

FROM EARLY HINDUISM TO NEO-VEDĀNTA :
PARADIGM SHIFTS IN SACRED PSYCHOLOGY AND MYSTICISM
THEIR IMPLICATIONS FOR SOUTH AFRICAN HINDUS

by

SWAMI SARADANANDA

submitted in accordance with the requirements

for the degree of

DOCTOR OF LITERATURE AND PHILOSOPHY

in the subject

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

at the

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

PROMOTER : PROF. J. S. KRUGER

JUNE 2001

SUMMARY

This research was stimulated by pastoral concerns pertaining to the South African Hindu Community. It was found that the community had a noticeable number of individuals stagnant or stranded at the level of gross spirituality. On the other hand it is known that the primary texts of Hinduism and its long mystical traditions, from the Vedic Period to the Neo-Vedānta Movement, had adequate motivational and goal-orientated material to address this challenge.

This work surveys the Vedic and Upanishadic texts in order to show the literary, social and philosophical conditions under which they were produced. Hindu mysticism emerges from all these strands of development. Gross mysticism in the form of elaborate rituals occupies the attention of the early Vedic seers. This graduates into subtle subjective mysticism in the Upanishads. At each phase there is a paradigm shift which this study interprets in the light of Shankara (medieval period) and Ramakrishna, Vivekananda, Aurobindo and Radhakrishnan of the Neo-Vedānta Movement.

In the early Vedic period the soul is a metaphysical entity. Upon death it is judged in accordance with its good or bad actions. Heavenly rewards or the punishment of hell are meted out to it. Heaven and hell are final eschatological goals for the soul in the Vedic period.

In the Upanishadic period heaven and hell are temporary eschatological goals. The ultimate Upanishadic goal is Liberation which implies the mystical cessation of empirical existence and the realization of Unitary Consciousness. The Taittirīya Upanishad defines the soul analytically as a formulation of five sheaths : body, vital energy, mind, intellect and bliss with an immortal consciousness as its divine focus. These sheaths are fundamental to Hindu sacred psychology.

Functioning under the effects of ignorance each sheath binds the soul to mundane existence. However, each sheath also possesses an intrinsic capacity to liberate the soul from suffering. This research explores the limitations and opportunities of each sheath and indicates the path by which the soul's divine potential may be realized. In the light of the Neo-Vedāntic outlook this process is considered with a life-affirming attitude which is of relevance to South African Hindus.

Key Terms :

South African Hindu Community; Hindu scriptures; ritual mysticism; subjective mysticism; sacred psychology; spiritual quest; intuition; Neo-Vedānta; world-affirmation; socio-religious focus.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
TITLE PAGE	i
SUMMARY	ii
TRANSLITERATION	ix
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	x
PREFACE	xii
CHAPTER ONE	
The South African Hindu Community : Limitations and Opportunities	
1.1 Authoritative Texts and Established Norms.	1
1.2 Setting of the Problem.	2
1.3 Methodology.	7
1.4 Considerations leading to the Definition of Mysticism for South African Hindus.	12
1.5 Definition of Mysticism.	18
1.6 Difficulties in Studying Mysticism.	19
1.7 The Context for Genuine Mystical Realizations.	22
CHAPTER TWO	
Literary Works : Ancient, Medieval and Modern	
2.1 Primary Approach to the Texts.	26
2.2 Hinduism - Early History and the emergence of the Sacred Texts.	27
2.3 Archaeological Roots of early Mysticism in Harappa.	28
2.4 The Aryans.	29

2.5	Vedic Literature - A Survey of its Complexity.	31
2.6	The Early Collection of Vedic Texts (<i>samhitās</i>).	34
2.7	The Ṛg Veda (Ṛg V).	35
2.8	The Atharva Veda (AV).	37
2.9	The Sāma Veda (SV).	40
2.10	The Yajur Veda (YV).	41
2.11	The Brāhmaṇas.	43
2.12	The Āraṇyakas.	45
2.13	The Upanishads - A Definition.	46
2.14	The Upanishads in the Context of Vedic Literature.	47
2.15	A Brief Survey of Some Principal Ups.	48
2.16	The Incoherent Characteristics of the Ups.	52
2.17	The Brahma Sūtras (Br S).	54
2.18	The Bhagavad Gita (BG).	55
2.19	Sanskrit : A Vehicle for the Transmission of Religious and Mystical Concepts.	56
2.20	Problems with Oral Transmission.	57
2.21	Some difficulties with Sanskrit Etymology.	59
2.22	The Relevance of Shankara.	62
2.23	Modern Interpreters and Translators.	64
2.24	Ramakrishna - Vivekananda and the Development of Neo-Vedānta.	65
2.25	Aurobindo and Neo-Vedānta.	69
2.26	Radhakrishnan's Role in Neo-Vedānta.	71
2.27	Some Modern Translators and Commentators within the Context of Neo-Vedānta.	73

CHAPTER THREE

Evolution of Mysticism - From the Vedic Period to the Vedānta

3.1	General Growth of Mysticism.	74
3.2	Sacrificial Mysticism.	74
3.3	The Development of the Ritual.	76
3.4	Some noted Features of Sacrifice.	77
3.5	The Nature of the Vedic Gods.	81
3.6	The Three Planes of Existence and the Three Classes of Gods.	83
3.7	The Journey from Polytheism to Monism.	85
3.8	The Hindu Experience of Sacrificial Mysticism in South Africa	86

CHAPTER FOUR

Vedantic Analysis of the Inner Being : Its Implications for Mystical Development

4.1	<i>Pañchakośas</i> : Important Theme of Taittirīya Upanishad.	88
4.2	Upanishadic Concept of Interconnectedness.	89
4.3	Microcosm and Macrocosm.	91
4.4	The Nature of the Human Soul.	92
4.5	The <i>Kośas</i> .	93
4.6	Arrangement of the <i>Kośas</i> .	95
4.7	<i>Pañchakośa</i> Symbolism in the Tait. Up.	96
4.8	The <i>Annamayakośa</i> .	99
4.9	Location of the <i>Ātman</i> in the <i>Annamayakośa</i> .	102
4.10	<i>Annamayakośa</i> - the Anatomical and Physiological Basis for <i>Mokṣa</i> .	103

4.11	<i>Annamayakośa</i> - an Ephemeral Object.	106
4.12	The <i>Prāṇamayakośa</i> .	110
4.13	The Infilling of the <i>Prāṇamayakośa</i> .	111
4.14	The Five Divisions of the <i>Prāṇamayakośa</i> .	112
4.15	The <i>Udāna Prāṇa</i> -its Mystical Significance.	113
4.16	The <i>Prāṇa</i> and <i>Nāḍīs</i> : Their Mystical Significance.	116
4.17	<i>Prāṇa</i> in Alternate States of Consciousness.	118
4.18	Reason for Studying the <i>Prāṇamayakośa</i> .	120
4.19	The <i>Manomayakośa</i> .	121
4.20	The <i>Manomayakośa</i> and Imagination.	126
4.21	The <i>Vijñānamayakośa</i> .	127
4.22	The <i>Ānandamayakośa</i> .	130
4.23	The <i>Pañchakośas</i> , <i>Karma</i> and Reincarnation.	132
4.24	<i>Māyā</i> and the <i>Pañchakośas</i> .	136

CHAPTER FIVE

Techniques, Practices and Experiences in Hindu Sacred Psychology

5.1	Two-fold Nature of Sacred Psychology.	138
5.2	Evolutionary Need for a Sacred Psychology.	139
5.3	The Laboratory for Sacred Psychology and Mystical Pursuits.	142
5.4	Spiritual interpretation of the Mind.	143
5.5	Lifestyle for the Transformation of the Mind.	144
5.6	Repression versus Sublimation.	154
5.7	The Role of Celibacy in Awakening Higher States of Consciousness.	161

5.8	Techniques for Raising the levels of Consciousness.	.....	168
5.9	Alternate States of Consciousness, Trances and Miraculous Manifestations.	.....	175
5.10	Religious Counselling for Raising the Levels of Consciousness from Gross Mysticism to Higher Mysticism.	.....	183
5.11	The Attainment of Ultimate Liberation.	.....	187
5.12	The <i>Pañchakośas</i> in the Pre-intuitive State.	.....	188
5.13	Divine Grace and Revelation.	.....	192
5.14	The Identity of the <i>Ātman</i> with <i>Brahman</i>.	.....	197
5.15	Retrieving the <i>Pañchakośas</i> after <i>Nirvikalpa Samādhi</i>.	.....	198
5.16	Unitary Consciousness - its Implications for the Modern Context.	.....	199

CHAPTER SIX

Conclusion	203
-------------------	-------	-----

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Works Cited and Used Extensively in the Text.	.....	212
Other Works Consulted.	.....	221

GLOSSARY OF SANSKRIT TERMS	223
-----------------------------------	-------	-----

TRANSLITERATION

अ a	आ ā	इ i	ई ī	
उ u	ऊ ū	ऋ ṛ	ॠ ṝ	
ल ḷ	ए e	ऐ ai	ओ o	
औ au	अं aṁ	अः aḥ		
क् k	ख् kh	ग् g	घ् gh	ङ् ṅ
च् c	छ् ch	ज् j	झ् jh	ञ् ñ
ट् ṭ	ठ् ṭh	ड् ḍ	ढ् ḍh	ण् ṇ
त् t	थ् th	द् d	ध् dh	न् n
प् p	फ् ph	ब् b	भ् bh	म् m
य् y	र् r	ल् l	व् v	
श् s	ष् ṣ	स् s	ह् h	
ळ् ḷ	क्ष ks	त्र tr	ज्ञ jñ	

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Aitareya Upanishad	.....	Ai.Up.
Atharva Veda	.....	AV
Bhagavad Gita	.....	BG
Brahma Sūtras	.....	BS
Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upanishad	.....	Br.Up.
Chāndogya Upanishad	.....	Ch.Up.
Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda			
CW followed by the Volume number example : Vol.1	.....	CW1
	Vol.3	CW3
	Vol.6	CW6
	Vol.7	CW7
Katha Upanishad	.....	Ka.Up.
Kena Upanishad	.....	Ke.Up.
Maitrī Upanishad	.....	Mai.Up.
Māṇḍūkya Upanishad	.....	Man.Up.
Paingala Upanishad	.....	Pai.Up.
Praśna Upanishad	.....	Pr. Up.
Rg Veda	.....	Rg V
Sāma Veda	.....	SV
Subāla Upanishad	.....	Sub.Up.

Śvetāśvatara Upanishad	.....	Sv.Up.
Taittirīya Upanishad	.....	Tait.Up.
Upanishad/s	.....	Up./s.
Vedānta Paribhāsa	.....	VP
Vivekachudāmaṇi	.....	VC
Yajur Veda	.....	YV

PREFACE

This research was primarily motivated by several pastoral concerns within the South African Hindu community. This community was and even continues to be disadvantaged in many respects. Economic deprivation, colonialism and apartheid and various social factors have enfeebled its members and invited several insecurities. These insecurities have manifested themselves to such a psychologically challenged community as anxiety, various psychoses, suicides, etc. As a Hindu monk I have had nearly thirty years of experience in interacting with various individuals and religious organizations within the community. This gave me ample opportunities to listen to and empathise with their insecurities. Furthermore, as an integrated member of this community I had to encounter several of these challenges myself. The problems that motivated this study are therefore first-hand information and may be found in Chapter One of this thesis.

Apart from the finer perception of the problem I had, especially during my nine years of monastic training and thereafter, the gift of having sat at the feet of a venerable teacher, viz. Swami Shivapadananda (1938 - 1994) who was the second President of the Ramakrishna Centre of South Africa. It was my privilege to be in his classes almost on a daily basis. His exposition of the Upanishads (with the original Sanskrit) which he did with the lengthy commentary of Shankara and the modern focus of the Neo-Vedānta Movements was an exhilarating experience. These classes served to make clear abstruse metaphysical, theological and philosophical points. Without these insights this study would not have been possible. I therefore express my profound appreciation to Swami Shivapadananda.

As a member of the Hindu monastic community I have been a practising Hindu all these years. Therefore the literary texts and personal dimensions of this study are so intimately interwoven

that they have merged into an inseparable amalgam. This has been a journey of personal transformation as much as it has been a process of literary exploration into texts both ancient and modern. It may also be stated that in the Hindu monastic training and practice there are insights that may not necessarily be fully articulated in the texts. Traditionally, these aspects are handed down from guru to disciple. I am of the view that some such insights (which I have included in this work) will fill certain gaps which would otherwise lead to some incoherence.

My study of the Hindu scriptures, more so its sacred psychology and its mystical aspects, has led me to believe that Hinduism has vast resources that ought to be tapped and applied to the South African Hindu context. This study explores this potential with the hope that the information contained herein would empower Hindus to rise to new and higher planes of religious expression.

The body of this thesis contains several Sanskrit passages which are laid out in their transliterated form followed by the English translation. The transliteration has only been quoted in the case of texts that are fundamental to this study or in instances where there may be some slight variation in the English meaning. Students understanding Sanskrit may then revert to the original transliterated texts for added clarity. A key to the transliteration has been provided and a glossary of Sanskrit terms supplements this work. Sanskrit words like *ātman*, *brahman*, etc. have been italicised. Those Sanskrit words that have become absorbed into the English language like *rishi*, *nirvana*, etc. have been left in normal print (except when appearing within a quotation). Sanskrit words that are anglicised like *samsaric* are also in the usual print. In this respect a consistency has been retained throughout the body of the thesis.

While conducting this research I felt that there were certain quotations, points of interest, or evaluations that were of vital concern to the South African Hindus. In order to highlight these

aspects they also stand out in relief by being italicised. Consistency has been maintained in this respect.

Today, we live in a pluralistic society in which we are constantly interacting with people of various faiths - Christians, Muslims, Jews, Buddhists and others. A peaceful pluralistic society is certainly the hallmark of civilization. This study is done within the wider framework of Religious Studies.

Over the last few years I have received the inestimable help and encouragement from my promoter Professor J. S. Kruger, the Head of Department of Religious Studies, University of South Africa. His ready availability and professional assistance is deeply appreciated. He allowed me to explore this journey with disciplined intellectual freedom and showed a thorough understanding of the context in which this work was undertaken. I express my deepest gratitude to him.

I am also thankful to the many academics, writers, monks, religious leaders and the South African Hindu community for their motivation, insights and encouragement.

- Swami Saradananda

CHAPTER ONE

The South African Hindu Community : Limitations and Opportunities

1.1 Authoritative Texts and Established Norms

The Hindu is taught by tradition and belief to trace the original source of his or her religious life to the dim prehistoric past of the Vedic age. The Vedas, which comprise a vast body of texts, was written over a protracted period by rishis or seers of spiritual truths. These Vedas stand as the primary source and supreme authority of Hindu beliefs in all their complexity.

The present-day religion, philosophy, ritualistic practices, civic conduct and even social relations of a Hindu are guided largely by secondary scriptures (*smṛtis*), that is, mythologies and epic literature. Even these secondary sources are based upon the sacred sanction of the Vedic authority. Manu, the most well known lawgiver of ancient India, has explicitly mentioned that the *smṛtis* should be considered as an elaboration of the Vedas. It is a recognised rule of procedure that whenever there seems to be a difference between the Vedas (*śruti*) and *smṛti* literature, the *śruti* has to be upheld as the supreme authority and the *smṛti* has to be interpreted in consonance with that (Müller : 1975: 29). The establishment of this point is crucial for the South African Hindus especially as they have espoused the tendency to lean heavily upon secondary scriptures.

Modern scholars of Hinduism have made serious endeavours to bring out translations and commentaries of these *śruti* and *smṛti* texts. Some such authors have kept to the traditional mode of exegesis and beliefs while others have departed from the age-long tradition and opened up new vistas of thought which have had their corresponding effects on the daily lives of Hindus.

From whatever source the Hindu may receive his inspiration from he or she is confronted with some immediate challenges. One of the major problems facing Hindu philosophy, mysticism and theology today is whether it is to be reduced to a cult (traditional or modern), restricted in scope and with no application to the present realities or whether it is to be made alive and real, so as to become what it should be, one of the formative elements not only of Hindu religious growth but of human progress itself. All signs indicate that the future is bound up with the latter alternative (Radhakrishnan : 1990 : 64). For this purpose ancient scriptural values need to be made increasingly relevant and vibrant so as to provide strength and vision to the post-modern Hindu.

1.2 Setting of the Problem

The South African Hindu community has been settled in South Africa for the past 140 years (1860-2000). The original group of Indians who came to South Africa as indentured labourers were educationally disadvantaged and economically impoverished. The yoke of colonialism weighed heavily upon them. From the viewpoint of religion they brought with them a plethora of traditional beliefs gathered from their native villages and towns in different parts of India. These beliefs, which were undoubtedly rich, formed a psychological anchor that the then diasporic community needed. It gave strength to a people that were suffering as a result of historical and socio-economic factors working against them. The insecurities connected with arriving in a new land, the hardships of labour akin to slavery and the subsequent disparities brought on by the apartheid system - all these combined to weaken the Hindu psyche and its social ramifications. This systematic erosion of the Hindu strength reflected itself in the prioritisation of life's needs. The community became more engaged in economic survival rather than a serious quest for the holistic and qualitative improvement of their existing religious beliefs. Their physical and mental energies were directed to their immediate survival and the dexterous manner in which they

should manoeuvre through poverty, illiteracy, ill-health and other painful insecurities. As a result of these factors Hindus remained spiritually disadvantaged for a long time.

The entrenchment of apartheid isolated South Africa from the world community. India, which the indentured labourers hoped to maintain some links with, discontinued diplomatic, trade and people-to-people links with South Africa. In effect this meant that the vital flow of religious information and values, so necessary to nurture and strengthen the indentured Indians and their descendants in South Africa, was severed. Religious teachers, preachers and monks or nuns could not travel to South Africa. The trade embargo implied that large quantities of religious books and audio-visual material could not reach the South African Hindus. While South African Hindus were permitted to travel to India financial constraints hindered their opportunities. During the entire apartheid era it became evident that South African Hindus developed in a near religious and cultural isolation - a type of vacuum that hampered intellectual probing and religious enrichment that could have otherwise been provided by contact with India. This isolation is largely responsible for the religious enfeeblement of the South African Hindus, that is to say, it impaired their capacity to transform their village religious traditions into a comprehensive philosophy and outlook that life has been demanding of them. Undoubtedly, smaller attempts to strengthen this group have been made. Yet the society, consciously or unconsciously, yearns for greater spiritual fulfilment.

When scriptures, commentaries and other religious writings became available there was an emphasis on secondary scriptures. Mythological works and epic literature like the Ramayana and Mahabharata became popular and in effect they moulded the religious beliefs and conduct of the people. Existing traditional practices were being influenced by these works. These secondary scriptures are an extension, amplification and illustration of the mystical insights found in the primary sources like the Vedas and Upanishads. With an overemphasis, or perhaps all the

emphasis, on secondary scriptures and without primary sources at hand there developed an aberration between mystical insight and the flow of '*meaning*' that is articulated in the secondary scriptures. The Vedas and Upanishads were not readily available reference books. Primary mystical insights were not used to give meaning to the rituals, ceremonies, characters, episodes and themes of the secondary scriptures. Furthermore, the secondary sources have mystical statements lodged at various points. These statements, of necessity, must be viewed in the light of primary sources. Interpreting secondary works in isolation of their roots raises various problems. When asked, "What is the good of studying the Vedas?" Vivekananda replied, "It will kill superstition." (Nikhilananda : 1994 : 340). Today, the South African Hindus need to address this aberration between their primary and secondary texts. The mystical roots of the secondary scriptures can only be identified and understood when there is a reversion to the Vedas and Upanishads. The mystical content of the primary sources enhances both the theory and practice enunciated in the secondary literature.

In most Hindu temples there is the regular performance of either simple or elaborate rituals. These rituals have been culled from Vedic texts and the later manuals of rituals, viz. the Āgamas. Added to this corpus of rituals are the ones that are more traditionally inspired rather than scripturally ordained. Priests disadvantaged by both Sanskrit learning and their poor vocational training have a tendency to lean heavily on the traditional mode of rituals. Such priests also have good followings. All Hindu rituals, scripturally ordained or traditional, have inherent meanings in them. Elements of mysticism lie hidden in each ritual. Among South African Hindus there is a noticeable tendency towards the mechanical performance of these rituals. It is only the mystical elements in these sacrificial rituals that give meaning to the ritual ceremony. Above all such a mysticism alone is capable of indicating the ultimate goal of rituals, viz. God-realisation. In the absence of mysticism rituals are incapacitated to raise the levels of spiritual consciousness to greater heights. This is identified as a definite impediment in the course of spiritual evolution.

Broadly speaking Hinduism comprises rituals, mythology and philosophy. Rituals and mythology are only meant to be an amplification or illustration of philosophy. Rituals cannot stand on their own. In South Africa, over the last one hundred and forty years, a large number of Hindu temples with their congregations have been involved in various rituals. The present author has noted, through innumerable counselling sessions, that such 'ritual-based' devotees are in search of a 'step' beyond the rituals. Monotonous rituals have led to religious frustration and unfulfilment. The gross rituals must lead to the subtler dimension of spirituality. It is precisely at this stage of 'ritual-fatigue' that such Hindus encounter the first stirrings of mysticism. The wherewithal to take this next step and the directions for onward progress, especially in the South African context, is lacking. Many are seeking a meaningful freedom from the rituals that they have been performing with monotonous regularity. In a post-colonial and post-apartheid South Africa this progressive step and its promise of a larger vision is a crucial necessity to open up inner resources of strength.

The above problem of moving or evolving from 'underdeveloped' spirituality to a more comprehensive spirituality requires a careful mapping out of the progressive areas of development. If the progressive steps are not clearly demarcated this in itself becomes a source of spiritual insecurity. While immense data is available on this subject especially in the Upanishads and the Bhagavad Gita, it is the South African focus that now needs attention. Even a generalised solution to the problem is insufficient. The pastoral response demands that the micro areas of both the problem and the solution relevant to the South African Hindu context be explored with clarity.

The *śruti* texts do not have any particular dearth of information regarding the data-response for the above problems. What is indeed lacking is the identification, collecting and processing of

such data that would meet the present requirements. Furthermore this synthesised data should not be in 'ideological violence' with the existing practices of the said Hindus.

The basic *śruti* texts, while they contain seminal information for such a response, require further interpretation and exposition. Interpretations can only be sought from within the tradition. The sourcing and synthesising of this information must indicate both an authentic spiritual tradition as well as a sharp South African focus. This alone will meet with widespread acceptability.

Many South African Hindus no longer want to stagnate at the level of sacrificial rituals. Since they have traversed this path for long years and have become established in its practices the most logical step would be a search for natural steps that lead away from the rituals to subtler dimensions of mysticism. Today the greatest spiritual yearning, defined or undefined, lies in this area of exploration.

Even a corpus of relevant mystical insights assembled with relevant guidelines will prove futile if it has no relevance to the present realities. Hindus take consolation in mystical wisdom. Such information should give philosophical strength to people at the time of crises - deaths, suicides, trauma, insecurity and a host of other problems that are evident in South Africa. Therefore there is an urgent need for 'applied mysticism' within the South African Hindu context. This research will draw attention to how some of the mystical insights and techniques may be relevant to the present problems.

The general psyche of the South African Hindus has become complex reflecting, as it does, the intricacies of the socio-economic and political milieu that is now prevalent. The diverse problems that emerge from such a context is a challenge that needs an appropriate response. While aspects of this response may come from various secular disciplines, Hinduism needs to

formulate a comprehensive map that would define the '*Hindu mind*' as it '*ought*' to be. It is imperative that this formulation should take into account the major progressive movements and drawbacks experienced by the South African Hindus. It should also be capable of '*raising a person from where he or she is*'.

South African Hindus have a vague notion of mysticism. It is a subject that has long been in a nebulous state. The community is in need of clarity, definitions and above all, an exposition of the immense possibilities that this subject has for their psychological health and spiritual welfare. There is an acute dearth of focussed information on mysticism as it would be currently accepted by the local Hindus. This lapse will be addressed in the present research. The South African context and the methodological aspects of this work are intrinsically interwoven.

1.3 Methodology

Since the core of this study involves Hindu mysticism the primary textbooks on this subject viz., the Vedas and Upanishads, need to be surveyed in order to show the historical, social and literary context in which Hindu mysticism developed in India. The primary literary sources are the Vedas and Upanishads which are indispensable throughout this study. They in fact will invest the study with its needful authenticity and will be used as primary reference sources throughout this presentation.

The Vedas and Upanishads are in Sanskrit. Some of the important texts will be read in the original. Furthermore, translations of both mystical and academic writers will be consulted to acquire meaning of the texts. Wherever necessary etymological analysis of key words in Sanskrit will be used to build up definitions or concepts. This research would however not venture to become linguistic in nature. Authors like Max Müller who have a philological approach to the

texts will only be used in a limited way. It may be pointed out that Max Müller has been used extensively among South African intellectuals that research Hindu themes.

The roots of Hindu mysticism would be traced in the early Vedic period. During this period seers interacted with nature and 'discovered' the energy and forces that lay hidden in natural phenomena. This developed into the early Vedic theology in which these forces became deified. This important phase of mystical development involving the 'insight' of deification will be discussed and analysed. This analysis would contribute to a clearer understanding of what may be termed 'rudimentary mysticism'.

The seers of ancient India were not only the observers of natural forces at work. Their theological beliefs now encompassed the deification of such forces. This process of deification invited a subsequent query as to how these deities may be propitiated for human happiness. In this very process we see a paradigm shift from a state of mute or even articulated admiration of the deities to one in which the seer wanted to 'participate' with the deities in order to extract some boon such as wealth, health, etc. The mechanism used to appease the deities and invite their blessings developed into elaborate rituals. This stage may be defined as 'sacrificial mysticism'. This research would trace the elements that led to sacrificial mysticism. It would also explore the scope of sacrificial mysticism firstly as an established step of its own and secondly as an element that facilitates the growth from grosser to subtler aspects of mysticism.

Hindu mysticism does not remain bound to the gross level. Perhaps one of the most important steps that now occur in the transition from the gross aspect to the subtle dimension of its working is the movement of observations, definitions, concepts and realizations from the external world to the internal world of the human person. Here is yet another paradigm shift. This work would

focus attention on this aspect of mystical growth in order to make vivid the process of internalising the search for mystical truth.

The internal quest for mystical truth passes through several complex processes. For this purpose an internal map or model is required to explain the developmental processes. This research would extract that working model from one of the oldest Upanishads viz. the Taittirīya Upanishad. This work has been selected because it is an authentic primary text and from the viewpoint of its chronology and its contents it represents the transition from gross to subtle mysticism. The model that it presents represents the multi-layered nature of human beings. In this Upanishad the human soul is a formulation of five sheaths: body, vital energy, mind, intellect and bliss with an immortal consciousness (*ātman*) as its divine focus. Functioning under the effects of ignorance each sheath binds the soul to suffering and rebirth. Under the conditions of this ignorance no higher mystical potential is experienced. This accounts for the lack of spiritual growth and an absence of insight into the higher purpose of life, that is, God-realization. However, each sheath also possesses an intrinsic capacity to liberate the soul from suffering. This work will explore the mystical potential of each sheath and point out the ascending steps in the mystical spiral that would eventually lead to God-realization.

In order to accomplish the above analysis of the five sheaths it would be necessary to undertake the following: Firstly the original texts of the Taittirīya Upanishad will be used. These texts are an admixture of poetry, aphorisms and prose. Their context also have a diversity regarding subject matter. For this reason the larger meaning of the relevant passages will have to be sought elsewhere. This will be achieved by looking at other major Upanishads especially of this chronological era. Should further clarification be necessary this work would draw on the Upanishad commentaries of Shankara (800 CE). Shankara, whose astute commentaries are deeply appreciated, also has some limitations on account of his distance in time. Some of his

expositions may not be totally intelligible to the 'modern' researcher. To justify a modern interpretation of the texts it would then be necessary to look at modern mystical teachers or their writings, viz., that of Ramakrishna, Vivekananda, Aurobindo, Radhakrishnan, etc. This approach would keep the entire discussion strictly within the parameters of this Hindu tradition. In using the aforesaid authors it is not the intention of this work to develop new or even extended metaphysical insights of their works. Rather, this work seeks to harness the existing metaphysical data and bring it into sharp focus that it may be applied to the South African Hindu context.

The ultimate purpose of studying and evaluating the five sheaths is for its intrinsic capacity to yield the intuitive experience which gives one God-realization (*mokṣa*). In the Upanishads the techniques of raising levels of consciousness to different mystical heights and even the intuitive experience are described with brevity. This is somewhat problematic in that many hazy and indefinite statements have attached themselves to these vital processes. This research will make a thorough analysis and evaluation of the methods of raising levels of consciousness and the ultimate intuitive process that results from the completion of this practice.

At the culmination of the intuitive process the person 'experiences' God. This work would point out the nature of this Supreme Being. What is implied by God-realization? Does God-realization have any personal implications? What is its effect on the personality? Does it have any relevance to our day-to-day lives? These aspects need adequate response. The answers will be sought from the lives of modern day mystics or their teachings.

Modern mystics like Ramakrishna and Vivekananda felt that mystical truths must be applied to everyday life. This is in sharp contrast to some Hindus that hold a life-negating attitude. This

research would explore some of the possibilities that 'applied mysticism' may hold forth for the South African Hindus.

In analysing the entire process of mystical development, step by step, from the Vedic Period to the Upanishads, Shankara, and its modern exposition by Ramakrishna and Vivekananda this work would inevitably produce a systematic evaluation of how the Hindu mind evolves through various stages until spiritual fulfilment is reached. The various paradigm shifts would be isolated and made vivid. These peak points in the study would constitute a corpus of information which collectively may be referred to as the major signposts in the Hindu mystical topography. A by-product of this research would be that such material would indeed form the psychological basis of this specific Hindu mind. The entire process with its paradigm shifts may be used as a yardstick to ascertain an individual's spiritual progress. It would point out the mystical journey already traversed as well as the directions ahead. Furthermore, psychologists or religious counsellors that handle the 'Hindu mind' may draw from this research the elements of Hindu psychology that would be crucial for the analysis of such a mind. This researcher is of the view that these specific elements of Hindu psychology embodied in this work may be easily used to develop psychological tools or counselling techniques that would address religious aberrations peculiar to the Hindu mind. It is beyond the scope of this presentation to work out such formulations. Yet the South African Hindu community is in immediate need of such services. Conventional counselling, especially to Hindu patients, has its limitations. A focussed or complementary approach would certainly account for better insight on the part of the counsellor and quicker healing in the said patients.

The South African Hindus, like the followers of other traditions are experiencing an ongoing engagement with modernity. The traditional values and practices which they espoused for decades are constantly being questioned. Obsolete values are crumbling and there is a need for

fresh interpretations of the old values. A response to this process would effect healthier attitudinal changes which in turn would generate spiritual strength and experiences that would provide individual and collective spiritual security. In the absence of such a fresh vision some Hindus are responding either through a type of Right-wing revivalism or a brand of Left-wing reformism. Both these approaches are somewhat unbridled and not in consonance with the general tenor of the Hindu spirit. This work would not be a radical interpretation of Hindu mystical developments. Rather it could gather together the rich and relevant normative resources in a rational way so as to open up a bridge or promote a dialogue between ancient insights that are neglected or misunderstood and the challenges thrown up by modernity. The modern Hindu would be far less impaired with such a rational resource concerning his or her religious tradition.

1.4 Considerations leading to the Definition of Mysticism for South African Hindus

Mysticism in India has a definite history. Even in the modern context Hindus are more often than not associated with some mystical aspect as being a part of their life. In South Africa as well, the Hindus are engaged in an encounter with mysticism. The present writer, as part of his pastoral work, has had regular opportunities to observe such Hindus over the last thirty years. It can be pointed out that this community's engagement with mysticism remains substantially at the superficial level, that is to say, at the level of priests, rituals, trances and propitiatory ceremonies. There are Hindus, not necessarily in small numbers, that frequent such priests, temples and shrines and practice what may be termed 'gross' or 'lower' mysticism. The word 'lower' is not used in a derogatory sense and it should not be confused with pseudo-mysticism. Such people go to priests who seem to specialise in 'lower' mysticism. They communicate with departed spirits, want their fortunes read, demand riches and health and ask for amulets to ward off evil. Some go to the extent of seeking security in Black Magic. This stage of spiritual want has its comparison only with the early states of spiritual quest mentioned in the Atharva Veda. Practitioners of this class of mysticism view this subject with some kind of superstitious awe or an unexplained

reverence. It is seen as an obscure and supernatural method by which, in some unaccountable manner, miracles may be performed or physical advantages reaped. People have insecurities and unfulfilled desires. Unable to imagine a rational solution to their problems they resort, as a necessity, to this 'lower' form of mysticism.

The author has observed that the practitioners of this mysticism, that is to say, the priests and the devotees, do not find long term solutions to their problems. Awed by the mystery of the surroundings and the practices they get temporary relief from their insecurities. The solutions to their problems are only postponed, they are never solved completely. Furthermore, priests exploit devotees charging them exorbitant amounts of money for exorcism and other bizarre rituals. Untruthfulness and immoral behaviour, the very antithesis of true mysticism, are resorted to. Yet people feel that this is a shortcut to domestic happiness, economic security and spiritual fulfilment. Many of such devotees are left enfeebled and enslaved by such engagements. There is noticeable spiritual stagnation or at best very little spiritual growth at this level. Devotees are convictionally impaired and are unconsciously in want of a 'liberation technique' that would draw them out of their present morass and engage them meaningfully in a genuine, albeit, rational approach to true fulfilment. To such people Hinduism offers its rich resource of higher mysticism.

Is it possible to transcend 'lower' mysticism? Hinduism answers in the affirmative. This work proposes to point out the motivational factors that facilitate this growth as well as a comprehensive account of the ascending steps that need to be undertaken in order that higher mysticism may be understood, practised and experienced - all within the Hindu context.

The South African Hindus already have too much of fettered religion with an accumulation of priest-made sanctions, prohibitions, dogmas and bigoted assertions. On the other hand there is a crying need for emancipation from such practices.

Let us not think that fettered Hinduism is the result of primitive superstitions, mythological beliefs and incomprehensible rituals. The mystics of the Hindu tradition like Vivekananda would not condemn these, even though they are not the highest expressions of the religious urge. Vivekananda felt that man is progressing not from error to truth, but from lower truth to higher truth. According to him these practices are necessary steps in the evolution of religion and can be of great help to earnest religious seekers. We have no right to be negatively critical of them. We should be grateful to them, for throughout the centuries these superstitions, rituals and myths have offered some way for such people to comprehend super-sensuous truth (Shraddhananda : 1996 : 44).

