main quest was to arrive at the certainty of the existence of the Self. And to probe as to what it is, Descartes made both direct and indirect approaches. Likewise Buddha too employs the same method. The latter indirect way that is negating all attributes of the self being safer, Buddha preferred it. It is here, all conditional references limited to the mere empirical self are negative, so as to indicate the existence of higher unconditional Self. Thus the issue, as to whether the elements of evil and suffering do form the constituent part of the essence of the self, assumes importance.

(iii) Man is egoistic:

Now, it is not that evil and misery cannot be rooted out. But it is the egoism accompanied with craving and clinging, infatuation and attachment as ‘self-ness’, appetites of greed and resentment etc. which strongly binds the man. Thus *Dhammapada* says that “evil is done by oneself, it is born of self, brought into being by self.”¹³ For all suffering is bound up with the concept ‘I am this or that’.

But then, what suffers is not the Self. Buddha never accepted the reality of the ātman of a permanent substantial entity, impervious to change. For, only when we consider anything as permanent and pleasant, as a self, do we get attached to it and are averse to other things. This is the nature of bondage and this ego is the subject of suffering. This ego is constituted of the world of six senses which is what we all experience in our personality and as our personality. These elements of personality in fact are something foreign to our true Being.

Man, however, refuses to face the reality of existence squarely and deceives himself through ignorance that something or some ‘self’ can survive the flux of change. This great delusion of the separate ego-entity due to man's craving and clinging to the world of objects and

consequent independent individual action heralds conflicts and sufferings.

Through constant craving and thirsting, man tries to break off the force of flux. Man's mental energy seeks something substantial from the flow of change, the continuing process of becoming. But the conditional law of dependent origination of things is all pervasive. Only those who seek permanent pleasures would not grasp this fact of reality. For, they do not know the fading away of craving and its extinction. It is truly said "everything is burning with the fire of passion, hatred and delusion, old age and death, grief and despair."¹⁴

The empirical ego necessarily introduces corruption into the world as it is itself a corrupt product of the flux of reality. Accordingly, its evil thoughts and acts are inseparable from pain and suffering. 'Sin' is generally understood in Buddhism as '*kleśa*' pain, demerit etc.

(iv) There is a constant dissatisfaction:

Every satisfaction of will leaves pain and suffering, for the same will is no more there at other moment. It is replaced by another set of will. Lasting satisfaction of will is impossible in the world. As long as we will something, we produce the evil of being frustrated by not getting what we want. The sentient conscious creatures are subject to suffering for they can know the gap between what they desire and what they get. The pervasive nature of suffering is so evident in this context that its rejection is impossible. Only, it is ignored by man owing to deep-rooted ignorance.

Thus, the basis of this will is so strong in man that it does not allow to enlighten the fundamental truth of his Being. This inveterate tendency prevents the supreme fulfilment of man by identifying itself with the conditional things of the world.

To seek an abiding refuge in such a storm is a contradiction in terms. It is an unbroken chain of continuity and a perpetuation of compulsive passion. This craving is due to ignorance which always results in suffering.

(3) JAINISM

With the inflow of karma-particles, the Ātman is bound by the laws of the ethical and material world. It results in the cycle of birth and death, a great cause of worldly misery. The bondage is parasitical, as it owes its life and existence to *āśrava* or inflow of matter particles. According to the *Tattvārtha-Sūtra* this bondage “acquires virtue or vice according as it has auspicious or inauspicious karma particles.”¹⁵

Spirit, when combined with matter, is regarded as impure. After bondage, it begins to hold wrong beliefs about itself and the world. It becomes attached to physical matter and continues to be so attached (*avirati*) and forgets about its essential nature. The conscious sentient principle has limited influence due to its contamination with *pudgala*. So long as it feels the pulls of hatred and attachment, it suffers a ceaseless transmigration from one life to another life.

(i) It is an embodied existence:

The embodied soul is in possession of non-essential temporary states of being. The embodied souls are either non-moving or moving. Non-moving souls have microscopic organisms and reside in earth, water, fire, air and plants. Moving souls have more than one sense. There too, only the human souls are fully conscious and rational. Again the soul is a regenerate ego. Once embodied, it acquires the senses, through the senses the objects in the environment are seen, and from this come desires and aversions towards objects.

One with the fear of death, disease and uncertainties can never have true happiness. It is queried in *Uttarādhyayana-Sūtra* “where is happiness to be found in this evil ridden world?”¹⁶ These pains and sufferings may be physical, mental or both together. Again, these pains have been classified in four ways. They are due to some substance, or due to some places, or due to an inevitable hellish period to be spent or due to psychical emotional states.

Besides, observance of non-violence through mind, word and body is the most binding moral duty. Unless and until this is

accomplished, suffering persists. Besides, due to the generated innate proneness to sin one continuously commits five sinful deeds viz. untruthfulness (*asatya*), violence (*hiṃsā*) dishonesty (*steya*), unchastity (*abrahmacarya*) and excessive possession (*parigraha*.) In fact, these acts being against the innate nature of the soul have to be avoided.

(ii) The nature of karma-bondage:

The objective karma bondage could be viewed from four points of view. (a) Man creates his own karma according to his own nature. (b) Karmas are classified according to the time duration they take to expiate. (c) Bearing the intensity of the fruitful karma. (d) Some karmas attract more *pudgala*, others less.

When matter enters the soul, it assumes eight fundamental forms.

- (a) Obscuring right knowledge and producing relative types of knowledge (*jñānāvaraṇa*).
- (b) Obscuring right type of contacts with objects (*darśanāvaraṇa*).
- (c) Producing transient pleasures and pains (*vedanīya*).
- (d) Disturbing and ruining our faith in truth and right conduct (*mohanīya*).
- (e) Determining the length of life (*āyus*).
- (f) Determining the form of individual existence (*nāma*).
- (g) Determining family, community etc. (*gotra*).
- (h) Acting as a downward pull for the soul (*antarāya*).

(iii) Passions:

Passions may be identified with the delusion producing karma. There are four kinds of passions viz. anger, conceit, deceit and greed. Each passion has four aspects and thus there are sixteen functions altogether. The four kinds of passions¹⁷ are namely, obscuring spiritual conversion, eclipsing the proneness to partial

conduct, arresting the aptitude for complete conduct and holding up of perfect type of conduct towards attainment of 'Arhathood' (enlightened state).

(iv) *Leśyā*:

Leśyā is an additional function of passions. Activity coloured by passions is called *leśyā*. It points out the character of the individual who possesses it. The totality of karma enjoined by a soul, attracts a transcendental colour. Of course this colour is not visible to naked eyes. But the colours named as black, blue and grey, yellow, red and white have moral bearing and accordingly they point out the characters of the individuals who own them. The first three belong to bad characters, while the rest belong to good characters. These refer and indicate the interplay of mind and matter with various kinds of colours.

The soul has to exert in the proper direction, else its embodiment is continuously extended and renewed by invisible matter particles through the medium of senses. As the cause of bondage is the union of karma matter with the soul, the liberation consists in the separation and destruction of these karma particles. Since man makes for self-determination, there is an element of initiative or personal action which within limits can resist the factors that affect it.

(4) SIKHISM

When acted by 'Hāumain' in a vicious sense, man's natural instincts are stimulated to desire more of everything. It invariably leads to stronger self-centred attachment which further binds the man. Often it is inconsistent with ethical laws. Man's mind is weak and by nature it is very much inclined to the forces of evil. When one follows this evil path (*manmukh*), there is suffering, anguish and one is lost in the wilderness of the world.

Man fails to discern the Divine Order and follows his wayward impulses. All his activities are performed from his own context. Even

that which we call good or right is done only if it accords with the individual's 'hāumain', if not, then it is rejected in favour of evil.

This error of judgement occurs, because man does not know the whole truth. He knows the nature but not the super-nature, he knows the not-self but not the Self. According to prof. P. S. Gill it is "this veil over reality (which) is called māyā."¹⁸ The world is not fully comprehensible.

Everything in the world takes birth, grows, declines and decays. Change is occurring incessantly. It is an illusion, when a person through free choice identifies himself with this momentary flux. Its consequence is nothing but anxiety and perplexity.

(i) It is an unregenerate existence:

Deluded by these transitory attractions, and following the evil impulses, man's unregenerate condition binds him firmly to the wheel of transmigration. The inner nature being vitiated by evil influences shuts up the window of the self upon itself.

One who follows the dictates of 'hāumain', loses equipoise and equilibrium; hence, there is a loss of true personality. Man is driven against his own better judgements and interests. His fate is diseased and as Gauri Aṣṭ describes "ineluctable death smites the head of the false."¹⁹ That is, in the words of Prof. W. H. Mcleod "when evil propensities are permitted to assert themselves, in consequence man remains a slave to his passions, and so to death."²⁰

(ii) It is a separation from God:

When the sense of individuation separates man from the Real, his existence becomes momentary. Pain, misery and sin are due to this separate existence. This is recognized in Sikhism as inherent in the world of coming and going. Nanak likens the world "to a wrestling arena where the souls have to overcome the evil tendencies, developed in them by succession of lives, lived in a wrong way."²¹

Submission to hāumain and involvement in māyā lead man astray from God, which in turn perpetuates the deadly transmigratory process. The pursuit of a petty self makes one lose the truth of a

profound relationship with God, so that one is born and reborn again and again in this wilderness of world. In these spread-out lives, there is nothing but suffering as the retribution and more retribution of the past sins continue.

The five traditional evil impulses, viz. lust, anger, greed, infatuation and pride which are expressed by one's thoughts, feelings and actions are due to sin and they too protract the cycle of existence endlessly. These sins result from the transgression of the commandments of scriptural injunctions.

So long as the soul is not merged in its original source, it feels imprisoned and one has to go through the unpleasant situations much against one's wishes. Man is responsible for his actions; he cannot escape the results.

In short, Gauri Sukhmani notes that "the ideas of good and evil, the three modes (inertia, passion and darkness), heaven and hell, māyā and attachment, doubt and I-am-ness, joy and sorrow, honour and dishonour, are all man-made."²²

3. The Religions of Semitic Origin and Zoroastrianism

(5) JUDAISM

As a matter of fact evil and suffering are outside the kingdom of God, which is truly the kingdom of life. For, Psalms hold clearly that God "has no pleasure in wickedness and nor evil remains with Him."²³ Evil belongs to the realm of mere fate and death.

The implication of 'the fall of man' is grasped in the inner experience of man. It is a lapse of the original idea of purity and divine nobility into defiance and sin. The state of immortality is lost and 'death' is accrued to the lot of man.

(i) Man is Unfaithful:

Man is unfaithful to God as well as to his own fundamental nature. The impurity in his divine stature, due to violation, is very

much evident. Living against the laws of God is blameworthy. There occurs a schism in the moral nature of man.

(ii) Corporate Punishment:

Violation between man and his fellow man is a corollary of the basic violation against God. No sin by man escapes God's notice. God's wrath fell upon the guilty nation Israel and brought its downfall and ruin. The people had to go excruciatingly through the doom that had descended.

There was no expiation on the Day of Atonement. People still continued the distrust and disservice of one another. This is how the political history of Israel is continuously subjected to periodic external invasions and internal disorders. People had to seek refuge elsewhere.

Thus, the whole nation was taken to the task. No doubt in course of time the influence of this clannish outlook was alleviated and the individual became the centre of the concrete unit of attention.

(iii) Misuse of Freedom:

Judaism does not admit the belief in hereditary man is endowed with an unrestrained sin. Each man is endowed with an unrestrained freedom of will.

The community and national character of this religion is never an excusing factor for the individual to be indifferent. Society has a kinship character. There is an interrelationship between the individual and the community. So they are liable together to retribution, punishment and expiation.

Mere defiance of God is not a sin, but with it ensues the severance of soul's inner and native relations to God. Miseries and suffering result. It is a failure to live rightly with fellow men and God. This is not merely an evil deed but it is also an evil inclination which affects the thought and life of the sinner. This is why when the prophets warn and condemn people's conduct, the condemnation is of their moral behaviour and not of their mechanical and routine

deeds of religion. It is said by Isaiah that “woe to them (people)! for they have brought evil upon themselves.”²⁴

(iv) It is a Sin:

There is a basic rapture in the relationship between man and God. Every evil deed is a sin against God and consequently, it is bad for the human freedom itself. Moral indifference and carelessness to worldly wrongs thrive with the denial of faith in God. There results a disharmony between the forces of nature and the power of man.

‘Sin’ is a free violation of the moral requirement of man in his relationship with God. It is a failure to achieve the religious fulfilment. God's commandments are moral and social obligations to all members of the society. Thus every violation becomes a serious sin if it is a voluntary violation of any of the Ten Commandments. Judaism speaks of these as “sins against community”.²⁵ “One feels afflicted with guilt and Leviticus says that “one has to carry the burden of sin.”²⁶ Man remains separate from God and cannot get his grace.

(v) Their own deeds are responsible:

The prophets were certain that all evils and calamities of man are the results of sin. In fact God is not happy in punishing man and the nation. Even in this case, He aims at saving them from their evil ways.

But the sensuous and evil nature of man is always inclined to sin. No one is wholly immune from this blemish of sin. Who can say; “I have made my heart clean, I am pure from any sin.”²⁷ In fact as K. Kohler says “it is a sin of self-condemnation”²⁸ and “evil ones bind themselves by their own deeds”²⁹ One is ignorant of one's holy nature.

Thus, mankind faces degradation and disunity. There is a ceaseless discord, for where fear of God wants violence and vice are rife. Man cannot be what he ought to be.

(vi) Sin results into Varieties of Suffering:

Physical sufferings are punishment inflicted upon mortals by God for the breach of covenantal fidelity. These sufferings are in terms

of “curses, afflictions, diseases, disasters, slavery, oppressions etc.”³⁰ Life is not merely physical. There are also social, political and historical evils too.

Dependency and limitation are inherent in the mortal life. In the way of wickedness, one cannot be saved. There are many sins of sensuality and intemperance, malice and dishonesty. The fall from the original integrity results into the continuous external and internal struggles.

(6) CHRISTIANITY

The Satan is a powerful malicious spirit who wishes to be respected as God. He tempts men to commit unrighteous deeds. Satan has revolted against God from the very beginning. So one who sins, favours only Satan. It is said by John that one who “doeth evil hath not seen God.”³¹

The Satan appears to have won and the great evil ‘death’ entered the earth. Verily it is said in the Epistle to Romans that “the wages of sin are death.”³² The life which is dissociated from God is without significance and importance of its own.

(i) Evil and Suffering are real:

The existence of evil is a reality. The life and struggle of Jesus evidenced this tragic part of the nature of life and the world. In fact pain and suffering are part and parcel of the deeper and wider issue of moral evil, the sin. It is against the good creation of God.

The world with Satanic influence is different from God, so it must be imperfect. It is a mixture of both good and evil. Man is enfeebled by the Satanic influence. The cross of Christ is the symbol of shame and indignity for man, for it signifies that Jesus “died for our Sins.”³³

The world is corrupt morally. The dread of death has caught man with much insecurity and anxiety. The Holy God condemns such a world. In short, human life is a continuous struggle between the dual forces of good and evil.

(ii) All is at War with Oneself:

When man cannot trust God and love others, he is at war with himself. He cares for such a life which in fact loses it, that is, the native dignity of the human spirit is jeopardised. The rupture in the unity of self creates disorder and antagonism within itself.

All the innumerable sins are the results of the original sin. All the defiled desires and inclinations are due to the separative self-assertion of man. Genesis maintains that "whatever generates in mind, it is always evil."³⁴ The symbol of cross indicates this schism between man and God. It is a distortion of the original nature of man.

(iii) It is Sin:

Actually, the concept of 'sin' is undefinable in its full implied sense. At its best, it suggests indifference and carelessness to God. There are various interpretations, but it is a pride and opposition to God. It is distrust and lawlessness, for it is the transgression of the law of God. There is no loving relation with God, and so it is irreligion. It is iniquity as man rejects God's goal.

This is such a gruesome fate that the son of God has come to seek and to save that which was lost. Man is full of discontent and anxiety. There are certain sufferings owing to the specific sinful deeds of men, but the overall evil and suffering of humanity is the result of man's elemental transgression.

Now, the state of the sinner is such that he cannot undo or make good the evil that has been done. It is said in Galatians that "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."³⁵ In other words no one can escape it, for man is warned that "Be sure your sin will find you out."³⁶ Thus sinful nature and sinful inclination hamper the spiritual growth of the individual. Men have inherited this predisposition to evil, and here lies the nature of punishment by God.

(iv) Denial of the Kingdom of God:

The nature of flesh and blood that exists with us denies the presence of the kingdom of God. It is a mortal and corrupt body in which there can be no immortality and incorruptibility.