Evolutionary growth may be achieved by a few imperatives that need brief mention at this point. The mind in Hindu psychological is called the 'inner instrument' or *antahkarana* in Sanskrit. Before the well-known French psychologists Charcot and Janet recognised the existence of the subconscious state of mind the West was interested only in the study of the conscious state of mind. The late Freud, Jung and others concluded that the larger portion of the mind is like the submerged portion of an iceberg. It is unknown to our conscious thinking. Even in the Upanishadic period (600 BCE) Hindu psychologists were aware of the subconscious or unconscious state of mind. They explained it as a storehouse of all past thoughts - impressions or *samskāras*. These *samskāras* have the ability to generate tendencies in the conscious plane of the mind. In the words of Swami Vivekananda (CW 1: 1984 : 52) :

“Every work that we do, every movement of the body, every thought that we think, leaves an impression on the mind-stuff (the internal organ or antahkaraṇa), and even when such impressions are not obvious on the surface they are sufficiently strong to work beneath the surface. Man’s character is determined by the sum total of the impressions.”

Hindu mystical exploration gives us an insight into the nature of this mind-stuff. This insight is necessary in order to eradicate evil and ignoble impressions and develop the moral basis for mystical practices. From observations alone it can be pointed out that no specific degree of moral conduct is necessary to indulge in lower mysticism. One could have a bad character and indulge in various brands and practices of lower mysticism. But to achieve a flight to higher mysticism it is necessary to cultivate mental hygiene through a morally sound life. This is the first, and perhaps the most important, condition that Hinduism emphasises in developing mystical consciousness.

The second condition that is inevitable is that one should develop one’s faculty of reason. To drop off the temporary securities of ‘lower’ mysticism one needs reason in order to distinguish between what is fleeting and that which contributes to one’s permanent weal. The former state implies inadequate alertness and an incapacity to develop a synthetic intellect. Such enhanced faculties are not only desirable and necessary but may be carefully cultivated by the process of discrimination (*viveka*). It is this discrimination, painstakingly cultivated over a period of time, that leads to the strengthening of the will. The manifestation of a strong will is a contributing force for the shift to higher mysticism.

The cultivation of higher mysticism cannot be viewed without a reference to the *purusharthas*. In fact one can say that the Hindu psyche is a product of the *purusharthas*. Since ancient times

Hindu culture has been made up of a two-tier system of values connoted by the word *purusharthas* which are as follows :

- i) *Dharma* - righteous living in thought, word and deed (morality).
- ii) *Artha* - legitimate means to acquire economic security.
- iii) *Kama* - the enjoyment of legitimate pleasures.
- iv) *Mokṣa* - attainment of the supreme goal of life, that is, liberation from the cycle of births and deaths.

In the actual working of these values *artha* and *kama* are to be governed by *dharma*. This triad of values is meant for the correct adjustment of life on earth. But for those that have developed dispassion for the world and seek liberation from suffering, Hinduism offers the value of *mokṣa*. There is hardly a soul that does not want to be free from sorrow. *Mokṣa*, however, is not freedom from ordinary sorrows and insecurities. It is freedom from the very possibility of being reborn. *Mokṣa* is an absolute value. The first three values may be taken as 'instrumental values', although they do not necessarily lead to *mokṣa*. (Bhajananda : 1996 : 21).

The above values shape the socio-cultural and religious milieu that makes up what may be called the 'Hindu identity'. According to Kakar (1981 : 51-52) *mokṣa*, *dharma*, and *karma* constitute a meta-reality "which is neither deterministically universal nor utterly idiosyncratic" but "culturally specific and harboured or accepted, often unconsciously, as a heart of a community identity." Such a meta-reality which constitutes the mental identity of the Hindus is not necessarily an intellectually apprehended and consciously acknowledged system of belief. But almost every Hindu child absorbs the values of the *purusharthas* deliberately or unconsciously, from his or her adult caretakers. In the course of everyday life these values may not be in the focus of awareness or for that matter have a direct influence on the conduct of the individual, yet, they function at a sub-conscious level. In the ultimate analysis it may be stated that even those

Hindus that are engaged in lower forms of mysticism have the *purusharthas* functioning within them though in its rudimentary form where we are yet to see greater articulation and expression of these values. This level nevertheless represents a state of Hindu identity in which there is also a limited quest for the realization of the spiritual self or a feeble striving for *mokṣa*.

For Kluckhohn (1962 : 289) values do not consist in *desires* but rather in the *desirable*, that is, what we do not only want but feel that it is right and proper to want for ourselves and for others. Values are abstract standards that transcend the impulses of the moment and even ephemeral situations. One ought to proceed to higher stages so that what is pointed out as a desirable goal is achieved.

Indeed, it is the sense of 'ought' that distinguishes ordinary desires or needs from the higher value of the *purusharthas*. The urge for *mokṣa* is an intrinsic part even of the 'unfinished' Hindu psyche. This fulfilment ought to be searched for and found in higher mysticism.

Artha and *kama* that are governed by *dharma* would be compatible to some degree with lower mysticism but it is the desire for *mokṣa* that activates the need for higher mysticism. *Mokṣa* should not be a neglected factor even for those that are engrossed in lower mysticism.

The challenge in moving to higher mysticism lies in giving greater vibrancy to the element of *mokṣa*, in putting forward changes in attitude and the process through which changes occur. It is acknowledged that changes cannot occur rapidly just because a higher value has been highlighted. The concept of *mokṣa* must be sufficiently integrated into lower mysticism in order that the full curriculum of mysticism could take its rightful evolutionary course and be supremely productive.

1.5 Definition of Mysticism

From the foregoing points this research will now attempt to define mysticism within suitable parameters that it becomes both theoretically and practically acceptable to the South African Hindus. At the same time the elements of this definition should not stray away from the spirit of the primary texts of Hinduism nor should it be incompatible with the experiences and teachings of the modern day mystics of the religion.

In Hindu history there has always been periods that produce rare souls, both men and women, that rose above the mechanical practices of religion and through a process of self-purification, contemplation and yearning for God-consciousness attained a state of *samādhi* or the superconscious experience. In this state of heightened spiritual consciousness they communed with God. Yet there were others who 'experienced' a 'oneness' identifying themselves with everything in the universe and beyond. This experience is always filled with such 'awareness' of the Reality that it leaves its transforming effect upon the mystic. For such a mystic the experience is no longer an intellectual theory or a fanciful idea. It is basically a vibrant, formative, creative, elevating and ennobling principle of life that sets the mystic apart from the common run of humanity.

Dasgupta (1992 : ix) states :

Mysticism means a spiritual grasp of the aims and problems of life in a much more real and ultimate manner than is possible to mere reason. A developing life of mysticism means a gradual ascent in the scale of spiritual values, experience and spiritual ideals. As such, it is many-sided in its development, and as rich and complete as life itself. Regarded from this point of view, mysticism is the basis of all religions - particularly of the religion as it appears in the lives of truly religious men."

In Hinduism mysticism can only have a 'graded definition' or a 'multi-layered' definition. This research demonstrates the origins, growth and development of this school of mysticism only to the extent that it is meaningful and useful within the South African Hindu context.

The South African Hindu that is enmeshed in lower forms of mysticism is a complex being in whom temporal desires mingle with spiritual aspirations. Unable to reconcile these two paths in life they seem to move in a circle within the ambit of lower mysticism. This has resulted in unfulfilment and dissatisfaction. In such circumstances the intervention of higher mysticism is not only desirable but necessary. For Sarcar (1998 : 41) :

"Mysticism makes all the parts of our being elastic and responsive, and unless the grossness of the lower part can be eliminated the higher forces cannot work with advantage, and occupy with full force our complete being and move it with spiritual harmony."

1.6 Difficulties in Studying Mysticism

The higher states of mystic consciousness attained as a matter of experience by mystics are not commonplace attainments by ordinary human beings. Much has yet to be done to observe, study and evaluate mystic consciousness. Methodological tools for this purpose are evolving but remain incomplete. Furthermore, it may be suggested that specific groups of mystics either within a tradition like Hinduism or among various other traditions like Christianity, Buddhism, Sufism, etc. may require 'tradition-specific methodological tools' to perceive meaning in the respective tradition. Each tradition seems to be an autonomous realm of experience. In the case of Hindu mysticism the methodological parameters must take into account Hindu history and the socio-religious aspects that developed its world-view. Yet mysticism also lies above these

empirical compulsions. The search for a fuller methodology must encapsulate the area 'beyond' the empirical data.

An established feature of a mystic is that he or she soars above dogmas and specific communities. Katz (1983 : 1) in a generalized view of mysticism states that *"at the exalted level of mystic experience the specificity of given religious systems is transcended in a sense of oneness which is common to all true mystics. Here in the presence of the Absolute, the self is no longer Jew nor Greek, male nor female and all true seekers come to know - to feel - the sameness which is the Ultimate Reality."* This point raises another debatable issue, viz. that of the ultimate experience being universal. This wide applicability of conclusions about universality may not enjoy widespread acceptance especially by those faiths and traditions that espouse inflexible dogmas. This point has raised many contentious issues that need to be considered for methodological purposes.

When it is stated that a Hindu mystic transcends the mechanical rituals and dogmas of his or her creed and experiences a 'universal state of consciousness' can we then say that this experience is necessarily Hindu? To use an alternate idiom, what we are concerned to inquire into is : just how Hindu is a Hindu mystic or how Muslim is a Sufi? Does Hindu mysticism represent a universal religious experience or is it necessarily related to Hindu dogmas and ceremonies? In other words can one be a Hindu mystic if one denies the conventional aspects of Hinduism? For Vivekananda (1995 : 27) *"Religion is not in doctrines, in dogmas nor in intellectual argumentation; it is being and becoming; it is realization"*. This statement of Vivekananda, which may be considered to be the collective voice of Hindu mystics, is important especially for those that wish to separate the gross forms of Hindu practices from its higher mystical elements. For South African Hindus this issue to separate ceremonies and dogmas from mystical practices and realizations is relevant and

must be emphasised in the overall methodological sophistication. There are many South African Hindus that wish to transcend some aspects or all of the grosser forms of Hindu mysticism.

From a theoretical standpoint many of the best known accounts of mysticism are analytical and evaluative products of *a priori* metaphysical, theological and philosophical requirements and not necessarily any close encounter with the actual mystical sources, that is, the mystics themselves. A study of this nature cannot depend totally on works that are just an academic juxtaposition of empirical data or a hermeneutical understanding of texts. This approach would have serious methodological irregularities. At best we can resort to the writings of modern day mystics and if possible the actual company of mystics that belong to that tradition. From the Hindu standpoint the latter approach is considered important. It is to seek mystical insight from a mystic.

Research on mysticism is always confronted with the problem : “Why are mystical experiences the experience they are?” In the case of Hindu mystics, as well as their counterparts in other traditions, it is evident that they do not ‘state’ their actual experience. The mystic descends from a particular experience and returns to the world of the senses. At this level there is no ‘pure experience’. That is to assert that all experience, if communicated, is processed through, organized by and makes itself available to us in complex epistemological ways. This is especially true with regard to the ultimate object of concern, e.g. God, *samādhi*, nirvana, etc. The primary mystical texts of Hinduism, viz., the Upanishads point to this ultimate goal in the following language (Tait. Up. 2.9.1) : “*When mind and speech go to comprehend it, they recoil being unable to do so.*” Therefore that part of this research that pertains to the Ultimate Reality can only be ‘*hints and suggestions*’ and never a definite statement of the mystics consciousness.

The analysis of Hindu mysticism encompasses the difficulty of scanning both primary and secondary sources that are expressions of a complex Hindu psyche. The Hindu mystic expression

in terms of literature is surely an adventure in which the mystic is caught up in the fetters of history and tradition, time and space, and social and religious inflexibilities. The Hindu mystic cannot be plucked out of this setting. They have to express the inexplicable through the inadequate symbols and syntax of their faith and community. Hindu mystical reports are a fusion of complex data that include : theoretical treatise, biographical information, aphorisms, poems, polemics, dogmatics and deductive compositions. It is therefore a demanding and skilful operation to sift through these myriad texts in order to identify, decode and analyse the information that would be relevant to the perspective of the research.

1.7 The Context for Genuine Mystical Realizations

For those that are practitioners of Hindu mystical teachings it is enjoined that they undertake this task under the watchful guidance of a Master. In order to free the mind from the pitfalls of unquestioning faith, realization and emotionalism, rigorous disciplines of self-mastery are prescribed so that the seeker may be well grounded in his sincerity of purpose, commitment to the goal and absolute detachment from blind loyalty to his or her pet concepts, fanciful ideas and various mental fixations not connected with this search (Adiswarananda : 2000 : 6). The Hindu mystical life is not without its disciplines and its various checks and balances. If these measures are put into place it will result in genuine mystical experiences. On the contrary if these standards are relaxed the entire venture will degenerate in to pseudo-mysticism. Naturally there are people who are desperate for some immediate gain of health, wealth, power or the fulfilment of some fantasy that would resort to pseudo-mysticism. Hinduism categorically points out that genuine mysticism is the result of disciplined labour. Pseudo-mysticism, however protected and popular it may be, is never a substitute or at best a 'halfway house' to the benefits of true mysticism. The Hindu mystic must be one of disciplined integrity.

Direct perception of the Ultimate Reality is the culmination of the mystical quest. Direct perception is called *darśana* in Sanskrit. It means 'to see' the Reality. Only one who has had this experience may be recognised as a mystic.

An experience of the Ultimate Reality can never be negated or superseded by a subsequent experience. It is 'ultimate' in the absolute sense.

Mystical experience does not contradict reason. Vivekananda (CW 2 : 1976 : 367) states :

"Is religion to justify itself by the discoveries of reason through which every other science justifies itself? Are the same methods of investigation, which we apply to science and knowledge outside, to be applied to the science of religion? In my opinion, this must be so; and I am also of opinion that the sooner it is done the better. If a religion is destroyed by such investigations, it was then all the time useless, unworthy superstition; and the sooner it goes the better. I am thoroughly convinced that its destruction would be the best thing that could happen. All that is dross will be taken off, no doubt, but the essential parts of religion shall emerge triumphant out of this investigation. Not only will it be made scientific - as scientific, at least, as any of the conclusions of physics or chemistry - but it will have greater strength because physics or chemistry has no internal mandate to vouch for its truth, which religion has."

The attainment of mystical consciousness must transform the seeker forever. The moments of mystical intuition, ecstasies and trances, dreams and visions, cannot be taken as meaningful until they permanently transform the personality. One sure mark of this transformation is his or her

self-expansion that embraces all beings and things in the universe. For Adiswarananda (2000 : 6) :

“A person of such transforming direct perception is called a free soul. Such a person is free because he has risen above all ideas of convention and tradition, culture and race, attachment and aversion. He sees his Self in all and all in his Self. Always conscious of his identity with all beings, he feels through all hearts, walks with all feet, eats through all mouths and sees through all eyes. His selfless love for all beings knows no bounds. He looks on the pleasure and pain of all beings as his own pain and pleasure. The virtues of discrimination, dispassion and self-control, which he practised before for self-purification, now become natural to his personality. A free soul wears no outward mark and does not belong to any particular religious denomination. An embodiment of Universal Truth, he becomes a moving temple of Universal Truth. Only such a free soul can demonstrate the validity of the scriptures and the reality of God - not the dogmatist with his blind belief, the philosopher with his analytical reason, or the theologian with his creedal assertions.”

The Neo-Vedānta Movement, especially that branch initiated by Ramakrishna and Vivekananda, emphasise that mysticism must find practical application for the welfare of all or what the Bhagavad Gita (3.25) terms *lokasaṅgrah*. Nevadita (CW 1 : 1984 : xv) explained Vivekananda’s expansive vision of applied mysticism as follows :

“If the many and the One be indeed the same Reality, then it is not all modes of worship alone, but equally all modes of work, all modes of struggle, all modes of creation, which are paths of realisation. No distinction, henceforth, between sacred and secular. To labour is to pray.

To conquer is to renounce. Life is itself religion. To have and to hold is as stern a trust as to quit and to avoid . . . To him, the workshop, the study, the farmyard and the field are as true and fit scenes for the meeting of God with man as the cell of a monk or the door of the temple. To him, there is no difference between service of man and worship of God, between manliness and faith, between true righteousness and spirituality.”

This approach of Vivekananda which has influenced and continues to influence the global Hindu movement has great implications for the South African Hindu mystical development.

CHAPTER TWO

Literary Works: Ancient, Medieval and Modern

2.1 Primary Approach to the Texts

The Hindu literary legacy already forms a large and important part of the global human heritage and as such is of intrinsic interest to all those who wish to comprehend the values and outlook of this sizeable section of the world's population. There is an abundance of well articulated critical studies of Hindu texts. The authors of such works have approached the subject from its usual historical, socio-economic, political and syntactic viewpoints. Klostermaier (1989 : 12) argues that both the eastern and western 'orientalists' have constructed their works looking at this reality with the *systematized western mind*. Rigid categories of disciplines are mapped out and the stupendous maze of Hindu beliefs are disentangled, isolated and cast into these categories. Sociological, psychological, economical and historical constructions of Europe and America fall into the same category as would the complexities of Hindu beliefs. It is an attitude communicated with the very ideal of 'science' or 'scientific' and it consists basically of being the best attitude and methodology to approach the texts.

A study of the origins and development of the Hindu texts as well as their context will compel us to believe that the 'scientific-clinical' approach is useful but only within certain limits. The reason and logic of this approach has a limited range of applicability. Beyond this the researcher is confronted with tensions and unresolved textual problems which require an alternate hermeneutical key of interpretation which, in the context of the Hindu scriptures, must come either from mystical empiricism or its transcendent form suggested in a paradox in which the ultimate interpretation is not described or categorized but rather postponed into a fathomless silence which in turn hints at the nameless Ultimate Reality (*brahman*).

The primary Hindu texts (*śruti*) are accepted as a product of mystical insight. As such the role of a mystical interpretation in analysing Hindu literature cannot be underestimated. In fact this should be the seminal approach to the texts with secondary light coming from historical data, socio-economic patterns and other linguistic tools that add to the vividity and livingness of what the mystical teachers (rishis) envisioned.

2.2 Hinduism - Early History and the emergence of the Sacred Texts

Hinduism, geographically speaking, grew and developed in the sharply demarcated Indian sub-continent bounded in the north by the world's largest mountain range - the Himalayas, which, with its lateral extension to the east and west, divides India from the rest of Asia and the world. This Himalayan barrier, however, was at no time an insuperable one, and at almost every period both settlers and traders have found their way over the high and difficult passes into India, while the inhabitants of India have carried their religious beliefs and commercial endeavours beyond her frontiers by the same route. India's isolation has never been complete.

Indian history and culture, at one time, was supposed to begin with the R̥g Vedic culture and the Aryans in India in the second millennium BCE. This *terminus a quo* of the study has been pushed up by another millennium with the archaeological discovery of the Indus Valley civilization which dates back to 3000 years BCE. To the archaeologist this is known as the Harappa culture. Harappa is taken from the modern name of the site of one of its two great cities, on the left bank of the Ravi, in the Panjab. Mohenjo Daro, the second significant city was on the right bank of the Indus, some 402 kilometres from its mouth.

Several brilliant attempts have been made to piece together the strands of the Harappan culture but the efforts still lack the comprehensiveness desired by the historian. However, from existing

archaeological evidence we glean that the Harappan culture was theocratic in nature (Basham : 1954: 14 ; Puri : 1971 : 8).

The socio-religious aspects in the life of the Harappan people were marked by the worship of gods and goddesses with some sort of an aristocratic or hierarchic set up. It is proposed by Marshall (in Puri : 1971: 9) that the essential features of the Hindu religion, as we know it today, were probably present in Mohenjo Daro. If this assumption is correct then it may be said that the people of the Indus Valley were the progenitors of Hinduism. Marshall's view, though not fully accepted, is often used to construct the foundational elements of Hinduism.

2.3 Archaeological Roots of early Mysticism in Harappa

Archaeological evidence of the Harappan culture, viz. inscriptions on steatite seals, or small copper plaques, and on a few pieces of pottery, still baffle scholars, despite repeated attempts to decipher them. At this stage reference must be made to two important artefacts that hint in no minor way to the early depiction of mystical practices. The worship of Female Energy in the shape of a Mother Goddess is proved by the discovery of a number of semi-nude female figures with elaborate head-dress and collar (often with a necklace and cheek-cones), but wearing only a girdle or band around the loins. The cult of the Mother Goddess seemed to be very popular among the Harappan people. The scenes depicted on some seals have been taken to represent sacrifices of human beings and animals before this Goddess (Majumdar : 1991 : 25). Sacrificial mysticism grew into a much more elaborate practice in the Vedic period. These female figures could also be identified as being the roots of feminine mysticism in the Hindu tradition.

The second artefact is a seal which has stirred the imagination of researchers. It is called the *pashupati seal* (*pashu* meaning 'beast' and *pati* is 'lord'; therefore 'lord of the beasts'). This seal shows a seated figure of a man in what was later identified as a 'meditative yoga pose'. The

person depicted is seated on some slightly raised dais with legs crossed and the hands stretching out with palms touching the knees. The spinal column is firm and upright. The head is adorned with horned headgear. On the chest are either ornaments or, more likely painted marks reminiscent of the kind of sectarian signs displayed on the foreheads and chests of holy men, or *sadhus*, in later Hinduism. The seal shows the central figure surrounded by an elephant, a rhinoceros, a buffalo and a tiger. In front of the figure there are a pair of antelopes. This seal has been identified as perhaps the earliest depiction of Shiva who is also known for his meditative stillness and also as *pashupati*. This seal is a priceless treasure for those seeking the historical roots of Hindu mysticism. Undoubtedly it would be difficult, if not impossible, to discern the type of contemplation or the type of religious practices engaged in by the person impressed upon the seal. The headgear or religious marking may be some clue as to the sect of the adherent but the identification of such a sect and its practices remain indefinite. Yet it can be pointed out that the physical posture in the depiction (*dhyanasana*, meditation posture) is the age-old and regular pose for those engaged in contemplative awareness in the Indian sub-continent

While the Harappan culture indicated a high watermark of civilization from the socio-economic, political and even religious points of view it went through a period of rapid decline which perhaps was the outcome of a convergence of causes including acts of nature. The Indus floods and attacks by ravaging marauders may have precipitated its end. The fleeing settlers of the Indus Valley then lived in scattered villages in the Panjab and Sind. Leading historians are of the view that without the foregoing information on the Harappan culture any attempt to survey the early religious history of India would be inaccurate.

2.4 The Aryans

Among the many people who entered India from about 2000 BCE was a group of related tribes calling themselves Aryas, a word generally anglicized into Aryans. The Aryan invasion of India

was not a single concerted action, but one covering centuries and involving many tribes, perhaps not all of the same race and language. The incoming Aryans not only fought the local village inhabitants of the Panjab and Sind but also intermarried with them and remained, largely in nomadic fashion, in these areas. There must have been an interfusion of beliefs.

The Aryan priests had perfected a poetic technique, which they used for the composition of hymns that were sung in praise of their gods at sacrifices. These hymns were carefully handed down by word of mouth to succeeding generations of Aryans and early in the first millennium BCE were collected and arranged in different forms. These hymns were not committed to writing but by this time they were seen as so sacred that even minor changes in their text were not permitted, and the priestly schools which preserved them devised the most remarkable and effective system of checks and counter checks to ensure their literary purity.

While it is believed that the art of writing was widely known in India the hymns were rarely written, but, the brilliant feats of memory of many generations of *brāhmins* (priests) and the sanctity which these hymns were thought to possess made them survive through many difficult periods for over three thousand years (Basham : 1954 : 30). This collection of hymns is known as the Vedas, the most sacred of the numerous religious texts of the Hindus.

While the Vedic texts have been preserved even up to the present times there have been occasions when the authenticity of these works have been challenged. To draw out mystical interpretations from such challenged texts not only incapacitates the researcher but also renders such a study dubious. Fortunately the eminent historian Basham comes to our rescue with some empirical data (Basham : 1990 : 7) :

“When Europeans first began to take an interest in the religion of India, some of them were told of very ancient texts called Vedas which were so sacred that

they were rarely if ever written but handed down orally from one generation of brahmins to another. It was only with great difficulty that a few brahmins in Calcutta were persuaded in the 1780s to divulge the oldest of these texts, the R̥g-Veda, but once the text was made public other brahmins from other parts of India followed them. When versions had been collected from all over the land it was found, to the great surprise of Western scholars, that the text as transmitted in Kashmir was scarcely different from that transmitted in Tamil Nadu. The R̥g-Veda had been passed on orally for nearly three thousand years, with hardly an error. Yet most of the brahmins who had memorized it had only the very vaguest notions of its meaning, because its language is so archaic that it is almost unintelligible to one trained only in classical Sanskrit. It is rather as though modern English speakers had memorized some mediaeval text like the Vision of the Piers the Plowman without any real training in the grammar and vocabulary of fourteenth-century English. Perhaps the fact that the R̥g-Veda was so imperfectly understood helped to preserve the purity of its transmission.”

From Basham’s empirical verification and the good number of Vedic texts in the original Sanskrit that are now available as well as their translations it has become possible to bring in a high degree of authenticity into such a research.

2.5 Vedic Literature - A survey of its Complexity

Etymologically considered the word ‘Veda’ means knowledge. It refers to supreme knowledge in the sense that it deals with the knowledge of the Divine, the nature of the soul and the soul’s relationship with the Divine. This comprises a type of ‘transcendent-literary’ definition.

For Vivekananda the Vedas did not necessarily mean a set of books or scriptures in which spiritual truths exist side by side with historical events, social customs and the mundane aspirations of the Vedic Aryans. To him they meant the accumulated treasure of spiritual laws discovered by different persons at different times. Just as the law of gravity or the principles of plant genetics existed before its discovery, and would exist if all humanity forgot it, so it is with the laws that govern the spiritual world. The moral, ethical and spiritual relations between soul and soul and between individual spirits and the father of all spirits, were there before their discovery, and would remain even if we forgot them. . . The discoverers of these laws were called rishis (sages) (CW1 1984 : 6 - 7). The position of the various rishis associated with the 'authorship' of the Vedas is restricted to being only the channels through which divine revelations were received. From an etymological standpoint 'rishi' means one who intuitively 'sees' or 'discovers' knowledge. This process of 'discovery' has great mystical significance. The process of intuitive discovery is the very basis of mysticism. The rishi is a special type of human agent whose mind and intuitive faculty form a repository of such sacred knowledge.

It is this eternal knowledge discovered by the rishi that goes into the formulation of the universe. Sayanacharya, the famous Vedic commentator who existed about five centuries BCE, states that God created the whole universe out of the knowledge of the Vedas (*yo vedebhyaḥ akhilan jagat nirmame*). This indicates that the Vedic knowledge existed even before the manifestation of the universe (Prabhavananda and Manchester : 1969 : 25). It is from this sacred knowledge that the universe comes into existence.

The claim that the Vedas are *apauruṣeya* (of divine origin) has naturally given rise to another claim, that of *veda prāmanya*. This means that the Vedas are free from all limitations and deficiencies usually associated with a human agency.

The Vedas are also called *śrutis* (from *śru*, to hear) because they were ‘heard’ or revealed to the rishis. The word *śruti* is also interpreted as “the rhythm of the infinite heard by the soul” (Dandekar : 1978 : 13). *Śruti* also denotes the primary source of Hinduism as compared with *smṛtis* or secondary sources such as mythological works and epic literature.

While the foregoing forms the fundamental understanding of the ‘Veda’ there is however a secondary meaning which is literary in scope. The study of Hindu mysticism is undoubtedly heavily dependant on the primary definition of ‘Veda’ but no analysis and evaluation even of seminal concepts would be complete without textual interpretation. In this context Sanayacharya also defines ‘Veda’ as “a book which reveals the knowledge of supernatural methods (*alankika upaya*) for the achievement of the desired object and avoidance of the undesirable” (Sharvananda: 1936 : 4).

Vedic literary history is usually divided in to four main periods : the *saṁhītā*, *brāhmaṇa*, *āraṇyaka* and the *upaniṣad* periods. Broadly speaking these periods represent a homogeneity in so far as the contents of the above literary collections are concerned. They do not strictly represent a chronological development.

Reference may also be made of another feature of the Vedas, which is important from the viewpoint of Vedic literary history. This concerns the emergence, in the course of time, of various Vedic *śākhās* (branches) which have sponsored their own recensions of the different Vedic texts. This led to a variety of interpretations of the original texts. This hermeneutic adventure developed from the fact that people were at different stages of spiritual development. Their spiritual yearnings and aspirations reviewed the texts in the light of their present state and development. Furthermore, it can also be said that historical forces, social compulsions and the

environment played its role in shaping the peculiarities that each Vedic *śākhā* possessed. Hence the Vedic *śākhās* lent themselves to a variety of interpretations.

2.6 The Early Collection of Vedic Texts (*samhitās*)

When the Vedic Aryans settled in their new homeland in north-western India and established their dominions, a sense of security and prosperity previously absent in their nomadic life, gradually grew among them. Now they had ample time for leisure. An important issue they undertook to do in this new phase of life was to collect, revise, add to, and systematically (at least by their standards) arrange their regular and stray *mantras* which had been handed down to them by the early Vedic seers.

The word *mantra* in this context denotes, on the one hand, the prayers addressed to various divinities of the Vedic religion and on the other it alludes to formulas and incantations that were utilised to seek worldly prosperity as well as to invoke the forces of the supernatural in the sense of black magic in order to achieve some mundane goal other than God-realization. *Mantras* also signify hymns. This *mantra* is “that which saves one who reflects upon its meaning” (Grimes : 1989 : 200).

Most of these *mantras* were now brought together and two great collections (*samhitās*) resulted : the Ṛg Veda Saṁhitā (or the Ṛg Veda) and the Atharva Veda Saṁhitā (or the Atharva Veda). Since the word *samhitā* means ‘collection’, it is essential to presuppose a former state of stray and scattered *mantras* that have now become united in a textual amalgam.

Eventually two more collections were also made, the Sama Veda Saṁhitā and the Yajur Veda Saṁhitā. These four *samhitās* are commonly referred to as the four Vedas (Dandekar : 1978 : 14).

2.7 The Ṛg Veda (Ṛg V)

The Ṛg Veda of 1028 *sūktas* (hymns) must have been composed at least between 1500 and 900 BCE (Basham : 1990 : 7). It will be noted that a more technical term, viz. *sūktas* had come into vogue to refer to hymns. These hymns, which are made up of varying numbers of *mantras* in the form of *ṛks* (metrical stanzas) are distributed in the ten books of the Ṛg V with each book being called a *maṇḍala* (a cycle of hymns). The arrangement of the *maṇḍalas*, each of varying length, was governed mainly by the principle of homogeneity of authorship. Among the classes of the Vedic Aryans certain families had already acquired some measure of socio-religious importance by virtue of their religiosity and spiritual insights. Such families were often headed by rishis. The *mantras*, or hymns, which the progenitor and the members of any of these families claimed to have 'seen' were collected in the book of that family. The nucleus of the Ṛg V *maṇḍalas* two to seven is formed of six such family books, which are respectively ascribed to the families of the rishis Ḡṛtsamada, Viśvāmitra, Vamadeva, Atri, Bharadvaja and Vasistha. The eighth *maṇḍala* largely belongs to the Kanvas. The ninth *maṇḍala* is governed by the principle of homogeneity, not of authorships but of subject matter, for all the *sūktas* in this *maṇḍala* relate to *soma* (an intoxicating beverage used during sacrificial rites). The first and tenth *maṇḍalas* each of which has 191 hymns, are miscellaneous collections of long and short *sūktas*.

It must be emphasised that in the tenth *maṇḍala* of the Ṛg V we find several important philosophical hymns : Puruṣa Sūkta (hymn of the divine Person manifest as the universe), Nāsadiya Sūkta (hymn on creation) and the Prajāpati Sūkta (hymn to the creator). The famous Gāyatrī Mantra (a prayer to the Supreme Being for spiritual enlightenment which is everyday repeated by millions of Hindus) ascribed to Viśvāmitra, occurs in the third *maṇḍala*.

Within a *maṇḍala*, the *sūktas* are arranged according to the subject matter. That is to say, the *sūktas* are grouped according to the divinities (*devatās*) to whom they relate, and then these divinity groups are arranged in some set order. Within the divinity group, again, the *sūktas* are normally arranged in the descending order of the number of their stanzas.

In the whole of the Ṛg V there are only metrical passages; there is no prose portion. Most of the verses are composed in simple metres : three or four lines of eight syllables, with an occasional four syllables extra and four lines of eleven or twelve syllables. Apart from these usually considered simple metres the eighth *maṇḍala* has a few complicated metres (Raja : 1937 : 21). Internal literary evidence indicates that the second to seventh *maṇḍalas* form the oldest substratum of the Ṛg V; later come the *sūktas* of *maṇḍalas*, eight, nine, one and ten, in that order, though there is overlapping of literary material. It is certain however, from language, style and content, that many of the *sūktas* of *maṇḍala* ten were composed centuries later than some of the earliest *maṇḍalas* or books (Basham : 1990 : 8).

Wilson (in Griffith : 1976 : vi) is of the view that the hymns of the Ṛg V, except in their rhythm, and in a few rare passages, appear singularly prosaic. He feels that their chief value lies not in their fancy but in their facts, social and religious. Cowell (in Griffith : 1976 : vi) states that the poetry of the Ṛg V is singularly deficient in that simplicity and natural pathos or sublimity which we naturally look for in the songs of an earlier period of civilization. The language and style of most of these hymns is artificial. Occasionally we meet with fine outbursts of poetry, especially in the hymns addressed to the dawn (*Uśa*), but these are never long sustained and as a rule we find grand similes or metaphors. Griffith feels that the worst fault of all in the Ṛg V is the intolerable monotony in a great number of hymns, a monotony which reaches its climax in the ninth *maṇḍala* which consists mostly of invocations to *Soma* or the deified *Soma* beverage. The greatest interest of the Ṛg V is, in fact, historical rather than poetical (Griffith : 1976 : vi).

Basham, however, contends that though the hymns of the Ṛg V form the oldest literature of India they are in no way archaic or primitive. They were composed according to strict metrical schemes by sophisticated priests with already developed conventions of poetics and a theology that, if varied and sometimes apparently self-contradictory, was far removed from the simple worship attributed by some earlier scholars to primitive humans. Basham points out that the unjust appraisal of the Ṛg V stems largely from Max Müller, whose nineteenth century standard edition of the Ṛg V was freely used by subsequent scholars (Basham : 1990 : 10).