The worldly lusts and forces are temporary, but God and His kingdom abide forever. Man cannot aspire for both the worlds, as it is rightly upheld by Luke and “ye cannot serve God and mammon.”³⁷

Man has forfeited his unlimited vision which God wanted man to possess. The glory and unity of the soul is lost. Till resurrection, man has to face this ill-fated nature. It is then only there will be a new beginning of life.

(v) Unrighteousness:

In reality neither Satan nor the world nor evil heart can compel man to sin, for man has free choice and free will. It is admitted that there is an awful power and potentiality for evil in man. But to be aware and to feel guilty of this sinful nature would make one know the holiness of God. But the question is, does man make for such a pursuit?

It is tragic that since the fall of man, he has been making ungodly quest for power and selfish ends. The cause of God remains unserved. Man is lost in selfish pleasures and desire. Because of the egoistic pride man does not manifest his basic spiritual nature.

Man thinks that he can win over his limitations. But man is not only morally weak but also morally blameworthy. The fact that human beings are hypocrites is conveyed well by Matthew when he says that “all their works they do for to be seen of men.”³⁸ Man's unrighteousness results in physical and spiritual destruction.

(vi) Punishment:

God is strict and drastic in punishing impenitent and evil doers. The history of sinful deeds and evil nature is painful. Man does not know his limits and true potentialities. His sin, due to his confusion and vagueness regarding his native nature, indicates distrust in God. It is the root of sin which drags him to hell.

(7) ISLAM

(i) Man deviates himself:

God has endowed man with the discriminative power to opt for good or evil, right or wrong. When man misuses this power, he is

unhappy. Those who misuse this power are “evil doers and wrong their own soul.”³⁹ The conflict of good and evil is constant in the world and not infrequently the latter wins.

(ii) It is a sinful existence:

Sin is indifference to the arbitrary decrees of God. As the human life is predestined, the emphasis on sinfulness is not like that of Christianity. Only, man is unaware of his God-like status, and hence he is not at his best in his life and work. This forgetfulness of his state is the defiance of God's wish. Thus, there is no fixed and immutable law whose violation is regarded as 'sin' in Islam.

With all His sovereignty and arbitrariness Quran categorically says that “Allah never enjoins foul deeds.”⁴⁰ Generally sins are divided in two kinds viz. (i) pardonable sins (*saghira*) and (ii) great capital sins (*kabira*). Minor and pardonable sins, if committed repeatedly with strong motive and intention may become great sins. Distrust and infidelity to God are great sins. In short, though difficult to define, conscious misdeeds are great sins.

(iii) Shirk-a more serious sin:

Of all sins, ‘shirk’ is the most serious one as it degrades and devalues man from the exalted glory in the divine plan. It denies the unity of God which points to partnership with Him and this is a grievous iniquity. No one including semi-Gods, minor powers or incarnations can be associated with Allah.

The unity of God has a deep underlying significance and it is not a mere dogma. No one else but God alone controls the destiny of man. Therefore, to believe oneself as to be powerful as God is a sin. Trust in polytheism is a sin. To make low desires for one's good is a sin.

(iv) Man is rebellious:

The worldly life is a finite existence. When the present life is not known fully, one cannot know of the life hereafter. Again, the world is not timeless for it would be wound up at the appointed time.

Still, man clung to the earth and followed his own lust. He has chosen the worldly life of pleasures. Hell is the place for such people.

A wrong choice and evil action lessens the dignity and stature of man. It is thanklessness to God when one is lost in the pursuit of momentary pleasures. In fact, God wanted man to elevate himself to the image of God within him. But it is a sad commentary that "man is given to injustice and ingratitude."⁴¹

Every evil action is disobedience, and it belongs to a *kufir* (unbeliever). Man on the earth is provided with all the requisites of life. But man is indifferent to God.

(v) It is irresponsibility:

There is no original sin, but the weak character in man is acquired through his free-willed acts. Every man is subject to the consequences which his deeds have earned.

According to the Quran "mere self-seeking soul is perished for what it has got to itself."⁴² Unjust (*zalūm*) and ignorant (*jahūl*) souls do injustice to themselves. The plans of unbelievers are weakened by God, for "He loveth not the treacherous."⁴³

Thus, if we view our life in the context of past experience, we would admit that evil and suffering are punishment due to our sins. Even those who consider themselves good, would recognize how shallow and superficial faith we have in God! Like Christianity there is no vicarious atonement here. Everyone has the personal liability, for it is said in Quran that "whosoever gets to himself a sin, gets it solely on his own responsibility."⁴⁴

(vi) It is faithlessness:

In reality, evil and suffering which serve God's purpose too, are a test of man. In such a crisis one shows one's true worth. It is a strict justice of God and man must trust and patiently bear His supreme will. As God does not desire injustice for any living being, one is likely to be rewarded.

But alas, man is faithless. God dislikes this and he sends all evil and punishment to man.

(8) ZOROASTRIANISM

The evil spirit Druj, having arisen, attempts to harm the world and the creatures of God. Besides death and destruction, it has made even the very existence an awful one. As an independent personified evil spirit, it opposes the good spirit and God's rule.

The evil spirit is bent upon wreaking vengeance upon God's creation. Its nature is spiteful and malicious, the whole creation is the target of its rancour. It tries to make man unhappy and this is why neither our thoughts, nor our teaching, nor our will, nor our choices, nor our words, nor our deeds, nor our convictions, not yet our souls agree.

The evil spirit being imperfect, its will is also imperfect. The world is much ridden with the influence of evil spirit than the good one. The world is corrupted and momentary, so it cannot be trusted. The evil spirit tries to outdo all that good spirit has done. There is a ceaseless warfare between the two.

The evil spirit is restricted spatially and temporally and it is sure to be destroyed sooner or later. In spite of this, it does not leave its evil ways. It harms good things of the world which the God has not willed. It defiles water, earth and plants too.

(i) Death and discord introduced in the world:

Thus, having chosen the evil mind, the evil spirit got infuriated and rushed headlong even "to extinguish the existence of mortal man."⁴⁵ Besides death, it has let loose discord and discontent in the world.

All the human ills, including decay and disease are heir to it. The evil spirit smote the progenitor of creatures and made man mortal. Because of it, the earth is infested with venomous and biting creatures. The whole creation is distorted.

Man was immortal both in body and soul, when he was created first. Death was not natural to him but the evil spirit introduced it for him. Still, man possesses both the good and evil spirit. There is a divine spirit which is deathless and wise, and the other is a devilish spirit which leads to death and destruction. The latter is hostile to man in all ways. Man is ignorant due to it.

(ii) It captures the human soul:

The evil spirit thinks of nothing but falsehood and revenge. For this end, it aims to tempt and capture the human soul. "It knows" as Prof. Zaehner remarks that "by robbing the Soul it has done a perfect injury."⁴⁶

Thus, the most powerful soul is led astray. It cannot, now ably control his psycho-physical functions. The soul is deprived of its native nature. The mind degenerates and much abounding in sensuality and licentiousness blunt the capacity of innate reason.

The life becomes unhappy and painful. The deeper one is attached to the world of gross objects, the stronger becomes the hold of the evil spirit. Ignorance takes the full possession of man.

(iii) Man is unrepentant:

Man is vulnerable to the temptations of evil thoughts, words and deeds. This evil and suffering continues in this world and the next too. Man overlooks his duty and responsibility; he is a foolish one who does not choose rightly. Such actions mean a spiritual death for man.

But man is not repentant for all this. His sins remain unatoned for and multiply fast. The divine law is infringed and the man is met by a terrible fate.

(iv) Man is punished:

God punishes man for his evil deeds. Man is perpetually wounded and tortured when he does not attend to His words. Thus the wicked ones "will be afflicted with lasting torment and fed on foul food."⁴⁷ The chastisement will be done in the damned hell, "the house of lie."⁴⁸

Thus, God's judgement is to be faced after death. The three spirits, viz. *Mithra*, *Rashnu* and *Sraosh* (Personifications of truth, justice and obedience) weigh the merits and demerits of the soul. Man's total life is viewed which only signifies that earthly pleasures and happiness do not last long.

After death, the impending doom awaits at the place known as '*Chinvat bridge*'. For the first three days, the soul hovers round the dead body and on the fourth day it proceeds further according to its fixed destination.

Anyhow, the evil spirit is to be foiled and ruined ultimately. It is not eternal, as one day, it will have to be sieged and subdued to the divine authority.

NOTES

- ¹ Refer *Bhagavad-Gītā* IV 6-9; IX. 11, Also *Bhumer 'bhārāvatarana'* - *Matsyapurana* 70.11, Anandashram Sanskrit series, Poona 1895.
- ² *Problems of Suffering in the Religions of the World*, J. Bowker, 1975, p. 205.
- ³ *Bhagavad-Gītā* XVI. 8.
- ⁴ *Bhagavad-Gītā* XVI. 7.
- ⁵ *Brhadāranyaka-Upaniṣad*. 1. 11. 1.
- ⁶ *Bhagavad-Gītā* III. 27; XIII. 5-6; XVIII 15-17.
- ⁷ *Problems of Suffering in the Religions of the World*, J. Bowker, 1975, p. 205.
- ⁸ *Bhagavad-Gītā* III. 13.
- ⁹ *Kaṭhopaniṣad* 1, 2, 2.
- ¹⁰ *Āṅguttara-Nikāya*. IV. 136-139.
- ¹¹ *Sutta-Nipāta* V. 576.
- ¹² *Majjhima-Nikāya* 12.
- ¹³ *Dhammapada* 161, 165.
- ¹⁴ *Vinaya-piṭaka* 1.34.
- ¹⁵ *Tattvārtha-Sūtra* 8:25-26.
- ¹⁶ *Uttarādhyayana-Sūtra* 19. 15.
- ¹⁷ Refer *Karma Granth*, Devendrasuri, I. 13.
- ¹⁸ *Trinity of Sikhism*. P. S. Gill, 1973, p. 39.
- ¹⁹ *Gauri Aṣṭ*. 14 (5), *Ādi-Grantha*, p. 227.
- ²⁰ *Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion*, W. H. Mcleod, Oxford University Press, 1968, p. 181.
- ²¹ *Facets of Guru Nanak's Thought*, Ajit Singh, 1972, p. 27.
- ²² *Gauri Sukhmani*, M. 5.

- 23 Psalms 5:5.
- 24 Isaiah 3:9
- 25 *Exodus* 20: 12-17.
- 26 Leviticus 5:1, 24:15; Numbers 15:31.
- 27 Proverbs 20:9.
- 28 *Jewish Theology*, K. Kohler, p. 243
- 29 Proverbs 5:22.
- 30 Deuteronomy 28: 15-68.
- 31 John 3:20.
- 32 *Epistle to Romans* 6:23.
- 33 Corinthians 15:3.
- 34 Genesis 5:5.
- 35 Galatians 6:7.
- 36 Numbers (O.T.) 32:23.
- 37 Luke 16:13.
- 38 Matthew 23:5
- 39 Refer Quran 22: 8-10.
- 40 Quran 7:29.
- 41 Quran 14:30.
- 42 Quran 6:70.
- 43 Quran 8:37.
- 44 Quran 3:4.
- 45 Yasna 30:3-6.
- 46 *The Dawn and Twilight of Zoroastrianism*, R. C. Zachner, C. P. Putnam's
Sons Publications, N. Y., 1961, p. 272.
- 47 Yasna 31:20, 49:1'.
- 48 Yasna 49: 11, 57:15.

Chapter VI

SOLUTION OF EVIL

1. INTRODUCTION

The evil and sinful aspect of the world automatically makes man activate to escape this profane existence and hence begins liberation or salvation. The more one is aware of this state, the stronger is the quest and desire for freedom. The felt bondage and baneful existence attended with felt suffering necessarily calls for a basic and foundational solution. Religions assure a way out of this and they recognize the meaning and value of the human existence for the same.

Evil and sufferings represent all oppositions and obstructions to the goal of man. One may question: What amount of struggle and fighting is required to overcome this thick gloom? It may be said that even the recognition of evil and the required struggle seem to be corollaries from the concept of Good or the nature of Supreme Religious Value viz. liberation or salvation. In other words, the Highest Good would have to be proportionate to the Evil, otherwise it would not justify the evil. It is in the deepest, inexplicable levels of human experience that paradox describes the reality of what happens.

Religions agree that perfection is inherent in the very constitution of the self. Man is unique in his capacity. Evil and

suffering become an intermediate stage between man's origin which was bliss and man's end which is a return to the primeval source. It is an anguish of separation and therefore the way out consists of a positive content. It is only during the course of this goal, that one's deep-rooted attitude and Covetous desires are in tussle with the laws of existence. One has to reassess these attitudes and desires. The very changing of oneself from this world perspective brings about a change in relation to others as well as to ultimate world order.

Bondage or damnation is not the essential and the ultimate nature of the Soul. It is only a relative happening as a consequence of worldly nature and involvement with it. The concept of liberation or salvation, suggests a wholesome and absolute completeness of man in a spiritual sense. The religions make it clear that the present life of an earthly existence with all its attendant values does not constitute a final goal for man. There is a perfect and regenerate condition for both men and the world. Men must strive for this goal.

But again, these strivings do not mean to confine their aim to mere harmony and happiness of oneself or all other beings in the world. There is also much more, a salvific goal or self-realization is inherent in it. It is a supreme personal experience, a relationship with God wherein all difficulties are overcome. However, this deliverance is not primarily a deliverance from suffering but that it is suffering which makes deliverance possible. Positively, it is a quest of the life eternal which transcends and goes beyond all evils and contradictions of the present existence.

This is a transfigured life and a new mode of being. One has to attempt for this kind of life, here and now only.

2. Religions of the Indian Origin

(1) HINDUISM

(i) Discrimination of Real from Unreal

Evil and suffering are not the essence of Reality (Brahman). One who has the perspective and understanding of Reality has no problem of evil. Because therein man is not connected with the source

of sorrow. It is Reality which is the source of all eternal values such as Truth, Beauty and Good. It is what is true in knowledge and conduct and which imparts meaning to the human existence as such.

The union between primal matter (*prakṛti*) and spirit (*puruṣa*) is not permanent. Discrimination to this effect is *sine qua non*, as then only the Self realizes its true nature. Also, it is orienting the existence in such a way that it only keeps aside the transmigratory process of birth and death.

(ii) Righteous deeds are equally important:

But this Reality (Brahman) is not and cannot be pursued in vacuum. One cannot escape the duties and obligations of the world. Though these duties are to be pursued for their own sake, their end is to promote 'dharma'. According to *Kaṭhapaniṣad* the truly wise "chooses good (*śreyas*) in preference to the pleasant (*preyas*)."¹ The good action, on one hand, promotes harmony and happiness of all beings and, on the other hand, it leads to self-realization of the individual too.

Purity of body and mind are ethical prerequisites. Perception of Truth calls for self-control and detachment from sense-organs. Specific restraints (*yamas*), observances (*niyamas*), and expiations of Hindu scriptures serve the purpose of purity and upliftment. The *Gītā* abounds in this normative account, giving a list of qualities and patterns of behaviour as the "divine wealth"² (*daivisampad*) of a person, which is conducive to final liberation.

Thus, the release from the bondage of the world is impossible while the unethical deeds and desires continue unabated. Though apparently the law of karma is purely a mechanical law, essentially it represents the cosmic power of righteousness which always encourages man towards spiritual elevation. To quote Prof. Bowker in this respect, "making people aware of the causes of suffering, and to show in what way suffering can be alleviated or avoided is the main work of *smṛti* literature."³

Moral action can be of three types viz. daily actions of worship (*nitya-karma*), obligatory actions of worship (*naimittika-karma*) and optional rites (*kāmya-karma*) performed with a view to enjoying their fruits. These individual and social needs have to be coordinated and then transcended in such a way that they are harmoniously related as the two aspects of a single whole. Directing our possessions and passions to a spiritual end is a righteous action.

Special emphasis is laid on truth (*satya*), non-violence (*ahimsā*), sacrifice (*tyāga*) and renunciation (*parityāga*). Unlike the general belief that these qualities are of passive nature, they in fact mainly represent active social morality.

However, moral law as the native attribute of the soul remains till "it has not experienced itself as Brahman and totally transcended the moral law."⁴ Unless and until one gets beyond relative morality and touches the level of Bliss (*ānandamaya-koṣa*), moral strife continues.

(iii) Four-fold prerequisites:

Hinduism grants many ways of looking at the Reality. A particular individual is unlikely to reach ultimate certainties in his search for knowledge. That is, the sign is not to be mistaken for the things signified. Men differ in physical, psychological and spiritual attainments and therefore their capabilities differ too. Hence, the quest for perfection presupposes certain prerequisites. They are classified under four-fold qualifications (*sampat*). These are as follows:-

- a. Discrimination between what is eternal and ephemeral (*viveka*).
- b. Detachment (*vairāgya*).
- c. Six-fold possessions (*saḍguṇa-sampatti*) viz. equanimity (*śama*), restraint (*dama*), distaste for pleasures (*uparati*), endurance (*titikṣā*), faith (*śraddhā*) and resolution (*samādhāna*).
- d. Desire for liberation (*mokṣa*).

(iv) To abide by the meaning of 'dharma':

In general the Hindu ethical perspective tries to steer clear of two extremes. The very catholic and open outlook prevents it from uniform and fixed rules of conduct to be imposed on the human will. No prophetic or scriptural statements are regarded as final and binding all. On the other hand Hinduism also believes that every man is not in a position to make his conscience the beginning and end of all his actions. This is how we find varieties of paths in Hinduism laying down respective norms and standards. Still the upshot is that Hinduism expects man to orient his actions from the level of inner development (*svabhāva*) and discerning intelligence (*buddhi*).

The emphasis is on appropriate action based on 'dharma'. The action has to be in consonance with the pattern of life (*varṇa*) in the present circumstances. Essentially the word '*varṇa*' indicates performing the particular duties which are the birth-right abilities of man.

(v) Varieties of the paths granted:

Hindu religious path is liberal as it grants relativity insofar as the methods of aspiration (*sādhana*) for the knowledge of Reality are concerned. However there is an unmistakable unity of doctrine with the diversity of practices. Transforming the whole man is the goal of aspiration, which needs to take note of varying capacities in the human nature.

Thus, the man with discriminative intellect opts for the path of knowledge, the emotional one selects the path of devotion and the extrovert and dynamic one may choose the path of action. All paths are complementary to one another. A short explanation of these paths is as follows.

a. *Jñāna-Marga*:

Jñāna is the intellectual discrimination between what is real and unreal, divine and non-divine, truth and falsehood. The implication is evident that this *Jñāna* is not merely intellectual but an experiential realization of the only highest reality. It begins as an

intellectual metaphysical knowledge. Herein one is convinced that the world is phenomenal, perishable and unreal.

b. *Bhakti-Mārga*:

It is a stead-fast and intense devotion to God. Without any desire for returns, the devotee fully surrenders himself to God. In His presence, the devotee loses all attachments to secular things.

c. *Karma-Mārga*:

No one can escape work. Also every work in context of the desired end is a mixture of good and evil, pleasure and pain. Good actions produce good effects and evil actions give rise to evil effects. Truly speaking both bind the individual soul. Ethically everyone has to work. But if this is done without any attachment to objects, one attains spiritual realization. He may be profoundly in action (*pravṛtti*), but his desireless action withdraws him from the stern causal nexus of action (*nivṛtti*).

As mentioned above, these three paths are not mutually exclusive. In a person there may be predominance of either of these paths and the other paths though subordinate in him, are of equal significance. Man is endowed with the inner power of volitional determination. Only he has to make a rational choice with free and autonomous willing. As a matter of fact, in the ecstasy of the realization of the Supreme, one forgets the distinction of the various paths listed, as one feels these paths to be merged in one another.

(vi) Selfless action is the goal:

Selfless and disinterested activity (*niṣkāma-karma*) assists significantly in the cause of moral and spiritual endeavour. For, action as such does not bind the individual as do the passions and attachment which accompany that action.

No doubt, one's birth and initial environment are beyond one's control but one can control, master and guide the innate spring of acting tendencies responsibly. Action done in a passionless spirit of detachment makes way for the soul's progress towards ultimate

release. Desirelessness prevents further involvement of the Self by egoistic tendencies.

This responsibility of regaining the primordial identity lies squarely on the individual himself. The real 'yoga' (union) can be achieved by the stable-minded person known as '*sthita-prajña*'. He is above all dualities of life and unfettered by attachments. He is able to check the trend of karmic forces which make for suffering. He is detached from all fleeting things, and is identified with that Reality only which endures and remains forever. In this state individual limitations come to an end. It is a self-transcending experience suggestive of the universal nature of the self.

(vii) It does not mean world-negating:

Emphasis on the transcendental aspect of spiritual experience makes some critics confuse Hindu principles with the world-negating⁵ views. Of course, Hinduism does insist on renunciation. But it is, to quote Prof. Radhakrishnan, "the feeling of detachment from the finite and attachment to the finite as the embodiment of the Infinite."⁶ Life of enjoyment and renunciation go together. Thus *Kaṭhopanishad*⁷ insists on enjoying the world with the intuition that everything is pervaded by God. This is a super-conscious and super-intellectual intuition. "It is such a vision" says *Śvetāśvatara-Upaniṣad* "which views the greatness of the Lord and crosses grief."⁸ However, there is a graduated series for this. First there is a theoretical knowledge (Indirect), from this only intuitive experience (Direct) of the ultimate dawns.

But so long as this enlightening and highest transformation has not taken place, one has to gradually explore and discover it through the practice of the rules of '*dharma*'. It helps to mould our outlook and approach objectively. In the absence of absolute perfection, we have to be satisfied with approximations. The relativism is not necessarily evil as such. This too, slowly leads to progress. Full Realization calls for many lives. The law of karma continuously gathers its momentum. It is only when selfless action begins, the process of law of karma stops growing like a burnt seed.

(viii) One must attain oneness with Reality:

In *Maṇḍūkyaopaniṣad* it is held that one realises the Goal, "when one attains sameness of essence with God."⁹ The state of liberation is not something different from the real nature of the self.

Everything low falls off from one who loves the Supreme. The inspiration of this spirit will behold action in inaction and inaction in action. But liberation is not simply an ethical process. It is also a religious or a metaphysical approach.

The *Kāṭhapaniṣad* says that "reality which is in all beings is not tainted by the miseries of the world, as it is outside (the universe)."¹⁰ For it therefore, to quote *Praśnopaniṣad*, "there is no dissolution at death and where there is no fear."¹¹ It is changeless and so Immortal.

In the theistic conception, the liberation means the realization of communion of the individual divine self with God. Herein one obtains the characteristics of God and enjoys fellowship with Him.

(2) BUDDHISM

The pervasiveness of evil and suffering is a challenge to be faced squarely. Impermanence and decay constitute the nature of the world. It is to realize this subtle nature of suffering to seek a way beyond it.

(i) To follow the natural Law:

Pursuit of good and happiness requires one to live in harmony with the natural laws. Thus, it is helpful to be aware of the following as mentioned in *Aṅguttara-Nikāya* viz. "impurity, death, aversion for food, dislike for the world, momentariness and no self."¹² Truth-finder needs to cultivate "deep devotion to Buddha, in Dhamma, in the order, moral culture, knowledge and freedom."¹³ Buddha employs the psychological method to analyse consciousness and to explain its ever-changing and composite character.

We have seen elsewhere that what exists is precisely the chain of causation. To give some specific direction rather than some other direction while remaining within that process is an insurmountable

task. Still, the path is to be undertaken within the chain of cause and effect. The basic insight for this is discovered in the theory of dependent origination of things.

(ii) Need of discriminating the ego:

Exploring one's true being and emancipating oneself from the dominating ego-self through right efforts is inevitable. Everyone is endowed with the permanent possibility for this enlightenment.

The component factors that make up the empirical self are constantly changing. So long thirst and craving exercise their influence, the 'personality' is held together. It is a separate existence. Mere senses do not create the world. It is so when they are associated with will and craving for the world.

Thus, fire is no longer there when the fuel is withdrawn by detaching oneself from all sensuous pursuits. The importance of the law of causation does not lie in the fact that it explains evil and suffering, but it is in the fact of its right understanding as causal origination which signifies an insight that roots the source of evil, namely, 'I' or 'Self' consciousness.

This brings home the fact that evil and suffering are part of our self-created being and not due to the external world or an arbitrary God outside ourselves. This indicates that the removal of evil is in our hands, provided we remove its causes.

Accordingly, possessiveness is a moral evil. This selfishness is abetted by self-ism. A moral discipline is needed to tame the self. So called complacency and contentment for further ethical progress is to be denounced.

(iii) Emphasis on righteous life:

Buddhism exhorts one to make one's own efforts for self-discipline and self-purification. As an ethical philosophy, it gives a progressive scheme for the same. The experience and understanding of the ever-changing process could be within one's very self.

Accordingly Knowledge, morality and concentration are three cardinal principles enunciated in Buddhism. In the scheme of 'eight-fold path'¹⁴ the first two paths belong to the wisdom group (*paññā*), the next three paths are the virtue group (*śīla*) and the last three paths belong to the concentration group (*samādhi*).

Ignorance and craving are bound together as the theoretical and practical aspects of the same phenomenon. Ignorance is rooted out by intuition, while ethical striving roots out desire.

(iv) Eightfold path:

The primary function of the eightfold path is to prevent evil and suffering. It is to help destroy the deeply rooted *kāma* (craving) and start cultivating those states of mind with beneficial results. *Aṅguttara-Nikāya* holds that "the fire can be quenched by opposites (traits)"¹⁵ This eight-fold path is as follows: -

a. Right Understanding (*Sammā ditthi*)

Life is to be seen as it is with its three characteristics. The seeker must develop right views of the four noble truths. Understanding the nature of existence and the moral law, one must keep on questioning one's previous assumptions creatively. One has to destroy avarice, anger and delusion, as well as various demeritorious things.

b. Right thought (*Sammā sankappa*)

According to *Dīgha-Nikāya* when thoughts are free "from lust, ill-will and cruelty," ¹⁶ it is right thinking. One must weed out emotional obstructions and narrow self-interests. Right thinking is a quality of the drive which has to be attentive to the task leading to liberation.

c. Right speech (*Samma vācā*)

There should be no dogmatic assertions and hypnotic suggestions in the words. Again, to quote *Majjhima-Nikāya* "one must avoid vain talks, speak at the right moment in accordance with the fact, and maintain law, discipline and moderation."¹⁷

Various modes of communications have to be utilized to further our quest for understanding and insight.

d. Right Action (*Sammā kammānta*)

It is a right conduct through which the mind becomes holy and detached from the worldly inclinations. To do away with negative vices, one must cultivate positive virtues. This definitely presupposes a clear and a deep understanding of the path.

e. Right means of livelihood (*Sammā ājiva*)

It implies a lot more than merely not employing the doubtful means for livelihood. Thus Majjhima lays down the rule that “practising deceit, disloyalty and usury is not a rightful livelihood.”¹⁸ Again, *Aṅguttara-Nikāya* maintains that one must do away with “trading in arms, living beings, in flesh, beverages and poisons.”¹⁹

f. Right efforts (*Samma vayāma*)

Great attempts and struggles have to be made to negate the arising of evil, vicious qualities, avarice and sorrow. One controls one's senses and passions and develops meritorious qualities. This requires us to develop insight, intuition and willpower.

g. Right mindfulness (*Sammā sati*)

One must keep a watch on all states, to intensify awareness of body, feeling, mind and its activities as well as the world of phenomena. It is a constant remembering of the perishable nature of things. It is a climax of the cognitive and contemplative process which is also a conjoining link with the intuitive process.

h. Right Concentration (*Sammā Samādhi*)

This path is the essence of the whole Buddhist teaching, which leads to the cessation of suffering. One guides one's life in the light of seven rules. This concentration has four stages:-

- i) The first stage is accompanied by reasoning and investigating the nature of the noble truths.

- ii) The second stage is the unruffled concentration free from reasoning.
- iii) Here concentration continues even without a joy of peacefulness and tranquillity resulting from the freedom of reasoning.
- iv) At this stage, concentration is detached even from the bodily ease.

These paths are interdependent and interrelated and they function and they function simultaneously.

(v) Middle Path:

Buddha avoids two extremes of self-indulgence and self-mortification. The former is an ordinary, unworthy and unbeneficial path of low and common people whereas the latter is also painful, unworthy and unbeneficial to the seeker. Without admitting either of these two dead ends, Buddha believes that the middle path leads to a thorough understanding of vision, knowledge and awakening.

Man acquires steadiness in following the middle path. He crosses over the forces of the lower realm spontaneously. Here his freedom of spirit and wisdom abides continuously.

(vi) Disciplining Mind:

Development of the inner faculties of the mind is essential, if one wants to have a perfect understanding of the world. So it is accentuated in *Dīgha-Nikāya* that “mind your mind”²⁰ This is an arduous task which calls for great wisdom.

Negatively it is the destruction of the self and positively it is calmness, tranquillity, release and sublimity. Still these positive and negative terms do not interpret sufficiently, as they do so from relative, conditional and limited viewpoints. Liberation uncaused, unconditioned and uncompounded, it is beyond all the states of being.

(vii) *Nirvāṇa*:

This word is derived from the Pali word '*nibbāṇa*'. It is constituted of 'Ni' as a negative particle and '*vāna*' means weaving or craving. It is a 'death' or "being extinguished". It is a state of blown out fire.

In other words, *nirvāṇa* is described becoming. "as the stopping of becoming."²¹ To *Samyutta-Nikāya*, *nirvāṇa* is "the destruction of old age and death."²² Because it is now that one is capable of attaining liberation from passion, hatred and delusion.

As long as one is bound by craving and attachments, one gathers fresh karmic activities and rotates in a transmigratory process. But in *nirvāṇa* state, one is immovable, inaccessible to all evil dispositions and free from hatred and attachment. This state cannot be described as Prof. Th. Stcherbatsky says that it is "beyond our understanding, beyond our concepts."²³

(viii) Compassion:

The highest ideal of Buddhism is not restricted to merely preventing the ills and miseries of life, but it aims at cultivating 'universal love', that is *karuṇā*. *Nirvāṇa*, meaning as the sense of extinction is not considered as man's final aim. It is not the religion of the void, but of fullness of love and compassion for the universe. Buddha's life is evidence of this. This has nothing to do with pride and conceit, ego aggrandisement. In reality, it is a radically changed and metamorphosed state, a consciousness which is uncompromisingly unaware of dualities or of polarities.

(3) JAINISM

Pure qualities of the Soul are realized fully when all its desires are destroyed. It is the Soul's determined confidence to do away with material bonds that would bring it out from this blind alley. There cannot be a sudden conversion, one has to go through a gradual series of steady steps. The Soul first replaces its unethical vices by corresponding virtues and finally perfects itself in Divine state.

This process is also of two types.

(a) **Subjective inhibition:** It is the voluntary suppression of attachment, aversion and delusion.

(b) **Objective inhibition:** It is the actual stoppage of the influx of karma matter into the Soul. This is the process of self-control by which the influx of sins is checked.

Before the Soul fully gets its enlightenment it has to pass through limited and relative vistas of knowledge. Thenceforth it is he alone “who has valid knowledge removes this ignorance, avoids evil, selects good and becomes indifferent.”²⁴

One has to begin exercising preventive steps opposed to the nature of the inflow of matter particles. Thus, *Tattvārtha-Sūtra* lays down ‘five careful attitudes (*samitis*)’²⁵ to be observed in following activities viz. walking, talking, receiving alms, proper lifting and laying down things. Then, there are three restraints²⁶ on the activities of mind, speech and body which are known as *guptis*. There are twenty-two endurances²⁷ known as ‘*pariṣaha*.’ Enduring hunger and thirst, cold and heat, indifference to clothes, lodging and unpleasant spots, enduring reproaches etc. etc. are a few of this category.

Cultivating humility, keeping away from deceits, fasting, cleanliness, destituteness and the well-known five rules of conduct (*caritra*) are ten duties to be strictly observed by the follower. Living in the best possible purity and turning to good actions considerably helps one to avoid the root of passions.

There are twelve objects (*bhāvanā*)²⁸ on which one must meditate and reflect in order to prevent the invasion of matter particles. Momentariness, negating refuge from anywhere in the world, transmigration, inevitable loneliness, distinction of soul from non-soul, bodily impurity, constitution of the universe, difficulty in acquiring the right path, inflow of karma, stopping of karma, shedding of karma, knowing rightful principles of dharma etc. assist in fighting the stress and storm of worldly life.

The destruction process of the already entered matter particles is known as ‘*nirjarā*’. This could be done in two ways i. e. (i)

by not allowing the fruits of karma particles (*avipāka-nirjarā*) and (ii) by separating the karma particles (*savipāka-nirjarā*).