This study purposely looks into some of the literary features of the Ṛg V. Hindus believe that the texts, in terms of contents, style and language, contributed not only in the way of being a repository of their sacred beliefs but also as a suitable vehicle for the effective oral transmission of these *sūktas* from generation to generation. It is now a fact that when writing was unknown the Aryan priests used this 'monotonous' rhythm of the Vedic chants to develop the capacity of auditory memory to an amazing degree. Repetitive intonations of the hymns certainly contributed towards its protracted life-span.

2.8 The Atharva Veda (AV)

The AV in contrast to the Ṛg V is essentially a heterogeneous collection of *mantras*. A distinctive feature of the AV is the many names by which it has been traditionally known. All the names are significant, and together give a full idea of the nature, extent and content of this Veda.

'Atharva Veda' means 'the Veda of the Atharvan'. Originally the word '*atharvan*' meant a fire-priest'. The beliefs and practices of the fire-cult played an important part in the daily lives of the ancient Indians and the AV was the regular manual of the fire-priest (Winternitz : 1977 : 119 - 120).

The name *atharvāṅgīrasah* seems to have preceded the AV and is indicative of the dual character of the Atharvanic magic, the wholesome, auspicious ‘white’ magic of the Atharvans and the terrible, sorcerous, ‘black magic’ of the Angirasas both of which form the chief contents of the AV. The later name of the AV is merely an abbreviation of the ‘Veda of the Atharvans and Angirasas’.

Another feature of the AV nomenclature is the substitution of Bhṛgu for Atharvan in the name Bhṛgvāṅgīrasah. This is presumably the result of the dominant role played by the well known rishi Bhṛgu and his family in that period of India’s religious and cultural history. Several other names of the AV were also in vogue (Dandekar : 1978 : 16 ; Winternitz : 1977 : 120).

Nine branches of study (*sākās*) of the AV are traditionally known but the *saṁhitās* of only two *sākās*, the Śannaka and the Paippalāda, have been preserved.

The Śannaka Saṁhitā of this Veda has always been in common use. It consists of 730 *sūktas* divided in to twenty books (*kāṇḍas*). About five sixths of the *sūktas* which are called *artha sūktas*, contain metrical stanzas, whereas the remaining *sūktas*, which are called *pariyāya sūktas*, contain *avasānas* or prose-units.

Unlike the Ṛg V the arrangement in the AV is not governed by consideration either by authorship or subject-matter. Dandekar (1978 : 17) is of the view that the AV shows considerable looseness in matters of metre, accent and grammar, presumably because it was not subjected, as the Ṛg V was, to deliberate revision and reduction. Deussen (1987 : 15) however feels that with the passage of time from the Ṛg V to the AV there was a metrical negligence which was responsible for the loose arrangement of the of the AV not only in terms of its

language structure but also its contents. For this reason it is believed that the AV had to struggle long before gaining recognition especially among the Vedic bardic families.

The contents of the AV are remarkably diverse in character. There are in this Veda charms to counteract diseases and possession by evil spirits (*bhaiṣajyāni*). This Veda also gives an indication of the type of medicine used during that period. There are also prayers for health and long life (*āyusyaṇī*); for happiness and prosperity (*pausṭikāni*). There are also spells pertaining to the various kinds of relationship with women (*striakarmāni*). Another significant section of this Veda contains hymns which concern themselves with matters involving the king (*rājakarmāni*), and others which are intended for securing harmony in the domestic, social and the political spheres (*sāmmanyasyāni*).

As for black magic (rites to produce hostile results especially against enemies), the AV abounds in formulas for sorcery and imprecation for exorcism and counter-exorcism.

Polarity may be said to be one of the most striking features of the AV; for side by side with the incantations for sorcery and black magic, it contains many valuable theological or philosophical hymns which represent the spiritual realizations and beliefs of that time, moreso of the common people. In this context we find cosmological hymns which anticipate the Ups. - hymns to Skambha, the 'Support', who is seen as the first principle which is both the material and efficient cause of the universe, to *Prāṇa*, the 'breath of life', to *Vāc* the 'Word', etc. (Zaehner : 1982 : viii). It is in these hymns that we also detect early evidence of mystical realizations which at some later date became more expanded and explicit.

Winternitz (1977 : 129) draws our attention to the point that the real importance of the AV lies in the fact that it is an invaluable source of knowledge of the popular faith in numberless spirits,

imps, ghosts and demons of every kind, and of the black magic, so eminently important for ethnology and for the history of religion. For the current study it is essential that we see these forces of 'rudimentary' or 'gross' mysticism at work in the evolution of religion in India especially in the pre-Upanishadic period.

2.9 The Sāma Veda (SV)

The SV is a collection of *mantras* prescribed for chanting at various *soma* sacrifices by the *udgātr* (singer priest) and his assistants. The primary meaning of *sāman* is probably 'propitiatory song', 'a means for appeasing gods and demons'. The word *sāman* also occurs in the sense of 'mildness, soothing words'. In another sense it is rhythmical speech (Winternitz : 1977 : 168).

Though called SV, it is not strictly speaking a collection of *sāmans* (also meaning chants). The SV is essentially a derivative product in the sense that most of its *mantras* are derived from the Ṛg V. Three distinct stages of development may be inferred in the evolution of this Veda. There is a specific *mantra* taken from the Ṛg V in its original form. This *mantra* is taken into the SV with the view to it being made the basis of a proper *sāman*. The only change that is effected in this process concerns the development of the accents for chanting. In this second stage the *mantra* is called *sāmayoni mantra*.

The SV is actually a collection of such *sāmayoni mantras*. The total number of *mantras* in this Veda, excluding the repeated ones, is 1549, all of which except 78 are taken from the Ṛg V. A number of these verses are addressed to the various divinities like Agni, Indra and Soma.

For practical use at the time of the rituals the *sāmayoni mantras* are transformed into chants or 'ritual melodies' called *ganas*. This is done by such devices as the modification, prolongation and the repetition of the syllables occurring in the *mantra* itself, and the occasional insertion of

additional syllables known as *stobhas*. These *ganās* represent the third and final stage in the evolution of the SV (Dandekar : 1978 : 18).

These technicalities in the sound modulation of the *mantras* certainly required skilled teachers and competent pupils for their oral transmission. Even today the long training of Vedic priests emphasises with delicate care the correct intonation of these *sāmayoni mantras*.

In order to see meaning in the SV, Winternitz (1977 : 169) points out that an etymological analysis of these *mantras* is insufficient. One has to be a student of the history of music as well. The early rudiments of Indo-ethnomusicology can be traced to the SV. Some of the spiritual aspirations from this Veda later developed into devotional mysticism especially in the songs that emerged in the Bhakti (devotional) Schools of the fourteen century India.

2.10 The Yajur Veda (YV)

Yajur Veda is derived from the roots *yaj*, to sacrifice and *vid*, to know. This Veda is essentially ritualistic in character and in many respects it is regarded as the first regular text book on Vedic ritual as a whole. It deals mainly with the duties of the *adhvaryu* (fire-priest), who is responsible for the actual performance of the various sacrificial rites. It may be mentioned at this point that while the SV represents a very early stage in the history of Indian music, the YV marks the beginning of Sanskrit prose.

Tradition speaks variously of the YV having 86 or 101 *śākhās* or recensions. For our present purpose we may consider only its two main recensions, the Kṛṣṇa Yajur Veda and the Śukla Yajur Veda.

Dandekar (1978 : 19) is of the view that the difference between these two recensions lies not so much in their context as their arrangement. Griffith (1957 : xix) however, feels that owing to a schism among its earliest teachers and their followers, this Veda was divided into two distinct collections and called - probably from the names of the rishis who are respectively their reputed compilers - the Taittirīya and the Vājasaneyā or Vājasaneyi; the former and older work being also known by the title of Kṛṣṇa Yajur Veda. The *mantras* (mostly derived from the Ṛg V) and the *yajus* (sacrificial formulas in prose) and their exegetical portions (*brāhmaṇas*) which explain the application of the rituals, are mixed up together. This fusion of prayers, rituals and the methods of application make many portions of this Veda perplexing, difficult to comprehend. To the untrained person interpretation is obscure, dark. Hence the name Kṛṣṇa (meaning dark).

Śukla (meaning 'bright') is the name given to the second division of the YV. Here the texts are revised, systematic and clear (Griffith : 1957 : xx). The meanings are transparent or 'bright', hence *śukla*.

For the purpose of this study we shall briefly focus upon the name 'Taittirīya' which is variously explained. In Vedic mythology there is the legend which narrates how Yājñavalkya, who had developed differences with his teacher Vaiśampāyana, 'vomited' the Veda which he had learnt from his teacher; how at the instance of Vaiśampāyana, his other pupils, assuming the form of *tittiri* birds, consumed the 'vomited' Veda; how consequently, the Veda so recovered by the *tittiri* birds was called the Taittirīya Veda; and how finally Yājñavalkya secured from the Sun-god another Veda which came to be known as the Śukla or bright YV. It is also suggested that, on account of the interspersions in it of *mantras* and the Brāhmaṇa portion, the Kṛṣṇa Yajur Veda appears variegated like the *tittiri* bird. While we cannot identify the *tittiri* birds from an ornithological sense their appearance in this myth and the symbolism they represent certainly has a mystical meaning. For Capra (1983 : 51) "mythical language is much less restricted by logic

and common sense. It is full of magic and paradoxical situations, rich in suggestive images and never precise, and can thus convey the way mystics experience reality much better than factual language". The *tittiri* birds with their ability to swallow and digest the Vedas (spiritual knowledge) and their capacity to soar into the lofty heavens permits them a permanent place in the rich symbolism of Hindu mysticism.

Finally, in interpreting the word 'Taittirīya' Dandekar (1978 : 20) feels that the most satisfactory explanation of the term seems to be the name of an ancient mystic (rishi) called Taittiri who was traditionally regarded as the seer of this Veda and more importantly for this study he was also the seer of the *pañchakośas* - the inner dimensions of the human person so crucial for the study of Hindu mysticism.

2.11 The Brāhmaṇas

It was inevitable that in the Vedic society there should arise distinct classes of priests, whose main occupation was to officiate at the various ritual sacrifices in different capacities. It was also inevitable that these priests should produce manuals dealing with the different aspects of the theory and practice of sacrifice. These manuals are the Brāhmaṇa portion of the Vedas (Dandekar: 1978 : 22). By sacrifice is meant a fire-ceremony in which oblations are offered into the fire for securing some favour from the gods.

Dasgupta (1992 : 13) states that these works are full of dogmatic assertions, fanciful symbolism and speculation of an unbounded imagination in the field of sacrificial details. He further asserts that the sacrificial ceremonials were probably never so elaborate at the time when the early Vedic hymns were composed. When the collection of hymns were being handed down from generation to generation the ceremonials became more and more complicated. Thus there came

about the necessity of the distribution of the different sacrificial functions among several distinct classes of priests, each group of which developed a specific way of interpreting the texts.

Speaking of the Brāhmaṇas, Macdonell (in Dasgupta : 1992 : 13) says that they reflect the spirit of an age in which all intellectual activity is concentrated on the ritual sacrifice, describing its ceremonies, discussing its value, speculating on its origin and significance. In terms of time and the activities of these priests it is also clear that this period may be looked upon as the established substratum of sacrificial mysticism.

While Dasgupta (1992 : 13) stresses that in the Brāhmaṇas free speculative thinking was subordinated to the services of the sacrifice, resulting in the production of the most fanciful sacramental and symbolic system, unparalleled anywhere but among the Gnostics, Radhakrishnan departs from this view and gives a mystical interpretation to the Brāhmaṇa texts. For Radhakrishnan it is not the mechanical performance of a sacrificial rite (however fanciful) that brings about the desired result, but the knowledge of its real meaning. Many of the Brāhmaṇa texts are devoted to the exposition of the mystic significance of the various elements of the rituals. By means of the sacrificial rites the priest 'sets in motion' the cosmic forces dealt with and obtained from them the desired results. Ritualistic religion is subordinate to knowledge of *brahman*. (Radhakrishnan : 1990 : 46).

In the literary history of Hinduism, the Brāhmaṇas are considered vital because they represent the earliest attempts to interpret the Vedic *mantras*. They also mark the beginning of Sanskrit prose. The Brāhmaṇa texts preserved many ancient legends and they also contain the seeds of the future development of several literary forms and works, of various branches of knowledge.

Very importantly, the Brāhmaṇas contain an exclusive and comprehensive treatment of Vedic sacrificial ritual and thus constitute a highly authoritative source of information of perhaps the most significant period in the religious history of India. It is the Brāhmaṇas which have prepared the background for the philosophical aspirations and mystical knowledge of the later Upanishads.

2.12 The Āraṇyakas

The Brāhmaṇas shade off imperceptibly into the Āraṇyakas. Actually there is a kind of continuation of the Brāhmaṇas, textually as well as conceptually. They mark the transition from the ritualism of the Brāhmaṇas to the mysticism of the Upanishads.

While, on the one hand, most of the texts of the Āraṇyakas form the concluding portion of some of the Brāhmaṇas, on the other hand, some of the Upanishadic texts are either embedded in or appended to them. The Āraṇyakas which are esoteric, seek to present the true mystique of the ritual by glorifying the inner mental sacrifice against the external material aspect of it (Dandekar : 1978 : 26). The inner mental world of a person is not a static alternative to the external one. The Āraṇyakas give an esoteric meaning to the Brāhmaṇa rituals. Therefore in the Āraṇyakas we notice a shift of attention from the external world to the 'inner' world of human beings. The Āraṇyakas represent this transition.

The study of the Āraṇyakas was traditionally restricted to the solitude of the forest. The word *āraṇya* means 'forest'. That is why they came to be called Āraṇyakas or 'Forest Books'. Dasgupta (1992 : 14) feels that these works were probably composed for the aged who had retired into the forest and were thus unable to perform elaborate sacrifices requiring a multitude of accessories and articles which could not be obtained in the forests. Radhakrishnan (1990 : 47), however, asserts that certain sacred rites were performed in the seclusion of the forests where teachers and pupils meditated on the significance of these rites.

2.13 The Upanishads - A Definition

The Ups. are called the Vedānta, as most of them constitute the concluding portions of the Vedas, and also their knowledge represents the aim or goal of the Vedas. The Sanskrit word *anta* (from Vedānta), like the English 'end', may be used to mean both 'terminus' and 'aim'.

In the etymological sense the term '*upanishad*' is to sit (*shad*) close by (*upa*) devotedly (*ni*), and is indicative of the manner in which the doctrines embodied in the Ups. were learnt at first by pupils sitting near their teachers in small conclaves on the banks of rivers or in forest or mountain retreats. The expression which thus means 'a session' came to be applied in the course of time to what was taught at such sessions (Müller : 1975 : ixxx ; Mahadevan : 1952 : 55).

Since the Ups. are regarded as teaching the highest truth, they could be imparted only to those who were competent to receive and benefit by them; and such competent pupils could be only a few at any given time (Mahadevan : 1952 : 55). The teachers adopted a certain reticence in communicating the truth. They wanted to be satisfied that their pupils were spiritually and not casually minded (Radhakrishnan : 1990 : 19). It is for this reason that the Ups. themselves refer to their teachings as being 'secret doctrines' (Tait. Up. 1.12.6). Consider also the following verse (Sv. Up. 6.22) :

*vedānte paramam guhyam purākalpe pracoditam
nāprasāntāya dātavyam nāputrāyāśīsyāya vā punaḥ*

*"This highest mystery (also secret) in the Vedānta
which has been declared in a former age should not
be given to one whose passions are not subdued nor
again to one who is not a son or pupil."*

Deussen (1987 : 3) also feels that a further reason for the Ups. being referred to as a 'secret doctrine' is that their teachings, when placed in incompetent hands could easily be misinterpreted. The knowledge was held and imparted only by competent teachers (*gurus*) who identified the right pupils (*śiṣyas*) as worthy recipients of such transcendental wisdom.

In the medieval period Shankara interprets the expression '*upanishad*' to mean that which 'destroys' ignorance, or what 'leads' to the highest truth, *brahman* - a meaning which may be etymologically incorrect, but which, nevertheless, correctly defines the scope and aim of the Ups. (Mahadevan : 1952 : 56).

The modern Neo-Vedāntic movements have given a radically different interpretation to the concept of the Ups. Words like '*paramaṁ guhyam*' (supreme secret), used in the above passage (Sv. Up. 6.22), take on another dimension. The word '*guhya*' which means 'secret', also refers to a 'cave'. Hence another meaning is that these truths are hidden (as in a cave). In all probability '*guhya*' (secret) is derived from '*guha*' (cave). In other words these truths are not apparent. As such every effort must be made to make them easily available to all. Vivekananda, for example, saw his life's mission as being to bring out the gems of spirituality stored up in these books and in the possession of a few only, hidden, as it were, in the monasteries and forests, and from the still more inaccessible chest - the encrustation of centuries of Sanskrit words, and to make them the common property of all (CW3 1979 : 290).

2.14 The Upanishads in the context of Vedic Literature

Though it is generally believed that the Ups. are usually attached as appendices to the Āraṇyakas which are again attached to the Brāhmaṇas, yet it cannot be said that their distinction as a

separate treatise is always observed. Thus we find in some instances the subject which we should expect to be discussed in a Brāhmaṇa are introduced into the Āraṇyakas and some Āraṇyaka material are sometimes fused into the great bulk of the Ups. Dasgupta (1992 : 28 - 29) therefore feels that these three divisions of the Vedic literature gradually grew up in one process of development and were probably regarded as part of one literature in spite of the differences in their subject matter.

There are over two hundred Ups., including some recent works. The Muktikopanishad gives a traditional list of one hundred and eight Ups., of which ten belong to the Ṛg V, nineteen to the Śukla YV, thirty-two to the Kṛṣṇa YV, sixteen to the SV and thirty-one to the AV; but even out of these, many texts are called Ups. only by courtesy. Usually thirteen Ups. are regarded as the principal Ups. They are traditionally connected with one Vedic śākhā or other (Dandekar : 1978 : 2). The Bṛhadāraṇyaka, Chāndogya, Taittirīya, Aitareya, Kauṣītaki and Kena Ups., from their literary structure and characteristics, as well as from their contents, are quite certainly assigned to an earlier chronological group of Ups.

2.15 A Brief Survey of Some Principal Ups.

Among the Hindu scriptures the Ups. contain the highest density of mystical utterances and statements. It is therefore essential to look at this primary source of mystical development. The principal Ups. are accepted to be those which Shankara (788 - 820 CE) chose to comment upon. They are ten in number and are enumerated as follows : Īśā, Kena, Kaṭha, Praśna, Muṇḍaka, Māṇḍūkya, Taittirīya, Aitareya, Chāndogya and Bṛhadāraṇyaka.

According to some scholars, Shankara also commented on an eleventh Up., the Śvetāśvatara. In his commentary on another important Vedāntic text, the Brahma-Sūtras, he refers to few more, that is, Kauṣītakī, Jābāla, Mahānārāyaṇa and Paiṅgala. These literary endeavours of Shankara

have lent importance to these texts. The value of Shankara's approach to the texts is invaluable and is discussed elsewhere in this research.

While each Ups. has a wealth of mystical insight this survey will only consider those factors of each Up. that is relevant to this study :

i) The *Īśā* Up. also called the *Īśāvāsyā* Up. derives its name from its very opening verse which is the central theme of all Ups.. namely, the spiritual unity of all existence. It belongs to the Vājasaneyā school of the YV. The Vājasaneyā Saṁhitā consists of forty chapters of which this Up. is the last. Through its eighteen verses its main purpose is to teach the essential unity of God and the world. It teaches that life in the world and a life of true mysticism are not incompatible. Furthermore, the language employed by the author in this Up. (example in verse eight) indicates his great struggle to express mystical insights through the limitations of human thought and language.

ii) Kena Up. acquires its name from its opening word *kena* which means 'by whom'. It belongs to the SV and has four sections, the first two in verse and the other two in prose. This Up. illumines the nature of knowledge by pointing out the eternal Knower behind all acts of knowing. It is this Supreme Knower that is the eternal Self of all beings and the Self or Divine Substratum of the universe.

iii) The *Kaṭha* Up. is perhaps the most popular of the Ups. It is a blend of exquisite poetry, deep mysticism and profound philosophy. It contains a more unified exposition of Vedānta than any other single Up. Its charm is enhanced, especially for the common person, by the two characters of its dialogue, that is, the old and wise teacher Yama and the youthful student Naciketā. Of importance to this study is the Upanishadic technique of turning the senses away from the world

and the subsequent inward mystical journey to Self- realization (Ka. Up. 2.1.1). This Up. belongs to the Taittirīya school of the YV.

iv) Praśna Up. belongs to the AV. It is so called as it deals with *praśna* or questions. Each of its six chapters comprises a question asked by each of a group of six inquiring students on various aspects of Vedānta, and the answers given by their teacher, the sage Pippalāda.

v) The Muṇḍaka Up. belongs to the AV. The name is derived from the root *muṇḍ* 'to shave' referring to shaven-headed monks who seek liberation from worldly existence. This Up. states the distinction between higher knowledge (*parā vidya*) of the Supreme *brahman* and lower knowledge (*aparā vidya*) of the empirical world. It is by this higher knowledge and not by sacrificial or ritualistic mysticism of the earlier Vedic period that the Supreme *brahman* is attained. Only the renouciate can obtain the highest knowledge (Mu. Up. 3.2.6.).

vi) In its short compass of twelve verses the Māṇḍūkya Up. surveys the gamut of human experience through a study of the three states of waking, dream and dreamless sleep and thereafter reveals the highest mystic consciousness - the *ātman* or the true Self of man as being *Turīya* or the Fourth. It is this realization of pure Consciousness which is the non-dual, omnipresent Reality of the universe. This Up. is also careful to separate the ultimate mystical experience from any other hallucinatory experience that may go by the term mysticism (Mān. Up. 4.69 - 71). This Up. belongs to the AV. Gauḍapada, Shankara's teacher's teacher wrote his famous exposition (*kārika*) on this Up. This is the first systematic exposition of Advaita Vedānta (Vedāntic monism) which has come down to us. Shankara has commented on both the Up. and the *kārika*.

vii) The Taittirīya Up. belongs to the Taittirīya school of the YV. It comprises three chapters, namely, Śikṣāvallī, Ānandavallī and Bṛguvallī. The Śikṣāvallī deals with phonetics and pronunciation. The Ānandavallī and Bṛguvallī deal with the knowledge of the ultimate Reality (*brahman*). Of great importance to this study is the Bṛguvallī. This chapter unfolds a scene in which the son Bṛgu approaches his father the sage Varuṇa time and again in quest of the highest truth (*brahma-vidyā*). The father imparts to Bṛgu the knowledge of the soul (*jīva*) which is made up of five sheaths (*pañchakośas*) with the *ātman* or Consciousness as its divine focus. It can be safely said that without this psycho-physical analysis of the soul it would be a daunting if not an impossible task to analyse the empirical aspects of Upanishadic mysticism.

viii) The Aitareya Up. belongs to the Ṛg V and comprises three chapters. In the evolution of mystical development it is significant to note that this Up. leads the mind of the sacrificer and the ritualist away from the external gross ceremonies to its subtler inner meaning. Shankara points out that there are three classes of people who wish to acquire wisdom. The highest consists of those who have turned their gaze away from the world, whose minds are liberated from mundane encumbrances, who are eager for freedom. It is for such people that this Up. is intended. The other categories of people seek gradual liberation by a staggered renunciation of worldly pursuits. (Radhakrishnan : 1990 : 513).

ix) The Chāndogya Up. belongs to the SV. 'Chāndogya' is the singer of the *sāman*. This Up. belongs to the followers of the SV. Of note is the information on the teacher-disciple (*guru-siṣya*) relationship. Seekers of mystical knowledge like Satyakāma, Śvetaketu, and Narada meet great mystics like Āruṇi, Sanatkumāra and Prajāpati. Several teacher-student dialogues ensue. Apart from the sacred knowledge that emanates from the dialogues one notices the teacher-disciple relationship in its fine elements. The attitudes expressed in this relationship is

considered to be crucial for the authentic transmission of mystical wisdom from teacher to pupil and from one generation to another.

x) The longest of the Up. is the Bṛhadāraṇyaka. As its name implies it is a big (*brhat*) forest (*aranya*) of mystical and philosophical realizations. Four outstanding personalities enter its pages - two men and two women - Janaka, the philosopher-king, Yājñavalkya, the philosopher-sage, Maitreyī, the deeply spiritual wife of Yājñavalkya and Gārgī, the *wācaknavī*, the 'gifted woman orator and philosopher', who stands foremost among the questioners of Yājñavalkya in philosophical debate. This Up. through a series of dialogues conducted by these and other lesser personalities expounds the theme of the divine nature of man and the spiritual unity of the universe (Ranganathananda : 1971 : 3). With the entry of two women of outstanding abilities we see in this Up. yet another dimension of feminine mysticism.

xi) The Śvetāśvatara Up. belongs to the Taittirīya school of the YV. Its name is derived from the rishi who taught it. It is theistic in nature and identifies the Supreme *brahman* with Rudra who is looked upon as the material and efficient cause of the universe. This personal God, Rudra, is not only the author of the world but its protector and guide. The Up. is a serious attempt to reconcile the different philosophical and religious views which were in vogue during its composition.

2.16 The Incoherent Characteristics of the Ups.

If we survey the Ups. as a whole there are certain characteristic features which emerge. Hume feels that they discuss a variety of philosophical doctrines, a number of which are not in the same stage of development. The heterogeneity and unordered arrangement and even apparent contradictions of the material make it difficult, indeed impossible, to set forth a systematic exposition of a single system of philosophy (Hume : 1991 : 70).

Prabhavananda and Manchester (1969 : 40) however feel that the concepts in the Ups. may be linked into an essential homogeneity. They point out that there is a distribution of emphasis of different concepts in different Ups. They further state that one Up. may emphasise certain ideas or a certain view, more than the rest, or may specialise as it were in a particular topic; but such distinctions are accidental, and never important. The partitions between the Ups. might therefore, for all practical purposes, be completely done away with.

Another important feature of the Ups. is that their authors were essentially mystics and the style, symbolism and imagery that they employed in writing the Ups. comprise a language typical of the early mystics. The mystic as a rule, cannot wholly do without symbols and images, inadequate to their vision though they must always be. The mystics experience of the transcendent reality must be expressed if it is to be communicated. However, mystics claim that such experiences are inexpressible except in some indirect way. Something or some hint or a parallel is necessary to stimulate the dormant intuition of the reader in order to enable him or her to get a glimpse of what is beyond the senses (Underhill : 1974 : 79).

The mystic authors of the Ups. were concerned with reporting insights which came to them intuitively and not with making these insights superficially coherent. They were not builders of theological or philosophical systems but recorders of experience. One must be prepared therefore, for apparent inconsistency. The authors may initiate a concept, become temporarily absorbed in another idea, and often revert to the original concept. Nowhere must we expect to find the whole truth gathered together once for all in an easy, triumphant, conscious formulation (Prabhavananda and Manchester : 1969 : 40). Homogeneity in developing a concept to its ultimate end can only come by skilfully drawing the many relevant strands together and then assembling them in a coherent formulation keeping in mind the spirit of the Ups.

2.17 The Brahma Sūtras (Br S)

Since the Ups. do not contain any ready-made consistent system of thought and at first sight its texts seem to be full of contradictions, there arose several bold attempts to systematise the thoughts of the Ups. Bādarāyaṇa, to whom the authorship of the Brahma Sūtras or Vedānta Sūtras is ascribed, was the only one who had tried to systematise the philosophy of the Ups. From the Br S itself we find that there were other schools of Vedānta which had their own following. For the purpose of this study we shall only consider Bādarāyaṇa's Br S.

Very little is known about the author of these *sūtras*. However, it is known for certain that he lived and conducted his literary endeavours in the pre-Buddhist period, that is, before the sixth century BCE (Vireswarananda : 1982 : v).

The Br S is a collection of aphorisms or short, sometimes ungrammatical statements that are meant to convey a range of concepts. Madhavācārya quotes from the Padma Purana a definition of the *sūtra* in his commentary on the Br S which is as follows :

“People learned in sūtra literature, say that a sūtra should be concise and unambiguous, give the essence of the arguments of a topic but at the same time deal with all aspects of the question, be free from repetition and be faultless.”

Though this definition indicates what a *sūtra* might be, in actual practice, however, the desire for brevity was carried to such extremes that parts of the *sūtra* literature are now unintelligible, and this is particularly so with the Br S which has consequently given rise to divergent systems of interpretation.

In this context Shankara has written an introduction (*adhyāsa bhāṣya*) and commentary in the Br S. In these writings there is greater clarity and insight into several mystical concepts which would otherwise have remained obscure and unintelligible.

2.18 The Bhagavad Gita (BG)

By far the most popular scripture among the Hindus is the BG. Even to this day it forms the subject of popular and scholarly discourses in various Hindu establishments. Taking the form of a dialogue between Lord Krishna who is regarded as a divine incarnation and his pupil, Arjuna a soldier, the BG sets forth a tradition which has emerged from the collective religious life of the people at that time. The eighteen chapters of the BG (in 700 verses) forms chapters twenty-three to forty of the Bhiṣmaparvan of the large Hindu epic - The Mahābhārata. The BG, in a chronological sense is pre-Buddhistic in origin.

At the end of each chapter of the BG there is a colophon which indicates the nature of the texts : it is both metaphysics and ethics, *brahmavidyā* and *yogaśāstra*, the science of reality and the art of union with reality. In this context Radhakrishnan (1989 : 12 - 13) states :

“The truths of the spirit can be apprehended only by those who prepare themselves for their reception by rigorous discipline. We must cleanse the mind of all distraction and purge the heart from all corruption, to acquire spiritual wisdom. Again the perception of truth results in the renewal of life. The realm of spirit is not cut off from the realm of life. To divide man into outer desire and inner quality is to violate the integrity of human life. The illumined soul acts as a member of the kingdom of God, affecting the world he touches and becoming a saviour to others.”

From the foregoing quotation it is understood that the BG is an important text on mysticism - but more so mysticism related to action in the world. The BG has been recognised since ancient times as an orthodox scripture of the Hindu religion possessing the same sacred authority as the Upanishads and the Br S and the three together form the triple canon (*prasthāna traya*) of Hinduism.

The teachers of the Vedānta are obliged to justify their own schools of thought and doctrines by an appeal to these three authoritative works. In this way they wrote commentaries on these works expounding how their texts teach their special points of view.

The commentary of Shankara is the most ancient of the existing ones. There were other commentaries older than his, to which he refers in his 'Introduction' to the BG, but they have not come down to us.

Insofar as mystical development is concerned the BG is replete with practical instructions (eg. chapter six) that enables a person to raise his or her levels of consciousness in order to experience mystical states. Furthermore, the BG even though it recognises the interconnectedness between nature and God (*prakṛiti* and *puruṣa*) points out that all mystical experiences within nature (which includes the mind) are not the ultimate state. The highest mystical state lies in transcending nature, including all human limitations, and realizing the supreme, imperishable Being (*puruṣa*) (BG 9. 20 - 21). Mystical experiences have levels of development and degrees of intensity. These intermediate states should not be confused with the ultimate goal.

2.19 Sanskrit : A Vehicle for the Transmission of Religious and Mystical Concepts

Hindus have always claimed a divine origin for the Sanskrit language. The Vedic chanters and later grammarians, who upheld the doctrine of elaborate monism 'saw' that *brahman* permeated

sound. *Brahman* is the essence of *vāc* or speech. Words are not sounds as they ordinarily seem to be. They have a subtle and intellectual form within. The rishis and grammarians proceeded still further, and on minute examination of the internal phenomena of words they grasped the remotest form of sound (*śabda brahman*), i.e. the eternal *verbum*, the original indivisible sound, which manifests outwardly at the gross level by letters and words. We are told that it requires a good deal of spiritual insight to have a glimpse of this *śabda brahman* (Chakravati : 1978 : 324 - 325). The entire Vedic literature, which has come to be written in Sanskrit, is considered sacred on the foregoing account.

2.20 Problems with Oral Transmission

Originally Vedic texts were not committed to writing. By a process of oral transmission the priests and rishis handed them down from generation to generation. Considering the large volume of texts this painstaking process had to be done with scrupulous accuracy. It would be unwise to suggest that the intensity of this accuracy was sustained considering the constant movement of the Vedic Aryans and the appearance of invading tribes into the whole of Northern India - the place of their habitation. Researchers looking at this situation seem to identify two problem areas. The first is defects in oral transmission. Human error and the inability of succeeding generations to memorise the vast number of texts imparted to them is an issue which has invited scholarly scrutiny. The second problem, which is no less serious, is that Sanskrit was not a static language. The discovery of new words and the varieties of new oral expressions become a part of the developing Sanskrit language. In this sense creativity while being good also threw up several challenges. Even key words took on new concepts with the passage of time. For example, an important word in this study, viz. *ātman* meant 'soul' or the psychological make-up of an individual in the early Vedic period. In the later Upanishadic period the same word evolves an entirely new concept, viz. the immortal Self in all beings. In discussing such concepts it is

therefore necessary for any researcher to capture the meaning of the word keeping in mind its chronological background.

The Vedic priests undoubtedly placed immense stress on the correct pronunciation of words but it is difficult to say if the protracted period of oral transmission is error-free. Consider, for example, the following important words of this study - the closeness in pronunciation and difference in meaning :

<i>brahman</i>	-	the Absolute
<i>brahmā</i>	-	name of the creator god
<i>brāhmin</i>	-	a member of the priestly order (also <i>brahmana</i>).
<i>brāhmaṇa</i>	-	a Vedic texts

It certainly requires some training in Vedic Sanskrit to identify and distinguish the differences in such cognate words. Such training would identify any solecism in the process of transmitting Vedic texts.

Yet, from empirical data Basham contends the view that there were many defects in oral transmission. He points out that European scholars as early as 1780 persuaded *brāhmins* in Calcutta to divulge the oldest of these texts, the Ṛg V. It was done with immense difficulty on account of orthodox rules not permitting such a divulgence to foreigners. But once the texts was made public other *brāhmins* from other parts of the country followed them. When various versions of the texts had been collected from various parts of the country it was found, to the great surprise of scholars, that the texts as transmitted in Kashmir in the north was scarcely different from that transmitted in Tamil Nadu in the South. The Ṛg V had been passed on orally for nearly three thousand years, with hardly an error. This empirical study also observed that the *brāhmins* who had faithfully memorised the Vedas had only the vaguest notion of its meaning.