All actions produce karma, So the doer is subjected to continuous world existence. Only the actions done without passions have no causal consequence. The karmas are to be burnt off in the glow of austerities. Fasting, partial fasting, limiting the food one takes, abstaining from special delights, avoiding temptation etc. are external austerities, whereas expiation service to ascetics, concentration, relinquishing bodily attachments, study of scriptures etc. are internal austerities.²⁹

According to *Uttarādhyayana-Sūtra* final liberation depends on four causes characterized as “right faith, right knowledge, right conduct and austerities.”³⁰

(i) Right Faith:

This is a sincere belief and honest conviction in Jaina categories. All kinds of acts which cause worldly existence have to be checked. This is the basis of ethical and spiritual life. One who knows has faith and acts too.

Right faith³¹ is free from three follies viz. devotion to false activity, externally mechanical rites and believing in so called religious quacks. Its eight ingredients are namely freedom from suspicion, freedom from desire and attachment of worldly objects, freedom from aversion, freedom from inclining to wrong paths, redeeming the effects of ineffective beliefs, sustaining right convictions, respecting pious persons and propagating Jaina principles.

(ii) Right knowledge:

It is an enlightened understanding. It is of two kinds:

- (i) Belief with attachment: Its signs are calmness, fear of mundane life, knowing space, time, thought-activity, compassion etc.

- (ii) Belief without attachment: It consists of the purity of the living soul itself.

Again, the wholesome experience of an omniscient is to realize which has no limitations characteristic of experience in space and time. It is a stage of man's progress in his knowledge-pursuit where Reality is fully without any obstructions whatsoever. This proof of knowledge is clearly specified elsewhere in the book.

(iii) Right conduct:

The practice of the rules of right conduct enables one to remove attachment with matter. It consists of "equanimity, absolute non-injury, freedom from subtle passion and passionless conduct."³²

The *Sūtrakṛtāṅga*³³ says that three-fold restraints on body, speech and mind enable one to achieve the purity of morals which are the foundations of right conduct.

Giving up evil actions, repentance, living with austerity and the observation of the famous five rules are some codes of conduct.

(iv) Austerities:

Besides preventing the formation of new karmas, the old karmas have to be wiped off more speedily than would happen in the ordinary course of things. So austerities are helpful. It is a part of the conduct.

Those worldly people, who are not sufficiently advanced, have to observe rules less strictly (*aṇuvratas*), of course without sacrificing the spirit of righteousness. Of these are five Jaina strictures common with *mahāvratas*. Then, to keep these five rules, there are three *guṇāvratas* viz. limiting desires, to keep vows against lying, covetousness or stealing, and to guard against unnecessary evils. Then, there are four performances to encourage religious duties viz. sitting in meditation, to limit one's outings, to spend some time as a monk and supporting the ascetic community.

All these observances mentioned here, when applied without limitation, are spoken of as rigorous practice of rules (*mahāvratas*).

Besides these twelve observances, the layman will also follow 'eleven *pratimās*'³⁴ which will further enable him to march towards the great vows of ascetic (*mahāvratas*). Some of these are, to worship *Tīrthaṅkaras*, promising to keep all the twelve vows, to remember these vows three times a day, avoiding night meals, observing continence, not involving in earthly pursuits, no covetousness, not to expect any special treatments from others etc.

(v) The ladder of fourteen steps:

There can be no absolute liberation till there is bondage of some kind or other. The ladder of fourteen steps (*guṇasthānaka*)³⁵ indicates the process of evolution to reach the climax. These are as follows.

- i. There is a delusive state where there is difficult to decide about the reality and falsity (*mithyā-drṣṭi*).
- ii. A little distinguishing state, still it is a stage of downfall (*sāsādana-samyag-drṣṭi*).
- iii. A stage of mixed right and wrong belief (*miśra-guṇasthānaka*).
- iv. Right faith but no resolution to act upon it (*avirata-samyag-drṣṭi*).
- v. Partial Vow-stage observing *Aṇuvratas* (*deśavirata-samyag-drṣṭi*).
- vi. Imperfect vow stage of *Mahāvratas* (*pramatta-saṃyata*).
- vii. New thought activity and with it a new inner progress begins (*apramatta-saṃyata*).
- viii. Advanced thought activity stage. It increases the power of meditation (*nivṛtī-bādarasamparāya*).
- ix. Stage of disappearing of deceit (*anivṛtī-bādarasamparāya*).
- x. Stage of advanced asceticism (*sūkṣma-samparāya*).
- xi. Stage of subsiding delusion (*upasānta-kaṣāya-vītarāga-chadmastha*).
- xii. Stage of destroyed delusion (*kṣīṇa-kaṣāyavītarāga-chadmastha*).
- xiii. Stage of vibratory omniscience (*sayogi-kevalī*).
- xiv. Stage of non-vibratory omniscience (*ayogi-kevalī*).

At the highest stage of achievement all karmas are purged away and the intrinsic nature of soul becomes manifested. It is described of this state that “there remains a perfect right belief, perfect right knowledge, perfect perception and the stage of having acquired all.”³⁶

This transcendental stage is beyond any characterization. We know it only from relative stand-points. Discriminative vision (*samyag-darśana*) is an insight into the meaning of truths and it is a spiritual conversion. It is rightly held by Dr. Sogani that “without the assimilation of *samyag-darśana* which is nothing but the belief in the super-empirical conscious principle, the entire Jain *ācāra* is a labour wholly lost.”³⁷

(4) SIKHISM

The law prevails strictly, however it is not inexorable. Else, the sinner is doomed forever with no chance of improvement. The destiny of man is not autonomous and followed rigidly and mechanically by the law of karma. Man's destiny with rewards and punishment lies with God. God is sympathetic and loves His creation. Only one has to be repentant over one's misdeeds. The purification has to take place. *Gurmat* is the ideal path which leads man to light, divinity, non-egoism, service and union with Divinity.

(i) To lead God-conscious life:

Mind must meditate on God's qualities and attributes, in order to win His love. His names or attributes point to the revelation of His being. These words are to be heard, and accepted intellectually as well as emotionally with total devotion. When the mind meditates this way, it is illumined and begins to make progress in the upward direction, which slowly lifts man from a personal to the impersonal Reality. Ultimately man becomes one with the *Nāmi* (possessor).

Thus, hearing and acquiring the spiritual knowledge of saints, to explore its meaning, believing these words and loving God, singing His praise and good company are a few of the dynamics for chanting His Name. The words of *Guru* are received as Truth, which express the

divine qualities. It renders the individual capable of rising progressively to greater heights.

This God-conscious life is self-effacing and of recurring renunciation. His service is equivalent to the service of humanity. One has to subserve the self-centred material goods, and uphold the ideal good which is God. Even while struggling with the evil forces, concentration is to be fixed upon Him.

This way Nanak says that “when one seeks the protection of God leaving aside all other ways (followed by the worldly- minded), in no time God would forgive him and shower mercy upon him.”³⁸

(ii) Hāumain to be subjected to God's will:

The self-ward mind has to be directed towards God. It requires a persistent subordination of ‘hāumain’ to God's will. It is a long-drawn-out spiritual process, but a stage definitely arrives when ‘hāumain’ loses its identity and merges in God's will.

Ego is a chronic malady, but its remedy also lies in it. It has to be in tune with God's will. Truth, purity and goodness are God's qualities and "hāumain assuming such qualities falls within the ambit of God's will."³⁹

Constant awakening and submission to His order, viz. eternal Law (*Hukam*) and will (*Razā*); are two inevitable factors to achieve the Real.

Submission leads to union, the consequence whereof is freedom. *Hukam* is an all-embracing and constant principle, a sum-total of all the divinely instituted laws. It is the revelation of the nature of God which is identical in meaning with the Word. To the extent to which *Hukam* can be comprehended, it works according to a predictable pattern.

Thus, according to Prof. Gopalsingh, “Sin is not a permanent malady, but only a temporary misdemeanour which can be put right.”⁴⁰ These universal truths are contained in the sacred scripture. The technique for this upliftment is fully known to *Guru* himself and not to man.

(iii) To do righteous deeds:

Ridding of ego, lust, anger, avarice and undue attachment, one has to cultivate "cleanliness of the mind, heartfelt humility, single-minded devotion, natural compassion, inner wisdom and above all patience."⁴¹ Again, it is said in Japji "conquering the man is conquering the world."⁴²

God's holiness and beauty is to be realized within and without. This can be achieved only when man abandons his formative Will and the discursive clamour of reason. To Prof. P. S. Gill "the real Guru for mind and intellect is in following properly the self of inner conscience."⁴³

In short, this true realization leads to oneness with Reality, enlightens rightful activity and noble duties, imparts a sense of justice and above all attracts the grace and kindness of God.

Though primarily centred with God-consciousness, Sikhism is no less earthwise. The ideal man has to aim at living a good life in this world. The sense of social and corporate life is very much with it. The primary needs of physical life and familial and social demands cannot be escaped.

The above pursuit is to be sought through higher consciousness which enables one to discriminate and choose good. The grappling with the world problems is for God's sake and not for one's own. The only way of understanding God's Will and deserving His Grace is by good acts. Nanak urged the need for honest labour. When the self is purged of itself earthly activities become sanctified. This brings about the integration of body, mind and spirit.

(iv) Need for rational discrimination:

Again, understanding the true nature of objects and their conscious and proper discrimination lead to the limitation of desires and redirect our emotions to love and longings for the Lord. Sikhism accentuates the intellectualization of senses. Many prayers in the sacred scripture insist on the need for the intellect to prevail upon the mind, the source of senses. Day- to-day ritualistic practices and

physical and mental exercises are regarded as divine as they help to control the flow of desires. This brings home the conviction that one's life is connected with Him in a conscious and harmonious way.

Man becomes stable-minded when he constantly keeps God in mind, for he understands that both pain and pleasure derive from Him. Suffering becomes a blessing in disguise. When man starts loving God, other longings cease and so his suffering ends. In reality, man's liability to evil and suffering ends when he sublimates his ego into His Will.

(v) Guru's Word & God's Grace:

The two sources that assist this pursuit are *Guru's* word and God's grace.

(a) *Guru*:

Literally it means teacher, guide and preceptor, but it implies a very wide connotation indeed. *Guru* leads the seeker (*sikh* means disciple) on the way where he must find out his liberation. This state of Eternal Truth is achieved by him. The word *Guru* also suggests a formless one who has neither birth nor death. The true *Guru* has "special meaning of Divine Giver."⁴⁴ So when the *Guru* and disciple become one, all powers, values and virtues become a part and parcel of the *sikh* as well.

Very often *Guru* has been identified with Eternal Verity whose essence within us is the Soul. Thus, *Guru* is God, ineffable and unseeable. He who follows the *Guru* understands the nature of the universe. He does not lead man to his own worship but to the worship of the Supreme Reality as such. He purges man's selfhood of its dross and illumines it with the light of Truth.

'*Guruśabda*' i. e. the word of the preceptor has the basis of experience. He has actually realized the spiritual reality that we call Truth or God. He has achieved union with the Divine Being. All the so-called intermediaries have to be eliminated, only his word as the guide becomes most significant. Through *Guru's* instruction "one understands one's own self and merges in the Truth."⁴⁵ One

overcomes one's lower consciousness. *Gurumukh* (following the Master) is a joy, a perfecting union with God.

(b) Word:

Word directly descends from the immortal God. *Guru's* word is the vehicle of this revelation. Its function is to provide 'means' whereby man can understand both God and the Way which lead to Him and give him freedom from the bondage. To quote W. H. Mcleod, "Word appears as the medium of communication and the Name as the object of communication."⁴⁶

Word partakes of the infinity of God, but it implies itself sufficiently to anyone who really desires to know it through the practice of Name or Word, ego is to be sublimated into His Will. The Word is the embodiment of God's essence. It stands both for His transcendence and immanence, unmanifest and manifest form. It expresses the totality of God, including his creative Will.

God, who has no colour or form, abides in the world. God pervades all beings and it can be perceived everywhere. The word is the source of this knowledge. Understanding, wisdom and light come from it. Conquering of I-am-ness and extinguishing insatiable desire is possible by it. It is said that the Word has "the capacity to lift the soul of even the most degraded man."⁴⁷

Contemplation and respectful hearing of the Word overcomes the duality and orders our desires. Renunciation and reconciliation imply extinction of dualism. Thus one must keep a constant company of seekers (*satsang*). It is a beneficial moral equipment which leaves an inspiring impact and helps win a selfless attitude towards life and the world. The word of the preceptor is free from the prison of ego, the progenitor of all evils.

Thus the problem of knowing the Divine Will is solved by the Word. Till we attain the direct contact with God, the words of Guru enshrined in the scripture (*Ādi-Grantha*) are to be resorted to. In short, Macauliffe says "only one word, God's name would be of account: all else would be the senseless discussion of pride."⁴⁸

(c) Japa:

'Japa' (recitation) besides being Guru's word in the sacred scripture, is a method to achieve the supreme God. Through it, attributes of God become a part of one's consciousness which conveys the proximity of God. This is a necessary and an important phenomenon which aids the inward perception. In no way revelation can be confined to a mystical inward experience alone. The root of human ills is often the lack of serious reflection, meditation and concentration. The *Japa* method goes a long way in this context. Of course assistance by True *Guru* to comprehend Truth and Will of God is indispensable.

(d) God's Grace:

It is a God-given perpetual inspiration. God bestows blessings upon us when he approves our actions. The faculties of perception and discrimination are God's gift and not dependent on the individual's achievement in this or in any prior life. One obtains salvation only through His Grace.

It is only the self-willed man who passes through evil suffering. Realizing the fact that God is in everyone and all belongs to him can help one to grasp the universe in its true perspective.

Resigning to his will vouches happiness for man. Liberation involves cessation of rebirth and man achieves transcendental state beyond pleasure and pain. Man rises above the three *gunas* viz. *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas* and above three modes of matter viz. time, space and causality. Anyone can qualify for his Grace. Remaining in a personal communion with Truth and to be stable-minded in happiness and suffering, glory and shame is the quintessence of Sikhism.

3. The Religions of Semitic Origin and Zoroastrianism

(5) JUDAISM

There is certainly a hope for new life before the wrath of God comes upon us on the day of judgement. The Israelites must begin to

live “as befitting the chosen people of a righteous God.”⁴⁹ Man has to translate the image of God that he is.

(i) Faith in God:

All our actions must bear faith in His unity and commandments. All hurdles and evils in the quest of this goal are to be fought against. It is said in Proverbs that, “the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom”,⁵⁰ for the God “is a man of war, the Lord is His name.”⁵¹

This faith in God implies that His goodness exists everywhere. We have to accept and make peace with Him here and now only. Even this very conviction and inclination to follow Him is God's Own gift to man. Still, when there is faith, then only God assures, “I will give them a heart to know that I am the Lord....for they shall return to me with their heart.”⁵²

(ii) He is Merciful:

God is not vindictive and remorseless. He is a gracious benefactor and maintains His dignity. Even His punishment to sinners is for their own good. One must accept His laws and diligently seek Him.

(iii) To live righteously:

There is no emphasis on ascetic life but one must have concern for the present earthly life. The righteous life with reference to the commandments of God prepares one for the eternal life in heaven. One has to be conscious of one's transgression. So doing good deeds and duties is essential.

The ‘ten commandments’ or ‘Decalogue’⁵³ constitutes an essential part of this covenant. These represent the Lord Jehovah's will for the chosen people of Israel which call for an obligatory conduct by the people. They are as follows:

- i. I am Jehovah, your Lord who brought you out from the land of Egypt, out bondage.
- ii. Ye shall have no other Gods before me.

- iii. Ye shall not make any idols.
- iv. Ye shall not take the name of Jehovah your God in vain.
- v. Keep the sabbath day holy.
- vi. Respect your father and mother.
- vii. Ye shall not kill.
- viii. Ye shall not commit adultery.
- ix. Ye shall not steal.
- x. Ye shall not bear false witness against your neighbour.
- xi. Ye shall not covet your neighbour's goods.

Men are judged by their deeds and not by their creeds. Again this righteous conduct is not to be weighed by human standards but by divine standards. Those who are faithful and loyal, even amidst critical situations, are declared just.

The imposition of the moral law is the corollary of the election of Israel by God. Morality has reference with a social relationship, which has again, relationship with God. One must be loyal and truthful to this relationship. God supervises His laws which point to the right direction. It stops evil and leads one to joy and bliss with the care of His plan.

(iv) To follow Divine Will:

Thus, the people, as a whole, have to go through moral and spiritual reformation. It is to follow His Will and Commandments, individually and collectively. God's plan is a historical process which bears relationship with the world and man in an intimate way. Salvation of the individual and the people as a whole has been linked indissolubly.