The reason for this is because its language is so archaic that it is almost unintelligible to one unacquainted with Vedic Sanskrit (Basham : 1990 : 7). A number of other Vedic texts had gone through a similar process of rediscovery and retrieval. Many texts, it is still believed, were obviously lost.

2.21 Some difficulties with Sanskrit Etymology

One of the most important, though much neglected, branches of technical literature in Sanskrit is lexicography. Sanskrit lexical literature is so vast, and the published works so few, that a student of etymology, especially one who wishes to study the evolution of words and solely from Sanskrit lexicons, can hardly gather sufficient knowledge of the history of words from the material now available (Patkar : 1978 : 326).

While the Vedic texts contain some elements of etymology it is evident that scholars even in the pre-Christian era had difficulty in interpreting certain words. The earliest gloss on the R̥g V, the 'Nirukta of Yaska' or the etymology of the author Yaska, which is generally dated to the sixth century BCE, shows that even then there were doubts about the meaning of some words. The much used standard commentary of Sayana, written in the fourteenth century, shows that many words did not have the benefit of accurate meaning (Basham : 1990 : 9). Pure etymology posed a problem for researchers. The etymological approach had to be supplemented by other means in order to render the texts meaningful.

Vedic etymology has always been supplemented by other means especially Sanskrit grammar. A combination of these two linguistic tools led to many clues as to the origin and meaning of many words. It is not within the ambit of this study, nor is it necessary, to venture into such a linguistic study.

Yet, this study cannot afford to omit a brief glance of the earliest extant systematic treatment of grammar, that is, Pāṇini's Aṣṭādhyāyī. This work contains 3,995 *sūtras* (formuli) on grammar. Historical sources indicate that Pāṇini lived in the fifth century BCE. This date places him in a crucial point in the history of Sanskrit literature. There were, however, grammarians before Pāṇini. He mentions by name many of his predecessors and hints at the existence of many more. Thus he testifies to considerable grammatical activity having taken place before him. Pāṇini deals with both Vedic Sanskrit grammar and later Sanskrit (classical) grammar. His emphasis is on the latter. Large numbers of indological scholars, ancient and modern, have drawn heavily from Pāṇini's interpretation of words (Vrat : 1978 : 312).

To the above sources of Sanskrit etymology it would be unjust to leave out the monumental research conducted by some modern philologists like Max Müller. With uncommon labour these researchers have given us useful insights into some of the fundamental words occurring in this type of study.

Two important words occurring in Hindu mysticism needs to be more carefully examined :

brahman : 'brahman' meant originally the hymns, sacrificial addresses and incantations of the Vedas and, further, the mystical power latent in them, but it was finally taken among the *brāhmins* (priests) who respected the Vedic rituals, as the usual terms for the fundamental principle of the universe. The word in time lost its original meaning and in the Upanishadic period became a technical term used only for the Absolute (Nakamura : 1990 : 105).

ātman : The importance of this word cannot be underestimated. It is next in importance to *brahman* only, and the two together may be called the

main pillars on which rests the whole of the edifice of Hindu mysticism and Indian philosophy. The etymology of *ātman* is somewhat obscure. Müller is of the opinion that it belongs to a pre-Sanskritic, though Aryan, stratum of Indian speech. In the early Vedic texts *ātman* originally meant 'breath'. Later it was employed derivatively in the sense of 'vital force', and further became a word meaning 'one's self'. In the later Upanishadic context it generally means the immortal consciousness which is the substratum of the individual and is identical with *brahman* (Müller : 1971 : 70 ; Nakamura : 1990 : 105).

Perhaps one of the greatest challenges that the study of mysticism would face in the context of the Sanskrit language is the problem of 'suggested meanings' (*vyāṅgyārtha*). It is a universal practice among mystics to use highly suggestive language to hint at mystical phenomena and experiences which otherwise cannot be captured within the limitations of human speech. This is specially relevant with regard to the Absolute. Words like *brahman* and *ātman* do not necessarily encapsulate a concept locked within a rigid framework of meaning. They are in fact words which suggest or hint at a state beyond concepts or language. They are only suggestive of an indescribable Absolute. Such words, due to long usage in the foregoing contexts, has invested Hindu mysticism with a lingering ambience that is always suggestive of the spirit rather than the letter.

Mystical writers and authors on mysticism from the Vedic period through Shankara and to Vivekananda and Aurobindo in the modern period utilised words in three fundamental ways :

mukhyārtha - words with primary meaning.

lakṣyārtha - words with secondary meaning.

vyāṅgyārtha - words with suggested meaning. In this type of meaning the primary meaning stands as a stepping stone to grasp the secondary meaning. However this meaning is not necessarily related or connected to the primary meaning. For example, by saying that the hermitage is in the Ganges (in the seventh case ending *gangayam goṣaḥ*), the idea is that it is cool and holy (Grimes : 1989 : 405). Hindu mystics constantly use this style of writing or speech. In this context it would not be incorrect to state that it is only one mystic with the same or similar cultural ethos that is capable of shedding some light on the original mystical insights.

2.22 The Relevance of Shankara

Shankara (788 - 820 CE) belonged to the unbroken line of Vedic monks (*sannyāsins*). After training from his *guru*, the scholarly ascetic Govindapada, he spent the remaining part of his brief life in intense literary and missionary activities. He combined in himself the attributes of a poet, a logician, a devotee and a mystic. He is the architect of the monistic system that bears his name (Shankara's Advaita Philosophy). Shankara's activities appear at a significant period in Hindu history and may be categorised as having three fundamental values : historical, literary and philosophical.

Shankara's historical value lies in the fact that he emerged at a time when Buddhism was still flourishing in India and Hinduism was on a decline. The survival of Hinduism depended, at least from a literary point of view, on the recapturing of the original Vedic and Upanishadic texts which were either being lost or diluted under the influence of Buddhism and other religious cults.

Shankara's literary abilities were stupendous. He wrote elaborate commentaries on the major Upanishads, the Brhadaranyaka and the Bhagavad Gita which constitute that three main pillars (*prasthāna traya*) of Hinduism. In all these works he displayed a rare faculty of relentlessly logical and concentrated arguments and refutation and such subtlety of reasoning, that his system of Advaita Vedānta stands as a monument to human thought. Apart from this he went on to write a number of guide-books, both in prose and poetry, for a clearer understanding of his seminal doctrine, viz. that of non-dualism or Advaita. It must be remembered that the ultimate Advaitic realization, in terms of its mystical experience belongs to the domain of the supra-rational (and not the irrational). Shankara's literary works employ an unflinching logic of the subtleties of technical language commensurate, at least from the best human point of expression with this supra-rational realization.

Shankara commences his argument with the notion that the essence of reality must be in its absoluteness. The ultimate mystical Reality must remain ever the same, unconditioned by time, space and causality. It follows from such an argument that the human intellect, conditioned and varied as it is, has not the remotest chance of ever comprehending the Reality in its entirety. Hence, intuitive revelation is the only source of knowledge regarding the ultimate Reality of the universe. Yet Shankara fully appreciates the value of reasoning in an inquiry into the nature of Reality. He says that in matters of philosophical inquiry, unlike discussions on *dharma* (duty), perception, inference and other human levels of evidence are as indispensable as the *śruti* (primary texts of Hinduism). Only such arguments are to be tolerated as are not independent of the *śruti* but supplement it. Not for a moment, however varied the interpretation may be, does Shankara depart from being loyal to the primary texts. In this respect his written works, that is, commentaries on the *prasthāna traya* as well as his handbooks on Vedānta like the

Vivekachudāmaṇi, Ātmabodha, etc., represent an authentic tradition of interpretation that has widespread acceptance even to this day.

2.23 Modern Interpreters and Translators

The scientific study of Indian literature starts from 1761 when India suffered a political defeat at the hands of the British. Warren Hastings, the then Governor-General of India, found it necessary for purposes of administration to study the old Indian law books. Several other British scholars also developed an enthusiasm to study the literature of ancient India. In 1785 Charles Wilkins published an English translation of the Bhagavad Gita and William Jones worked on several translations including that of Sanskrit drama. Thus the above English scholars were naturally the first to make Europe acquainted with the religious literature of India. Thereafter German scholars took the lead. Fredrich Schlegel's, *The Language and Wisdom of the Indians* (1808) generated the initial interest among German scholars. August Wilhelm von Schlegel became the first German professor of Sanskrit in 1818 in Bonn. He edited the Bhagavad Gita in 1823 and had it subsequently published (Radhakrishnan : 1940 : 247). Since this initial period of translations and such literary pursuits several other translations and interpretations of Sanskrit works appeared in English and German.

While these literary activities were gaining ground and a new avenue of literary expression was being unfolded, Hinduism itself was beginning to experience a regeneration. With the appearance of Rammohan Roy (1772 - 1833) there followed a long line of social, cultural, religious and political leaders, men and women of thought and action, who were constantly reinterpreting the Vedic and Upanishadic texts to meet the challenges of contemporary issues. Their spirit of work and their literary output may best be captured in Radhakrishnan's (1990 : 145) words :

“Loyalty to our particular tradition means not only concord with the past but also freedom from the past. The living past should serve as a great inspiration and support for the future. Tradition is not a rigid, hide-bound framework which cripples the life of the spirit and requires us to revert to a period that is now of the past and beyond recall. It is not a memory of the past but a constant abiding of the living Spirit. It is a living stream of spiritual life.”

Noted among these modern interpreters of Hinduism in general, and Hindu mysticism in particular, are Ramakrishna, Vivekananda, Aurobindo and Radhakrishnan.

2.24 Ramakrishna - Vivekananda and the development of Neo-Vedānta

With the coming of Ramakrishna (1836 - 1886) and Swami Vivekananda (1863 - 1902) we see the emergence of the Neo- Vedānta movement in India and the world. By Neo-Vedānta is meant the new Vedānta as distinguished from the old traditional Vedānta developed by Shankara. Both Ramakrishna and Vivekananda were what may be termed ‘career mystics’. Like Shankara they spent their entire lives in mystical pursuits, acquired a variety of mystical realizations and disseminated this wisdom to a wide audience both in India and abroad. Ramakrishna and more so Vivekananda differed from Shankara in that their message as much as it possessed a genuine mystical core also had a world-affirming attitude that is virtually unprecedented in the religious history of India.

The roots of Neo-Vedānta, as also the rationale and beginning of its practical application, are to be found in the life and teachings of Ramakrishna. While Ramakrishna did not produce any literary work several biographies on him have come to light. The most authentic of these works are *Sri Ramakrishna - the Great Master* a voluminous book written by Swami Saradananda (1865 - 1927) a direct-disciple of Ramakrishna and one who is also recognised as a mystic.

Saradananda apart from being an eye-witness to Ramakrishna's life also went to great pains in verifying information for his biography. Above this, Saradananda is careful in casting the biographical information in the correct technical terms that a mystic would want employed in such a work. The second authentic work on Ramakrishna which this research would refer to is *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, also a voluminous work written by another disciple of Ramakrishna, namely, Mahendranath Gupta who simply goes as and is better known by the pen-name of 'M'. The *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* comprises the utterances of the mystic during the last three years of his life. The author 'M', a professor at a Calcutta college, visited the saint on weekends and college holidays and recorded with accuracy the saint's conversations during these times. In the Foreword to the English translation of the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* Aldous Huxley wrote (Nikhilananda : 1977 : v) :

"No other saint has had so able and indefatigable a Boswell. Never have the small events of a contemplative's daily life been described with such a wealth of intimate detail, never have the casual and unstudied utterances of a great religious teacher been set down with so minute a fidelity."

The other biographies of Ramakrishna that are of value to this study include *The Life of Ramakrishna* by the French Nobel prizeman - Romain Rolland. This work while being an authentic biography of Ramakrishna tends to make several comparisons between the life of Ramakrishna and that of Christian mystics. Rolland, it may be said, appreciated the 'mystical context' of religion in general and Ramakrishna's life in particular.

Ramakrishna and His Disciples by Christopher Isherwood is a work that could easily be understood by Western readers especially in the context of studying comparative mysticism. Omitting too many 'eastern technicalities' and yet being faithful to the spirit of the subject Isherwood has produced a work that has become one of the popular biographies of Ramakrishna

especially in the western world. In reviewing the book the New York Times stated (in Isherwood : 1980 : back cover) :

“This is a fresh and important contribution to the history of a religious mysticism, a subject of ever-increasing interest in a psychology-conscious age.”

It can be added that all the writers on Ramakrishna must have had a formidable task before them. Ramakrishna not only practised his Hindu tradition but was the only mystic in India who in a practical sense went on to express the yearnings and aspirations found in Islam and Christianity as well. In this way we see in him the blend of several streams of mystical values. He was the first in India to create a ‘global mysticism’ - a concept that has and continues to influence contemporary Hindu writings. Zimmer states (in Nikhilananda : 1977 : back cover) :

“A fervent experimentalist and devotee, Ramakrishna passes through every kind of religious tradition. Endowed with a Proteus-like vitality and voluptuousness for metamorphosis, his soul measures the celestial heights and fathoms the abyss. He achieves an unparalleled integration of the mystic heritage of India and the West.”

While Ramakrishna did not leave behind a literary legacy it was his chief disciple Vivekananda who gave articulation and expression to his master’s teachings notably at the ‘World’s Parliament of Religions’ held in 1893 in Chicago. Vivekananda was educated in the modern sense of the term. He is also recognised as an accomplished mystic, orator and prolific writer. His speeches, literary works, letters and poems form nine substantial volumes of *Complete Works*. In these *Works* of Vivekananda the modern Hindu, including Gandhi, Tagore and Aurobindo, have turned for inspiration again and again. In the Foreword to these *Complete Works* Nivedita wrote (CW1 1984 : ix) that these volumes represent :

“What is not only a gospel to the world at large, but also to its own children, the Charter of the Hindu Faith. What Hinduism needed, amidst the general integration of the modern era, was a rock where she could lie at anchor, an authoritative utterance in which she might recognise herself. And this was given to her, in these words and writings of Swami Vivekananda.”

In interpreting the ancient and medieval Vedānta Vivekananda undoubtedly made his own contribution. Chatterjee (1963 : 265) records the formation of this Neo-Vedānta as follows :

“We shall see that the main outline of this new Vedānta was drawn by Sri Ramakrishna and it was Swami Vivekananda who filled it in with elaborate reasoning so as to work up a philosophy proper. It has been very aptly said that Swami Vivekananda is a commentary on Sri Ramakrishna. But the commentator with his giant intellect and profound understanding made such a distinctive contribution that his commentary becomes itself a philosophy, just as Shankara's commentary on the Vedānta -Sūtras (Brahma Sūtras) is by itself a philosophy.”

The entire Vivekananda literature and indeed the type of mysticism expressed by Vivekananda has a world-affirming dimension attached to it. Mystical truths have their application in the mundane world. To quote Nivedita (CW1 1984 : xv) on Vivekananda's views, “No distinction, henceforth, between sacred and secular. To labour is to pray. To conquer is to renounce. Life is itself religion. To have and to hold is as stern a trust as to quit and avoid . . . To him (Vivekananda), the workshop, the study, the farmyard and the field, are as true and fit scenes for the meeting of God with man as the cell of the monk or the door of the temple. To him there is no difference between service of man and worship of God, between manliness and faith, between true righteousness and spirituality.”

The above theme runs through the entire works of Vivekananda. Before the emergence of Vivekananda, Hindu literature lacked a clear interpretation of mystical insights in relation to the world. Vivekananda filled this void in an abundant measure.

2.25 Aurobindo and Neo-Vedānta.

Appearing next in line of Neo-Vedāntic teachers was Sri Aurobindo Ghose (1872 - 1950). For the purposes of this study Ramakrishna, Vivekananda and Aurobindo are being brought together into a single category as a substantial degree of commonality of mystical thought exists among them. While each of these mystics may have varied experiences and expressions of mysticism they nevertheless represent a single tradition which has its roots in the *śruti* texts. Referring to the 'profound and abiding' influence of Ramakrishna on Aurobindo, Diwakar (1976 : 10) states that he (Aurobindo) had found in the person of Ramakrishna 'solid gold, naked spirituality shorn of all intellectual embellishment.'" Aurobindo was first and foremost a man of intuition, a mystic and only secondly an intellectual of a rare calibre. It is this intellectual worth of Aurobindo that makes his literary works take on a uniqueness that sets him apart from Ramakrishna. In this context Diwakar (1976 : 10) states :

"Aurobindo's approach was more along the lines of Ramakrishna's teachings than any other school of thought current in those days. The difference however is obvious. Aurobindo had a vast background of knowledge and experience of western thought and religion that Ramakrishna lacked. But in his instinctive sympathy with all that is high and noble in Indian spirituality, in intuitive appreciation and realization of it, and in the adoption of a truly spiritual and synthetic attitude towards all religious and human endeavour in that field, Aurobindo is nearer to Ramakrishna than all other thinkers and reformers . . .

his (Ramakrishna's) conduct was based on Vedāntic as well as Tantric truths and he looked upon all human beings as equal and thus worthy of respect."

Throughout the speeches and writings of Aurobindo, which include a substantial number of metaphysical poems, he draws his fundamental inspiration from the *śruti* texts. He believed that the Vedas and Upanishads are of the same origin - 'the revealed word'. Further to this a good deal of his philosophy and teachings is a 'development and an elaboration of the truths that are adumbrated in this ancient text (Pandit : 1988 : 119).

Aurobindo makes constant reference to the 'Supramental Vision' as the highest mystical experience. The ordinary, mystically undeveloped mind, has latent in it this 'Supramental Vision'. The mind has the potential divinity hidden in it. Aurobindo supports this by quoting the *śruti* texts (Tait. Up. 3.4.1.), "He (i.e. an ancient seer) discovered that the mind is *brahman*". For Aurobindo, "Mind is no independent and original entity but only a final operation of the Truth-Consciousness or Supermind, therefore whatever Mind is, there Supermind must be. Supermind or the Truth-Consciousness is the real creative agency of the Universal Existence. Even when the mind is in its own darkened consciousness separated from its source, yet is that larger movement always there in the workings of Minds." (Aurobindo : 1989 : 174). In this respect Aurobindo asserts that every mind has the latent capacity for mystical experiences. The highest mystical consciousness lies hidden in the mind as cream lies hidden in milk. The process of securing this cream from the milk is indeed the art of churning. Humanly considered it is *tapasyā* (austerity) or "an overpassing of the hold of the bodily nature on the consciousness or else a supernormal energising of the consciousness and will to gain some spiritual or other object" (Pandit : 1988 : 153). Austerity when correctly directed leads to the supramental vision.

Keeping this ultimate mystical vision as the goal Aurobindo asserts that man is already in an evolutionary process. He sees this process as having two component parts : the first is the nature of evolution (i.e. the what, when, why and who of the grand mystery of evolutionary existence) and secondly the practical side or the means that promote this evolution. Existence is a mystery, a philosophical problem, to human beings alone. Therefore its solution may be searched for at the human level. Many solutions have been suggested and tried during the long course of human history. In Aurobindo's solution we find a specific concept of austerity to reach this end. He called it Integral Yoga. This Yoga or practices for the ultimate mystical insight is a synthesis of all previously known *yogas*, with a definite emphasis on the three most important ones, viz. *jñāna*, *karma* and *bhakti* or the paths of knowledge, selfless service and devotion respectively. The application of the methods prescribed by these *yogas* brings forth the latent spirituality in human beings and develops the supramental vision.

The supramental vision is a global vision. It is the development of the mind by intelligent austerity to the extent that it "cuts off little bits which it puts up against one another; it is the mental capacity that re-gathers everything into a single beam. The Supermind sees not only the whole world of things and beings in a single vision, which gathers up all the beams without opposing anything, but it sees the viewpoint of each thing, each being, each force - it is a rounded view which does not end in a central point but in myriads of points". Aurobindo refers to this ultimate mystical vision as, "a single innumerable look" (Satprem : 1970 : 236).

2.26 Radhakrishnan's role in Neo-Vedānta

Radhakrishnan (1888 - 1975) was the next major interpreter of the Neo-Vedānta movement. He takes his position firmly on the *śruti* texts and is in fact a translator and commentator on the major Upanishads, the Br S and the BG (*prasthāna traya*). He was an idealist philosopher who believed in the validity of metaphysical realizations and truths. He felt that these metaphysical realities are

founded on a basic awareness of spiritual intuition which cannot be established by the current scientific experiments or rational logic. Experience is not limited to sense awareness. Sensory input reveals only sensory data. In every individual there is the potential of awakening the intuitive faculty which alone yields mystical insights. The verification of these insights are not directly dependant on sensory experience. Mystical Truth exists by its own majesty and its ultimate language is silence; but hard metaphysical thinking gives to religious thought, dignity and strength, articulates ultimate presuppositions about the world and restores spiritual wholeness to human beings (Gopal : 1988 : 300).

Radhakrishnan was a creative philosopher with a gift for literary vigour. Apart from his work on the *prasthāna traya*, his other major works include *Indian Philosophy*, *Hindu View of Life*, *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, *An Idealist's View of Life*, etc. In all these works mystical insights form the background of his expositions. Yet he never fails to point out, almost at every turn, that these mystical insights have a world-affirming dimension attached to them. (Radhakrishnan : 1940 : 58). In this respect his insights are akin to the views of Ramakrishna, Vivekananda and Aurobindo.

Special mention must be made of Radhakrishnan's commentary on the 'Principal Upanishads'. In this volume he translates and comments on the texts of eighteen Ups., major and minor. These commentaries are profound as they are extensive in their scholarship. While leaning heavily on Shankara's commentaries he also includes the vital interpretations from some major dualistic philosophers like Ramanuja and Madhava. Apart from the Hindu schools of thought he is equally at home with other eastern traditions and western philosophers. He felt that the "pursuit of religious truth together would lead ultimately to mutual transformations within an overall partnership (Gopal : 1988 : 384). In this context his commentaries are laden with parallel quotations, points of clarification and insightful enhancements from Buddha and Zarathustra,

Plotinus and St. John, Eckhard and Rumi. From an academic point of interest Radhakrishnan's works may easily be considered to be a rich source of material on 'comparative mysticism'. Radhakrishnan is keen on seeing the similarities and meeting points in various theologies and philosophies. In doing so he does not sacrifice the individuality of each system. This approach is important in the present globalization of mystical knowledge. Furthermore, Radhakrishnan is a pioneer in interpreting the East to the West.

2.27 Some Modern Translators and Commentators within the context of Neo-Vedānta

This study should not fail to make reference to such pioneering scholars as Max Müller and Paul Deussen. Max Müller's *Sacred Books of the East*, has translations and notes on the Vedic texts and the major Upanishads. Müller adopts a philological approach to the texts. He depends heavily on Sanskrit etymology and grammar to derive the English meaning of the texts. Is it possible to use an emphasised philological approach to interpret ancient mystical thought that is encoded in the Sanskrit language? Philology is undoubtedly insufficient as it does not fully capture the spirit of the texts. In this respect Müller has some limitations in exploring hidden mystical dimensions of the texts. In spite of this his works are useful as they contribute towards a philological insight into the scriptures. This is one of the many useful strands in an overall holistic approach to the texts. Müller's approach unlocks some significant aspect of the texts. This must, however, be supplemented by other hermeneutical tools to obtain a clearer insight so essential for mystical interpretation.

CHAPTER THREE

Evolution of Mysticism

- From the Vedic Period to the Vedānta -

3.1 General Growth of Mysticism

Mysticism in Hindu history has had a definite pattern of evolution. This pattern may be untangled and isolated from the Vedic and Upanishadic texts. The pattern discerned is a movement from 'inferior mysticism' to 'higher forms of mysticism' as Dasgupta (1992 : vii) has classified it. The present author however feels that it is a movement from 'gross mysticism' to 'subtle levels of mysticism'. Each stage represents a vital area of growth, one graduating into the other.

Over a period of time these areas of growth shed their nebulous nature and earned certain characteristics that lent themselves to broad classifications. An examination of these patterns of evolution will indicate the quality and direction of mystical growth. Furthermore, it reveals the cultural milieu, the ritualistic apparatus and the psychological tools that have their interplay in this process.

3.2 Sacrificial Mysticism

The forces of nature like the rain, wind, thunder, lightning, etc. with their varied manifestations appeared to the early Vedic sages like supernatural beings endowed with a specific personality. These forces were viewed at times as being friendly, but again as adverse. Sometimes the marvels of natural phenomena seemed stupefying in its psychological impact. When the early Vedic sage saw the sun moving from east to west he exclaimed in wonder (Dasgupta : 1992 : 11) :

*“Undropped beneath, not fastened firm, how comes it
That downward tuned he falls not downward?
The guide of his ascending path, - who saw it?”*

Similarly the sage is fascinated by the fact that “the sparkling waters of all rivers flow into one ocean without ever filling it.” He is puzzled by the night or the unexplained disappearance of the sun (Dasgupta : 1992 : 11) :

*“Who is it knows, and who can tell us surely
Where lies the path that leads to the Eternals?
Their deepest dwellings only we discover,
and hidden there in distant secret regions”.*

Side by side with the above capacity for wonder at these natural phenomena at work the Vedic sages deified these phenomena. The gross manifestations in nature like wind, rain, etc. were seen as gross expressions of a divine force within these manifestations. Many early hymns in the R̥g Veda are praises of various deities, who are often perceived as personifications of the different powers of nature like the fire-god (Agni), the god of the atmosphere (Indra), etc. The prayers in these hymns allude to greatness and power, the mysterious workings of these forces, and the exploits of these gods. There are also prayers to these deities for various rewards such as material blessings, long life, strong offspring and the necessities of an agricultural community, that is, cattle, horses, corn, gold, etc. At this stage of development we note that prayers for the advancement of the inner spiritual life, for moral excellence and for surrender to the divine will are not frequent.

Most of these R̥g Vedic chants were recited in the performance of certain prescribed rituals. Though the keynote of these various chants is the praise of various gods who are supposed to

bestow the benefits upon devotees it can be inferred that the elaborate ritualistic performance, which included the chants, were the actual cause for securing the benefits.

3.3 The Development of the Ritual

How were the various forces in nature to be invoked? How was it possible to seek out these gods and attract their blessings? These are the questions that must have vexed the minds of the early Vedic thinkers. It is difficult to determine whether in the earliest period any definite theory developed regarding the connections between the chanted hymns and the ritual. The possibility exists that hymns could have been chanted without the accompanying rituals. It is however obvious that this system did not last long. The Brāhmaṇa period of elaborate rituals occurs quite quickly as a natural sequel to the hymns. The Brāhmaṇas or ritualistic manuals of the Vedas rapidly capture the earlier hymns and engage them dextrously in the ritual or *yajña*.

The concept of *yajña* is characterized by a uniqueness that is not discernible in the other races, religions or belief-systems of the world. The *yajña* is the mechanism that linked the Vedic devotee with the gods. The mechanism carried great power. It was the undisputed means to secure the blessings of the gods. The gods could be pleased or displeased. This was not so relevant. However if the *yajña* was carefully performed the prayers were bound to be rewarded.

The *yajña* is generally perceived as a *fire-sacrifice*. A special fire-altar is set up with bricks cast in various formations. Twigs and wood, generally of an aromatic type that is obtained from the forest, is arranged on the fire-altar. When the fire is literally lit the fire-god (Agni) is invoked in the fire thus consecrating it and inviting it to be the medium through which various oblations could reach various gods. Dasgupta (1992 : 6) gives a vivid description of the *yajña* :

*“The utterance or chanting of the stanzas of the Vedic hymns
with specially prescribed accents and modulations, the*

pouring of the melted butter in the prescribed manner into the sacrificial fire, the husking of rice in a particular way, the making and exact placing of cakes, all the thousand details of rituals - often performed continually for days, months and years with rigorous exactness - was called a yajña (freely translated into English, "sacrifice"). All the good things that people wanted, be it the birth of a son, a shower of rain, or a place of enjoyment in heaven, were believed to be secured through the performance of these sacrifices."

It was the firm belief of the Vedic devotees that when these elaborate ritualistic sessions were carried out in all their details and with careful accuracy it produced a mysterious effect whereby prayers were fulfilled.

3.4 Some noted Features of Sacrifice

It became an established view that the hymns of the Vedas and their Brahmanical sections (sacrificial manuals) were without authorship. The knowledge of these scriptures existed eternally just as the principles of plant genetics were already inherent in nature or creation. Mendel only **discovered** them. Similarly Vedic knowledge is an integral part of nature (i.e. both gross and subtle aspects of nature). Sages only **discovered** this knowledge. They are only the **discoverers** and not the authors of this knowledge. This knowledge is far beyond human synthesis and in a mundane sense it stands beyond human reason. This element of the divine origin of knowledge formed the basic sanctity of the Vedic sacrificial hymns and the mysticism that flowed from it.

The sacrifice theory prescribed various ritualistic procedures which correspondingly brought on their respective advantages. The composite rituals involving a number of priests, family members, ingredients for worship, etc. also prohibited certain courses of human action which were not in consonance with the sacrificial ethos. The hymns that were chanted at the ceremony were laden with the exploits and conduct of gods and sages, some of a legendary nature, that powerfully alluded to a 'sacrificial conduct' that gave rise to what may be termed a '*sacrificial ethic*'. It included self-discipline, fasting, austerities, etc. Human limitations and wayward emotions were purified and directed towards the sacrifice. This '*sacrificial ethic*' is considered to be an important foundational pillar of the sacrifice. For Sarma (1980 : 22-23) it ultimately leads to *mokṣa* :

"The numerous fasts and vigils, the numerous rules regarding eating and drinking which a complex ritualism enjoins are not without their disciplining value. Almost every rite we perform is a lesson in self-control. It is the first step in that long process of the liberation of the spirit from the thralldom of the flesh which is the aim of all morality and religion."

This early development of '*sacrificial ethics*' cannot, under any circumstances, be overlooked in the evolution of Hindu mysticism. In Hinduism ethics has always been a strand that runs through the entire course of mystical growth.

When Vedic sacrifices are performed with their expected accuracy, both on the part of the priests and the devotees, they by their very nature invoke certain secret or mysterious powers that bring about or produce their effects either in this life or the hereafter. This practice is almost akin to a scientist who working under strict laboratory conditions places two or more chemicals together

to produce a desired end. If the method is gone through with meticulous attention to detail the result is inevitable. This exercise highlights the “unalterable law involved in such invariable and unflinching occurrences of effects consequent upon the performance of these sacrifices” (Dasgupta : 1992 : 17).

Sacrificial rites are largely gross. They involve the construction of the fire-altar with bricks. The paraphernalia used in worship include fire-wood, a variety of food grain like rice, barley, wheat, etc. Then there is a variety of specially crafted utensils. The priests give full verbal articulation to the *mantras* while the clarified butter and other oblations are poured into the fire. The gross senses are engaged in a complex way with the ritual. However while this process is fully operative the priests and devotees should also be conscious of the subtle and mysterious forces that are being invoked. One can therefore conclude that while the sacrifice had a sizeable portion of gross elements in it, it was not without its subtle perceptions. The gross ceremony did hint at subtle powers at play. Such a ceremony became the springboard for subtle insights - however limited such insights may have been at this stage. This link between the gross and subtle elements are in their rudimentary form here. It is a link that cannot escape our notice as it represents the almost imperceptible transition from the gross to the subtle. In Hinduism gross sacrificial mysticism is the sponsor for subtler forms of mystical insight.

Observances of natural phenomena led to the recognition of the forces in nature. These forces were either admired or feared or looked upon with awe. The gross aspects of the natural forces like the visible fire, rain, water, etc. had their subtle counterpart forces. These subtle forces were invisible but lent themselves to personification as gods. These gods were invoked in the Vedic fire-sacrifice. Soon the practice of the fire-sacrifice in its present form revealed yet another dimension, that is, a definite, mysterious and secret power of the sacrifice which replaced the forces personified as gods. A ‘*mysterious omnipotence*’ now enveloped the sacrifice. This power

invested the Vedic hymns with a transcendent authority giving it an unchallengeable right over human pursuits and duties that led to the well-being and happiness of the people. Dasgupta (1992 : 18) states:

“The assumption of the mysterious omnipotence of sacrifices, performed by following the authoritative injunctions of the Vedas independently of reason or logical and discursive thought, forms the chief trait of the mysticism of the Vedic type. There is nothing here of feeling or even intellect, but a blind submission, not to a person but to an impersonal authority which holds within it an unalterable and inscrutable law, the secret of all powers which we may want to wield in our favour.”

This ‘*mysterious omnipotence*’ stood as a metaphysical truth without the need for any support. Human faculties such as comprehension and reason, however acute they may have been developed, cannot reach or change this truth. It was unchallengeable and unshakeable by reason or by the experiences of the mind. An important cerebral tool like reason is placed in perspective vis-à-vis the ‘*mysterious omnipotence*’. Reason summons for a counter-reason. This leads to an endless regression within the domain of thought-categories being unable to transcend itself and reach the truth. The supreme truth in the Vedas therefore transcend the categories of thought however sacred or sublime they may be. Throughout the development of Hindu mysticism reason remains in this subordinate position. Mystical explorations and new insights are always considered in the light of Vedic sanction. Reason is never trusted as a safe guide for mystical analysis.

3.5 The Nature of the Vedic Gods

The Vedic community must have been engaged in innumerable rituals. The stirrings of these rituals and the worship of the gods animated their thoughts. They spoke not only of rain (Indu) but of rainer (Indra), not only of fire and light as a tangible fact, but of a lighter and a burner, an agent of fire and light, a Dyaus and an Agni (Müller : 1971 : 35). Behind each of the natural phenomena the Aryan found an expression or an emblem of some spiritual being which was worshipped with awe and reverence in the complex rites.

The worship of animals, birds and reptiles is also evident in the early Vedic period. This has led to the belief that the Vedic sages with their gifted mystical insight were living side by side with persons who were rank animists and fetishists. The Vedic society at this time mirrored a spectrum of beliefs from the sub-level fetishism to a rich polytheism. Macnicol (1968 : 9) sees in these early developments the emerging outlines of a *'full orbed theism'*.

Even at this stage of development it is difficult to settle the exact nature of the gods. In the Rg Veda they are represented as human in form and they possess various attributes that connect them with their natural phenomena. They have arms, noses and jaws (limbs that are often referred to in Vedic poetry). They travel in chariots drawn by animals. They wear ornaments and carry arms like bows and clubs.

In a careful analysis of the gods it would be unjust to associate them with natural phenomena alone. One cannot pass the Aryans off as nature worshippers. If this is done it would be a hasty and limited conclusion.

Raja (1936 : 28) asserts that the safest interpretation would be to assume that the Vedic poets were aware of certain forces, invisible and incomprehensible to ordinary men and that in

describing the gods they were symbolically trying to represent these forces in the light of natural phenomena known to ordinary men. Metaphysical realities and natural occurrences are related or interconnected.

The Vedic poets 'saw' the gods and they described what they 'saw'. Only an individual who could 'see' the gods is called a rishi. This 'seeing' is a distinct mystical insight - a look at something that is beyond the comprehension of the five senses. Some other faculty of the Vedic person must have developed for this insight to occur. This observation seems to represent the rudimentary stage of intuition in which the seer has insight into distinct metaphysical dimensions of the gods. The Sanskrit word for 'gods' utilized throughout the texts is '*devas*'. By definition, that is from literary sources and usage, the *devas* are immortals (*amarāḥ*), the ever-shining ones (*devāḥ*), heavenly beings (*trideśaḥ*), the knowing ones (*vibudhāḥ*) and the gods or deities (*surāḥ*). Qualities of luminosity, power and knowledge are always associated with them (Radhakrishnan : 1990 : 30).

Mystical experiences need the language of symbols for purposes of expression and explanation. The Hindu gods are characterized by many arms, heads and religious emblems. Critics of the gods have treated this peculiarity as an unpardonable defect. Vincent Smith pointed out (Imperial Gazetteer of India : 1910 : Vol. 2) that "*after 300 CE Indian sculpture properly so called hardly deserves to be reckoned as art. The figures of both men and animals become stiff and formal, and the idea of power is clumsily expressed by the multiplication of members. The many-headed gods and goddesses whose images crowd the walls and roofs of medieval temples have no pretensions to beauty and are frequently hideous and grotesque.*" Mashell speaks of the "*hideous deities with animals' heads and innumerable arms*". George Birdwood spoke of the "*monstrous shapes of these deities*". Quotations of this nature could be multiplied. However

enough has been shown that a certain class of critics were oblivious of the origins and the complex symbolic development of the gods (Coomaraswamy : 1982 : 96).

In reply to the above criticism it can firstly be pointed out that the angle of criticism is always from the viewpoint of philosophy and history or the objections raised by artists or connoisseurs. The criticisms stem from the 'unknown' elements of the gods. For 'unknown' need not imply anything more than 'unrecognized'.

The gods are first and foremost the product of a mystical experience. It is only after the mystic gains this metaphysical insight that he or she expresses it in literature and art. This school of criticism is therefore unjust. In fact it is an abuse to use the critical methodology of art and iconography in evaluating the gods. To the mystic the representations of the gods are realistic presentations of another order or dimension of life than our own, deriving from *deva-loka*, other than the world we are familiar with, but not necessarily unknowable or always invisible. This distinction is important for the images of gods because they belong to a world of their own, however we may regard them (Coomaraswamy : 1982: 100) The all too familiar logic and arithmetic that we are accustomed to are not applicable in analysing the shape, size, colour, number of hands, etc. of the gods.

3.6 The Three Planes of Existence and the Three Classes of Gods

The Rg Vedic sages looked upon the 'universe' as possessing three separate yet interconnected strata of existence. The topmost place is designated the *dyuloka* or the celestial sphere; below that is the *antariksaloka*, the sphere of intermediary space; the third is *bhurloka*, the terrestrial sphere or the earth. This theistic topography is an integral part of the Hindu world-view and is articulated in the *Gāyatrī Mantra* which is still chanted by millions of Hindus even in the present times.

In each sphere there is a presiding deity. Sāvatri or Sūrya (the sun) is the god of the celestial world; Indra (the god of the atmosphere) is the deity presiding over the intermediary space; and Agni (fire) is the god of the terrestrial sphere. These main gods were again subdivided into various categories to take charge of the various functions pertaining to their sphere (Sharvananda : 1936 : 7-8).

Raja (1936 : 27) who translates the above spheres as earth, atmosphere and heavens is of the view that the Vedic rishis did not use these terms as being visible regions of the world. The terms are only employed in want of better metaphysical vocabulary. In developing these spheres into their fuller metaphysical interpretation it can be pointed out that the spheres, as they progress from the earth to the celestial region, represent a definite movement from the gross to the subtle. Each dimension is progressively subtle.

The earth is gross, physical or tangible. Yet within each gross expression there is a subtle force at work. These subtle forces at this level of the earth is presided over by the subtle power called Agni (Fire). Agni is the presiding deity of the earth. In ascending subtlety the next dimension is the intermediary space which in its metaphysical context is a 'heaven'. This region is presided over by Indra (the god of the atmospheric forces). It is important to note, especially in the study of Hindu eschatology, that in this sub-division there is also a region called *pitṛloka* (sphere of the ancestors). This region is sub-presided over by Yama - the god of Death. The souls of ordinary mortals that have met with the fate of death on earth reach this sphere. The next higher sphere is the heaven of Vṣṇu (*dyuloka* or *svargloka*) and is made up of the essence of lustre (*tejas*). This metaphysical topography stretching from the gross earth to the subtler heavens must have been discovered and mapped out as the mind of the rishi ascended, through spiritual practices and explorations, to subtle dimensions of the universe. These practices of raising the levels of human

consciousness from the sense-world to the subtle strata of creation needs careful analysis and formulation and is dealt with separately in this work.

3.7 The Journey from Polytheism to Monism

The Rg Veda is strikingly polytheistic in its early phase. However, from the textual point of view, it is evident that the Rg Vedic rishis, while contemplating upon the nature of the various gods, caught a glimpse of an infinite entity that unites all these gods at the fundamental level. They termed this seminal concept *āditi* which became the ‘mother of all the gods’, the substratum from which all the gods emerged. The root meaning of *āditi* is ‘unbroken’, ‘indivisible’ or ‘infinite’. Its meaning connotes an ‘expansion’ or a ‘vastness’ both in thought and as a metaphysical entity.

This new position led to another significant understanding of the gods. At the fundamental spiritual level they are all one but at the functional level they differed in nature and attributes. The gods are not isolated entities working independently of each other. They are always interconnected even though they may be working from different planes of existence or *lokas*.

When gods are viewed as separate isolated entities it is in fact a fragmentary view of Hindu metaphysics. This view invites an unjust polytheistic view upon the total picture of the gods. The gods are interconnected and must be seen in that context alone. It is at this point that the Vedānta begins its formulation of the Unitary Consciousness that pervades the universe.

For most Hindus sacrificial rites are performed for one or more gods. As a general rule Hindus do not offer these sacrifices to the supreme *brahman*.

3.8 The Hindu Experience of Sacrificial Mysticism in South Africa

By virtue of vocation the present researcher has had ample opportunities to observe the types of rituals practised by the South African Hindus. There are large sections of this community that are economically disadvantaged. Such people also harbour various insecurities involving food, clothing and shelter. Yet there are many who seek spiritual security to overcome evil forces and Black Magic. Guilt, anxiety and the sense of sin that is picked up in day-to-day living may also accumulate beyond the average human capacity to bear them. This becomes problematic. Often the Hindu would seek out a priest or a ritual to address these insecurities.

Importantly, the priest that one would generally encounter in the South African context would be one that is tradition-bound rather than someone that follows scripturally ordained rituals. To be more focussed on this point it can be said that the South African Hindu priest would not address the above problems of the devotee with the ritualistic solutions that are specifically prescribed in a work like the Atharva Veda. He has very little or no knowledge of those rituals. Rather he seeks redress in tradition-inspired rituals and astrology. These sacrificial rituals are an inheritance he has gained from his forefathers that go back to their native villages in India.

The important question that the South African Hindu has to ask himself or herself is : Can these rituals effect a cure for their malady? More importantly for spiritual growth : It is possible for the present tradition-bound ritual to elevate the devotee's mind from its involvement in gross mysticism to a subtler and more sublime height of higher mysticism?

The present writer's long encounter and experiences may be stated as follows: Tradition-bound rituals that involve penances like fasting, fire-walking, being pierced with needles, etc. have all contributed in some measure or the other in relieving the tensions of guilt and sins. They have imparted some purity and faith to the individuals concerned. But most of these devotees remain

stagnant at this level. They become too dependent on the priest for every common insecurity. Furthermore, this type of ritual develops into an obsession that makes the devotee religiously insecure without it. This accounts for stagnation at this level. Spiritual stagnation is a serious problem in the practice of mysticism. This work addresses this challenge at a later stage (see Chapter 5).

In the last two decades there has been an increase in the number of both lay and academic writers producing books or articles on the South African Hindus. Almost in all these works as well as in the South African electronic and print media Hinduism has been portrayed as a religion of sacrificial rituals. A typical example of this approach may be found in the nationally and internationally circulated article, *Hinduism in South Africa* (Maxwell, Diesel and Naidoo : 1995 : 177) in which the authors have sections for astrology and the various rituals like fire-walking, etc. that are practised by the South African Hindus. It is a tendency to evaluate and write about a religion from the evidence that is before such researchers. In this respect the above authors are correct in discussing the rituals at some length. In contrast with this many such authors have had very little or no contact with the higher aspects of Hindu mysticism in South Africa. The above authors, for example, acknowledge the practice of higher mysticism like contemplation and meditation but discuss it with brevity (Maxwell, Diesel and Naidoo : 1995 : 191). Perhaps they have not encountered enough of higher mysticism to write adequately about it. On the other hand this researcher feels that the practitioners of such mysticism who belong largely to the Neo-Vedānta Movements are reticent about 'advertising' themselves. Yet a fuller picture of Hinduism in South Africa should include more of its aspects of higher mystical practices which include introspection, contemplation and meditation. These are practices which are encouraged and in fact practised by a large number of devotees, moreso those that are affiliated with the Neo-Vedānta Movements.

CHAPTER FOUR

Vedāntic Analysis of the Inner Being : Its Implications for Mystical Development

4.1 Pañchakośas : Important Theme of Taittirīya Upanishad

How does Hinduism view the inner nature of the human person? This 'inner nature' is a subject that is vital for the exploration of Hindu mysticism. Of the ancient primary texts of Hinduism it is the Taittirīya Upanishad that takes up this subject with an analytical stance. Subsequent commentators like Shankara have added greater meaning and interpretation to these texts. Furthermore, rich insights and innovative ways of explaining these concepts have been given to us by Vivekananda, Aurobindo, Radhakrishnan, Dasgupta and others. Authors that have specialised in reconciling scientific insights with religious theories like Fritjof Capra, Ken Wilber, Gary Zukav *et al* have in some way or the other drawn ideas from this Upanishad. These authors are now being read by an increasing number of South African Hindus. This researcher feels that Ken Wilber's work *The Atman Project - A Transpersonal View of Human Development* is an excellent modern exposition of a theme similar to the *pañchakośa* model. This work may be considered a useful supplement that may be used with profit in understanding the *pañchakośa* model which forms the basis of this chapter.

In the Taittirīya Upanishad the human being is described as a formulation of five sheaths or the *pañchakośas* (*pañch* meaning five and *kośas* is sheaths). These five sheaths are the body, vital energy, mind, intellect and bliss. This is the stratified realm of the inner being. Most importantly, at the core of these sheaths there lies the *ātman*, the divine focus present in all beings.

This researcher has selected this model of *pañchakośas* on account of its analytical details. Another model that may be useful but without this range of multi-layered detail is the states of consciousness explained in the Mandukya Upanishad. This Upanishad surveys the whole of human experience through a study of the three states of waking, dream and dreamless sleep, and reveals the *ātman*, the divine focus in beings, as *turiya* or the ‘fourth’ as it puts it, as pure consciousness, eternal and non-dual. This alternate model, though devoid of the *pañchakośa* details, may assist usefully with secondary interpretations of the present model under consideration.

4.2 Upanishadic Concept of Interconnectedness

Hindu concepts of God appear in a graded stage. This formulation may be likened to a triangle where at the base there would be the grosser manifestations of divinity. Moving up this hierarchical structure there are subtle and subtler manifestations of divinity. At the apex of the triangle is *brahman* which is infinitely subtle. The word *brahman* is derived from the Sanskrit root *bhri* - to grow - and thus suggests an all-pervading Reality that is the Supreme Consciousness. Though *brahman* is beyond description, the Upanishads for conceptualization purposes alone, describes it as ‘unformed, immortal, moving’ (e.g. Br. Up. 2.3.3). Though it transcends motion, the sense of ‘aliveness’, ‘vibrancy’ and ‘infinity’ are associated with it. *Brahman* as the all-pervading divinity is fundamental to the Hindu world-view.

The entire phenomenal existence, with its prodigious diversity and its layers of subtlety, is viewed as having *brahman* as its still core, ‘formless beyond form’, pervading all forms and enlivening all of existence. It pervades the entire existence because it is infinitely subtle. To use an idiom of the Vedānta : Just as light pervades an expanse of water so *brahman* pervades the worlds (*lokas*).

While this central core is still, everything on the periphery, that is, beings, objects, etc. work in an interconnected and dynamic way (Capra : 1985 : 141). Interconnectedness and mutual dependence are intrinsic to Hindu ethos. For Vivekananda, “one atom in the universe cannot move without dragging the whole world along with it.” (CW3 : 1979 : 269). The Vedānta emphasizes this theme. We cannot neglect or overlook this central concept as it has great implications for applied mysticism or what Vivekananda called ‘Practical Vedānta’.

The stupefying multiplicity found in phenomenal existence, that is, beings, objects, activities, circumstances, etc. cannot be viewed as autonomous elements, self-reliant and unrelated to the whole. Diversity is meant to be the compulsion that directs the mind to this unitary consciousness. Sudarshan (1995 : v) uses a typically Indian metaphor to describe this :

“The tail feathers of the peacock, whether fanned out or laid back, attract our eye to the brilliant, iridescent colours and their pattern. But the effect of the pattern is to point the beholder’s eye to their functioning as a whole, to the centre with the spokes. In this manner, the compelling attraction to detail is the very mechanism to redirect our vision to the unity in this diversity. When one sees the peacock, one is seeing the whole without losing any of the attraction of the parts. This is to be contrasted to the mundane (or profane) experience of everyday life when details compel us to lose the sense of unity, since it tends to distract. It is to be noted that the centre has none of the detailed iridescence of the tail feathers; it is almost bare of details. But when the peacock dances while the tail feathers move, it is the whole that moves.”

Hindu mystics have never viewed diversity as an impediment to spiritual progress. The larger vision of existence made them celebrate diversity. In the absence of this vision diversity becomes an impediment to mystical growth.

4.3 Microcosm and Macrocosm

The Vedāntic mystics saw no sharp demarcation between the external objective world and the internal subjective world of man. For the convenience of analysis it would be necessary to look upon these aspects as two entities within an overall life cycle. Coomaraswamy (quoted in Wilber : 1989 : 3-4) states that :

“The life or lives of man may be regarded as constituting a curve - an arc of time-experience subtended by the duration of the individual Will to Life. The outward movement of this curve ... - the Path of Pursuit - the Pravritti Marga - is characterized by self-assertion. The inward movement - ... the Path of Return - The Nivritti Marga - is characterized by increasing Self-realization. The religion of men on the outward path is the Religion of Time; the religion of those who return is the religion of Eternity.”

Swami Vivekananda’s analysis of the first questions that arose in the human mind were about the external world. As the questions went deeper and deeper, the external manifestations failed to satisfy the human mind, and finally the quest turned inward and the quest was directed to man’s own inner nature. From the macrocosm the question was reflected back to the microcosm; from the external world the question was reflected back to the internal. From analysing the external world man is led to the analysis of the internal world (CW2 : 1976 : 212). In this context the internal world is the microcosm.

In the Vedānta the ‘macro’ concept is called *samaṣṭi* and the ‘micro’ is the *vyāṣṭi*. Together they constitute the whole. One is incomplete without the other. One of the fundamental arrangements encapsulated in the macrocosm-microcosm relationship is that whatever exists in the macrocosm also exists in its scaled-down version in the microcosm. Just as in relation to the expansive

universe, the underlying Consciousness is *brahman*, so its microcosmic entity, the *ātman*, is the foundational reality underlying the conscious powers of the individual, the inward ground of the human soul . The human soul is pluridimensional in nature (*pañchakośa*). The *ātman* is the super-reality of the individual soul (*jīva*) (Radhakrishnan : 1990 : 73-74). In essence all beings have as their divine focus the *ātman* which is an inseparable spark of *brahman*. In this arrangement the all-pervading *brahman* touches the core of all beings and may be realized there as the *ātman*.

4.4 The Nature of the Human Soul

It is a well established principle that the *ātman* is the ground reality or the Consciousness within the soul. In the Vedānta the soul (*jīva*) has a composite definition. For an analysis and evaluation of the soul this study would consider the definition given in a passage of the Tait. Up. (3.10.5) :

*sa ya evaṁ-vit asmāl lokāt pretya, etaṁ
 annamayam ātmānam upasaṁkrāmya, etaṁ
 prāṇamayam ātmānam upasaṁkrāmya, etaṁ
 manomayam ātmānam upasaṁkrāmya, etaṁ
 vijñānamayam ātmānam upasaṁkrāmya, etaṁ
 ānandamayam ātmānam upasaṁkrāmya, imān
 lokān kāmānnī kāmārūpy anusañcaran,
 etat sāma gāyannāste
 hā vu hā vu hā vu*

“He who knows this (brahman), on departing from this world, proceeding unto that self which consists of food, proceeding unto that self which consists of vital energy, proceeding unto that self which consists of mind, proceeding unto that self which consists of understanding, proceeding unto that self which consists of

bliss, goes up and down these worlds, eating the food he desires, assuming the form he desires. He sits singing this chant (sāman) : Oh wonderful! Oh wonderful! Oh wonderful!"

Several major translators, commentators and mystical essayists like Gambhirananda, Radhakrishnan, Hume and others have rendered the above passage in a similar translation. This frees the translation of unnecessary disputes.

The opening line of this passage is a realization emerging from the previous passage (Tait. Up. 10.4) which asserts that the seer who intuitively knows *brahman* as existing uniformly in the human individual (microcosm) and in the sun (representing the macrocosm), such a seer is identified with the all-knowing *brahman*. At the level of microcosmic experience the seer also perceives *brahman* as the *ātman* pervading his entire being, that is, the multi-layered strata of his soul. This unitary experience encompasses the external objective and the internal subjective worlds. Some analysts refer to this as an 'omnijective' experience. This passage ends in a rapturous chant, *Oh Wonderful!*, expressing the ecstasy that the mystic experiences on realizing the truth of unitary Consciousness.

4.5 The *Kośas*

In the analysis given in this passage the soul is composed of five integrated layers or *kośas* (body, energy, mind, intellect and bliss). *Kośas* literally means sheaths. Just as a scabbard covers a sword so do the *kośas* cover or obscure its divine focus - the *ātman*.

In the actual passage the word *kośa* is not used. It is purposely replaced by the word *ātman*. This is simply because the mystic at this state of final illumination 'sees' the *ātman* in all the five sheaths. The passage is articulated from this standpoint of development. Furthermore, it cannot

be concluded that the full conceptualization of the *kośa* had not occurred by the time this passage is expressed. In fact the word *kośa* is used in an earlier passage (Tait. Up. 1.4.1). It also has references elsewhere. (Pai. Up. 2.5). The word *ātman* in this context must also be taken to mean *kośa* since this passage comes technically under the ambit of an *anuvṛtti* which is “an assumed conclusion or a deduction taken for granted on account of a previous discussion.”

The *kośas* have a twofold function. Firstly as coverings of the *ātman* they have their individual focus of ego which generates desires for each *kośa*. Such desires like hunger, thirst, the craving for various types of pleasures are considered to be manifestations of the ego. The intricate workings of desire, both gross and subtle, stem from the ego-sense. The *ātman* transcends the entire working of desires and the ego. The *ātman* is free from desires. It lies beyond the ego.

These desires are *karma* generating agents. *Karmas* have to be fulfilled within the domain of *saṃsāra*. Hence under the impulse of desires and ego the soul is constantly subject to suffering and rebirth. The ego is therefore an encumbrance for the attainment of liberation from *saṃsāra*.

This arrangement of the soul as being involved with desires and the ego and its subsequent burdens is only one dimension of the *pañchakośa* model. It is an aspect that is often stressed leaving researchers with the notion that misery and limitations are the only components of the *pañchakośas*. This brings us to the second, and undoubtedly the most important, insight into the *pañchakośas*. This second dimension is precisely where mystical resources lie hidden. In the entire *pañchakośa* profile each sheath has lodged within it a ‘liberating mechanism’ which when invoked through mystical techniques, individually and collectively, could transform the bound soul or *jīva* into a *jīvanmūkta* or a soul that is liberated from *saṃsāra* or the cycle of births and deaths. It is in this capacity that we discover the supreme value of the *pañchakośas*. They contain

intrinsic keys at each of five layers to unlock the soul's potential and lead it to total emancipation.

As each sheath is studied, analysed, engaged and experienced by the mystic he or she undergoes corresponding changes in spiritual insight. Inner vistas are opened up and greater spiritual resources are discovered. It is these mystical resources that are responsible for self-mastery and the transformation of the mystic's personality.

The *kośas* cannot be evaluated in a fragmentary way. Each *kośa* lends meaning and support to the others. Though each sheath may be disentangled, analysed and evaluated for its mystical content it is always approached with a holistic topology in mind.

4.6 Arrangement of the *Kośas*

The Sanskrit names of the *kośas* have etymological and functional considerations. Arranged from the outermost sheath to the innermost sheath they are listed as follows :

<i>annamayakośa</i>	-	the gross physical body.
<i>prāṇamayakośa</i>	-	the vital energy.
<i>manomayakośa</i>	-	the mind.
<i>vijñānamayakośa</i>	-	sheath of the intellect.
<i>ānandamayakośa</i>	-	sheath of bliss.

For the purposes of Vedāntic classification and study these sheaths fall into three categories (Pai. Up. 2.5) :

Stūla śarīra or the gross body comprising the *ānandamayakośa*.

Sūkṣma śarīra or *linga śarīra* or the subtle body which is made up of the *prāṇamayakośa*, *manomayakośa* and *vijñānamayakośa*.

Kāraṇa śarīra or causal body comprising the *ānandamayakośa*.

Due to each sheath having a different degree of subtlety or 'density' the arrangement is such that as they proceed from the outer to the inner nature of beings "*the succeeding one fills the preceding one*" - *tena eṣa pūrṇah* (Tait. Up. 2.2.1). Modern commentators mention them as being like the segments of a collapsible telescope, the physical sheath being the outermost and the sheath of bliss being the innermost (Nikhilananda : 1968 : 91). The inner sheaths are subtler than the outer and just as a fine substance permeates a denser one, so each 'inner' sheath permeates all the 'outer'. Thus, when it is said that the sheath of vital energy is 'inside' the gross physical body, it actually means that the former is subtler than the latter and therefore permeates it. In comparison with this the core of these sheaths, the *ātman*, is infinitely subtle. It is completely detached from the sheaths yet it permeates them all.

4.7 Pañchakośa Symbolism in the Tait. Up.

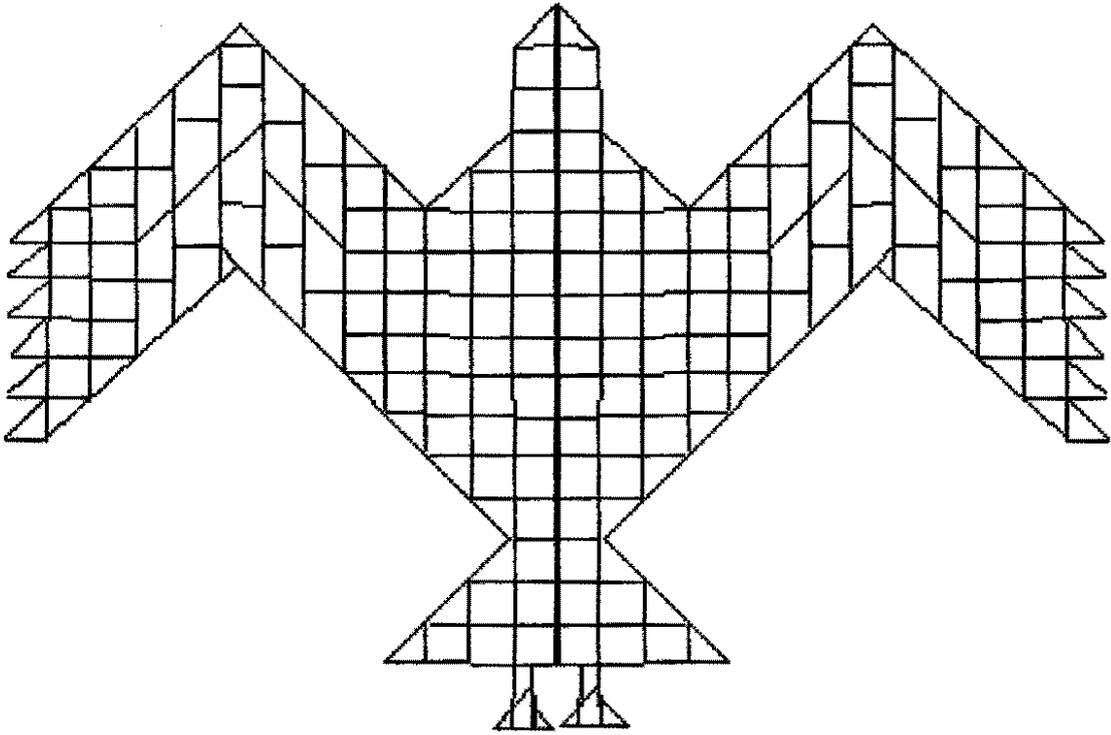
In the context of sacrificial mysticism we noted that the Vedic Aryans constructed their fire altars in shapes that resembled various elements of nature or synthesized objects used in their everyday religious life. The ancient geometrical details of some of these fire altars have been preserved in the *śulbasūtras*, which are manuals for the construction of these altars used in the *samhītā* period. These shapes are of special importance because they deal with the rules for measurements and construction of the altars and with many geometrical propositions and problems relating to rectilinear and other types of figures. The Vedic geometers known as *śulbavids* were so proficient in the subject that they discussed a large number of cases of *transformations* of figures - squares into rectangles, triangles, trapeziums and circles, and vice versa. The Yajurvedins were primarily interested in the details of the fire altars and the fire sacrifices. Of them the Black Yajurvedins of the Taittirīya School were the most prolific producers of *śulba*-texts (Sen and Bag : 1983 : 2-3).

One of the key figures used by the Taittirīya School for the construction of fire altars is that of the bird image. The outer contours of an eagle or hawk with outstretched wings formed the model for the brick placement for such a construction (see diagram 1). Sitting for long and elaborate rituals before such a configured altar generated an image-building influence in the practitioners of such rituals. Gradually the bird image became a vibrant symbol ready for use in their creative minds.

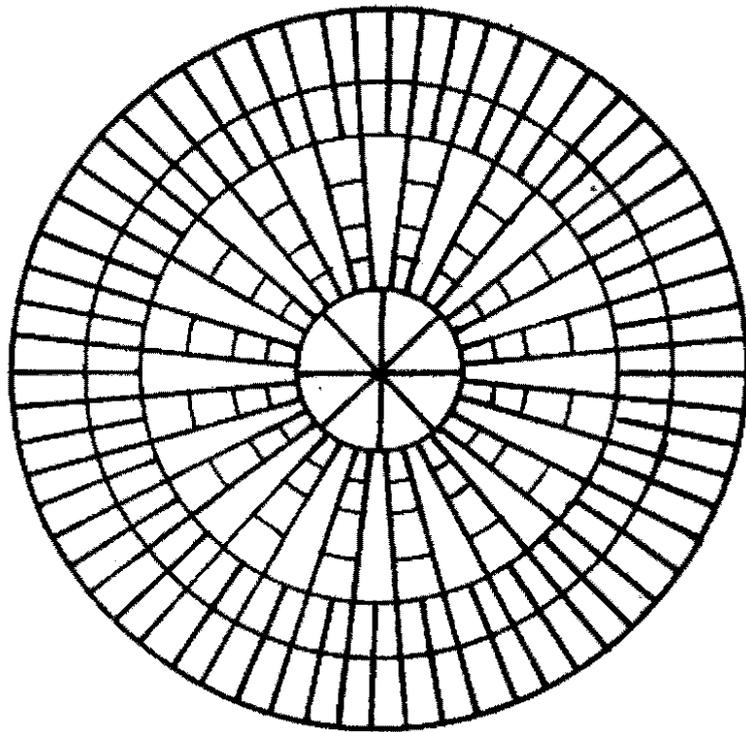
When gross rituals grew into subtler and more internal forms of personal introspection and meditation the bird image was spontaneously picked up and the inner contours and experiences were then related in terms of this image. This development is fully evident in the Tait. Up. It is important to emphasize that the bird symbol is a crucial link between the ritual and internal meditation as also the movement from the gross to the subtle.

Once the outer contours of the bird-image have been set the Tait. Up. creates four other concentric bird images within the outer lines. Each image represents a sheath. In this way the five sheaths were given a generalized profile. From the outer to the inner images each sheath is arranged in the order of increasing subtlety. But just as a bird has a head, two wings, a trunk and a tail, so also every sheath is represented as having five parts. This constitutes the details. The *ātman* is at the core of this arrangement (Tait. Up. 2.1.1; Radhakrishnan : 1980 : 543).

Diagrams of Fire Altars



1. Bird Image : Symbol of Spiritual Transformation



2. Fire Altar representing the wheel of *samsāra*

The above *pañchakośa* configuration is perhaps one of the earliest diagram or map of the inner nature of human beings. This model is a basic necessity for the analysis and evaluation of the Hindu psyche. Its implications have immense possibilities for psycho-analysis and the generation of psychological tools for people in general and Hindus in particular. For the Hindus this symbol would be religiously and culturally acceptable. Furthermore, since the image is drawn from nature it has an eco-sense making it all the more valid in our present eco-conscious society where natural representations are appreciated.

The bird image with its outstretched wings represents flight or the capacity to soar. With each image being depicted as a bird in flight the indication is that there should be constant 'mystical flight' from one level to another till the *ātman* is reached. At each sheath the mode of understanding and its correlative sense of reality are in the main generated by intricate mystical transformations of the previous level. Each emergent sheath is thus not so much a complete negation of the previous sheath, nor does it come from the previous level, but rather is a transformation and transcendence of it. The *pañchakośa* model encapsulates a sequence of mystical transformations, the totality of which leads to the realization of the *ātman*. Importantly, each ascending step in this sequence represents a correspondingly higher insight into mystical truth. For Histon Smith (quoted by Wilber : 1980 : 42), "*Symbolism is the science of the relationship between different levels of reality and cannot be precisely understood without reference thereto*". The *pañchakośa* model is therefore not a static symbol unconnected with mystical growth. It is vibrant both as a living image and a motivational symbol. In essence it is a symbol of total spiritual transformation.

4.8 The *Annamayakośa*

The physical body with all its anatomical parts and physiological systems which is perceived and analysed by the five senses is the *annamayakośa*. The word *anna* means food. It is so designated

because it is the product of food, lives on food and dies without food. It is also said to be *'filled with the essence of food'* (Tait. Up. 2.2.5).

Importantly, the physical dimensions of the five senses are located in the physical body and through them human beings experience the external world of sight, smells, taste, etc. The physical body serves as the medium of experience in the waking state of consciousness. But this external sense of consciousness is just one aspect of our awareness. The subtle body (*sūkṣma śarīra*) serves as a medium of dream experience and the causal body (*kāraṇa śarīra*) as the medium of dreamless sleep experience (Satprakashananda : 1981 : 50). Therefore it is only through the physical body that consciousness or awareness flows to the external world. Shankara states, *"Know this gross body to be like a house to a householder, on which rests man's entire dealing with the external world."* (VC 90).

The primary texts, as well as commentators like Shankara, have generated classifications of the human body. These are in a sense generalized classifications and are there only to support metaphysical arguments. They cannot be compared with any astute anatomical analysis. According to these Vedāntic classifications the human body is made up the five organs of perception (*jñāna indriyas*) (i.e. ears, skin, eyes, tongue and nose) and the five organs of action (*karma indriyas*) (i.e. mouth, hands, feet and the organs of evacuation and procreation). Shankara's view is that the physical body comprises seven ingredients - marrow, bone, fat, flesh, blood, skin and cuticle, and consisting of the following limbs and their parts - legs, thighs, chest, arms, the back and the head (VC 72-73). For Vedāntic analysis it is important to spell out such details as this contributes towards giving the body the definite 'gross' definition that is necessary for any further metaphysical analysis.

The Uṣ. recognize the uniqueness of the body and extol its features in several passages. The Ka. Uṣ. refers to the body as the 'city with eleven gates':

puram ekādaśa - dvāram ajasyāvakra - cetasaḥ'
anuṣṭhāya na śocati vimuktasca vimucyate.

"There is a city with eleven gates belonging to the unborn one of unwavering consciousness (ātman). He who meditates on Him grieves no more. Released (from the bonds of ignorance, desire, karma, etc.) he becomes free."

The eleven gates of the *annamayakośa* are the two eyes, two ears, two nostrils, mouth, the reproductive opening and excretory organ, the naval and lastly the opening on the crown of the head (which may compare with the sagittal suture of modern anatomy). All these orifices have metaphysical implications. It is asserted in the Vedānta that at the time of death all those souls (*jīvas*) that have not yet attained *mokṣa* depart from the physical body through any one of these orifices except the opening on the crown of the head which is technically called the *vidṛti*. Only liberated souls leave the body through this specific opening (Satprakashananda : 1981 : 50; Radhakrishnan : 1990 : 636).

The Bhagavad Gita which is undoubtedly a more well used scripture than the Uṣ. has simplified the above concept by referring to the body as 'the city of nine gates'. Whatever the enumeration be, it is important to point out that the entire focus of the body is its central core, that is, the *ātman*. The 'gates' are also used as a metaphor. Just as the king's presence in his capital makes the entire country functional so the presence of the *ātman* within the human being makes all his or her psychophysical systems operational and meaningful.