Man has to make a decision, for "life is like a path man chooses."⁵⁴ Again divine decrees and commandments exist for man. Thus Proverbs hold that "if a man obeys these laws, they become life for him."⁵⁵

(v) Sins are to be atoned:

One must feel urgency for the spiritual redemption and the freedom from sinful existence. The humanity must restore and regain

their primal consciousness of the God. The path of God is a goal continuous with existence here and hereafter. This presupposes the purification of the soul and results in the divine holiness of love and goodness. At this stage only man realizes the kernel of what God means to man and how he is helpful for future orientation too. As God and men have interpenetrating unity, man must revere and follow Him creatively. Man must face all hurdles and afflictions, wherein lies his true human significance.

Man is capable of this atonement. The tenth day of the seventh month is the special day for performing this rite. Sacrifices, propitiations and offerings are made. If there is a sincere confession, it is hoped that God forgives sins and reconciliation with Him is achieved.

(vi) Repentance:

Thus, the digressed and the wayward sinner must repent before God. The fall brings with it sorrow, condemnation and punishment. It is repentance which is a remedy now. Man must expiate for his sins. Fasts, austerities and withdrawing from evil life are first essential conditions for progress to the unity and proximity of God. In reality God is kind, for "even in anger God's mercy is implied."⁵⁶

As man himself has sinned, he must himself come back to God. There is no one between him and the God.

(vii) Evil and Suffering-a door of hope:

Evil and suffering can be redemptive, collectively if not individually. Difficulties and afflictions, in fact, are helpful to better our future, "for He has torn, that He may heal us."⁵⁷

Thus, faith in Him was to be intact even while Israelites were away in exile. It is a role that led through suffering to the enlightenment of the world. This is how the prophets constantly insisted on faith of restoration of their relationship with God.

Salvation concerns with all in the future life. It redeems mankind from sin and its effects. It is a simple path without much

mystical touch. One must utilize one's capacities fully so that God's forgiveness and reconciliation are expedited.

(viii) Grace:

This is the gift of God which presupposes a constant struggle for the holy state of purity. God is sympathetic even in punishments, for "He is kind, He won't leave you or destroy you."⁵⁸ No doubt His love is guided by justice and balance.

It is His grace which helps the sinner to repent. It compensates human incompleteness. Daily prayers supplement human merits.

(ix) Day of judgement:

Man's worth and significance consist in more than his earthly existence. In fact, his "root is in infinite and immutable which is not destroyed by death."⁵⁹

To regain his status, man must remember God, foster His laws, trust His revealed message, do good deeds, make prayers and observe one day off in a week for rethinking and reassessment of his sincerity in relationship with God. Man attains his immortality in resurrection. It is the salvation which comes at the end of world history.

Thus, on the day of judgement all men are presented before God. Due rewards and punishments are exercised to men in accordance with their deeds and beliefs.

Man has to enter the blissful kingdom of God. It is a glorious manifestation of perfect justice and peace. For this truthful knowledge of God and His kingdom, one must submit to God, make confession and lead a righteous life. The present life, thus, is a means for this goal.

Judaism does postulate a future Messiah who would help in establishing righteousness and cosmic salvation. As the fall of man happened in the earliest beginning of God's history, so there would be redemption at the end of His history. At this time the dead would be resurrected and the souls would regain their body and merits. The creation will be free from decay and bondage and would obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God.

(6) CHRISTIANITY

Man has to redeem and restore his fellowship with God. Like Judaism, Christianity, too, does not emphasise on asceticism and monkhood. Even Jesus, the Saviour himself “came eating and drinking”⁶⁰ What is implied as significant is the control of passions and its rational redirection. The body must become a means for the life of the spirit.

Thus, the physical life must subserve the good of the self, and the self in turn is to subserve the law of God. The natural body being finite and limited perishes. Only the spiritual body lasts and resurrects. Observing the divine will of law is essential for this goal. Because ultimately the will of God alone is final.

This fellowship and communion with God is a continuous fact of the daily life of man.

(i) To follow Jesus Christ-The Mediator:

Jesus is a chosen son of God who evinced loyalty and devoted affiliation to God. His life is a glorious one to be followed. Christianity is concerned mainly with practical aspects of the problem of evil. As such, the life of Jesus assures the contingent nature of evil and suffering. Because he fought squarely with evil and won over it.

On the one hand Jesus is full of humility and submissiveness, but at the same time Jesus valiantly fights with the evil forces to regain the kingdom of God. He exhorts that “resist the devil and he will flee from you.”⁶¹ The evil force is evil because it has not seen God.

Thus all actions of Christ ensue from his saving power. His is an authentic and faithful life for the Divine plan of salvation. In Christ “all things are restored to their pristine unity.”⁶²

Jesus’ very life manifested the unity of the Spirit. His redemptive life and action elevates this unity of all men to the divine level. Jesus atoned for the sins of the world. His path is simple and straightforward. Out of kindness God sent his only son to the sinful world. And Jesus, in his turn as of man, makes a true relationship with God.

Since the very beginning of the birth, the life of Jesus is a delivered one from sinful nature. As a son of man he experienced a constant fellowship with God. In short, He is a message of new life and good deeds.

So it is rightly maintained in Epistle to Romans that “as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.”⁶³

(ii) Message of the Cross:

Resurrection is an actual happening like the crucifixion of Jesus. The event of Cross implies significance for both this world as well as the next world. It is here on the cross the redemptive death of Jesus annihilates sin. Mankind longed to be forgiven for their sin, and it is here that Jesus enacted the beginning of a new covenant between man and God. The fact of Jesus' death signifies his sacrifice for the sins of others.

The fear of death is destroyed on the cross. The moral principle implied here has limitless applicability. The cross brings home the message of the union of sinful man and the painful heart of God for man.

No man is born like Jesus. Well, he has to be reborn like Jesus and for that he must try in the present life. It is the divine plan too. For man must accept moral responsibility with love and spontaneity like Jesus Himself.

Jesus' life has the saving will and the plan of God. To testify this fact one has to be filled with the spirit of Christ's nature with utter goodness, faith, meekness and temperance.

(iii) Optimism:

Suffering for the righteous cause is rewarded with the eternal heavenly life. Despite man's faithlessness and transgression, the kingdom of God is guaranteed at some time or other in future. Even evil and suffering have a moral goal. This is how the very suffering of Jesus with love and submission to God's will has redeemed the world, and still it holds the same redeeming power.

(iv) Atonement:

The doctrine of atonement suggests cleansing and purification from sin. It is an act of restoration of truthful relationship with God. Atonement is the reassertion of the faith in God, which dulls and neutralizes the evil effects of sin in the soul. Through the atoning life of Jesus for the sins of mankind, "He reconciled the world to Himself."⁶⁴ His is a "sacrifice of flesh and blood that makes atonement for the soul."⁶⁵

(v) Repentance:

Thus, one is called to repent for sin and be converted to Holy life. This is a regeneration, and "except a man is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God"⁶⁶ It is the eternity in the heart of man.

To attain this goal, man must will and renounce sin. Leaving aside the past, one must orient one's life Godward. And now one must hasten to expiate, for "the kingdom of Heaven is at hand"⁶⁷

(vi) God is Graceful:

Jesus evidenced that God forgives sins due to personal repentance as well as due to the sinner himself forgiving others who have wronged him. Men, in spite of their being sinners, are equal in the eyes of God.

God has created everything, so he naturally looks after it. In selfless divine grace, God gave his only son for the good of the world. Again, man is endowed with free-will so as to acquire a new life. Admitted that sin abounds in the world, but God's grace abounds much more so.

(vii) One must Choose the Goal:

Besides faith in Christ, his presence is very much experienced in the soul. It is categorically said that "Jesus stays near to those who call him with Depth."⁶⁸

To fulfil this aim, man must use his free will fairly and follow the revealed words. Heartfelt commitment and earnest devotion to Jesus is essential.

To observe faithfully the call of the Sermon on the Mount is much more than a testament of morals. It is a call for an internal feeling of friendship and brotherhood, justice and good behaviour.

(viii) Love is a means of Righteousness:

It is through love, God co-operates with man and establishes relation. It is the wish of God, for love alone destroys the self-will and pride. Love alone abides between man and man and God. Jesus's life testifies to this effect of love. Love, in fact, leads to righteousness.

(ix) The day of Judgement:

Even after death, the soul leads a personal experience. All the dead souls would be resurrected on the day of judgement. Reward and punishment in the sense of heaven and hell is decreed in accordance with the deeds done.

Over the period of time the whole world will be perfected. After the man is redeemed, he lives in communion with Him, shares God's love, glory and grace. The kingdom of God is man's fulfillment of the eternal life.

(7) ISLAM

When God fully controls the creation, he controls the life and death too. Even evil and suffering possess some goal in His scheme. Submission to God and rightful relationship with him is central in Islam. By all means, His sovereignty is to be respected.

(i) Salvation consists of the total personality:

The whole personality of man is to be saved from the evil effects of sin committed on the earth. With proper purification and moral development, man has to carry out God's will in the comprehensive fulfilment of his life. The Quran, the words of God, points to his oneness and unity. The grace of God implies God's concern for the good of man. Regulations for prayer and the life of community help tide over the hurdles his way. The day of the judgement of God is a definite reality in this changing and momentary world.

(ii) Submission to God's Will:

Worshipful obedience (*ibādat*) to God is the goal. The very moment one is genuinely and sincerely initiated on this path, he feels relieved of the weight of the past sins. His help is available to all his followers. God being omnipotent evil and suffering cannot be a reckonable issue for him. As a matter of fact, evil and suffering are means to his end.

God is to be constantly remembered and His realization longed for. All our activities depend on him. So the Quran says that, "let not your wealth or your children divert you from the remembrance of Allah, and whosoever does that is a loser."⁶⁹ The ideal is to contemplate on him and work accordingly.

(iii) It is a worshipful obedience to Him:

God is gracious and tends to forgive sin. The trusted are really looked after by him. Man must accept with humility that he sends. In spite of the weakness and defects of character, man must seek Him humbly. Thus, the true Muslim always "seeks after the right way."⁷⁰ Man is likely to have the divine mercy if he tries to reject falsehood and corrects himself.

Allah does recognize human frailties of various types as well as many uncertainties of his life. In spite of his strict punishments, he is large-hearted due to his compassionate nature. This is how the problem of evil and suffering both as punishment and as a fight and a trial are well resolved.

Man's ego is covered by one's own desires and sins. The ego also projects plural conceptions regarding the God. The evil-minded cannot escape God's eyes, only He postpones His judgement upon them and their deeds.

By any means, God is not arbitrary. Man must continue to follow His laws dutifully. Although it is not obligatory on God to be satisfied with man's actions. Thus what man thinks in his own way is not what reflects God's acceptance. 'Good' is what He desires. Even the

good actions of man are due to His charity. The gesture of God's grace is totally a different and unique action which is beyond our reason.

(iv) To live a righteous life:

Man's duty is to follow God's laws. He must sincerely repent and pray for being forgiven. Despair is tantamount to refusing him. As such, man must assess himself continuously, for "he is a witness against himself, however he may seek excuses."⁷¹ Accordingly, religious duties have much significance in Islam. Its well-known five pillars are as follows:

- a. **Prayer (*namāz*):** Through it one realizes the primal essence of God. God's attributes are pure and perfect and devotional remembrance and intense feelings for Him help man tremendously.
From Sun-rise to night there are five times of prayer. Again, the emphasis on collective prayer is noteworthy in Islam.
- b. **Alms (*jakat*):** It expresses the compassion and solidarity of the community. The historical situation during the time of Mohamad necessitated the latter to tax the rich. This practice became a religious deed in the course of time. It is decreed to be a good deed which "returns with reward."⁷² Giving alms secretly has a high value.
- c. **Fasting (*rojā*):** One must remain without food and meditate God in solitude in the month known as *Ramzān*. Fasting generates self-control, tolerance and sympathy for starving and hungry men.
- d. **Pilgrimage (*haj*):** It is assigned to a Muslim to visit Mecca and Medina at least once in a life. It helps spiritually. No doubt, before going to this place, man must repent for his sins. He must read the Holy Quran and remember him.
- e. **Crusade (*jehād*):** One must devote and give up one's life for the actualisation of a certain mission. Thus, (a) the followers should fully observe the religious duties and (b) on certain critical events of history one should not desist from carrying

on fights for the sake of one's religion. The unbelievers should be dealt with firmly.

Various doctrines and duties are classified into two sections:

- (i) the manual of Islam known as '*Imām*' which strengthens one's religious conviction.
- (ii) is the practical manual wherein the religious duties are known as '*Dina*'.

To root out the basic self-injury and self-destruction, the Quran still guides man with the codes of social and moral conduct. Man must learn and practise these virtuous commands. The lower ends have to be sacrificed for higher ends.

Islam exceptionally lacks the organisation of priesthood. No one mediates between God and man. Each person is directly linked with his maker. Islam is quite hopeful. Notwithstanding all satanic and evil influences, ultimately victory belongs to God only.

(v) The day of judgement:

The soul and the body rest in the grave till the final and universal resurrection. By a stroke, God destroys the world and all the dead souls regain their life.

Thus, mere physical vision of the present birth has a limited perspective. Man has to take into account the total happiness and perfect realization of his personality in the next life. Resurrection would lift up the veil of the narrow vision of the present life. It is said, "...and he (man) will not be blind in the hereafter."⁷³

God will judge the man in the context of His revealed message. He rewards and punishes men according to their deeds. Still the punishment is only therapeutic in nature and not for any revengeful reason. After this period of punishment is over, man attains salvation.

(8) ZOROASTRIANISM

This religion aims at a strong and convinced crusade against the forces of evil and imperfection. The prophet Zoroaster himself "baffled this evil spirit by uttering the holy word."⁷⁴ Meditation and Evil, Suffering And Salvation

remembrance of God prepares one against the evil and its forces. It helps to restore the native purity of birth. The implication being that the whole creation must sit up for regeneration and redemption.

Spenta Mainyu is God's sacred power, a creative desire and an active principle of mind. Our enlightened mind is due to this good spirit. So it is said, "if man looks within with an enlightened mind, he will awake to the truth."⁷⁵

(i) To be faithful to God:

With faith in God one must strive to establish the divine rule and drive out the influence of wickedness. A sincere and trustful devotion to God helps to bring about a moral and spiritual regeneration.

The point is that the evil spirit is not attacked by God directly. God wants it to be defeated in its own manoeuvrings. It is maintained by Cursetji that "He has set the trap and impressively watches the beast destroy himself".⁷⁶

(ii) To live righteously:

The followers of lie i.e. the evil forces are to be fought against by all means. Service and self-devotion to God result in divine wisdom and power. If one follows His laws and loves His creation, he is favoured by God.

The key of the moral life is within. It is in the soul that the moral law is ingrained. It helps to cultivate self-confidence and free will for the spiritual goal. The three commandments viz. *Humatma* (good thought), *Hukhta* (good word), *Huvarshta* (good deed) are comprehensive enough to include all other commandments.

For attaining one's own good and happiness, the purity of thought is important, whereas good deeds make for the happiness of others. The purity in human relations has to be carefully maintained. Zoroastrianism contains many purificatory rites for the individual as well as social life.

Thus, purity of body and soul is the golden instrument for

liberation. For the divine path calls for the control and concentration of mind. The best quality of man is the sacredness and holiness of his soul.

This religion very much promotes and encourages the social solidarity of the community. Pastoral and agricultural life are exalted superbly. They help preserve the social structure. In virtue of this, protection of the earth, digging the well, good cultivation of land etc. etc. are considered very significant.

One must withdraw from the momentary worldly pleasures. The path of *Amertat* is a pure and benevolent one and it is a great mission. It is only the pious active life which leads to the strength and dynamism of life.

Fire is symbolized as Ahur Mazda's light which helps to destroy the darkness. Along with fire, the veneration of the dead is also an important righteous duty. This is how fire temples and towers of silence are held in esteem by the followers of Ahur Mazda.

To resist and fight back the evil forces is a central point. The evil force which exists with us is going to last till the world exists. Man is to be adequately equipped to defend himself against it. So the proper use of metals and weapons befitting the earthly counterpart is very well commanded.

(iii) To make free choice:

Man must be grateful to God, for He has endowed man with free will. So a proper response is inevitable as only by choosing good, "men promote their position and raise their dignity in this world and the next."⁷⁷

In spite of the divine revelation, God's grace and teachings of the prophet, one has to work out one's salvation. God forces no one for the choice. The good spirit has to decide by its own free will.

Guiding by appropriate discrimination between right and wrong, good and evil is a must to regain the eternal salvation. The faculty *dāenā* or conscience plays a significant determinative role in man's future destiny. Prophets and scriptures assist in grasping the Evil, Suffering And Salvation

good laws. Still the continuously conflicting kingdoms of good and evil, call for the ultimate free decision by man.