4.9 Location of the *ātman* in the *Annamayakośa*

From ancient times consciousness has been associated with either the brain or the heart, that is to say, that either of these organs are the physical basis for consciousness. Charaka and Susruta, the chief medical authorities of ancient India, regarded the heart as the seat of consciousness. Aristotle held a similar view. In some Yoga and Tantric points of view the seat of consciousness is the brain (Seal : 1915 : 218-219). In so far as this research is concerned this issue must be settled as it has serious implications in mystical analysis. The primary texts of Hinduism are clear on this point. Passages in the Ups. constantly remind the student that it is the heart that is the definite seat of consciousness. The Ka. Up. (2.3.17) emphasizes this point :

*anḡuṣṭhamātraḥ puruṣo'antarātma
sadā janānām hṛdaye sanniviṣṭaḥ
tam svac charirat pravṛhen muñjad
iveṣṭikām dhairyeṇa
tam vidyāc chukram amṛtam tam
vidyāc chukram amṛtam.*

“The puruṣa (or ātman) the size of a thumb, the inner Self, abides always in the hearts of men. Him one should draw out (locate) with skill, from the body, (as one may do the wind from the reed). Him one should know as the pure, the immortal, yea, Him one should know as the pure, the immortal.”

The supremely authoritative text leaves us with no room for dispute. In the Vedānta it is also an understood principle that when the word ‘heart’ is mentioned in the text it does not refer to the physical heart. It means the *core of our being in the region of the heart*. In the principles and practice of meditation it is important that this point is carefully settled.

4.10 *Annamayakośa* - the Anatomical and Physiological Basis for *Mokṣa*

The Vedānta and indeed later Hinduism has been consistent in stating that *mokṣa* is the privilege of human beings. Lower orders of animals have neither the capacity nor the urge for this realization. The Ai. Up. (1.2.3) states, “*man is well formed, indeed man is truly fit for righteous deeds*”. The very purpose of having a human body is for the attainment of *mokṣa*. The Srimad Bhagavatam (11.9.29) urges human beings to fulfil their spiritual potential by attaining *mokṣa* :

“The wise man having after many births obtained this extremely rare human body, which though delicate is yet conducive to man’s Supreme Good, should forthwith strive for mokṣa before the body, which is always subject to death, chances to fall away; for sense-enjoyment is obtainable in any body.”

This approach to the body is basically from the metaphysical angle. The frontiers of human knowledge have moved to new horizons. Now and even in the future explorations of the human body will be integrated and therefore interdisciplinary. It will bring together not only anatomists and physiologists but also psychologists and religious leaders and in fact experts from many other professions. The concept of the body will find constant review and re-evaluation.

Since this study is a serious attempt to place mystical data within rational or scientific parameters it would consider a supportive view made on the *annamayakośa* by modern neurology. The leading British neurologist, Grey Walter, pioneered this insight which rationally collaborates the mystical potential of the *annamayakośa*.

Modern neurology has pointed out that from the stage of the higher mammals to man nature has been developing and perfecting the mechanism of a built-in equilibrium system, thermostatic to begin with and homeostatic later. Walter (1953 : 16) draws our attention to the following observations in neurology :

“The acquisition of internal temperature control, thermostasis, was a supreme event in neural, indeed in all natural history. It made possible the survival of mammals on a cooling globe. This was its general importance in evolution. Its particular importance is that it completed, in one section of the brain, an automatic system of stabilization for the vital functions of the organism - a condition known as homeostasis. With this arrangement, other parts of the brain are left free for functions not immediately related to the vital engine or the senses, for functions surpassing the wonders of homeostasis itself.”

After suggesting the above potential of the human brain Walter (1953 : 16) says that this potential is epitomized in a famous saying of the French physiologist Claude Bernard : *La fixité du milieu interieur est la condition de la vie libre.* (A fixed interior milieu is the condition necessary for the free life).

Developing this theory further Walter (1953 : 16) states :

“Those who had the privilege of sitting under Sir Joseph Barcroft at Cambridge owe much to him for his explanation of this dictum and its application to physiological research. We might otherwise have been scoffers ; for “the free life” is not a scientific expression. He translates the sayings into simple questions and guided us to the answers.

“What has the organism gained”, he asked, “by the constancy of temperature, constancy of hydrogen-ion concentration, constancy of water, constancy of sugar, constancy of oxygen, constancy of calcium and the rest?” With his gift for quantitative expression, it was all in the day’s work for him to demonstrate the individual intricacies of the various exquisitely balanced feedback mechanisms. But I recall in his manner a kind of modest trepidation, as if he

feared we might ridicule his flight of fancy, when he gave us this illustration of homeostasis and its peculiar virtue :

“How often have I watched the ripples on the surface of a still lake made by a passing boat, noted their regularity and admired the patterns formed when two such ripple - systems meet; . . . but the lake must be calm . . . To look for high intellectual development in a milieu whose properties have not become stabilized, is to seek . . . ripple-patterns on the surface of the stormy Atlantic.”

The complex process of homeostasis as a fixed interior milieu is not an end in itself. It is just a prerequisite for life forging ahead to higher and higher physical and psychological evolutionary levels. The highest level to be reached is the perfect ‘mechanical calm’ which is the physiological basis of *mokṣa*. Walter (1953 : 16) states the following as his conclusion :

‘And once again, as new horizons open, we become aware of old landmarks. The experience of homeostasis, the perfect mechanical calm which it allows the brain, has been known for two or three thousand years, under various appellations. It is the physiological aspect of all the perfectionist faiths - nirvana, the abstraction of the Yogi, the peace that passeth understanding, the derided, “happiness that lies within”; it is a state of grace in which disorder and disease are mechanical slips and errors.’

The neurological dimension to this study of the *annamayakośa* reiterates from a scientific perspective that some mystical information may be intellectually discovered by scientists. It is an indication that the borders between scientific discoveries and mystical insights are capable of being constructively opened up without in any way compromising the spirit of reason. A naïve reductionism on the part of science or a rigid dogmatic stance would certainly impair the quest for truth. The approach to truth could be innovative without being necessarily irrational.

4.11 *Annamayakośa* - an Ephemeral Object

Dependent on food for its existence the *annamayakośa* endures for as long as it can assimilate nourishment. It obeys the laws of nature and exhibits ephemeral qualities pertaining to weight, colour, form, strength, etc. It passes through the stages of birth, childhood, youthhood, adulthood, and the inevitable death. The Vedāntic scriptures are at great pains to emphasize the transitoriness of the body and in sharp contrast the eternality of the *ātman*. The *ātman* cannot be destroyed like the body. The Vedānta states (BG. 2.23-26) :

“Not wounded by weapons,

Not burnt by fire,

Nor dried by the wind,

Not wetted by water :

Such is the ātman,

Not dried, not wetted

Not burned, not wounded,

Innermost element,

Everywhere, always

Being of beings,

Changeless, eternal,

For ever and ever.”

Within the human person there are the elements of the mortal and the immortal. The world of mortal existence has a meaning and value, so does the immortal dimension of beings. What the Vedānta labours is that the value of permanence and immortality should never be attributed to the body. If we live under the illusion that the body lives for ever it is certainly a misplaced judgement. This chronic illusion is well addressed by the Vedānta which states that the value of

impermanence must be attributed to the body and that of permanence to the *ātman*. To juxtapose these values is ignorance (*avidyā*). Even people with terminal illnesses believe that the body will endure forever. The clearance of this illusion that surrounds the *annamayakośa* has its special implications for psychoanalysis and psychotherapy like grief therapy, counselling of the terminally ill and even counselling of the families of those that have lost a member.

Now we shall consider another aspect of applied Vedānta concerning the *annamayakośa*. In the Upanishads, the body is eulogized as a city or temple of God (Ka. Up. 2.2.1). It is also portrayed as an ideal vehicle for the attainment of *mokṣa* (Ai. Up. 1.3.3). These are authoritative statements of the primary texts. Yet we find established mystics like Shankara in the medieval period and Ramakrishna in the modern period speaking disparagingly about the physical body. Consider, for example, the following view of Shankara (VC 87) :

“This gross body is to be deprecated for it consists of skin, flesh, blood, arteries and veins, fat, marrow and bones, and is full of other offensive things.”

It is certainly a position that is in definite contradiction to the primary texts. The modern mystical voice of Ramakrishna also articulates a similar position (Nikhilananda : 1942 : 82) :

“Consider - what is there in a beautiful body? Discriminate and you will find that even the body of a beautiful woman consists of bones, flesh, fat and other disagreeable things. Why should a man give up God and direct his attention to such things? Why should a man forget God for their sake?”

Here are two opposing views. One from the primary texts and the other from respected mystics. This is a major contentious issue for researchers of the Vedānta and a matter of perplexity for the

actual practitioners of mysticism. How is it possible for two irreconcilable aspects to lie next to each other within the overall Vedānta?

The answers lie more in the practical techniques of Vedānta rather than in its theory. Firstly the mystics of the Hindu tradition, Shankara and Ramakrishna included, had the highest veneration for the primary texts. They are exemplars of the texts. They illumine the texts in different ways but do not contradict it. Importantly, these mystics are gurus of the 'non-physical' to their students. This means that their instructional techniques should be in consonance with mystical education. It should raise the levels of consciousness of the student from the gross-sensate level to subtler areas of reality. For those that are enmeshed in stubborn body-consciousness these mystic teachers employ such language. It is only a technique to effectively demolish the obstacle of body-consciousness that they resort to such measures. Such language has tautological value and is not meant in any way to contradict the primary texts. It is also important to note that such statements are made only to serious spiritual aspirants that are striving to transcend the *annamayakośa*. In the *pañchakośa* model spiritual growth is not possible without this step. The gross aspect of the *kośas* must be transcended in order to experience the 'non-physical'.

At the time of death the *annamayakośa* is detached from the other four *kośas*. In the Hindu context the physical body is disposed of according to the necessary Hindu rites. At the time of the funeral, either at the graveyard or crematorium, the priest usually articulates Vedic and other traditional prayers seeking God's blessings that the elements of the body may 'dissolve' into their source. The microcosmic human body is made up of five elements : earth, water, air, ether and fire. These elements are to 'dissolve' or return to their microcosmic source of the universe. The priest generally prays that this process occurs auspiciously and peacefully.

The remaining four *kośas* which carry with them the stored-up *karmas* of the individual moves with the momentum and direction of these *karmas*. If *mokṣa* is not attained then at the appropriate time the soul is reborn. The new body that it takes on is ‘manufactured’ in accordance with its latest *karmas*. In this way it continues its journey, unconsciously or consciously, until *mokṣa* is reached. In the context of the *pañchakośa* model it is important to note that the body is a crucial requirement for *mokṣa* to be attained. The *pañchakośas* without one of its aspects would not yield *mokṣa*. Therefore this model emphasizes the need and will for a vibrant physical body for this purpose. This model is therefore life-affirming.

In contrast with the above life-affirming view there are those individuals that have strayed from this ideal only to develop a life-negating view. This fixation together with their insecurities drives them to a precarious position. In the case of the South African Hindus the rate of suicides is exceptionally high. A total absence or neglect of the values enumerated in this model is a contributing factor to this state. Suicide is defined as an act in which a person intentionally kills himself or herself. According to the Vedānta and subsequent mystics each physical body in the cycle of reincarnation has to work out a certain quantum of *karmas*. A premeditated act to sever this natural process invites serious consequences. According to the Hindus suicide or *ātmahatyā* and abortions or *bhrūṇahatyā* are considered to be sins (Manu V : 89). Ramakrishna states (Nikhilananda : 1977 : 164):

“Suicide is a heinous sin, undoubtedly. A man who kills himself must return again and again to this world and suffer its agony.”

In Hinduism the life-negating attitude is a pathological condition. Suicides and para-suicide conditions are some of its manifestations. Religious counselling, which may be strengthened by the above position, can play a helpful role in rectifying mental health and in instilling beneficial values in those that are afflicted by such a malady. In doing so the full status of the

annamayakośa must be established and the value of *mokṣa* emphasized. Otherwise this approach to therapy would be a temporary step. The aspiration for the larger goal should reach its logical conclusion.

Further to the above it may also be suggested that the above Hindu position on suicide be taught to people in their ‘normal’ state of mental health. This would be a pro-active measure to strengthen their value system and faith. If this exercise is successful then it would endow the individual with a constant life-affirming attitude in which he or she respects the human body as a valuable vehicle for greater secular and spiritual excellence.

Thus the *annamayakośa* has complex ramifications. Its elements have vast implications for the theory and practice of mysticism. The human body is the basic gross vehicle for the mission of mystic realization. A deliberate affirmation of this point is a feature of Hindu mysticism.

4.12 The *Prāṇamayakośa*

Before attempting a definition of *prāṇamayakośa* it is essential to focus attention on the word *prāṇa*. From the viewpoint of Sanskrit etymology it means ‘vital force’ or ‘energy’. Indological translators have used a variety of words to render *prāṇa* into English : vital force, vital air, life-force, bio-energy, etc. These words put together give us some initial insight into *prāṇa*. But *prāṇa* is a concept - a functional concept of energy present in the entire microcosm and macrocosm. “He (*prāṇa*) is present in a grub, present in a gnat, present in an elephant, present in these three worlds (earth, the intermediate space and heaven), it is present in the entire universe.” (Br. Up. 1.3.22).

Prāṇa is the cosmic energy, the background energy of the universe. It is permeated by *brahman* and is therefore divine and conscious. It functions in accordance with the cosmic purpose. It is

subtle and cannot be perceived by sensory means. However, its gross manifestations are observable. In this context Vivekananda states (CW1 1984 : 146-147) :

“It is the prāṇa that is manifesting as motion; it is the prāṇa that is manifesting as gravitation, as magnetism. It is the prāṇa that is manifesting as the actions of the body, as the nerve currents, as thought force. From thought down to the lowest force, everything is but a manifestation of prāṇa. The sum total of all the forces in the universe, mental or physical, when resolved back to their original state is called prāṇa.”

4.13 The Infilling of the *Prāṇamayakośa*

The *prāṇa* that is present in the macrocosm is also present in the microcosm. There is no dichotomy between the two *prāṇas*. They function in an interdependent manner.

When applied to the human individual *prāṇa* is a more specific entity. It ‘fills’ the human person and works as an interdependent part of the *pañchakośas*. As it has been noted the Tait. Up. pictorially refers to each of the *kośas* as being in the shape of a bird. In this respect the *prāṇamayakośa* assuming such contours fills the physical frame (Tait Up. 2.3.1). Commenting on this passage Shankara states that the *prāṇamayakośa* and the other three infilling *kośas* are not actually made up of a head and so on (as in a bird), yet as molten metal is poured into a mould takes the form of the mould, so the *prāṇamayakośa* and the other *kośas* which lie within the *annamayakośa* may be imagined to be moulded after the latter (Shankara on Tait. Up. 2.3.1). Such a presentation also indicates that the *prāṇamayakośa* on being subtler than the gross human body permeates it. The Vedānta is careful to point out that in this context the *prāṇamayakośa* is not *brahman* or the *ātman*, but a mere limited principle of life which when operating in the human body takes on five separate functions.

4.14 The Five Divisions of the *Prāṇamayakośa*

In the Pr. Up. (3.1) it is recounted how *prāṇa* is born of the *ātman* (*ātman eṣa prāṇo jāyate*). As in the case of a person there is a shadow, so, this *prāṇa* is the shadow of the *ātman*. The Pr. Up. (3. 2-16) then proceeds to enumerate the fivefold functions of the *prāṇa*. All these *prāṇic* procedures become functional and meaningful on account of consciousness or the presence of the *ātman*.

The five *prāṇas* and their functions are enumerated as follows : *prāṇa*, *apāna*, *vyāna*, *udāna* and *samāna*. Descriptively they are the vital force which raises upwards (*prāṇa*); that which moves downwards (*apāna*); that by which these two are held together (*vyāna*); that which carries the grosser material of food to *apāna* and brings the subtler material to each limb (*samāna*) and that which brings up or carries down what has been drunk or eaten (*udāna*) (Grimes : 1989 : 264).

The foregoing translations are more literal in nature. They are useful in getting the initial insight into how this vital energy fills and becomes functional within the human person. These initial definitions are generalized and therefore inadequate for mystical analysis. One needs greater analysis of the five *prāṇas* in order to locate and evaluate mystical aspects.

In this context *prāṇa* (that is the first division of *prāṇa*, also known by the same name) is the vital force operative in the lungs and heart. It is responsible for respiration and the circulation of blood. It also activates all other divisions of *prāṇa*. *Apāna* functions below the heart and helps in the elimination of waste matter and the maintenance of an internal balance in so far as this process is concerned. *Samāna* is located in the digestive organs and is involved in the assimilation of food and drink. *Vyāna* (lit. the pervading one) is designated so because it pervades the entire body and operates on the nerves. It regulates *prāṇa* and *apāna* as their nexus. It is responsible for speech and work of great strength (Pr. Up. 3. 2-16; Satprakashananda : 1981 : 106). While the workings of the *prāṇas* should be understood for their subtle influence on the

body and for their mystical significance it must also be pointed out that the 'prāṇa-composure' of the body has always played a vital role in alternate systems of healing like the Indian Ayurveda. The imbalance of energy accounts for several illnesses.

4.15 The *Udāna Prāṇa* - its Mystical Significance

The functions of all the *prāṇas* are relevant to mysticism. Their harmonious workings are essential for a healthy body. Ill health is an obstacle for the aspirant of mystical truths.

From the above-mentioned five *prāṇas* we single out the *udāna prāṇa* for its special mystical implications especially in the death process. The *udāna* functions upwards from the feet to the head. It promotes growth, height and maintains the bodily heat. At the time of death the *annamayakośa* finds itself detached from the other *kośas*. It is the *udāna* that directs the death-process in which the physical body drops off and the remaining *kośas* under the force of *udāna* departs through one of the eleven 'gates' of the body. (Ka. Up. 2.2.1). The *udāna* then leads the remaining *kośas* (i.e. the individual in a disembodied state) to whatever region (*loka*) its *karmas* would take it. The following passage gives an overall view of this process (Pr. Up. 3.7) :

athaikayordhva udānaḥ
punyaṇa punyalokaṁ nayati
pāpēna pāpam ubhābhyām
eva manuṣya-lokaṁ.

"Now then udāna, when it is in its upward movement, leads to a virtuous world as a result of virtue to an evil world as a result of sin, and to the human world as a result of both."

For the mystic the death process is important. Hindus consider the death of a mystic to be the 'ideal death'. When the ideal becomes clear it serves as a model for lesser mortals. For the average Hindu death is still a fearful, frightening happening that has to be addressed with mystical insight and strength. The process of death has to be mastered on many levels. The function of the *udāna* in the death process needs careful consideration for this mastery to occur.

In the case of a mystic he or she, through constant practice, has a mind that is habitually attuned to the Supreme Being. It is not a state in which the mind wanders after everything else. It is a state of unwavering dedication to the Supreme (BG 8.8). Such a seer has his whole being established in the, "*Seer, the ancient, the ruler, subtler than the subtle, the supporter of all, whose form is beyond conception, who is sun-coloured and beyond darkness*" (BG 8.9). After stating this quality of mind of the mystic the Vedānta describes the 'death-model' of the mystic (BG 8.10) :

prayānakāle manasā 'calena
bhaktiyā yukto yogabalena cai 'va
bhruvor madhye prāṇam āveśya samyak
sa taṁ param puruṣam upaiti divyam

"He who does so (that is, having fixed his mind on the ātman), at the time of departure, with a steady mind, devotion and strength of yoga (mysticism) and setting well his vital force (prāṇa) in the centre of the eyebrows, he attains to this Supreme Divine Being."

Commentators are careful to state that this practice is possible only for those who choose the moment of death by the power of yoga or mysticism. Further to the above practice the Vedānta also emphasizes the full mastery of *prāṇa* by the mystic (BG 8.12) :

*sarvadvārāṇi samyamya
mano hṛdi nirudhya ca
mūrdhny ādhāyā 'tmanaḥ prāṇam
āsthito yogadhāraṇām*

“All the gates of the body restrained, the mind confined within the heart (where mental functions are checked), one’s vital force (prāṇa) fixed in the head and established in concentration by yoga (the practice of mysticism).”

Then uttering the *mantra* Aum which expresses the Absolute the mystic departs having completed a ‘successful death-process’ in so far as Hindu mysticism is concerned (BG 8.13) :

*aum ity ekākṣaram brahma
vyāharan mām anusmaran
yaḥ prayāti tyajan dehaṁ
sa yāti paramām gatim*

“He who utters the single syllable Aum, which is brahman, remembering Me as he departs, giving up his body, he goes to the highest goal (mokṣa).”

Thus we find that the functions of *prāṇa*, particularly those of *udāna* are intrinsically interwoven with this death-model. In actual practice the *prāṇas* are purified and directed by the will for this process to become effective. Since *udāna* is interconnected with every other element of the *pañchakośas* it does not function in isolation. Every other aspect influences it and contributes to its maturity for this process to happen.

Even to the Hindu there are scriptural and traditional variations to the death model. It is unlikely that any one conceptual system can be applied to all. But the above model, which is an overall picture, from the most important primary and secondary texts must stand. As such it is beyond reproach.

This model of the mystic's death has great implications for counsellors, doctors and family members that are confronted by the dying. These 'Hindu specific' elements which constitutes the fundamentals of the Hindu psychology of the dying may be developed into various therapies in death education and counselling. Such a basis would make the therapy relevant, intelligible and effectively communicable to the Hindu mind.

4.16 The *Prāṇa* and *Nāḍīs* : Their mystical Significance

The term *nāḍī* is another Sanskrit word with important mystical connotations that is difficult to render into English. *Nāḍīs* are like 'veins' that have their ramification throughout the subtle body. They may be classified as 'subtle veins' or 'subtle arteries' in which there is a flow of *prāṇa*. One the earliest Upanishads states that the *nāḍīs* are filled with white, blue, yellow, green and red fluids (Br. Up. 4.3.20). According to Dasgupta (1952 : 345), "*they (nāḍīs) are some kind of ducts, through which blood and other secretions flow, and many of these are extremely fine, being about a thousandth part of a hair in breadth.*"

In contrast with Dasgupta's view Satprakashananda (1977 : 106) points out that the analysis of the human system by the medical authorities of ancient India is rather psycho-physiological than anatomical. This may be one of the reasons why their physiological or anatomical terms do not correspond with those of modern medical science. He further adds that *nāḍīs* within this context means "*a vital channel of transportation or communication in the psycho-physical system.*"

Since these *nāḍīs* originate in the region of the heart some translators have rendered them as ‘arteries’. Radhakrishnan in his *Principal Upanishads* has translated them as ‘arteries’ in some texts and ‘veins’ in others. However, he leaves no doubt that the ‘arteries’ and ‘veins’ are aspects beyond the gross blood vessels.

Vivekananda uses the term ‘nerve fibres’ but makes it abundantly clear that by ‘nerves’ he does not mean the physical anatomical structures of the ‘nerves’. Furthermore, he states that these ‘nerve fibres’ are ‘channels through which afferent and efferent currents travel.’ They are channels in which prāṇic energy and mental impulses travel (CW1 1984 : 1963).

These *nāḍīs* form a network throughout the body (Pr. Up. 3.6) :

*hrdy hy eṣa ātmā, atraitad ekaśatam nāḍīnām,
tāsām śatam śatam ekaikasyām dvāsaptatir
dvāsaptatih pratiśākhā nāḍī sahasrāṇi bhavanti
āsu vyānaś carati.*

“This subtle body (associated with the ātman) is surely in the heart. There are a hundred and one of the (chief) nerves there. Each of them has a hundred divisions. Each branch is divided into seventy-two thousand sub-branches. Within them moves the diffused vital force (vyāna).”

The *nāḍīs* also play an important role in the death of a mystic. One principal *nāḍī* referred to as the *suṣumnā nāḍī* is located inside the spinal cord. At the time of a mystic’s death the vital energy (*prāṇa*) is directed by the *udāna* current along the *suṣumnā nāḍī*. The *prāṇas* then depart through the *vidṛti* aperture on the crown of the head (Mai. Up. 6.2.1). For such souls their microcosmic aspects merge with their macrocosmic counterparts thus freeing them from the

limitations of individuality and rebirth. Hindu mystics of this school therefore pay careful attention to the internal observance and purification of these *nāḍīs*. The Ka. Up. (2.3.11) supports the above position and adds that if the mystical potential of the *suṣumnā nāḍī* is not utilized optimally the practitioner of mysticism experiences rebirth :

*śatam caikā ca hṛdayasya nāḍyas
tāsām mūrdhānam abhiniḥśṛtaikā
tayordhvam āyann amṛtatvam eti
viṣvaññ ānya utkramaṇe bhavanti*

“The nerves of the heart are a hundred and one in number; One of them leads up to the crown of the head. Going upward through that nerve one gets immortality. The others that have different directions become the cause of death (i.e. saṃsāra, births and deaths).”

4.17 Prāṇa in Alternate States of Consciousness

Much of the data generated by orthodox Western psychology pertains largely to the psycho-physical system. Rene Guenon (quoted in Wilber : 1980 : 65) states that Western psychologists, “recognized . . . scarcely anything except the corporeal modality (the gross body-mind)”. Western psychologists aim at what Guenon calls the “corporeal individuality” which is similar to Aurobindo’s “physical ego”. Guenon is of the view that Western psychology deals with quite a restricted portion of the human individuality in which the physically natural faculties are in direct relationship with the corporeal modality. Under this arrangement it has developed methodological tools that are limited to the confines of such a relationship. As such it is incapable of expanding its exploration beyond this phase.

But is there a 'beyond'? "*The ordinary man,*" says Aurobindo, "*lives in his mind and senses (that is, gross body and mind) as they are troubled by a world which is outside him, outside his consciousness. When the consciousness subtilises, it begins to come into contact with things in a much more direct way, not only with their forms and outer impacts by which what is inside them, but still the range may be small. But the consciousness can also widen and begin to be first in direct contact with a range of things in the world, then to contain them as it were - as it is said to see the world in oneself and to be in a way identified with it. To see all things in the self and the self in all things . . . that is universalization.*" In the journey to *mokṣa* or a supreme identity with *brahman* there are several states of lesser identities that need to be experienced and integrated into the whole. These experiences lie beyond the physical realities in what the Vedānta calls the *sūkṣma śarīra* or subtle body (Wilber : 1980 : 65-66).

Prāṇa as the vital energy has its ramifications throughout the subtle body. The average person is inextricably intermeshed with the gross world. Such a mind is identified as a '*gross-reflecting mind*'. The *prāṇas* function largely at this level. They activate this level of consciousness. If a person lives habitually at this level the *prāṇas* in a sense '*stabilize*' their operations at this point. But *prāṇas* are capable of functioning at various other levels. As they ascent to other levels they correspondingly bring into the focus of awareness other states of consciousness or awareness that are not related to the gross physical awareness.

For Hindu mystical analysis we take recourse to the *Ups.* in which we find a combination of *prāṇic* and mind elements producing alternate states of experience. The *Sub. Up.* (4.1) informs us that there are '*ten hollows in the regions of the heart*'. These are the gateways for the functioning of *prāṇas*. In these hollows are established the chief *prāṇas*. When the mind of an individual is saturated with certain thoughts and is 'yoked' to *prāṇa* it travels through these hollows to produce a state of consciousness very much related to the thoughts. When the mind is yoked to

prāna (that is, the first of the five *prāṇas*) this condition makes a person experience a state of consciousness in which he sees vast open scenes of rivers and cities. This *prāna* is functioning through specific *nāḍīs* associated with that state. Likewise when this attention is yoked to *vyāna* the person has visions of gods and seers. When yoked with *apāna* he sees semi-divine and even evil beings. When yoked with *udāna* he sees the heavenly world and the deities. When yoked with *samāna* he sees the heavenly world with wealth of all kinds (Sub. Up. 4.1; Radhakrishnan : 1990 : 867-868).

The Ups. give a brief categorization of these various levels of inner realities. These states of consciousness form a vast potential for exploration, especially in the field of parapsychology. As far as the Vedānta and Hindu mysticism are concerned these states only represent the subtilization of an individual's awareness. It represents a meaningful milestone on the mystic's journey. Hindu mysticism emphasizes that these states, however wonderful they may be to the neophyte, must be transcended in order to reach *mokṣa*.

4.18 Reason for Studying the *Prāṇamayakośa*

The Vedāntic analysis of the *prāṇamayakośa* exposes its various functions. Radhakrishnan (1990 : 555) states, "*from materialism we pass into vitalism*" in which we discover the first subtle layer with its varied complexities. The *prāṇamayakośa* is essentially an energy system that operates from the gross physical body to the subtlest dimensions of the human person. When functioning through its various ramifications or *nāḍīs* it is capable of generating different levels of consciousness. For the mystic the potential lies in drawing these *prāṇas* away from gross experiences and directing them to subtler levels of inner awareness. In doing so the mystic must always keep in mind that the wondrous workings of *prāna* are a vehicle by which he or she may reach *mokṣa*.

The Vedānta is careful to point out that as the awareness becomes internalized and the vital energy comes into focus the student should never confuse this energy or *kośa* with the *ātman*. As a functional concept the *prāṇamayakośa* appears to be vibrant and conscious making it almost identifiable with the *ātman*. Yet the Vedānta is at great pains to point out the sharp difference between this *prāṇa* and the *ātman*. The *prāṇamayakośa* is only one of the five coverings of the *ātman*. It is made conscious by the presence of the indwelling *ātman*, yet it is never the *ātman* as such (Shankara on Tait. Up. 3.3.1).

4.19 The *Manomayakośa*

In the Vedānta *prakṛti* or primordial nature comprises matter. What distinguishes the complexity of matter is that its various aspects vibrate at different intensities. The *manomayakośa* or the mental sheath is considered to be a microcosmic aspect of primordial nature. As such it is matter, but only vibrating at a different rate. For Vivekananda, “*the mind and body are like two layers in the same substance, moving at different rates of speed. Relatively, one being slower and the other quicker.*” (CW1 1984 : 299). With this arrangement the mind is interconnected with all the aspects of the *pañchakośas* and functions interdependently of them.

According to the Vedānta the *manas* or mind is made up of the subtle essence of food (Ch. Up. 6.5.1):

*Annamaśitam tredhā vidhīyate,
tasya yaḥ sthaviṣṭho dhātus tat purīṣam bhavati,
yo madhyamas tan mūḥsam,
yo 'ṇiṣṭhas tan manah.*

“Food when eaten becomes divided into three parts. What is its grossest ingredient becomes faeces; its middle ingredient becomes flesh; and its subtlest portion becomes the mind.”

In this approach the uses of food are classified into three parts consisting of refuse matter rejected by the organism, nutritive ingredients assimilated by the physiological system and making up the *annamayakośa* and the subtle essence of food which goes to make up the *manomayakośa*. The Ups. mention that the subtle essence of this food enters the subtle body through *nāḍīs* like the *hitā nāḍī* situated in the region of the heart. It then sustains the mind like the gross aspects of food that sustain the body (Br. Up. 4.3.20; Swahananda : 1980 : 432).

It is important to point out that the Vedāntic concept of mind is not totally materialistic. It has its basis in food yet it is non-physical as such. Shankara (on Ch. Up. 6.5.1) states that the mind being produced from food is in this sense material (that is, it is a product of nature) and elemental. It is not a homogeneous whole that is eternal. It is subject to various fluxes as nature changes. Being material by nature the mind does not possess consciousness of its own. It is a sheath covering the *ātman* and is made conscious by its proximity with the *ātman*. The *manomayakośa* is made up of an aggregate of *vṛttis* or thought impressions such as desires, fancies, etc. A sample of these impressions are enumerated as follows (Br. Up. 1.5.3) :

“Desire, determination, doubt, faith, lack of faith, steadfastness, lack of steadfastness, shame, intelligence, fear, all this is truly mind.”

Other Ups. add to this list of impressions (Mai. Up. 3.5). The mind is said to be infinite on account of its countless modifications (Br. Up. 3.1.9). Such is the general nature of this ‘inner instrument’.

According to the Hindu analysis the mind has three levels of consciousness: subconscious, conscious, super-conscious. The conscious is that level of awareness from which a person makes decisions, choices and value judgements. Beneath the conscious lies the subconscious, hidden and unperceived, yet exerting its influence on the conscious. This is the permanent receptacle of the residuals of experience that lie within the mind.

According to Vivekananda (CW2 1976 : 268-269) the mind is like a lake, and every thought represents a wave upon that lake. Just as the waves on the surface of the lake rise and then decline and disappear, so these thought waves are continually rising in the mind-stuff and then disappearing. But they do not disappear forever. They become finer and finer, but they are all there, ready to start up at another time when called upon to do so. Memory is the process of calling back into wave-form some of those thoughts which have gone into that fine state of existence. In this way everything that has been thought, every action that has been done, is lodged in the mind; It is all there in fine form. When a person dies the sum total of these impressions is in the mind which again when taking on a new body in rebirth works upon that material body as a medium. The *jīva*, clothed as it were, with these impressions in the subtle body, passes out, and the destiny of the soul is guided by the resultant of all the different forces represented by the different impressions.

The subconscious mind is not necessarily a storehouse of evil only. It also has the past good and noble thoughts and impressions in fine form. So in the subconscious there is stored up both help for, and opposition to, the efforts at controlling the mind. Mystical practices at this level will be to reduce the opposition and strengthen the help (Buddhananda : 1999 : 106). Practitioners of Hindu mysticism pay careful attention to the observation, purification and control of these gross and finer waves in the mind.

The above discussion brings us to another point: the development of the mystic's character. The theoretical aspects of the *manomayakośa* provide the framework for this. In Hindu mysticism what is meant by "character"? To explain this one may develop the analogy of the lake. Waves do not merely disturb the surface of the water, they also, by their continued action, build up banks of sand or pebbles on the lake bottom. Such sandbanks are, of course, much more permanent and solid than the waves themselves. They may be compared to the tendencies, potentialities and latent states which exist at the level of the subconscious and unconscious areas of the mind. In Sanskrit these latent tendencies are called *saṃskāras*. The *saṃskāras* are developed by the continued action of the thought waves, and they, in their turn, create new thought waves - the process works both ways. For example, if the mind is exposed to constant fits of anger and resentment then these anger waves will build up anger-*saṃskāras*, which predisposes one for a constant expression of anger. A person with well-developed anger-*saṃskāras* is said to have a "bad temper". The sum total of these *saṃskāras* is in fact the character of the individual at any given moment. For mystical development it must be pointed out that just as a sandbank may shift and change its shape if the tide or current changes, so also the *saṃskāras* may be modified by the introduction of other kinds of thought-waves into the mind. The cultivation of pure, noble and divine *saṃskāras* is a necessary stage in Hindu mystical evolution. It forms the moral base for character development.

Above the conscious there is a third stratum, the super-conscious, where individual consciousness comes into contact with its divine nature or the *ātman*. The subconscious is guided by instinct, the conscious by reason, and the super-conscious by intuition. I-consciousness, or the ego, operates only on the conscious level. On the subconscious level it is unmanifested, while in the super-conscious level it almost vanishes (Adiswarananda : 1994 : 158).