(iv) To follow the Divine Will:

Man has to be sincere and truthful doing righteous deeds. Following the good laws of God as revealed to the prophet heralds salvation. One attains to the highest good by "freely choosing to follow the divine law of righteousness, truth and wisdom."⁷⁸

The divine law protects our thoughts, words and deeds. Even the subtle body is enabled to prevent the invasion of evil forces. One must fight out the evil spirit by all means. Thus, when tempted, the prophet himself replied, "... no, I will not renounce the good law, not even if soul and body and life shall part."⁷⁹

'Asha' is the way of good traits. It is the fulfilment of duties and not satisfying the worldly desires that relieves man.

Spiritually, it is in a selfless life that knowledge and wisdom arise. And it is through such an inner spirit, "one controls one's desires, emotions and actions which lead to responsible deeds."⁸⁰

(v) Repentance:

Sincere repentance and penance by man restores the relationship with God. An honest expiation is essential. Abstaining from wrong deeds, one must sincerely confess one's sins before the high and good spirit. One must pray to God to be forgiven and yet be prepared to suffer the needful punishment.

(vi) Grace:

One, who voluntarily acts and opts for good deeds, receives God's blessings and grace. Following His commandments strengthens the mind for the cause of purity. Slowly one wins the struggle against evil and is freed from sinful and evil existence.

(vii) Optimism:

Ultimately good alone will conquer. God's omnipotence is at work, for the will be routed at the end of time. The evil spirit will escape into darkness, and from thereon it will rot in hell perpetually.

Then, the good spirit will influence pervasively and comprehensively in all things. The dual nature in the world entities will be marked with the traits of good spirit only.

The saviours to help in future are known as '*saoshyant*'. They will make a complete destruction of the evil force. The present cycle of the world will end and a renewed world with the new cycle of time will come into existence. It will be full of bliss and happiness.

The righteous man is assured of reward even on earth, besides the reward of the future life. Only one must be zealous and resolute in one's goal.

After the evil spirit is destroyed, good things will have automatic and spontaneous fulfillment. The cosmos will be perfected and divinised as planned by God.

(viii) It is the resurrection of totality:

After death, for three days the soul hovers round the physical body. Then, the freed soul goes to the other world. It experiences good and evil in accordance with the deeds done. On the 4th day, it passes through the *chinvat* bridge, only the good souls cross it with self-confidence and satisfaction.

Salvation is not individual. When the full resurrection of the world occurs, all the dead souls are brought back to life and judged accordingly by God. Man being the part of the total reality, must strive for the good cause of Ahur Mazda. It is God alone who lifts them up to the height of bliss through the good mind.

¹ *Kāthopaniṣad*. 1.1.1-2.

² Refer *Gitā*, Chapter XVI.

³ *Problem of Suffering in Religions of the World*, J. Bowker, pp. 223-224.

⁴ *Kāthopaniṣad*. I. II. 14.

- 5 Refer: *Indian Thought and its Development*, Schweitzer Albert, Wilco Publishers, Bombay, 1960, p. 28.
- 6 *Hindu View of Life*, S. Radhakrishnan. p. 57.
- 7 *Kaṭhopaniṣad*. 1-2.
- 8 *Śvetāsvatara-Upaniṣad*. IV. 5-7.
- 9 *Muṇḍaka-Upaniṣad*. III. II. 8.
- 10 *Kaṭhopaniṣad*. II 2.9-11.,
- 11 *Praśnopaniṣad*, V-7.
- 12 *Aṅguttara-Nikāya*. IV. 445
- 13 *Ibid.*, III.450-451.
- 14 Refer *Majjhima-Nikāya*. 44.
- 15 *Aṅguttara-Nikāya*. IV. 445: *Dhammapada*. 5:223,
- 16 *Dīgha-Nikāya*. 22
- 17 *Majjhima-Nikāya*. 117.
- 18 *Ibid.*, 117.
- 19 *Aṅguttara-Nikāya*. V. 17.
- 20 *Dīgha-Nikāya*. 16.
- 21 *Samyutta-Nikāya*. ii. 117.
- 22 *Ibid.*, V. 218.
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SECTION : III

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Chapter VII

GENERAL DIRECTION TO THE END

(i) Way to spiritual regeneration:

The issue of evil and suffering being of very wide in magnitude, the conclusions are also bound to be so. Any exclusive claim by any one religion for the final and all-around solution of the problem of evil is untenable. Siding with any one religion or sermonizing in any sense is not and cannot be our aim. Therefore, let us concentrate and dig into the presuppositions and implications that are revealed in the general survey of this problem in all religions under study.

While all religions differ in their metaphysical speculations, they all agree that absolute and final good exists for man. They all give a general direction with this 'end' in view. On this score the religions are mutually helpful, for they seek a stable and positive way out. They all possess a deep trust in some higher power which is the guide of our life.

Thus Supreme Reality is around us and within us. Its quest is the '*summum bonum*' of human life, which is 'God's will' in Semitic religions or the nature of 'Being' or 'self' in Indian religions. These

religions aim at bringing about a change in the unregenerate and ignorant nature of man.

The development of this end, namely, the Supreme Good, is a progressive process of transcendence, individually and socially, resulting through the different stages of human history.

In the ultimate and perennial issues like evil and suffering differences are there, and hence the method of unification also differs. But at least in the spiritual goal there is a purpose in common, and it is here that the unity and integrity of human experience is sustained.

(ii) Symbolic suggestion by scriptures:

Religious statements are indicative of commitment to the referred supreme goal of 'Good' and therefore to an axiological way of life. To make for such a spiritual elevation the religions direct us to clearly recognize our place in life and the mission entrusted to us by destiny.

Thus, religion is a way of life essentially, doctrine is only a part of it. Man is responsible for all his acts of thought and conduct. Still, ethics is just a means to this basic goal of man. The Supreme God cannot be reduced to some specific definitions, for It is incomprehensible, both quantitatively and qualitatively. The aspirant has to inculcate an attitude of reconciliation with God's Will. The metaphysics of religions provide stimuli to this constant dissatisfaction one feels at each stage.

(iii) Ethics related to Metaphysics:

Realization of man's basic nature makes man happy. For anything that is alien to this quest is a source of anxiety and dread, discontent and unhappiness. Ethics in all religions meant for upliftment and transformation from the standpoint of the higher life. It enhances man's sensibility to the facts of evil and suffering.

Linking of moral philosophy with the metaphysical insight rules out the petty self-interests and leads it to the religious plane. For mere ethical action never results either in mental equanimity or in spiritual joy, two necessary prerequisites of God-conscious life.

Again, the consciousness of ourselves as belonging to the God-created world takes for granted our having the knowledge of the distinction between good and evil. And here, it is the ideal of goodness that must guide our choice. It is in religions that man finds the scheme of spiritual development and benevolence. The gradual training of body and mind brings about the transformation to supreme good which is inherent in man. Establishing a proper relationship with his will is a way to fulfillment and perfection.

(iv) The criterion of the supreme good is unconditional:

The self of man being a growing and developing entity, moral standard progressively reveals itself, better disciplined and better enlightened. There has to be a continuous assessment and critical analysis. The dictates of conscience at this stage only, possess authoritative nature. It is a transition from an unreflective to the reflective faith as it has a discriminative capacity for higher good.

The point is that the whole creation represents the Supreme Good by Virtue of its own capacity and so what we call evil is, at the most, that which contains the lesser degree of good, that is, it is less inclusive. This leads us to hold that the criterion by reference to which religions measure the goodness of the various goods must be unconditional. It is the quest for the total meaningfulness of the scheme of things. It consists of no blind leap, but it is a conscious elevation and evolution to the highest good

Thus, man's pursuit of secular values has to be arranged by the degree to which they display this unconditional good. The religions aim at giving guidance on appropriate action in as many of the foreseeable situations as is possible. This ideal of goodness that guides our choice, and it is evident, may be there in some degree at least, in our will which has been determined by sensuous desires too.

The self of man transcends its strivings as well as achievements. It is in the inner act of 'realization', one becomes conscious of oneself as a transcendent agent. It is here, one stands far above all sensuous desires and limitations. It refers to the condition

of mind which feels extending pervasively in all aspects of man and the universe.

The problem of evil defies all ready-made solutions, for each situation demands an approach which is appropriate to it. It is a grim battle, but still it has a clear goal requiring much patience. Proper means have to be employed for this goal. Here, man is destined for mastery not by force but by his own self-nature.

(v) Relationship of Supreme good with empirical values:

For all religions, the human life is a commitment to the conviction of the conceived highest goal. It represents the best that man can achieve.

No doubt this question of ultimate meaning is a complex one, and it cannot be restricted to any particular religion only. Here the contribution of comparative religion is that it looks into the various contributions of different religions. With a philosophic approach, we have to examine their relative significance and weight.

In this context our very act of criticism and evaluation would mean to appeal to human values. This is how, besides explaining the origin of evil and the nature of evil, the religions provides the solution of evil with a clear metaphysics as seen earlier in the present study. But here, we have to rule out a static doctrinaire or an absolute final answer suggesting as to how all values and energies shall be directed. For our reference is to the whole man, and not to a part of him. All aspects of man's total personality are valuable in themselves.

The metaphysical truths of religion are related with the cosmic life of mankind. Religion binds the individual to his ends and values. And again, the evolving and changing individual man has the ever changing values too. If the world is to be changed from evil into good, then man must begin to change himself from evil into good.

Philosophically, all knowledge has relevance only in relation to human interests. In fact, man too makes for continuous choices and preferences. Norms and standards of judgements are implied in man's behaviour itself. So leaving aside any arbitrary decision man must

bank on the general sense of discrimination calling upon the goal to differentiate progressively that which is more valuable than others. Thus the philosophic stand-point is the stand-point of values and it is normative both in approach and design.

An oriented thinking and resolution requires vigorous perseverance to protect, establish or create one or other values which have an abiding interest for man. This could be witnessed in nature which is basically constructive, progressive and orderly. However the valuational nature of evil and suffering is often unattended when it is mistaken with some of the negative moments of the human situation. It is only when we think deeply on the suffering love, on the anguish of misunderstanding, on the desire to be what we cannot be, on the inevitable parting from those who are nearest and dearest to us, that a suffering appears not an evil in itself but the condition which lifts the life above the earthly limitations. To repeat again, religious statements are essentially valuational, and like all value knowledge, they point to factual basis also.

But while striving for a goal of complete happiness and Supreme Good, and equally making sincere attempts to maintain priorities in values, one is hampered by natural limitations of this world and by short-comings and indifference of human beings. Thus, acquiring both virtue and happiness simultaneously is difficult. But in any way, it is to be admitted that religions aim at the strengthening and stabilizing the established order, described metaphysically.

Now, values are the products of human interests, as such they are relative and anthropomorphic in nature. Granted these fluctuations in value and valuations, there can be a logical gradation in it. In spite of this relativity of values, they can be arranged in an ascending scale depending upon the degree to which the Infinite or Supreme value 'good' is manifested. From a religious point of view, it simply means that whatever is spiritual is per se higher than the material. In other words this gradation in values depends upon the degree to which they display the *unconditional* and absolute *spiritual principle*.

The tentative pre-supposition being that those values which are more objective, more consistent, more comprehensive and more permanent are considered higher than those which are deficient in all these respects.

It is in view of this higher aspiration of man, precise place of natural impulses have to be determined and satisfied accordingly. For man is deeply rooted in reality. In the religious quest of highest good, the following scale of values could be employed discriminatively.

a. Basic survival values:

It is striving for imminent teleology which fulfils natural tendencies and surviving needs. Thus worldly goods are not to be denied, in as much as they are needed for the welfare and happiness of man. Only one should not lose sight of the intrinsic spiritual value of things.

b. Instrumental values:

Our search for physical, economic, social, political values etc. consists of this nature. They should be pursued in harmony with rational and righteous self which looks backwards and forwards.

c. Intrinsic values:

All our search for truth, beauty, goodness and love are prized as ends, and enjoyed for their own sake. They exist only as an actual personal consciousness of liking and enjoyment.

d. God Realization:

But insofar as the religious quest of supreme good is concerned, even these intrinsic values are only instrumental to God realization. It is a wider whole where there can be a proper synthesis and intelligibility of all other values. The indication is to the unity of values known as 'Supreme value' which fulfils the criterion at its fullest. Merely avoiding evil and suffering for its own sake is not important, but the divine will means to grow stronger than evil and suffering itself. Whatever the pros and cons of this process empirically be, it is a quintessence of joy and happiness religiously.

Religions measure man's experience in terms of intrinsic values and thereby they peep beneath the surface of existence to apprehend its inner core. The faith in God-Supreme Reality rules out all ethical opportunism. Again, the religious concept of liberation or the bliss of salvation that is the plenitude of joy and good, is not a value in the acquiring sense, but it is already there as an essential fact in man. Of course, from the empirical point it is yet to be accomplished through man's will, efforts and knowledge, which are admitted valuationally.

Thus, the Supreme God experienced is at once in us and about us and which is incomparable with any finite things. expresses itself through both facts and values. And the value is the part and parcel of the Supreme God.

Everything in nature is purposive and its proper utilization leads to man's welfare. The good is to be consciously willed. The supreme good is due when man regards his purposes to be inseparably bound with the divine life.

The purpose of life and unity is sought in religions with reference to a comprehensive and integrated system of values. Spiritual behaviour is an inner change. It is here that man attains the unity of life and realizes the supreme meaning which makes man contented.

(vi) One must understand one's station in life:

The religious good, as borne out from metaphysics, is man's well - being and well- doing which is not cosy and expedient by any meaning. The discernment, due to intuition and intimate acquaintance with the dynamic reality is of synthetic insight which advances by leaps. It breaks off firmly fixed habits and stagnant tendencies, So that one can attain self-fulfilment and freedom from bondage, evil and suffering.

As said earlier, to all religions, evil has its roots in the narrow selfish desires and disregard for the Supreme Good. Now good and happiness derive from the spontaneous quest of purpose and quality

of life. That is, it is not enough to know the good, but one must have the will to pursue it too. Knowing here means being activated in one's efforts of establishing oneself in a meaningful existence. Granting whatever Spatio-temporal station of life, religions indicate full possibility for upliftment to everyone.

The need for metaphysical reflection is felt in moral conflict when discrimination is to be made between different goods and evils. Appealing to one's intellect and temperament, one must suit one's position vis a vis the world. The religions do admit this responsibility, in one way or other, which is of balanced and positive nature. In other words, the religions significantly drive home the point that all men, jointly and singly, contribute to the good or evil conditions of past, present and future.

The Supreme God is regarded as a rational principle, else there could be no ordered life or thought.

(vii) The Supreme good is not so much acquired as realized:

The effectiveness of the solution of the problem of evil in different religions could be seen by the keenness of analysis and the proper means to overcome it. We have to examine and verify these conceptions of reality. The religious good aims at the preservation of all existence. Approximation is an inevitable proposition here, for human development results from the combination of both immanent and transcendental realms.

That is, in vital and great problems like evil, the mind can determine only the conditions of the solutions, rather than the solution itself. In fact, we do not come across the great fundamental truths in the phenomena themselves, but they manifest themselves in man's knowledge of them.

Thus, reason by itself makes no differentiation between what is good and what is evil. For no such things exist independently of desire. Only it is noteworthy that the man wills certain ends and that is what gives meaning to man's life.

(viii) It is an intuitive insight:

Upliftment towards supreme good or spiritual life brings greater freedom and a more conscious choice of actions with increased abilities, duties and responsibilities. The man has to examine his drives and motives constantly. Moral goodness must precede the spiritual search. No blind leap into religious heights is helpful without fully conscious elevation and growth of inner life.

The deeper self criticizes the categories, terms and thoughts of the world, for these are felt as incomplete by profounder experience, and hence transcended. This is arrived at, not so much by a rational method as by intuitive insight or revelation. The problem of evil is essentially the problem of harmony. When a man keeps away from evil and sin with all his heart, his work transcends into the skill. One enjoys a unique freedom and the mind is liberated from finite anxieties, with a new strength and power in possession.

The effects from above are seen to be varyingly emotional and intellectual, leading to speculative, practical and social efforts. There are two levels wherein the spiritual process seems to be operative in man. These are:

- (a) Outer level: At this level spirituality is reflected in the activities of will and intellect, emotions and imaginations of man. This approach is very much visible in religions of the Semitic origin and its range is equal to the categories of mind.
- (b) Inner level: There is a ceaseless intuitive dissatisfaction with logical categories suggesting greater limitless ground within man. This is evident mainly in the approach of Indian religions.

In short, religion involves all aspects of man's being inward and outward, individual and social. If any part or aspect of man's being is not well developed and is ignored, to that extent it is evil and suffering for man.

(ix) Dualism transcended:

We cannot think with finality and comprehensiveness about all aspects of the problem of evil and suffering and their solutions. The world being of relative nature, there cannot be any such thing as an absolute evil. Thus though the world consists of opposite things (as good and evil, pleasure and pain etc.), it is not constituted of the nature of strict and irreducible duality. In the ultimate realisation of Supreme Good, the opposites are not so much abolished as transcended.

(x) It is a creative act:

Spiritual life frees one from the discords and ambiguities of existence. Moral discipline is necessary. However, religious life belongs to a higher dimension which man experiences either by revelation or intuition and which is not man's own creation.

This religious process is not a mere activity which is blind by itself. But it is a way in which activity is transformed into a new creative force by means of the inner freedom of choice and determination.

(xi) Evil and suffering to be endured fruitfully:

We have said that the belief in the supreme God allows for no convenient indifference to ethical and social order. Evil tendencies and disorderliness are concrete forces and they cannot be explained away. Thus, for one who aims at the goal of liberation or salvation, it does not mean so much the negation of life as the negation of evil, sufferings and limitations of life. Religions neither intend to meet this problem of evil by cold stoicism, nor by much optimistic but blind pantheism, nor by pessimism of a disappointing hedonistic nature.

The call of religions for rebinding or reawakening into the divine source presupposes continuous struggle and striving. One has to overcome the fatality of one's psycho-socio-cultural adjuncts. It is the process of growth and development and can evolve into something higher than itself. If one is meaningful and purposive as

shown by the metaphysical nature of religions, one feels encouraged with convinced direction.

The religions provide some basic elements with broad recognition for all times. These generally expressed values can be intelligently applied to changing situations. Through self-improvement, religions emphasize the practical life. Man's life is shaped by individual needs and interests as well as by social roles and group structures. The proper development of man requires universal codes of conduct both from the individualistic as well as from the socialistic point of view.

(a) Social Realization:

The all-inclusive Supreme God presupposes fellowship and co-operation of people. Self-realization is not possible in isolation from the society. Inward conviction is reflected in outward social acts. In place of negative egotism, both in personal as well as in the sense of groups, there has to be mutual love and unity of mankind. A perfect co-operation and harmony between individuals and society would alleviate much evil and suffering. One must keep one's social obligations and preserve integrity, for it is a meaningful relationship with a significant sector of reality.

The purpose is the common welfare and the loyalty of the world. The fact is that the reasons being the servant of self-interest at least to some extent, mere rational and moral sanctions do not resolve our wide prevalent social injustices and so man must become himself as means for the greater purpose.

(b) Self Realization:

The quest of the realization of the finite self and the infinite self is a great attempt at disciplinship. Avoiding all narrow prejudices, man has to review, revise and enlarge the vision of himself. For this, all religions prescribe some code of regulations or the other by way of guidance. Man's social existence is accepted, but then, ultimately, man has his own personal initiative and free will. In fact he is the foundation of society.

All religions speak of man as the master of himself. He needs to have no fears of the labyrinth of worldly forces, because he can care for and cultivate himself. The self- development brings forth far reaching changes in the attitude of the individual towards the world. The fuller and wider meaning acquired in the course of life makes for transformation in man.

It is here that man succeeds in discovering the method of ending personal evil and suffering. It raises the level of spirit. Again, instead of maintaining the status quo, man becomes more sensitive to strife and contradictions of the greater sphere, and hence, he develops and constantly modifies certain systems of relation.

This results slowly and slowly into the purification of senses. Man's immediate forces at disposal, namely, intellect and volition, feeling and imagination seem to be oriented with a spiritual direction. Personal forces, manifest or latent, are geared into action and one is stable and detached from ups and downs. All these lead to freedom from worries and disappointments. No doubt, the above by itself does not constitute perfection or fulfilment of the human personality. But it ennobles one for further good and progress, joy and happiness.

The nature of this experience is profoundly varied. Still, regardless of whatever nature and value of this experience to the world, the full realization of Supreme God presupposes the attainment of fulfilment on both the above planes. There has to be a proper balance and synthesis of these two.

The significance consists in denying the separative consciousness and realizing the self in the essential unity of the Supreme Being God. All outer social changes are secondary by-products, after-all it is the individual man who has to have the aspiration and striving towards the perfection ultimately.

(xii) To make a responsible choice:

The crux of religions is clear by now that religious language is not restricted to mere doctrinal orthodoxy. Ultimately it is the individual man who has to choose and interpret this language.

Of course the divine providence (Semitic religions) or the Law of karma (Indian religions) may mean that we are in a determined world. Still, the aspect of free will suggests that we are the creators of our own destiny and makers of our own future. It is a creative process and a new level of freedom, it has a structure that is not logically determined, but teleological guidance. This creative process though orderly and progressive is unpredictable, Still, it is the fight that gives life its values.

Thus, it seems in a way that there is no freedom for man except in the pursuit of the supreme good. For in spite of man's evils, limitations and sufferings, man's free personality manifests itself through choice and action. As a matter of fact the whole problem of good and evil is fundamentally a problem of choice. Thus, when the man has this right of free-will, there are some duties too, to be followed.

(xiii) Evil and suffering: not a challenge to theism:

Far from being one drive among others, the religious yearning is an ineradicable human reaction. It points to consciousness in a certain direction and seeks cosmic unity. On this score, religion cannot be an attempt to reconstruct a cosy world for feeling the so-called projected importance oneself.

Philosophically, restricting ourselves to the religious process in general, the way to Supreme Being-God is the ultimate goal. Thus admitting the fact of evil as an undeniable experience, still from a spiritual and higher angle its part is only a secondary one. Again, the fact of evil does not bring home the conclusion that there is inevitably no purpose of the world at all. In reality, evil instead of being contradictory may be complementary too.

Thus, all religions are optimistic in the sense that the final victory lies with 'Good'. The very sustained efforts and enthusiasm by man indicate the possibility of overcoming evil and suffering. Freedom in the sense of self-determination is granted to all in each religion. Only one has to use it rightly. Thus, even as there are evils and pains, all religions show the possibilities for Good and happiness

too. We have shown that religion is both knowing and doing, and deeply sensible solutions have been offered by religions to get out of this quagmire of evil existence by developing successfully an attitude of transcendence.

Chapter VIII

COMPARATIVE EVALUATION

(i) Comparative Religion:

Religion aims at making man happy and by bringing forth the best within him. Thus, different religions provide profound insights into the nature of man and the Supreme reality - God. Restricting the solution of the problem of evil to any one or other religion is untenable. For man is a complex creature, leading an inward and outward life. Again, merely to compare the principles of religions in abstract is not enough, but they have to be seen as to how far they are workable in our life too.

This is to say that comparative religion is not confined to the level of phenomenology only. Interpretation and evaluation with reference to the depth of man's personality is also important. No doubt this selective approach does not need to account for all religious phenomena, except the problem of evil with which we are concerned. We have seen that different religions mention various avenues to satisfy man's higher spiritual search.

The varieties in philosophical and ethical principles are due to different sets of intuitive experiences. Comparative religion seeks to analyze the cognitive, the affective and the conative attitudes in these

religions. Man finds the spiritual link between himself and mankind. It is when we take into account this total personality of man in his quest of the object of the ultimate goal, that it is bound to appear as diverse and varied as the personalities of different followers.

We referred earlier that the supreme religious good appeals to man's profounder, more constructive and more permanent aspects, for it aims at his whole and healthy development of personality. This necessitates looking beneath the surface of man's beliefs and practices.

The method of handling the religious data is both deductive and inductive, and organization of which is due partly to some selection of assumptions and postulations as shown in the earlier chapter, and partly to some view which will be replaced later by other more developed '*weltanschauung*' and the vision of things themselves.

With cooperation and mutual understanding, the religious life becomes more diversified. The pattern of a new change or finding solution to evil and suffering in the world today is co-existence, hopefully of a creative type. Recognition of pluralism is inevitable here. The effectiveness and significance of these faiths have to be examined through a long process of empirical struggles of psycho-social dialogues.

No doubt evil and suffering are neither desirable nor justified. But then, this is a challenge to that which constitutes the best in the human spirit. In fact this all-pervasive problem has shown its bearing on our guilt and short-comings, lack of social justice and brotherhood. Resolving and easing the problem of evil is a complex phenomenon. It calls for the varied human traits as mentioned both in self-realization and social-realization.

Thus, there is an interconnection of complex relations and responsibilities. Various religions put emphasis on various values and they all have something worthwhile to contribute. The problem of evil is multi-dimensional in itself. To bring out the various positive aspects and values of these religions of Indian and Semitic traditions would enable fairly to the quest of infinite good and happiness.

(ii) Origin of Evil:

For all religions the origin of evil and hence all unhappiness of man is generally due to egoism, an excessive sense of self-importance.

The dualistic principle of Zoroastrianism and by that means Jainism too, clearly appreciates the antagonism between good and evil. The explanation of the origin of evil and suffering is quite clear and facile in these religions. In this sense it is attractive, but misleading ultimately. Because the common ground is sought, not in the varieties of results as due in dualistic approach, but in the unifying goal of contradictory fragments of experience. If this is so then like light and darkness, good and evil also in fact, are two sides of the one and the same experience.

The doctrine of original sin in Semitic religions, especially in Judaism and Christianity, wherein the very first case of disobedience is an act of sin; militates against the conception of divine righteousness by attributing arbitrariness and cruelty to God. Again, the corporate guilt of these religions is not and cannot be experienced with the same force as personal guilt.

In this respect Indian religions are more lenient and compassionate, for they attribute all our spiritual ills in the fact of avidyā or ignorance of our supreme nature. In Semitic religions the sense of 'sin' is much diluted with the course of time, identifying it with just moral evil rather than alienation from God. Then, this is a worthless guilt with no living consciousness with God. It does not appeal rationally.

But anyway, it is a hope in all religions that in spite of the fact of existence of ignorance or sin or evil power whose exact beginning and logical explanation is not possible, the certainty of its end is unquestionable.

(iii) Nature of Evil:

Semitic religions are revealed words of God, and so they are less tolerant of other faiths. For these theistic religions especially the

biblical religions man in his present status has become so degenerated by nature, that he is incapable of saving himself.

But Indian religions and Zoroastrianism do not regard man as a sinner. In spite of all evil pervasiveness, there is a greater optimism in these religions. In fact, here too, the philosophic perspective of Indian religions is more appealing. For, evil and suffering is indissolubly related with creation.

The catholic and tolerant attitude is indispensable in today's world. Dogmatism regarding the origin of evil and the nature of evil is forbidden. The crux is this that the one-sided assessment of these is not fruitful and it is questionable.

(iv) Solution of Evil:

a. Emphasis on spiritual experience:

Indian religions emphasize inner quest or direct spiritual experience as the means of realizing the supreme God. Generally the Indian religious tradition is far more pantheistic and monistic. The way to realization is mainly through renunciation and the life above action is over stressed.

Now this perfect renunciation requires not only compassion and purity, but also intelligence and awareness. It is to be conscious of one's own internal resources and from this view Indian religions are more helpful today.

Still, 'desire' in man cannot be rooted out or killed. It is the fountain of life, its denial is the denial of life. Only 'desire' is to be cultivated properly, for it is what makes possible the progress in worldly life. But the ethics in Indian religions press more for the subjective self-control to the utmost at the cost of self-expression through right actions.

b. Spiritual concentration:

A methodical cultivation of the inner life is a must for enlightenment. Concentration is the religious method of self-education. For Indian religions, spiritual meditation is an approach to

supreme spiritual life. It helps consolidate and strengthen the will uniquely.

Indian religions seem to present the methods for stilling and pacifying the turbulent passions and desires and obtain inner peace in return. Thus, Jainism and Buddhism do aim at self-culture and perfection. They offer some original and unique way out instead of dogmas and creeds. Those who have difficulty with the belief in God, could still benefit from the spiritual techniques of these religions.

The spiritual concentration leads one to the realization of one's identity with the supreme God. He rises beyond personal and dualistic concepts of good and evil. But then this self-realization is not to be mistaken as submerging one's identity. From another angle it is a creative use of the freedom of thought, feeling and imagination.

This view that God could be approached directly by any person, without the need of prophets, enlists more recognition and conviction rationally. In reality, such an approach can unite mankind much more than alienate, which is a possible case with dogmatic conceptions.

c. Rationalism versus Mysticism:

The concept of sin in Semitic religions is due to a high theistic outlook. Man-God relationship is mainly a personal one where God observes man's actions, grants justice to man's progress, and even speaks directly to His messengers. Thus, when one believes in the otherness of God, grace becomes much more effective.

Semitic religions are more rational than mystic. Their response to the problem of evil is in practical rather than theoretical terms. Their approach is humanitarian.

The fact is that the Semitic God acts in history. The individual and social activities are interwoven. It is not possible to think of an individual person separate from some sort of corporate society. In fact it is a historical treatment of religion.

But in Indian religions and Zoroastrianism, historical events

are not that noteworthy, in reality they ignore history altogether. So here, Semitic religions have an edge, for the full awareness of historical tradition presupposes a unique responsibility for its progress. It is a search for doing away with evils in concrete measures.

But Indian religions incline more towards the supernatural and supersensuous aspect of man. Unlike the Semitic emphasis on faith, they have a philosophic quest. This in fact, enables Indian religions to strengthen and consolidate the ethical teachings and quest of truth and wisdom.

d. Ethical Approach:

If we put aside the differences in doctrines of various religions then the ethical front presents a good picture. All the religions show a fair measure of identity and agreement on what is right and what is wrong. Notwithstanding all interpretations, it can be said that all religions inculcate the essentials of good conduct. These various religions may question many religious beliefs, but they never doubt the existence of the moral order of the universe and the value of the human soul.

Thus, the Semitic religions and Zoroastrianism exhort to transform the humanity into a spiritual state, so that everyone could realize the life divine in the Kingdom of God, whereas the Indian religions believe in the eternal existence of the soul. But till this realization occurs and the soul realizes its unity with God, it keeps on a continuous transmigration from one life to another.

In Indian religions the law of karma tends to be autonomous in the realm of morality. So all the seeming inevitable and undeniable evil and suffering or the relation with unhappy happenings is not sudden and accidental, but there is a systematic chain and arrangement. For, whatever that happens, one is solely responsible to one's previous actions. As long as the desires and motives continue, the cycle of life keeps on revolving.

Though this karma theory is better logically, still, as mentioned before, 'desire' is the fountain of life. Man cannot live without the life of action.

Accepting divine revelation, Semitic religions seek to propound rational concepts for the explanation of moral and spiritual happenings. In them the motive to good actions is the thought of the great and terrible day of judgement. This naturally leads towards the tendency of the morality of rewards. In reality, the dread of punishment and retribution cannot be taken for granted as higher ethical motives. Again, this theory seeks the root of sin in ancestors' misdeeds, especially in biblical religion, which seems untenable insofar as justice is concerned.

Now, while rationalistic ethics insists on a righteous life and theistic ethics insists on a faith in the redemptive will of God, ethical religion like Zoroastrianism reconciles the claims of both by the synthetic view that righteousness is climaxed in redemption. It is the spiritual faith that righteousness is fulfilled in redemption. One could though differentiate these two rationally, but they are one and undivided spiritually. In fact this dualism between the righteous action and the grace of God is a knotty problem in ethical religion resolved by an appeal to the spiritual insight only.

In short, Semitic religions seek justification of moral life from divine revelation, whereas in general, though not perfectly but fairly, Indian religions provide independent and minute rational reflection on this ethical issue. However it must be said that from the social perspective, Semitic morality is more convincing.

e. Saving nature of the Soul:

Ontological nature of the self occupies a central place in Indian religions. Here the soul is uncreated and immortal. This by itself gives more significance to it in relation to God. It is to realize the perfection inherent in the soul. The metaphysical knowledge of the soul possesses saving capacity within it.

For Semitic religions and Zoroastrianism, not all souls last

after death. It is only those souls who have achieved a certain moral status remain, and they too, have to continue this moral struggle further. It is evident, especially in biblical religions that so long as the resurrection has not taken place, the influence of evil continues. It is a conditional immortality. For others it is the eternal damnation of hell or the bliss of heaven. Semitic religions believe that immortality, whenever it comes, is graced by God.

But the problem of conditional immortality in Semitic religions and Zoroastrianism is as to how much moral pursuit is needed after death? Again, how one is to know that enough action is done or not towards this? In reality immortality should be unconditional. All souls have the right to survival, and such a hope is essential in the issue such as evil and freedom from it.

In this context the resurrection of the body is more of a pointer to distant and future expectation than the indestructibility of an immortal soul in Indian religions.