The mind is subjected to the three *guṇas* or the three modifications of nature: inertia (*tamas*), passion (*rajas*) and tranquillity (*sattva*). The preponderance of one over the other two at any time affects the moods of the mind. *Tamas* overpowers the mind with dullness, *rajas* with agitation, while *sattva* gives the mind purity and stability. In regard to mystical insights *tamas* causes non-perception and *rajas* distorted perception, while *sattva* brings clarity of perception. The mind of each individual represents a specific composition of these three *guṇas*, and this composition determines the person's disposition. This disposition will include the nature of the individual's character, likes and dislikes, etc. The *guṇa* composition becomes altered as one changes his or her way of living. In the case of aspirants that seek mystic truths, an understanding of these *guṇas* becomes relevant as it influences the practical aspects of mysticism which should lead to purity and illumination.

Since the mind is an infilling of the *annamayakośa* it functions at various levels though its root is in the region of the heart. Later Vedānta speaks of six subtle centres of consciousness located along the spinal column known as *chakras*, or pictorially visualised as lotuses. These locations along the spine are at the base of the spine, at the level of the organ of generation, at the navel, at the heart, at the throat, the space between the eyebrows and the last is at the crown of the head.

These centres are like windows through which the mind perceives the outside universe. For mystic analysis when the mind dwells in the three lower centre, it broods only on eating, sleeping, lust, greed and other gross sense enjoyments. When it raises to the fourth, it feels spiritual longing and makes spiritual efforts. By raising higher, it eventually goes beyond the six centres and merges in the supreme consciousness.

According to Radhakrishnan (1990 : 555) mind or *manas* is in a state of evolution. It is 'rudimentary mind' or a pool of thought possibilities that are evolving towards spiritual perfection. Adiswarananda (1994 : 159) states :

"The basic urge of the individual consciousness is toward unity with the universal Consciousness, and so the natural flow of the mind is cosmocentric. But because of the blocking of the ego, the flow becomes obstructed, falls back upon itself and breaks into countless waves of negative emotions and urges, such as lust, anger, jealousy and possessiveness. Unable to be cosmocentric, the mind becomes egocentric."

4.20 The *Manomayakośa* and Imagination

Since the mind is an aggregate of impressions it follows that these impressions combine to form imagination or *vikalpa*. Impressions are never fossilized. They are vibrant and by their combinations they produce a prodigious diversity of images which is called imagination. For the mystic the faculty of imagination is a great inner tool that may be meaningfully employed for mystical growth.

In the lower orders of animals we do not come across any form of imagination akin to that of human beings. The nearest creature to us, the chimpanzee, cannot retain an image long enough to reflect on it, however clever it may be in learning tricks or getting food that is beyond its natural reach. The brain of the lion, tiger, rhinoceros and other powerful animals also lack the mechanism of imagination, or we should not be here to discuss the matter (Walter : 1953 : 2). It is only at the human level that imagination may be well developed. It is through the correct cultivation of imagination that the practitioners of mysticism develop the faculty of deep reflection on subtle truths. Vivekananda (1985 : 49) states, "*Imagination properly employed is our greatest friend; it goes beyond reason and is the only light that takes us everywhere*". For

Hindu mystics, and indeed for mystics all over the world, the purest imagination can only come from the thought of God. Pure imagination produces a pure mind. It is the pure mind alone that reflects the light of Consciousness.

4.21 The *Vijñānamayakośa*

The *vijñānamayakośa* (lit. the sheath of the intellect or *buddhi*) has been given a place of justified merit in the Vedānta. Technically speaking *vijñānamayakośa* is a sheath and the word *buddhi* refers to the faculty of mystic reasoning. Sometimes these words are used in an interchangeable way.

The Ups. have separated the functions of the mind from that of the intellect. *“Verily different from and within that which consists of the mind is the self, consisting of intellect (vijñāna). By that (intellect) this (mind) is filled.”* (Tait. Up. 2.4.1). The Ka. Up. (1.3.3-9) uses an image of a chariot to depict the function of the intellect. The *buddhi* is the charioteer driving the chariot of the body of which the *ātman* is the master. It is the *buddhi* that holds the reins of the mind guiding the organs, the horses, through the sensory world to the goal of *mokṣa*. This is the supreme value of the intellect.

In contrast with the above Shankara (VC 185) enumerates the limitations of the intellect :

“This vijñānamayakośa, which seems to be invested with the power of consciousness, is a modification of prakṛti (primordial nature). It is endowed with the function of knowledge and always wholly identifies itself with the body, organs, etc.

In this instance the intellect is a binding factor leading to saṁsāric existence. Its larger potential has not been developed for the purpose of *mokṣa*.

In separating the mind from the intellect the Vedānta points out that the mind is a repository of thoughts in which deliberations take place without its forthcoming decisions. It is '*mind-indecisive*' or a conglomerate of thoughts that have not matured into a decision. It is precisely at this point that the intellect takes over. It synthesizes these thoughts and produces a decision on the impending thoughts. It employs reason and understanding. It represents the capacity of discrimination between right and wrong, between the real and the apparent, between the temporal and the eternal, and in this *pañchakośa* model, between the *kośas* and the *ātman* (Satprakashananda : 1981 : 81; Nikhilananda : 1987 : 87). Intellect in this mystical context therefore means right determination or decision without doubt or even the slightest wavering of thoughts. Its intrinsic quality is conviction.

When a pool of thought possibilities arises in the mind it awaits the influence of the intellect for a decision. In order to accomplish this the intellect has to go through a few processes. Firstly, it has to *observe* the thought possibilities. This process is too important a point to be glossed over in mystical analysis. The capacity for '*witness-consciousness*' at this level is a psychological tool that is painstakingly cultivated by the Hindu mystic. It is only when the thoughts are observed and identified that they can be 'handled'. Unwanted thoughts may be rejected and congenial thoughts readily accepted. Action is to be taken on the decisions emerging from this process. The word *buddhi* refers to this entire process. In some people *buddhi* is in its rudimentary stage, underdeveloped and less used. But for mystic consciousness to be awakened the *buddhi* must be exercised time and again until it becomes the perfect psychological tool for self-upliftment. The Vedānta states that the underdeveloped *buddhi* is a foe to the aspirant. The developed *buddhi* alone is a friend in the mystical quest (BG 6.5) :

“A person should lift the (lower) self by the (higher) self (through buddhi) and not degrade the self. For verily this self (the developed buddhi) is the friend of the self and the self (undeveloped buddhi) is the foe of the self.”

When decision-making becomes firm and such decisions become implemented in correct action them it is said that the full power of *resolve* or *will* has been developed. A dissipated mind and an uncultured intellect are impediments in the formation of a strong will. Even in spiritual evolution a person’s attainments are in keeping with his or her ability to develop and exercise the will (Ch. Up. 3.14.1). For the mystic the will is always a supreme tool for ascension in the steep path of mystic enlightenment. Let us not for a moment overlook the element of *buddhi* in developing the will.

The Ka. Up. (1.3.12) states that the *ātman*, though in all beings, is not perceived by all. It is only perceived by those whose intellects have become pure and subtle. In this scheme the human intellect has multiple functions. Its first function is to be mixed in the phenomenal world, confining itself to the circle of sensible experiences. It admits the workings, logic and laws of this external world as the final truth. Such an intellect concerns itself only with the study of phenomena, that is to say, the appearances of things by way of sense-data. This exercise is always related to relations, processes and utilities. This humanly rational action is incapable of knowing what is, it only knows what appears to be. Through sense-data it forms concepts on their basis. Remaining at this level it is the gross intellect that is yet to approach any degree of subtle reasoning.

But reason is capable of yet another function. It must go beyond sense-experience and enter into the depths of being. It should be aware of things, not indirectly, through the medium of the senses or the relations based on them, but by becoming one with them. At this point reason must

take the sensible experiences as a starting point but should not be limited by it. The use of reason or intellect in this procedure of movement from the gross to the subtle then allows the attention to penetrate into the world of ideas, of mental symbols. But mental symbols never constitute knowledge of the *ātman*. They are indirect and approximate, yet helpful means of realizing the *ātman*. The *buddhi* or intellect has yet to discriminate and penetrate through the subtleties of this stage. It has to seek out the being behind these subtle mental waves. Here the intellect must be pure and sharp in the sense that it must be pointed towards the *ātman* with a mission to overcome the subtle obstacles of the inner nature. This is seen as an extension of the normal psychological experiences of the intellect. The Vedānta describes it as being “*beyond the perception of the senses but seizable by the (pure) intellect*” (BG 6.21). In this stage the faculty of reason or intellect in the *vijñānamayakośa* matures, or reaches its highest potential in which pure reason is transformed into intuition in order that the infinitely subtle *ātman* is realized (Radhakrishnan : 1989 : 200-201; Aurobindo : 1989 : 60-61). The term *vijñānamayakośa* is therefore laden with an entire process that starts from gross phenomenal discrimination among sense-experiences to directing the attention within the subtle domain of the mind and then going through yet another process of much subtler discrimination until it arrives at the Being behind phenomena. This process of intellectual development is the prerequisite for intuition - the ultimate faculty used by the mystic.

4.22 The *Ānandamayakośa*

Finer than the sheath of intelligence and even finer than that sheath, is the sheath of bliss (*ānandamayakośa*) (Tait. Up. 2.5.1). The *ānandamayakośa* is the fifth and last of the sheaths in the *pañchakośa* model. It is a subtle modification of nature (*prakṛti*) and its location is closest to the *ātman*. Due to its close proximity with the *ātman* it reflects one of the main ‘qualities’ attributed to the *ātman*, viz. that of bliss.

For the average person, that is one who is not a mystic, the chief features of this *kośa* is that of pleasure and rest. Pleasure is experienced when one comes into contact with an agreeable object or event. All these encounters and actions of good deeds (*karmas*) form mental impressions (*vṛttis*) which gather in a subtle state to form a repository in the *ānandamayakośa*. The *ānandamayakośa* is so designated because it reflects the bliss of the *ātman* and it is also the storehouse of pleasant mental impressions.

The effects of the *ānandamayakośa* can be felt in the three states of consciousness, viz. waking, dream and dreamless sleep. In dreamless sleep (deep sleep) one experiences the *ānandamayakośa* in an *unconscious* way. In this state one is totally unconscious of suffering of any kind. But the mystical practices enjoin that this state be explored and experienced not *unconsciously* as in deep sleep but *consciously* through inner penetration and awareness. Furthermore, the mystic is not interested in the pleasures that this state may bring on. If anything he or she would want to experience the pure bliss of the *ātman* that may be encountered at this level. A partial manifestation of the *ānandamayakośa* is known in dream sleep when the dreamer encounters pleasurable and agreeable objects. In this state the subtle waves of pleasure lodged in the *ānandamayakośa* are at work. Yet another manifestation of the *ānandamayakośa* is felt in the waking state when the senses come into contact with pleasant objects. (VC 207-208; Nikhilananda : 1987 : 89).

In a hierarchical and integrated system like the *pañchakośa* model the lower or grosser manifestations are strengthened and fulfilled by their union with the higher. The conscious and unconscious anticipation of joy or bliss is a psychological urge inherent in human life. The *ānandamayakośa* fulfils this need. It has two capabilities, that is, it could either contribute towards mundane pleasures and joys or if its fuller potential is explored and engaged through purification and discrimination it could yield the pure bliss of *brahman*. The mystic takes the

latter alternative. The mystic is also aware of the fact that the *ānandamayakośa* is a modification of nature. The bliss one derives from it may endure for a long time but it is never endless or eternal. This sheath must be ultimately transcended and the *ātman* realized. It is in the *ātman* alone that infinite bliss is to be found. The VP (8.1) states :

Happiness is of two kinds— relative and absolute. Of these relative happiness is a particular manifestation of a modicum of bliss caused by differences in the mental mode generated by a contact with pleasant objects . . . Absolute bliss is brahman alone.”

Another consideration for mystical knowledge is that the *ānandamayakośa* provides this approach with that state of subtlety or abstraction that leads to the gateway of intuition. The process of transcending the *ānandamayakośa* implies the beginning of intuition and the ultimate realization of the *ātman*.

4.23 The *Pañchakośas*, *Karma* and Reincarnation

The word *karma* is derived from its Sanskrit root *kṛi*, to do or to act. The doctrine of *karma* and rebirth forms an important part of the Upanishadic teachings and has exerted the greatest practical influence upon Hindu society from ancient times to the present day. The *karma* theory is in a sense complex. This complexity has led to various poor and unfounded notions even among the Hindus. Misrepresentations of the theory often lead to a belief in fatalism and a corresponding world-negating attitude. For the *pañchakośa* model to be fully functional this negative interpretation must be cleared and replaced by authentic data that is evident in the primary texts.

Nikhilananda (1989 : 27) is of the view that the doctrine of *karma* and rebirth is certainly an original contribution of Hinduism to the religious thought of the world. Its origins lie in one of the earliest Upanishads (Br. Up. 4.4.6) :

“According as one acts, according as one behaves, so does he become. The doer of good becomes good, the doer of bad becomes evil. One becomes virtuous by virtuous action, bad by bad action.”

At the very basic level the *karma* theory states that one enjoys the fruit of good actions and conversely one suffers as a result of bad deeds. But what inspires good or instigates the bad? The Upanishads identify this driving force of action or *karma* as being desire (Br. Up. 4.4.6) :

“Man is indeed filled with desire (kāma). As is his desire so is his resolution (kratu) and so is the deed (karma) he does. As is his action so is the result he reaps.”

Desires are the root of action. Desires also form the root of empirical existence (*samsāra-mūla*) and is responsible for taking the soul through almost endless births and deaths. With each birth and death new *karmas* are added on and old *karmas* worked out. In each cycle of rebirth the *pañchakośas* function only with their minimum potential. Each *kośa* being constantly engaged in desires keeps the souls bound to the level of *samsāra*.

In order to transcend *karma* and *samsāra* the *karma* theory develops a framework in which three types of *karmas* are identified and their efforts analysed for the purposes of *mokṣa*.

The first of these *karmas* is *sañchita karmas*. This is the accumulated *karma*, the stored up latent impressions of the past that will work itself out in a future life or lives. Vivekananda (CW2 : 346) explains the workings of this aspect of *karmas* as follows :

“Every thought that we think, every deed that we do, after a certain time becomes fine (subtle), goes into seed form, so to speak, and lives in the fine body in a potential form and after a time emerges again and bears its results. These results condition the life of man ... Our thoughts, our words and deeds, are the threads of the net which we throw around ourselves, for good or for evil. Once we set in motion a certain power, we have to take the full consequences of it. This is the law of karma.”

According to this aspect of the doctrine each individual is responsible for his or her own destiny, be it spiritual or temporal elevation or degradation, prosperity or adversity, enjoyment or suffering. Importantly, the law of *karma* functions at all levels encompassing the gross, subtle and causal bodies of the *pañchakośa*.

The second type of *karma* is *prārabdha karma*. This is the fructifying *karma*, the past impressions that are bearing fruit in the present life. Although the formulation for this fruit-bearing *karma* is unalterable, yet it admits to modifications in certain respects. A typical example of this is one’s natural height. No one can make a tall body short or a short body tall. However, these conditions may be ameliorated to some degree (Satprakashananda : 1981 : 140). Modern medical science, for example, may make some adjustments. Furthermore, if one is incapacitated from altering such *karmas* one can at least change one’s attitude towards them. Here, special mention must be made of the *prārabdha karma* of a liberated mystic. In this circumstance the mystic has transcended *karmas*. Theoretically speaking the mystic should therefore be absolved from all *karmas* lodged in the *pañchakośas*. This would imply that the *pañchakośas* be dissolved as it is desires and *karmas* that hold them together and make them functional. Yet we do not see the dissolution or deaths of such mystics. They live and work in the world of *karmas*. This is a paradox. Hindu mysticism responds to this situation by stating that such a mystic has indeed

transcended his *karmas*. The *karmas* that make his body and mind function are in reality the products of his past actions. But these *karmas* do not affect him in any way. He is a *witness* to them never claiming its ownership. He is never identified with them as he is habitually identified with the *ātman*. These *karmas* work themselves out through his *pañchakośas* until they are exhausted. Since a mystic's past is essentially morally pure and actively good, these *karmas* are therefore of a beneficial nature. It is always for the welfare of the world. Such a mystic in transcending *karmas* does not create new *karmas*. He has no desires. His desires have found fulfilment in the ultimate desire, that is, the *ātman*.

The third type of *karma* is *āgāmi karma*. These are prospective *karmas*, the impressions of the current activities that are accumulating and will bear fruit in due course. It is important to note that the law of *karma* rules out fatalism, accidentalism and naturalism in human affairs. In this respect Satprakashananda (1981 : 134) states :

“No supernatural power determines the events of man's life. There is no scope for chance in human existence. It is not blind nature that motivates human actions . . . the doctrine of predestination is a dogmatic version of fatalism.”

Vivekananda (CW3 : 125) points out that man is the maker of his own fate : “This law knocks on the head at once all doctrines of predestination and fate ... The human will stands beyond all circumstances. Before it - the strong, gigantic, infinite will and freedom in man – all the powers, even of nature, must bow down, succumb, and become its servants. This is the result of the law of *karma*.”

I would state the law of *karma* as follows: *“What I am now is the result of my past. What I will be in the future is the result of my past but modified in the present. Karmas are born of desire. When desires are controlled and purified they provide the basis for mystic consciousness. When*

this ultimate consciousness is achieved by realizing the ātman all karmas are transcended and become ineffectual.”

This theory also explained for the Hindus the inequality between one person and another at the time of birth and gave them reason to believe in a moral foundation of the universe, in which virtue is, in the long run rewarded and inequity punished. The *karma* doctrine shapes the moral fabric of mystic achievements. To do good is a prerequisite for *mokṣa* and as such this theory is world-affirming.

4.24 Māyā and the Pañchakośas

The word *māyā* was initially used in the Ṛg V (10.177) to denote a kind of magical power. In the Br. Up. (1.5.19) the god Indra uses this power to assume many forms. Here we notice that through some ‘power’ the one becomes manifold. Wholeness becomes fragmented. The Upanishads develop this theme further. The Sv. Up. (4.10) described God as a *māyin*, “*the wonder-working powerful Being, who creates the world by His powers*”.

Māyā is the power of God (*brahman*). It is that power which measures out, divides, fragments, and moulds forms in the formless. It produces the whole of nature (*prakṛti*) with its infinite variations. Nature itself is compounded of the three *guṇas* (purity, activity and inertia). The workings of these *guṇas* produce an endless variety in the domain of *samsāra*. Working through these *guṇas* *māyā* also gives *prakṛti* a sense of constant change. Hence, *samsāra* is nature in incessant motion and change. This is the abode of the human soul. It moves and has its being in the world of endless variety and change. Since the soul draws its experience from this world it possesses a confusion arising from fragmentation. Such souls develop mental categories of thoughts, each representing a fragment of their perceptions. *Māyā* is the illusion of taking these concepts or categories for reality, of confusing the map for the territory (Capra : 1983 : 100;

Nikhilananda : 1987 : 58). This type of unending conformation of limitations in our modes of thinking is designated as an illusion (*avidyā-māyā*). Such souls do not have the clarity of perception to see the unitary Consciousness (*brahman*) behind this fragmentation.

Unitary consciousness is an ideal which one should strive for. This is not what Hindu mysticism points to. Rather it states that unitary Consciousness is Real. The soul's bondage in fragmentation is a response to its actions guided by illusory perceptions, which is shaped by fragmentary thought in the domain of *samsāra*. In other words it is just because reality is of a unitary nature, that man with his fragmentary approach, will inevitably be answered with a correspondingly fragmentary response. What is needed in mystical development is to give attention to the habit of fragmentary thought, to be aware of it, and thus bring it to an end. The soul's approach to Reality will then be whole and the response correspondingly whole or unitary. The soul has an intrinsic capacity to achieve this. This is the benign power of *māyā* known as *vidyāmāyā* or the knowledge of liberation. For the mystic the *pañchakośa* model, though fragmented within its whole, is so interconnected and interdependent, that at each sheath there is a 'lever' that firstly empowers one to transcend that sheath. Secondly, it directs that transcendence to a subtler sheath all the time moving in the direction of unitary Consciousness (*brahman*).

CHAPTER FIVE

Techniques, Practices and Experiences in Hindu Sacred Psychology

5.1 Two-fold Nature of Sacred Psychology

Apart from the primary texts, the writings of Shankara, and the works of the main modern proponents of Neo-Vedānta, viz., Ramakrishna, Vivekananda, Radhakrishnan, etc., there are other noted writers and scholars of this tradition that have made an invaluable contribution towards interpreting Vedānta in contemporary circumstances. Yatiswarananda, Ranganathananda, Adiswarananda and some others belong to this category. Not only have they written extensively on Vedāntic themes but also lectured and interacted with a global audience. The 'contemporary spirit' that pervades their writings and the critical evaluations they have made of mystical practices is sure to have a wide appeal among South African Hindus. What this researcher feels is more important is that these modern interpreters are all monks. Hindus, by their religious and cultural upbringing, have a ready tendency to accept the teachings of mysticism and sacred psychology especially if they are articulated by long-standing monastic persons. Such teachers of inner peace are valuable to society in that they provide the core of certainty that is an intrinsic part of this teaching. This work should therefore consider the contributions of such later writers.

The mind plays a crucial role in human life. According to the primary texts of Hinduism an individual's real strength or fuller potential lies in the acquisition of a tranquil mind. Tranquillity is essential not only for his or her survival, but also for fulfilment in any sphere of human endeavours. Tranquillity is the source of power, creativity, self-confidence and efficiency. It is as important for a saint or mystic as it is for a labourer, housewife, scientist or artist. The B.G. (6.6) tells us that the mind is our best friend when it is kept under control, and our worst enemy when we lose control over it. In Hindu psychology the determinism of the individual is invoked to

control the mind and to bring it to a state of tranquillity (Adiswarananda : 1994 : 157; Radhakrishnan : 1989 : 190).

What is the mind in terms of Hindu sacred psychology? Many theories of the mind have been formulated. These include such concepts as the mind being *a function of the brain, a by-product of physiological processes, a product of heredity, a product of the environment, etc.* All these views only describe how the mind acts or reacts, but not why. These theories do not give explanations as to a person's moral commitment, aesthetic sensibilities and spiritual aspirations. If these elements are not considered then such theories may be taken to be incomplete and in fact inadequate. For the practitioner of mysticism it is essential to discover, analyse and evaluate that part of the human psyche that is concerned with the craving and fulfilment of a sacred ideal. It is in this area that the Hindu sees a vast potential for the exploration and study of a sacred psychology. Furthermore, those mystics that have undertaken this discipline acquaint us with the fact that this exercise yields various techniques that is conducive to human welfare. In the first instance of the exploration it is *pure sacred psychology* which tries earnestly to understand the true nature of such a mind through a dispassionate inquiry. In the second phase it is an *applied sacred psychology* in which the knowledge discovered by *pure sacred psychology* is harnessed and developed into an *applied sacred psychology*. For the Hindu mystic there are two phases, knowledge as *lucifera* and knowledge as *fructifera*, knowledge as light and knowledge as fruit are intrinsically interconnected. Knowledge leads to power and power leads to the control and constructive manipulation of mental forces enabling human beings to act with deliberate spiritual intentions.

5.2 Evolutionary Need for a Sacred Psychology

In 1959 the University of Chicago hosted a landmark symposium to commemorate a hundred years of the publication of Darwin's *Origin of Species*. Significantly the symposium reflected on

the theme, *Evolution after Darwin*. In the concluding session the noted British biologist, Sir Julian Huxley, delivered a lecture titled, *The Evolutionary Vision*, in which he gave a spiritual orientation to the evolutionary process. Huxley considered human evolution to be ‘**psychosocial**’ - a definition which will be evaluated shortly.

One of the main interpreters of Neo-Vedānta, Swami Ranganathananda, is of the view that Huxley’s notion of *psychosocial evolution* is in harmony with the Vedāntic vision of spiritual development. After reading Ranganathananda’s exposition of the Upanishads in his *Message of the Upanishads* Huxley corresponded with the author. The entire correspondence has been published in a later edition of Ranganathananda’s aforesaid work (Ranganathananda : 1971 : 517). This correspondence clarified what Huxley meant by ‘**psychosocial evolution**’ and what Ranganathananda envisaged in connecting this concept of evolution to Vedāntic spiritual unfoldment. The present researcher feels it imperative to evaluate this theme of psychosocial evolution using material from the above-mentioned published correspondence as well as from Ranganathananda’s further exposition of this subject in his published lecture, *Science and Religion* (Ranganathananda : 1987 : 186).

For South African Hindus it would be necessary to highlight the various strands of progress in their psychology. This researcher is certain that this discussion on Huxley’s ‘**psychosocial evolution**’ and Ranganathananda’s views of Vedāntic unfoldment will rationally clarify an aspect of spiritual growth that is of interest to the South African Hindus.

Huxley (in Ranganathananda : 1987 : 186) postulated that the human evolutionary process is not biological but **psychosocial** ; it operates by the mechanism of cultural tradition, which involves the cumulative self-reproduction and self-variation of mental activities and their products. Accordingly, great leaps in the human phase of evolution are achieved by breakthroughs to new

dominant patterns of mental organization of knowledge, ideas and beliefs - ideological instead of physiological or biological organization. All dominant thought organizations are concerned with the immediate or the ultimate problems that the thought of the time is capable of formulating or envisaging. These thought patterns are connected with giving some interpretation to human beings, that is to say, within the world in which they live. Do they have a place and role in such a world? In other words, human thought patterns try to formulate a comprehensive picture of human destiny and its significance. Further, Huxley reveals the trend of evolution, at the human stage, towards quality when he states, "*It (the evolutionary vision) shows us mind enthroned above matter, quantity subordinate to quality*". Even from a biological point of view Huxley sees the goal of the evolutionary process as being *fulfilment* (Huxley in Ranganathananda : 1987 : 187) :

"In the light of our present day knowledge, man's most comprehensive aim is seen not as mere survival, not as numerical increase, not as increased complexity of organization or increased control over his environment but as greater fulfilment - the fuller realization of more possibilities by the human species collectively and more of its component members individually."

After stating the above Huxley pleads for a *science of human possibilities* (ibid.) :

"Once greater fulfilment is recognized as man's ultimate or dominant aim, we shall need a science of human possibilities to help guide the long course of psychosocial evolution that lies ahead."

What does Huxley understand by psychosocial evolution? From the single cell up to the biologically complex human being, evolution was motivated by organic satisfaction, organic survival and numerical increase. In the case of human beings these aspects of survival become secondary and not primary; the primary motivation becomes *fulfilment*. Evolution at this stage

becomes conscious, deliberate and goal-oriented, unlike the blind processes at the pre-human stage. This quantum leap is the result of the fully developed cerebral system in human beings. This system gave the individual the capacity to move evolutionary trends from the organic level to the psychosocial dimension.

Ranganathananda is of the view that psychosocial evolution itself has to pass through a few stages. He postulates that in a self-centred man, as in all pre-human species, the psyche or mind or soul is limited and confined to the physical organism. In a moral or ethical person it expands beyond the limitations of the physical organism and enters into other psyches of the social milieu. This is the fruit of psychosocial evolution. It is what religion interprets as ethical awareness and social sensitivities, the by-product of the early phase of spiritual growth (Ranganathananda : 1987 : 188).

In Hinduism all ethical theories presuppose a distinction between a lower and higher self in human beings (B.G. 6.6). The lower self comprises animal tendencies and diabolical qualities. Liberation from the lower self is what human beings achieve through psychosocial evolution. The lower self has to be observed, controlled and transcended in order to produce the fulfilment that comes with mystical consciousness. For this purpose Hinduism has developed its sacred psychology. It is, fundamentally, the science and art of handling the mind with spiritually-specific techniques that produce mental qualities that ultimately yield mystical insights. These techniques constitute a resource that has great relevance for the seeker of tranquillity and *mokṣa*.

5.3 The Laboratory for Sacred Psychology and Mystical Pursuits

It is a long established practice in Hinduism that aspirants for mystical knowledge resort to solitude. *“One should perform one’s (mystical) exercises in concentration, resorting to caves and other such pure places helpful to its practice - places where the ground is level without*

pebbles, and the scenery pleasing to the eyes; where there is no disturbance of wind, dust, fire, dampness and noises" (Sv. Up. 2.10). Similar passages may be found in other Hindu scriptures (B.G. 6). Solitude is indeed the environment for the inner quest. For Radhakrishnan (1940 : 53) the soul in solitude is the birthplace of religion. Everything that is great, new and creative in religion rises out of the unfathomable depths of the soul in quiet prayer, in the solitude of meditation. The urge to go into solitude is a universal, mystical need experienced by spiritual personalities all over the world. The spiritual teachers of ancient India resorted to solitary riverbanks and the foothills of the Himalayas. Moses contemplated on the lonely Mount of Sinai. Buddha spent long hours under the *bodhi* tree. Jesus went to the bank of the Jordan and St. Paul is seen in his lonely sojourn in the desert. Mohammed goes to the solitary mount at Mecca. St. Francis of Assisi moves to the remote crags of the highlands of Alverno.

In every religious system, it may be pointed out that, it is solitude that has produced the freshness, vibrancy and intensity in the experience of God. In a world that is daily growing noisier it must be emphasised that the undisturbed stillness of solitude is a prerequisite for mystical exploration. Origen's description of the first hermits is relevant: "*They dwelt in the desert where the air was more pure and the heaven more open and God more familiar*" (Radhakrishnan : 1989 : 193).

5.4 Spiritual interpretation of the Mind

Hinduism gives a spiritual interpretation to the mind. The mind according to Vedānta is a positive entity that stands between the body and the senses on the one hand, and the ultimate spiritual experience of *mokṣa* on the other.

The mind is subject to the three *guṇas* or the three modifications of nature: inertia (*tamas*), passion (*rajas*) and purity (*sattva*). The preponderance of one over the other two at any time

affects the mood of the mind. *Tamas* overpowers the mind with darkness, *rajas* with agitation, while *sattva* gives the mind stability. In regard to the perception of reality, *tamas* causes non-perception and *rajas* distorted perception while *sattva* brings clarity of perception. The mind of each individual represents a specific composition of the three *gunas*, and this composition determines a person's disposition, character, likes and dislikes. The *guna* composition becomes altered as one changes his or her way of living (Adiswarananda : 1994 : 158). The idea is to develop the quality of *sattva* through a change in lifestyle and habits. A pure mind is a spiritual resource in the sense that it becomes instrumental in initiating mystic consciousness.

5.5 Lifestyle for the Transformation of the Mind

The serious aspirant for the highest mystic consciousness has to implement a lifestyle that is conducive to this experience. Many followers of Hinduism and even those from other faiths and traditions have the mistaken notion that severe ascetic practices are necessary to achieve this end. It is most unfortunate that yogis sleeping on nail-beds, walking on fire or buried in the earth pass off as Hindu mystics. There could be nothing further from the truth. The scriptures declare that that penance which is performed in order to gain respect, honour and reverence and for the sake of show is said to be rajasic (passionate); it is unstable for mystic consciousness in that it produces a distorted vision of the reality or the *ātman* (B.G. 17.18). Furthermore, that penance which is performed with a foolish obstinacy by means of self-torture or for causing injury to others is said to be tamasic and is therefore incapable of producing any consciousness of the divine (B.G. 17.19). Another mistaken notion prevalent among Hindus is that ascetic practices are meant to please the gods (*devas*) and thereby invite their blessings. Ascetic practices are meant for the control of the lower self and the purification of the mind. The present researcher has observed that these misunderstandings of ascetic practices have been the cause of personality distortions that has had serious negative consequences for the individuals concerned and South African Hindus could do well with a better understanding of this fact.

The fundamental problem in Hindu sacred psychology is to transform the mind from its present mundane state to a state of purity and stability. The Vedāntic texts never tire of stating the proverbial restlessness of the mind. Almost the entire sixth chapter of the Bhagavad Gita discusses the undeveloped mind by referring to four epithets: “restless”, “turbulent”, “powerful” and “obstinate”. Word-pictures of such a restless mind are also to be found in other sources of Hinduism. A restless mind addicted to sense pleasures has been depicted in an ancient Sanskrit proverb as a “mad elephant”. Shankara depicted it as a “huge tiger” : “In the forest of sense pleasures there prowls a huge tiger called the mind. Let good people who have a longing for *mokṣa* never go there” (V.C. 176). Vivekananda has compared the restless mind to a monkey that is not only drunk with the wine of desires, but is also simultaneously stung by the scorpion of jealousy and taken over by the demon of pride.

Since the restless mind is the basic impediment for mystic consciousness it is important to look at it with some critical introspection. The restless mind may be identified by several signs. It is lethargic, dull, excited or scattered, and never concentrated. Impulsive and hypersensitive, it has low frustration tolerance and is often guided by arbitrary whims and passing sentiments. Carried away by the waves of impulse, darkened by imagination, unstable, fickle, possessing many desires, it is a constant prey to delusions and fancies. It swings from hyperactivity to depression, from self-pity to self-aggrandizement, from over-optimism to over-pessimism. It is secretive and negative, divided and discontented. Boredom and anxiety, tensions and complexes drive it about aimlessly. It is unable to find either rest or stability (Adiswarananda: 1994 :159; Radhakrishnan : 1989 : 192-3).

The mind is restless because it is unconcentrated and weak. It is weak because it is impure, and it is impure because it has become a constant slave to the outgoing nature of the senses and the body. In this context Vedānta traditionally recognises five causes of suffering. They are :

Ignorance - which is here interpreted as a mental state that blocks or veils the Divine reality (Advaita - or knowledge of the unitary Consciousness)

Deluded ego - that creates thought patterns to project its own world of fancies and desires.

Deep attachment - when the mind flows towards some object and experiences pleasure there it acquires the tendency to repeat this flow. This leads to attachment which expresses itself as possessiveness.

Strong aversion which seeks the pleasurable and shuns the painful.

Clinging to life - all life-forms are transient. Change is inevitable. Clinging to life and to comfortable thought patterns, however good they may be, invest human beings with an inability to change and grow.

Impurities of the mind are considered to be deposits of past indulgent living. They are not simply impure thoughts that are detected on the surface of the mind. Having been repeated over and over again, these impure thoughts have become habitual. Habits are always formed little by little. These habits when they lodge themselves in the mind become deep impressions (*samskāras*). Such tendencies cannot be overcome by mere intellectual reasoning or analysis. The passage of time cannot erase them nor change of place or diet uproot them.