The standpoint of Indian religions is, on the whole, individualistic on the question of salvation. The salvation it speaks of is salvation only for the individual. It is not cosmic salvation as upheld in Semitic religions. But then the point against this is that the scheme of cosmic salvation smacks essentially utopian in character rather than of rigorous philosophical thinking. But this does not mean to be indifferent to the sympathetic understanding and action to the sufferings of others.

Again, in Indian religions such as Hinduism and Buddhism, liberation is possible even in this very life. It only requires to correct the short-sightedness of the temporal existence which emphasises on 'here' and 'now' only. This is an additional dignity of the human soul, due to its immortal nature. This spiritual climax results from one's own resources of knowledge and detachment.

f. The nature of Supreme Being:

Strict dualism of reality, such as in Zoroastrianism, seems to resolve the problem of evil. But then, philosophically it creates more

problems than clarify. For it considers evil as a permanent and lasting aspect of the world. This issue of the coexistence of two totally opposed orders in the world, is in itself a puzzling premise.

On the other hand from another view-point, Jainism, while looking at the problem of evil dualistically, postulates an uncompromising dualism between reason and feeling. Thus, if hedonism is infra-human and rationalism is supra-human, then the entire animal sensibility is to be avoided. This is untenable psychologically, for it leaves apart the very essence of morality and mistakenly identifies it with intellectual and speculative life.

The basis of Semitic religions is theistic. These religions are types of pure monotheism. They are anti-ascetic and admit the moral strife of the secular world. They also justify moral purity, struggle for justice and the life of labour. To them the worldly existence is to be faced squarely.

When these Semitic religions consider God as a person, then personal values are regarded as the highest values. The belief and emotional attachment to personal God brings about good ends. As a corollary to this comes the enormous over-valuation of the individual ego. Still, it must be said that these religions do suggest the need to transcend personality.

But monotheism and dualism more or less equally elevate the status of Satan to a very high stature which distorts their monotheism. Unlike the philosophical explanation of evil in terms of relative nature as it is in Indian religions, Semitic religions and Zoroastrianism expound evil as an opposition to God. As such, the evil power Satan plays its due part. Still no doubt, God wins over the Satan ultimately. The Satan is the strongest of all demons, and only God could defeat such a mighty force. The existence of evil and sin as a factual experience in these religions is advantageous in that they do not explain away evil and suffering in dialectical reasoning of knowledge and ignorance, reality and appearance, which is beyond the relativity of good and evil.

Still, the devil theory leads one to think as if God is finite.

Because God is fighting against the evil forces with a will to get victory and with the cooperation of human beings.

From what follows as the logical analysis of the concept of Supreme Being God, the one all pervasive reality i.e. the monistic outlook and which is normally evidenced in Indian religions, seems better equipped philosophically for the solution of the problem of evil. In polytheism and dualism one of the realities must necessarily restrict or obscure another. It is only the concept of the unity of God that gives harmony to the intellectual and moral realms.

Again, the monistic and non-dual aspect of the Supreme Being possesses deeper implication in the context of plural and multi-dimensional aspects of evil and suffering as seen before. Unlike dualism wherein the enjoyment is the ideal, it is the freedom and liberation which is the ideal in non-dualism. Here, the man is the master of himself.

In short, the unique liberal outlook in Hinduism, the psychological approach and the doctrine of middle path in Buddhism; the ontological description of the soul and the doctrine of non-violence in Jainism; fulfilling the primary needs of physical, familial and social demands of earthly existence in Sikhism; deep concern for man's restoring the relationship with God and religious duties of man towards another man in Judaism; the example of the life and character of Jesus and the Christian missionary activities; the conception of the unity of God and simplicity of rituals in Islam; Zoroaster's insistence on the practical moral life and the significant emphasis on the pastoral and agricultural life considered in view of the unprecedented ecological dilemma today; are some of the distinct contributions of various religions. All these are the different ways to the solution of the complex and complicated problem of evil and suffering.

The heart of issue is the synthesis of the various aspects of evil and suffering felt conatively, cognitively and affectively. Harmony of the varieties of evil in one single system is found in the unity of one Supreme Being-God. No doubt this is not an abstract reality, but it is a concrete absolutism which unfolds in various degrees and orders.

Chapter IX

IS COMPLETE SOLUTION OF THE EVIL POSSIBLE?

1. No dogmatic determination:

The developing and evolving human mind acts and reacts according to the currents and counter currents of different times with their attendant tensions and fluctuations. It is indisputable that the ultimate reality-God is beyond the ken of the human mind. Thus, in the quest of the Supreme Good, the issues of the problem of evil as seen in the different religions continuously meet and sharply conflict with one another. Each individual person and society as such must struggle in one's own respective situation in the needed religious perspective.

Man's hunger for spiritual thirst is infinite and unlimited. And such a religious quest without crisis is a contradiction in terms. It is a predicament constantly to be fought and won over.

2. Struggle against Evil is a continuous process:

The notion of direction entails the notion of goal. Thus, life has no dichotomy, it is an unbroken flow. The inner and outer searches of life are neither at two poles nor are they free from one another's

influences. The Supreme God is not a static truth. But it ever stirs and strives within and without. That is, there is no such thing as a uniform, stationary and unchanging supreme good whether in respect of belief or practice.

Truly speaking, the supreme good and happiness do not and cannot fully manifest under human limitations. Ultimately it is an all-encompassing goodness which is never exhausted and never reaches an end.

Religious experience as felt generally in this context is not the pure and unmixed state of the good and real in itself. What is normally presented is already influenced by the ideas and possessions of the perceiving mind. The developing person both controls and is controlled by his ideas and conceptions of the Supreme God. Still, in spite of these determinable conditions and consequent limitations, man is endowed with creative and dynamic nature.

The process of self-manifestation does not get exhausted at one point of time. The 'best' in man never permits him to be satisfied with temporary pursuits. In reality, the very lack of satisfaction is the spur of the further endeavour. And it is in this search for the 'best' and the beyond which makes man ease with himself and others.

Ethical life is significant and meaningful in this context. For, it continues till there is a total attainment of the spiritual supreme good both in the outer and inner life. Now, this spiritual search for good has as much to do with the 'end' as to the process of realizing its end. It is a way of gradual 'offering' and 'dedication' of oneself and its attending petty tendencies while in the quest of the supreme good. Ultimately one has to transcend the stage of moral life too. However this is in no way meant to point towards endless time which is not at all the same as the state of timelessness.

Religious experience is as varied and multi-faceted as men are. It is a matter of deep trust and faith which provides the highest solace for a way out. The claims of such a religious need are not due to authority, but only on the basis of one's own inner and intuitive experience.

3. Existence of evil is indissolubly connected with creation:

The fact of evil and suffering is inevitably linked with earthly existence and creation. In the world as it is, complete removal of evil is not possible. This is evidenced in the fact that in spite of man's much headway in science, technology and vision of himself, still despite the resultant positive gains of the same, man is not relieved of evil and suffering fully.

Notwithstanding this certainty of evil being recognized in general, the religions also regard the problem of evil as instrumental in the purpose of realizing the Supreme Good. In other words, evil is good, misplaced or by mistake it claims a place in the whole, disturbing its coherence.

Anyway, we must admit in this context that the problem of the distribution of evil in the world is itself beyond man's understanding. To grasp the nature of all pervasive supreme reality from our relative position is beset with inherent contradiction and therefore impossible too. Again, it must be admitted that those cases of excessive evil with much pain and miseries are self-defeating, for they harm man negatively, that is, leading to total cynicism and absolute inactivity.

4. Evil is necessary for good:

When we look at the problem of evil from the total context of meaning of the sublime Supreme Reality, it is changed in its perspective. Thus, the problem of evil is important not for its own sake, but it only indicates that we do not make the quest of good as ought to. It is when man does not endeavour enough to probe his deeper self and cannot evolve further, suffering is created for man. Religion in its dynamic condition means this conscious suffering and this in turn blunts the sharpness of the fact of evil. Once one suffers evil consciously, then it becomes a power which one wields in the next.

It is in strife and struggles that one comes to measure one's strength. Going through the instances wherein evil and suffering crush the human spirit, it also helps to develop the human spirit very

often. One who has gone through it is morally more strong and courageous than one with mere theoretical knowledge of evil.

The manifestation of God's purpose and the end of His Kingdom requires cooperation from mankind. And for this evil is necessary to some extent, for then only man strives further. The higher the idea of the nature of good, the deeper will be the vision of the nature of evil. In fact this helps spiritually to awaken man to the tragedy and predicament of human life and enables man to look up when he feels let down and helpless. Everything possesses its own place in the highly and complexly ordered universe.

5. The knowledge of the problem helps positively:

Deep awareness of the problem of evil leads one to the quest of good. It assists one to dispel various fears and apprehensions and inspires for the further struggle. Understanding of this nature is the beginning of freedom from the evil forces. The knowledge makes one consciously pursue the good. The knowledge of one's limitations is a safety and strength of man.

Evil in no way is to be blamed or brooded over vainly. In reality, as we saw it is a necessary part and parcel of the worldly creation. It is like darkness which cannot be removed from one place to another. As light alone can dispel the darkness, so knowledge and wisdom regarding good help to fight out the evil and suffering.

6. The World is good and helpful:

The world is more than mere ceaseless change. Its subjection to the law and order, systematic regularity and coherence indicates the foundation of spiritual reality. It is a moral universe, where one has to train oneself through various experiences of the world. This only means in other words that the world is a means to further the end which is evidenced by the metaphysics of different religions.

The Supreme Divine Will operates uniformly in the laws of nature. All the religions regard the universe in some sense as good insofar as it is the basis for the realization of the Supreme End. This is accepted by any observation and experimental evaluation, but on the

trusted belief of the spiritual goodness of man as well as the transcendent goodness of the Supreme God.

Thus, though the world is full of evil and suffering, it is also a sphere wherein moral values are to be realized. The whole universe activates towards this highest spiritual history of the universe.

7. It is an unsolved mystery:

The problem of evil is not essentially an abstract problem as a problem in mathematics. It occurs from the particular standpoint of facts and appears in varieties of forms.

Thus, we cannot stamp on any specific solution of the problem of evil as real or unreal true or false, which in an absolute assertion only means, in other words, to be dogmatic about it. Because even when we declare any solution from an indifferent spectator's viewpoint, the problem of evil stands as it is a mystery to sufferers. In the momentary happenings of the world, each situation calls for a specific approach and reaction of the human mind. But then, not all the wills of man fructify. The corollary is that it is the Divine Will which knows what is in the best interest of the man and the universe.

Here, the mystical approach of self-surrender to the Divine Will ultimately alleviates or ends the personal sufferings of man. But this does not mean escapism or indifference to the facts of evil. Even though its mysterious aspect is admitted, no efforts are to be spared to approach and solve it effectively in different perspectives and points of views. For religion is a way of life and not a mere cosy belief in the supreme reality as we have referred to earlier in part one of the book. There is the basic order underlying God's guidance, and the man is endowed with the capacity of self-determination.

This mysterious nature of evil is known to one who is free from delusion and ignorance.

8. Surrender and Grace:

The attitude of surrender is not trivial and casual, but it is worthy of being cultivated consciously. One must offer one's desires in all their gross and subtle forms to the Supreme God through the acts

of faith and trust. The conviction gradually ripens and elevates oneself spiritually. Such a deep faith wins over all fears and apprehensions, strains and anxieties.

This is how the grace and forgiveness of Supreme God for the repentant is not arbitrary but it is always in accordance with some fundamental concepts of justice. God assures cooperation with human actions. The grace is the gift of God and tends to remove the corruption and ignorance of the person. Mere moral life is not enough, man is to be aware of and pray for deliverance from the basic helplessness of the conditional worldly existence.

Thus, though the concept of grace is predominant in the Semitic religions, it is prevalent to a certain degree in all religions. The ultimate Supreme God is a rational principle, else there would be no ordered life or thought. All the religions are optimistic in that they have implicit faith in God's goodness and the ultimate prevalence of good.

9. Dualism cannot satisfy for long:

Man is always influenced by the dualistic forces in various spheres of life. But it is when the conviction of one Supreme God dawns, the pulls and pushes of this dualism are transcended. All greed and desires, infatuations and temptations fall away. When the problem of evil is essentially the problem of reconciliation and harmony, then contemplation and harmony go a long way towards the way out of evil. The religions of the world provide such techniques very well.

It is a gradual transformation and a long-drawn-out process. Countless conflicts and frictions exist in this aspiration before this basic change is brought about.

10. Ultimately the genuine self transcends categories:

The very possibility of this explanation of the problem of evil is due to man's creative nature. In fact evil and suffering are the basic stimulation to life and action as such in general. But it is at the level of mind, that is, at a certain evolutionary stage, this creativity is

manifested in the cognitive, affective and conative faculties of man. This new vision and harmony is glimpsed in the moments of insight.

Thus, one comes to experience the lifting of the life spirit to the plane of the universal spirit. It is a transcendental state of self-consciousness beyond the spatio temporal limitations and dualism. In fact at this stage when there is no sufferer, suffering does not remain as such. It is a realm of free actions.

The spiritual progress is indeed illimitable. It is the wisdom of the inner understanding. The point is that in the quest of good and Supreme Being, one has to become the instrument of the total reality. It is an attempt at discovering the divine truth within man. Satisfaction lies in the full efforts towards this goal.

The crux of the whole problem of evil consists not in doing away with evil and suffering as such, which is only negative and incidental, but in the attaining of perfection of the authentic condition of man, which is positive and fundamental. That is, suffering loses its finality and assumes only a transitional character. In reality it is the yearning for more life which makes us suffer. From the discriminating religious perspective the problem of evil points beyond itself to the realm of *light, glory and fulfilment*.

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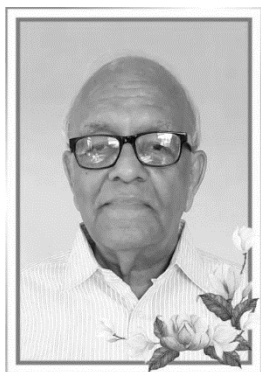
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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Prof. Nitin J. Vyas (1951-2021) served as Professor and Head of the Department of Philosophy and also acted as Dean, Faculty of Arts at the M. S. University of Baroda, Vadodara, Gujarat (2008-2013). In the early career, Prof. Vyas taught at Bahauddin College, Junagadh and as a visiting fellow at Nalini Arts College, Vallabh Vidyanagar for some time, Besides writing many articles in known journals, some published books contributed by

him are Evil, Suffering and Salvation: A comparative perspective in Religions (1982). Joint editors of Arunabharati : Some Contemporary Researches in Indology (Aligarh-1983), Gurudeva Rambhau Ranade-M. S. University, Vadodara (1986). Upalabdhi (Ed. Vol.) Vadodara (1996), A Dialogue with Faith and Flora, Bharatiya Vidya Prakashan, New Delhi (2000), Joint editors of a book philosophy of justice Bharatiya book Corp., New Delhi (2002). B. Gita and Rangmasti (2019) Ahmedabad. Chaired International Interfaith Dialogue Meets at Cochin (1996) and Varanasi (1997), Invited for Interfaith Dialogue at Bali, Indonesia (1996) delivered Endowment lectures at India Philosophical Congress, Jabalpur (1996), Haridwar (1997), Bodhagaya (1998). Invited to participate 'Religions Meet Religions: - An international seminar at free University, Amsterdam (2001). Prof. Vyas was invited as a UGC visiting fellow at the center of Shri Aurobindo Studies at Jadavpur university, Kolkata (2006-07) and Philosophy Deptt., Kolkata University, Kolkata (2014-15)

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The problem of evil cuts deep into human experience. For some it shrouds their life in cynicism and despair; for others it shatters the limits of the human situation and opens a realm of transcendent meaning. Throughout millenia the great religions have faced evil courageously, penetrating into its dark mystery for theoretical and practical solutions.

At this point in history we can no longer explore evil from a single viewpoint. The human race is converging towards a global community; we are becoming heirs to the spiritual heritage of the human race as a whole and, as such, have at our disposal enormous spiritual and intellectual resources. We need these resources desperately since the problem of evil has escalated to global proportions. Although its essence is the same as at the time of the Buddha, its dimensions have become overwhelming. Nuclear holocaust, widespread injustice, the pollution of the environment, the exhaustion of natural resources threaten the future of life on our planet. To meet evil in its monumental proportions, we urgently need to explore the religious solutions from a global perspective.

This is what Dr. Nitin J. Vyas has done in this book by viewing the problem from the point of view of Indian and Semitic religions. In so doing, he has not only thrown light on the problem, but has employed an approach that responds to the most urgent needs of the present and future.

Prof. Ewert H. Cousins
Department of Theology & Comparative Religion,
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