Some try to overcome restlessness by pampering the desires of the mind. It is not uncommon to find even within the Hindu fold people who hold the belief that desires must be consistently fulfilled. By being satiated they will eventually come to an end. There are others who subscribe to an "*impulse release philosophy*". By this they mean that all impulses must be fulfilled by being worked out. Should an impulse be withheld or suppressed it would lead to some

psychological trauma. The Vedānta cautions that such psychological theories are dangerous. *“Desires, like flames of fire are insatiable and are a constant foe to the wise”* (B.G. 3.39). Desire is never satisfied by the enjoyment of the objects of desires; it grows more and more as does the fire to which fuel is added (Manu 2.94). Unrestrained desires and unbridled gratification of libidinal urges only lead to the deterioration and disintegration of the mind.

There are others within the Hindu faith who mistakenly believe that the restless mind may be overcome by punishing it. Ingenious methods of penance have been created for this purpose. Self-torture and mortification are considered to be religious practices. But punishing only represses the urges and desires, driving them to the hidden recesses of the mind. Repression heightens the awareness of the desired object, causing fantasy and personality disorders. Still others try to escape restlessness of the mind by a change of environment. Soon they discover that the restlessness surfaces in the mind. This is because of the obvious fact that wherever we go we carry our mind with us. The way to overcome the restless mind, according to Vedānta, is to face it with the appropriate techniques.

Facing the mind has four aspects : self-acceptance, self-control, self-regulation and moderation. An understanding and the actual practice of these four processes is responsible for the slow but steady transformation of the mind. These elements constitute what may be called the main pillars in the application of the Hindu sacred psychology.

Self-acceptance is the first aspect of facing the mind. In the Vedānta this acceptance is not a karmic fatalism nor a helpless passivity. Self-acceptance is acknowledging that the problems of restlessness and indulgence are our own creation. We ourselves will have to transcend it. The solution to this issue will always elude our grasp if we deny this responsibility. The absence or lack of self-acceptance is the cause of despair, anxiety, self-pity and cynicism. In a case study a

man suffering from an acute inferiority complex had been visiting a psychologist for several years with no result achieved. One day when the patient arrived for his counselling session the therapist told him : “Mr Naidoo, I have good news for you. At last I have been able to make a breakthrough with your problem. You have no inferior complex - your *are* inferior!” The truthful diagnosis was startling but it nevertheless contributed towards an honest psychoanalysis and its corresponding therapy. Self-acceptance teaches us that obstacles and limitations are not to be avoided but acknowledged and overcome. A limitation or deficiency, when accepted with a positive attitude, becomes a motivating force for self-development and self-mastery so crucial for mystical experiences.

Self-control is the second aspect of facing the mind. According to Vedānta, the unruly mind never comes under control except through conscious practice of self-control and discrimination (B.G. 3.41). Such control is never attained vicariously or miraculously. Neither can it be achieved by mechanical or chemical means. In this period there are several self-styled teachers of meditation and religion who profess and promise that experiences like *nirvana* may be attained rapidly by some miraculous means. Hindu mystics have always cautioned their students against accepting such proposals.

Hinduism postulates four broad paths to control of the mind. In technical terms these paths are referred to as *yogas* or means for the attainment of union with the Divine. According to Aurobindo (1985 : 23), “*The aim of our Yoga is to open the consciousness to the Divine and to live in the inner consciousness more and more while acting from it on the external life, to bring the innermost psychic into the front and by the power of the psychic to purify and change the being so that it may become ready for transformation and in union with the Divine Knowledge, Will and Love ...*”.

The four paths of yoga are classified according to the psychological make-up and attitude of the aspirant :

- jñāna yoga** - the path of knowledge for the intellectually inclined.
- bhakti yoga** - the way of devotion for the emotional temperament.
- karma yoga** - the approach to God through selfless action - best suited for the active type of aspirant.
- raja yoga** - the path of inner meditation for the aspirant with a contemplative nature.

Students of the mystical path may select any one of these *yogas* for practice or they may practice elements from all four paths. This is usually done under the guidance of a guru.

The path of knowledge, or *jñāna yoga* relies heavily on reason. The virtues it prescribes for practising control are: (i) discrimination between the realities and the unrealities of life; (ii) detachment, which is freedom from cravings especially with respect to sense pleasures; (iii) restraining the outgoing propensities of the mind and senses; (iv) withdrawal of the mind; (v) fortitude; (vi) self-stability or inner equilibrium; (vii) faith and (viii) a genuine longing for *mokṣa*. The intellect which guides the mind is persuaded to reflect seriously on the harmful consequences of sense enjoyments, and then to give up such enjoyments joyously and voluntarily.

The path of devotion, or *bhakti yoga*, advocates the cultivation of pure and one-pointed love for God. For Vivekananda (CW 3 : 1979 : 31) "*Bhakti-Yoga is a real, genuine search after the Lord, a search beginning, continuing and ending in love. One single moment of extreme love to God brings us eternal freedom.*"

In bhakti yoga the virtues prescribed for inner transformation are : (i) purity of food, including whatever the mind draws in through the senses for its enjoyment; (ii) freedom from craving. Necessities, like food and drink may be utilized, but controlled desires for indulgence must be given up; (iii) practice of devotion, and being in holy company; (iv) truthfulness; (v) doing good to others especially fellow aspirants on the path; (vi) straightforwardness, that is an absence of cunningness; (vii) non-violence; (viii) compassion; (ix) charity; and (x) inner stability by not yielding to mood swings from despondency to excessive merriment. Bhakti yoga relies not so much on controlling the mind as on directing it towards the Divine. It postulates that the mind cannot renounce the lower pleasures of life until it has tasted something higher. Love is a psychological phenomenon. When it is purified and well regulated it transforms the personality leading to mystic realization (Adiswarananda : 1994 : 159; Gnaneswarananda : 1995 : 124).

The path of selfless action, or karma yoga, involves the process of harnessing all human actions and directing them selflessly towards God. Each human being is potentially divine. The full manifestation of this divinity is disturbed by agitations caused by his or her setting into motion the wheel of causation (*samsāra*). This results in action and reaction, which produces *karma*. Until karma is effaced, human beings cannot express their inner divine nature and be liberated from karma. Karma Yoga is the process of attaining the divine through action or work. Action or the impulse for expression is inherent in all beings. This inevitable factor of life may be cultivated and utilized for the attainment of *mokṣa*. This path implies the task to eradicate the ego and to develop selflessness in thought, word and deed. The virtues prescribed for this end are : (i) giving up brooding over the results of action; (ii) non-attachment; (iii) eradication of the ego; (iv) dedication of the results of all actions to the Divine.

In this context Adiswarananda (1994 : 162) states, “According to karma yoga, all mental restlessness is due to the worldly ego and its attachments, involvements, and actions, and the

only way to overcome restlessness is the eradication of the ego. But the ego, hardened by repeated selfish actions, cannot be eradicated by any other means other than performance of unselfish actions. Karma alone can rescue a person from the bondage of karma.”

The path of meditation, or raja yoga, emphasises the way of inner contemplation. It relies not so much on reason or devotion or eradication of the ego as on inner strength and willpower. The virtues that it prescribes for practising inner control are: (i) non-violence; (ii) truthfulness; (iii) non-covetousness; (iv) continence; (v) non-receiving of undesirable gifts and favours; (vi) external and internal cleanliness; (vii) to cultivate contentment; (viii) austerity; (ix) study of sacred texts; (x) surrender to the Divine; (xi) control of posture and breathing; and (xii) withdrawal of the mind from the outer world. According to raja yoga, reason is too feeble to uproot ingrained and hardened mental tendencies, devotion requires an inborn and natural faith in God, and ego eradication is a slow process. Only strong willpower can direct the wayward mind to tranquillity. Raja Yoga is of the view that by the determined effort to control the conscious mind the sub-conscious slowly comes under control. By the stabilization of the posture (especially that for meditation) and the regulation of breathing, along with the practice of other prescribed virtues, the follower of raja yoga controls the outgoing or agitated mind and subdues it.

Self-regulation is the third aspect of facing the uncontrolled mind. This procedure involves three stages: (i) arresting the attention of the scattered mind; (ii) directing the newly acquired attention; and (iii) regulating that attention so that it flows towards an Ideal which becomes the focus of this practice. No lasting tranquillity is possible without a fixed Chosen Ideal like the *ātman* or a personal God like Krishna. The reason is that concentration cannot take roots if the Chosen Ideal is changed frequently. Habitual concentration culminates in absorption in the Chosen Ideal,

which is the goal of all regulatory practice. In order to reach this absorption, each path of yoga advises a number of supportive regulatory practices.

Jñāna Yoga prescribes chanting and listening to the Vedāntic *mahavakyas* like 'tatvam asi' - 'Thou art That'. Raja Yoga advocates the careful cultivation of concentration and meditation. Bhakti Yoga advises ritualistic worship, prayer, *japa* (regular repetition of a sacred formula), and meditation. The practitioner of karma yoga uses the supportive practices of either bhakti yoga or jñāna yoga.

Self-control and self-regulation represent respectively dispassion and practice (*vairāgya* and *abhyāsa*) the two disciplines prescribed in the Bhagavad Gita (6.35). The two must be followed simultaneously. Unless one practices control, one cannot succeed in regulation, and unless one regulates the mind, one cannot succeed in controlling it. Control without regulation never becomes lasting. Such attempts at control do not stand the test of stress. On the other hand regulation without control is dangerous. Concentration arises from a pure and untrammelled mind. An uncontrolled mind is impure and fettered by various base tendencies. When such a mind is roused through concentration, it becomes destructive. A Sanskrit proverb says, "To feed a cobra with milk without first taking out its poison fangs is only to increase its venom." Control and regulation are to be practised repeatedly, in thought, word and deed, for a long time, without a break, and with devotion so that the obstinacy and violence, waywardness and self-will in human nature may be conquered and transcended. (Adiswarananda : 1994 : 164; Radhakrishnan : 1989 : 206).

The applied psychology of repeated practice is to neutralize the deep-seated and distracting *samskāras* by carefully developing counter-*samskāras*. Impure thought is countered by pure thought, impure imagination by pure imagination, uncontrolled speech by thoughtful speech and

an unstable meditation posture by a good posture. A thought when constantly repeated becomes a tendency, a tendency when repeated becomes a habit and a habit when repeated forms our character.

Moderation is the fourth technique of facing the restless mind. The mind cannot be brought under control rapidly. Human Nature has its own pace of expression. Old habits die hard. They have deep roots and cannot be obliterated or controlled at once. A habit is formed bit by bit until it is established - so a counter-habit is to be cultivated bit by bit. To draw on an analogy, one drives a screw into a wall by a number of turns. One cannot simply pull it out. In order to remove it one has to give the same number of turns in the opposite direction. The intensity of our endeavours to develop a counter-habit must be in keeping with the capacity of our minds to endure. Violating this rule may produce mental disorders. Furthermore, this process must be done voluntarily and joyously and never as a drudgery.

Efforts that are too feeble and causal will fail to change old habits, but when too intense and accelerated, can impact negatively on the mind itself. In the Vedāntic scriptures like the Bhagavad Gita there is always an emphasis on selecting a middle-path : “Yoga (spiritual attainments) is not for him who eats too much nor for him who eats too little. It is not for him who sleeps too much nor for him who sleeps too little. For him who is moderate in his food and recreation, moderate in his exertion at work, moderate in sleep and waking, yoga (spiritual disciplines) puts an end to all sorrows” (B.G. 6.17-18). It is not complete abstinence from human necessities that is advised but restraint in indulgence.

It is not uncommon to find Hindus in South Africa who hold the view that the intensity of spiritual consciousness is proportionate to the levels of indulgence. High indulgence means that a person is less religious. Low or no indulgence characterises a deeply spiritual person. This

mistaken view is indeed a departure from the scriptural authority. It has its corresponding limitations in that it distorts our vision of spiritual life thus impeding mystical growth. In actual fact spiritual disciplines must be practised and seen within the context of a moderate or temperate lifestyle. This middle-path advised in the Bhagavad Gita is of vital importance for the successful accomplishments of mystical attainments. It is also a path of universal appeal and may be compared to the middle path of the Buddha or the golden means of Aristotle.

5.6 Repression versus Sublimation

One of the criticisms against Hindu psychology is that its spiritual disciplines have a tendency to repress innate tendencies. In examining this criticism carefully it will not be out of place to take a brief comparative look at Western psychology and some specific elements of Hindu psychology. Such a comparison has already been attempted by various authors, and some interesting points of similarity and dissimilarity have been noted. This comparison seems neither fair nor valid. The important branches of Hindu psychology, viz. that of Yoga and Vedānta have a definite spiritual focus. This is the divine consciousness present in all beings. Hindu sacred psychology revolves around this focus. In this sense Hindu psychology has an established goal. In comparison with this, Western psychology is still developing, and along several divergent lines; continually producing new theories and discarding old ones. If one says categorically : "*Western psychology holds this view...*," one is in danger of being reprimanded for some inaccuracy. However one statement may be made with safety and that is most Western psychologists and psychotherapists do not, as yet, recognize the existence of the *ātman* or Godhead within all beings. At present there is a noticeable group of Western thinkers that are investigating this possibility or prefer to retain an open mind for this angle of exploration (Prabhavananda and Isherwood : 1983 : 10-11).

Sigmund Freud, the founder of psychoanalysis was able to get some insight into the human psyche while studying the dreams of his mentally disturbed patients. His major declaration was

that the human psyche is full of sexuality and violence. Subsequent psychoanalysts did not stop at his level. Other dimensions of the human mind have been noted. Freud's own co-worker Carl Jung has developed lengthy criticisms of Freud in his well known work *Modern Man in Search of a Soul*. Jung's view is that dreams are no longer considered to be merely imaginary fulfilments of suppressed wishes. This theory of Freud has been superseded. According to Jung it is certainly true that there are dreams which embody suppressed wishes and fears, but what is there which the dream cannot on occasion embody? Dreams may give expression to ineluctable truths, to philosophical pronouncements, illusions, wild fantasies, memories, plans, anticipations, irrational experiences, even telepathic visions and other experiences. Jung emphasizes the one thing we ought never to forget : *almost half of our lives is passed in a more or less unconscious state. The dream is specifically the utterance of the unconscious.*

Pleading for the recognition of the presence of something higher than mere instincts in the unconscious, Jung (1973 : 136) says :

"I do not doubt that the natural instincts or drives are forces of propulsion in human life, whether we call them sexuality or the will to power, but I also do not doubt that these instincts come into collisions with the spirit, for they are continually colliding with something, and why should not this something be called spirit? I am far from knowing what spirit is in itself, and equally far from knowing what instincts are. The one is as mysterious to me as the other, yet I am unable to dismiss the one by explaining it in terms of the other . . . They are terms which we allow to stand for powerful forces whose nature we do not know."

Protesting against Freud's view of sexuality in the human psyche, Jung (1973 : 138) says :

"I hold that psychic energy involves the play of opposites in much the same way as physical energy involves a difference of potential . . . What I seek to set bounds to is the rampant terminology of sex which threatens to vitiate all discussion of the human psyche; I wish to put sexuality itself in its proper place. Common sense will always return to the fact that sexuality is only one of the life-instincts – only one of the psycho-physiological functions - though one that is without doubt very far-reaching and important."

While the sex instinct forms an important part of the human psyche it is however not the only instinct that lies in the collective unconscious. Jung is of the view that *"the collective layer (of the collective unconscious) comprises the pre-infantile period, that is, the residues of ancestral life."* Liliane Frey-Rohn, who worked for a while under the supervision of Jung, has tried to explain the collective unconscious further by saying (Frey-Rohn : 1976 : 123) :

"The collective unconscious, is a deposit of ancestral life, sheltered not only the individual experience of father, mother, child, man, and wife, but also the totality of psychic traces, which had originated under the influence of instincts, particularly hunger and sexuality. For Jung, the collective unconscious was the source of drives and instincts, yet also the fountainhead of the basic forms of human thought and feeling, combining creative impulses and collective primordial images."

According to this important stream of Western psychology the collective unconscious is inherited from parents and ancestral life. In sharp contrast to this, Hindu psychology considers reincarnation as an experienced fact. Human beings are born innumerable times until they become spiritually illumined through the superconscious experience. Every incarnation is an

opportunity to evolve further by learning newer things and gaining newer experiences. *It is the same evolving mind of the individual that reincarnates again and again by acquiring different bodies.* Every human mind is the repository of past thoughts or *samskāras*. All thoughts from its past incarnations, starting as far back as its first prehistoric primitive incarnation down to the most recent, are stored in its subconscious domain as *samskāras*. Not a single thought is lost. Human psychology therefore does not accept Jung's concept of the collective unconscious. According to Hindu psychology hereditary memory or instincts are not from ancestral stock or genetic inheritance but from the impressions of previous lives.

These impressions, constantly though unpredictably, surface on the conscious mind. The nature of such surfacing impressions influences the conscious mind creating thought patterns that in turn expresses itself as behaviour. Some of these impressions are instinctive in nature, that is, they are "*an inborn pattern of activity and response common to a biological stock*". Apart from these instinctive thoughts that generate behaviour that would preserve the human individual in terms of food, clothing and other securities, there are other thoughts which when rising to the surface of the conscious mind would either be detrimental to mystic consciousness or aid mystical progress. The former category is of concern to the Hindu psychologist. Hindu psychology recognizes various urges, impulses and instincts in human beings, but it does not accept the theory of Sigmund Freud that all the motives of human beings are aspects of his sexual and aggressive drives.

Hindu psychology postulates that everyone has an inherent and basic urge to have Infinite Joy or Infinite Bliss, because Infinite Bliss as the *ātman* forms the core of one's being. It is one's birthright. Keeping this higher goal in the background the mystical disciplines in Hinduism are so attuned so as not to suppress base and negative thoughts but to handle them with dextrous skill so as to sublimate them into higher thoughts that are in tune with mystical consciousness.

Repression of bad or unmystical *samskāras* is no solution for their control or elimination. The problem of repression as a psychological impediment was recognized in the Bhagavad Gita (6.33) which states:

sadṛśam ceṣṭate svasyāḥ
prakṛter jñānavān api
prakṛtim yānti bhūtāni
nigrahaḥ kim kariṣyati

“Even a wise person acts in accordance with his (or her) own nature. Beings follow their nature. What can repression accomplish?”

Each impulse or *samskāra* is considered to be a centre of energy. Collectively it may be asserted that each group of *samskāras* that make up an emotion or a psychic experience is indeed a large centre of energy. The patient application of mystical techniques imply that there should be no direct confrontation or suppression of these energy formations in the mind. Suppressed energies become latent only to reappear at a later time. Unpleasant thoughts, which are a tyranny to the conscious mind, may be suppressed. But they later emerge in some disguised form, in various forms of psychic distortions and complexes manifesting as distorted behaviour. Ranganathananda (2000 : 331) commenting upon the above passage of the Bhagavad Gita states :

“That (psychic) energy has to be refined and given a direction. That capacity we have. Only we must do it carefully, judiciously, not through a direct confrontation . . . So Sri Krishna says, that suppression is not the way, educate these energies; they can be educated.”

The Bhagavad Gita (6.35) postulates two important means to handle and educate the negative tendencies of the mind :

asamsayam mahābaho

mano durnigrahaṁ calam

abhyāsenā tu kaunteya

vairāgyeṇa ca grhyate

“Without doubt, O mighty-armed (Arjuna), the mind is difficult to curb and restless but it can be controlled, by constant practice and dispassion.”

Regular practice of mystical disciplines like observing the mind, identifying negative thoughts, and transforming or ‘educating’ these thoughts and energies into higher, nobler and spiritual energies is the means to curb the obstinacy, restlessness and self-will in human nature. It must be emphasized that this transformation is slow and comes only with long practice. Furthermore, the Bhagavad Gita (in the above passage) prescribes *vairāgya* or dispassion to be yet another important means of self-control. In the life of a Hindu mystic the spirit of dispassion should never be underestimated or understated. It is too important a means to be glossed over. Dispassion enables one to see things in their proper perspective. For those that are not spiritually illumined all transient things appear to be real and permanent. According to Adiswarananda (1988 : 25) the ignorant take everything for granted. They love life and hate death; they cling to the pleasurable and shrink from the painful. In contrast, more spiritually mature individuals accept all pairs of opposites because they know that there cannot be good without evil, pleasure without pain, and life without death. Dispassion is neither optimism nor pessimism. On the other hand, to be always pessimistic is to be negative and morbid. Dispassion is a carefully cultivated attitude which make a distinction between the immediate and the ultimate values of life.

Dispassion as a psychological tool is capable of freeing the mystic practitioner from an overemphasis on the immediate transient values and directing his or her will and attention to lasting or ultimate values. The application of dispassion in this context gives the inner freedom that is so necessary to transcend the lower self. Radhakrishnan (1998 : 206) is of the view that *vairāgya* means nothing more than ‘non-attachment’, that is to say, non-attachment to the values of the lower self or of transient values.

Hindu sacred psychology offers other effective means for self-transformation or self-transcendence. Patanjali, for example, in his Yoga Sutras (2.33) advises the following technique which is employed with seriousness by many Hindu spiritual aspirants :

“To be free from thoughts that distract one from yoga (mysticism), thoughts of an opposite kind must be cultivated.”

Thoughts that are inimical to a mystical psyche are impediments and have to be transformed. Commenting on the above passage in his *Raja Yoga*, Vivekananda (CW 1 : 1984 : 261) gives the example of a household occurrence. For instance, when a large wave of anger has come into the mind, how do we control that? Just by raising an opposite wave, that is, to think of love. Sometimes a wife is very angry with her husband, and while in that state, the baby comes in, and she kisses the baby; the old wave subsides and the new wave arises, love for the child. Similarly, lust, violence, greed and various other harmful inhabitants may slowly be overcome by this technique of raising vivid and vibrant counter thoughts. This technique is undoubtedly therapeutic and has great importance not only in Hindu mystical development but also in freeing our lives from the anxieties of mundane burdens. For the purposes of self-adjustment and in the larger context of therapeutic counselling the following elaboration of this technique taken from an old Indian folk tale would prove useful (Buddhananda : 1999 : 84) :

A somewhat inebriated gentleman was slowly moving along the street, carrying in his hand a box with perforations on the lid and sides. It appeared he was carrying some live animal in the box. An acquaintance stopped him and asked, "What have you got in the box?"

"It is a mongoose," replied the tipsy man.

"What on earth for?"

"Well, you know how it is with me; I am not really drunk now, but soon I shall be. And when I am, I see snakes all around and I get awfully scared. That is what I have the mongoose for, to protect me from the snakes."

"Good heavens, those are all imaginary snakes!"

"This also is an imaginary mongoose!"

The box was in fact empty.

Similarly we require a set of thought patterns to dislodge and disintegrate an entrenched thought force. Correct imagination can subdue and control wrong imagination. Vivekananda (CW 8 : 1964 : 49) states, "Imagination properly employed is our greatest friend; it goes beyond reason and is the only light that takes us everywhere." Asserting the use of pure imagination Buddhananda (1999 : 84) clarifies the link between imagination and mystical realization : "*The purest of imaginations is the thought of God. The more we cling to the thought of God, the less will be our trouble with the mind.*"

5.7 The Role of Celibacy in Awakening Higher States of Consciousness

Since the Upanishadic period there has been a stress on the need for celibacy in attaining higher states of consciousness. The Sanskrit word for celibacy is *brahmacharya*. The word literally means 'one who is in search of brahman or the Supreme Being'. In its practical context *brahmacharya* means the control of all the sense organs with the sole intention of directing them

towards *brahman*. Since the control of lust plays a crucial role in this exercise the word *brahmacharya* is laden with the notion of controlling lust in thought, word and deed.

At this point it must be emphasized that the practice of celibacy is enjoined for those desirous of monastic life. One of the Hindu monastic vows is that of celibacy. This is accepted as a life-long practice. Sexual purity and not complete celibacy is prescribed for the householders. By sexual purity it is meant that young men and women should not indulge in any sexual relations before marriage. After marriage they may fulfil their legitimate pleasure derived from sex with a measure of control. Extra-marital relations are forbidden. This is considered to be *brahmacharya* within the context of married life. Such sexual purity and ethical awareness is considered to be helpful in spiritual life.

In the case of the practitioner of mystical teachings absolute celibacy is essential. Yatiswarananda (1998 : 210) states, "*Some people may have got some glimpses of mystic vision even without observing the strictest brahmacharya, but they can never succeed in remaining on the higher plane and no higher form of realization can be attained by them. Brahmacharya is to be observed under all circumstances if the aspirant wants to attain to any higher life and to any higher form of realization. There is no other way out. This is the plain truth about spiritual life.*"

Within Hinduism itself the spiritual ideal has been lowered very much and dragged down to the plane of mere morals. The notion of direct superconscious or mystical realization is hardly promoted. Many feel that to enjoy a good mood or to be religiously comfortable is enough. Moral life is not spiritual life, although a really spiritual person will always act morally as it has become habitual and natural to him or her. Conventional morality is insufficient for higher spiritual experiences. A thorough overhauling of the personality is needed. Something of the

self-denial and discipline of the monastic life is essential for every spiritual aspirant, even if he or she is a householder.

Modern psychologists, including Freud and Jung, have done a great service to humanity by their research work into the nature of the unconscious, dreams, motivation, repression and complexes. One of the many results of this study is that some psychologists have propagated the theory of 'free expression'. Though many eminent psychoanalysts have protested against this notion, the idea that suppression of sex is harmful has rapidly gained popularity in the modern world (Yatiswarananda 1998 : 211; Jung : 1973 : 40). In sharp contrast with this, Hindu psychology argues that the conscious suppression of the sex impulse with a spiritual aim is not only not harmful but also absolutely essential for mystic growth. Yatiswarananda (1998 : 211) states :

“Repression may be dangerous, but not Yogic suppression followed by sublimation of the sex instinct through love of God and meditation. At first this may lead to tension and conflicts. But then, is there any higher venture which does not cause some tension or struggle? The true and earnest spiritual aspirant soon overcomes all internal troubles, and through divine grace reaches a higher plane where he is free from the conflict of the lower plane.”

Within the South African context there is an increasing attempt to popularize Vedānta, that is, the teachings of the Upanishads and the Bhagavad Gita without stressing purity of mind and chastity. Many people feel drawn to Vedānta because of its inherent logic and even its intellectual grandeur. But intellectual appreciation alone is not enough. Large sections of such people think that the practice of *brahmacharya* and other virtues is a secondary matter. This is indeed a great lapse that will lead to sure disappointment in so far as attaining *mokṣa* is concerned. A *jīvanmūktā* or a liberated person may not pay much attention to social conventions but he or she never violates the fundamental virtues like chastity.

Hindu sacred psychology is of the view that that part of the human energy which is expressed as sex energy, in sexual thought, when checked and controlled, easily becomes changed into a higher form of psychic energy called *ojas* in Sanskrit. The yogis have identified a centre of consciousness (*chakra*) located at the base of the spine which may be referred to as the sacral plexus. In technical terms it is called the *mūlādhāra chakra*. This centre of consciousness controls the sex impulse. Yogis pay particular attention to this centre. Through a life of purity, by meditation techniques and specific breathing exercises this centre may be purified and the sexual energy sublimated into higher spiritual energy or *ojas*. This *ojas* is stored in the brain. It is only the chaste person that is capable of producing this *ojas*, which as we shall soon see, is that special type of energy that is required for mystical insight. Vivekananda (CW 1 : 1984 : 170) asserts :

“A man feels that if he is unchaste, spirituality goes away, he loses mental vigour and moral stamina. That is why in all the religious orders in the world which have produced spiritual giants you will always find absolute chastity insisted upon. That is why the monks came into existence, giving up marriage.”

Elaborating further on this theme Vivekananda (CW 1 : 1984 : 169) states that “the more *ojas* that is stored in a man’s head, the more powerful he is, the more intellectual, the more spiritually strong. One man may speak beautiful language and beautiful thoughts, but they do not impress people; another man speaks neither beautiful language nor beautiful thoughts, yet his words charm. Every movement of his is powerful. That is the power of *ojas*”.

Now we may consider what is the actual function of *ojas* in mystical development. By means of this energy a special *nādi* or faculty is developed. Technically this is called the *medhā nādi*. This faculty expresses itself as remarkable developments in the yogi. It gives such a practitioner a

prodigious memory and an uncommon capacity for subtle understanding. The abstract aspects of mysticism become perceptible. The yogi may not look like a great athlete but the development of his brain is so fine that his capacity for grasping supersensuous things is remarkable (Brahmananda in Yatiswarananda : 1998 : 209). Furthermore, Yatiswarananda (ibid.) asserts that when a man practises *brahmacharya* for ten or twelve years, he feels the awakening of this 'nerve' or faculty in him. This is the power of intuition latent in all men. It is also the strength that arises from chastity that facilitates long hours of meditation on the Ideal. Therefore it can easily be concluded that in so far as Hindu sacred psychology is concerned chastity is a vital element. No higher mystical realization is possible without chastity.

As this study is focussed within the South African Hindu context it must emphasise the value of *brahmacharya* in the life of a guru. In South Africa the religious teachers are broadly divided into two categories - the priests (pandits) and the monks or nuns. The priest is generally a householder who is invited to conduct rituals and ceremonies in the homes of devotees. He or she generally has some basic training in Sanskrit and the ritual manuals. Such a person performs naming ceremonies, weddings, propitiatory rites, funerals, etc. They may also teach or explain these events to the concerned devotees. The priest is hardly ever or never a teacher of supersensuous-mystical truths. This task is generally reserved for monks or nuns. The community hardly recognized this distinction. The lapse that is obvious is that authentic mystical teachings hardly ever reach the larger community. This task is the responsibility of celibate monks and nuns. In view of the fact that South Africa has a minuscule number of Hindu monks or nuns it means that there is a great dearth of genuine teachers of Hindu mysticism. This is a lapse that needs the attention of a community that is woefully unaware of its consequences, that is, in the cultivation and strengthening of higher spirituality.

Another point of concern is that the word 'guru' is used too loosely. The true spiritual guru is one who is always established in *brahmacharya*. Patanjali in his Yoga Sutras (2.38) points out that, "When a man becomes steadfast in his abstention from incontinence, he acquires spiritual energy". This spiritual energy (*ojas*) is indispensable to a spiritual teacher. It is the power by which he transmits *understanding* to his pupils. For true mystical knowledge is not just "taught" like history or mathematics; it is transmitted like heat or light (Prabhavananda and Isherwood : 1983 : 150).

In a case example occurring as a conversation between a disciple, Saratchandra Chakravarty, and his guru, Swami Vivekananda, we find the following information on the use of *brahmacharya* in the role and responsibility of the guru in expounding the abstruse points of philosophy (Vivekananda : 1995 : 438 - 439) :

Disciple : Whatever you may say, I cannot bring myself to believe in these words. Who can come by that oratorical power of expounding philosophy which you have ?

Swami Vivekananda : You don't know! That power may come to all. That power comes to him who observes unbroken *brahmacharya* for a period of twelve years, with the sole object of realizing God. I have practised that kind of *brahmacharya* myself, and so a screen has been removed, as it were, from my brain. For that reason, I need not anymore think over or prepare myself for any such lectures on such a subtle subject as philosophy. Suppose I have to lecture tomorrow; all that I shall speak about will pass tonight before my eyes like so many pictures; and the next day I put into

words during my lecture all those things that I saw. So you will understand now that it is not any power that is exclusively my own. Whoever will practice unbroken *brahmacharya* for twelve years will surely have it. If you do so you too will get it.”

Western authors, like Gary Zukav, who have become part of the spreading New Religious Movement have in fact understood the evolution of the human being from a '*five-sensory*' person to a '*multisensory*' person. According to Zukav (1990 : 27) our five senses, together, form a single sensory system that is designed to perceive physical reality. The perceptions of a multisensory human extend beyond physical reality to the larger dynamical systems of which our physical reality is a part. The multisensory human is able to perceive, and to appreciate, the role that our physical reality plays in a larger picture of evolution, and the dynamics by which our physical reality is created and sustained. This realm is invisible to the five-sensory human. From the viewpoint of Hindu psychology the attainment of multisensory faculty is undoubtedly an achievement. But it is only considered as an intermediate goal or a stepping-stone to a higher intuitive faculty of which *brahmacharya* is a necessary element. Authors of the New Religious Movement, especially those that have considered Eastern psychology, will certainly do well to explore what may be called '*intellectual intuition*' and '*mystical intuition*'. While the intellectual intuition of the multisensory individual expands perceptions producing a growth in perceptual strength and complexity it is yet incapable of yielding the ultimate knowledge of Unitary Consciousness which is the goal of mystics. In contrast with this Hindu psychology offers the practice and strength of celibacy to transform the multisensory individual into the spiritually intuitive individual. One discerns from the above passage of Swami Vivekananda that the guru of Hindu mysticism is not the multisensory individual of the New Religious Movement. He or she must, of necessity, transcend the multisensory stage and its limited intuitive faculty to reach mystical intuition. By contrast with Hinduism the New Religious Movement, now influencing

many Hindu intellectuals in South Africa in some way or the other, does not mention or stress the necessity of celibacy for mystical development.

From the viewpoint of the Vedānta the *ātman* is sexless. It transcends the male-female principle. All Hindu mystical practices that aim at reaching the *ātman*-consciousness must align itself with this transcendental state.

5.8 Techniques for Raising the levels of Consciousness

It is relevant in the present context to point out that the Vedāntic concept of God (*brahman*) includes the immanence of God in nature as well the transcendental aspect beyond nature. The Bhagavad Gita (7.4) expounds the presence of God in nature as follows :

*bhūmīr āpo 'nalo vāyuh
khaṁ mano buddhir eva cha
ahaṁkāra itī 'yaṁ me
bhinnā prakṛtīr aṣṭadhā*

“Earth, water, fire, air, ether, mind
and understanding and ego-sense —
this is the eight-fold division of My nature.”

But the Supreme Being is not present in nature alone. It transcends nature and is indeed that which sustains nature as asserted in the Bhagavad Gita (7.5) :

*apore 'yaṁ itastvanyām
prakṛtim viddhi me parām
jīvabhūtām mahābāho
yaye 'daṁ dhāryate jagat*

“This is My lower nature; but different from it,
know thou, o might armed (Arjuna), My higher
nature which is the principle of life-intelligence,
by which this universe is sustained.”

In the Hindu mystical path the route is to move progressively from consciousness associated with nature to the transcendental Pure Consciousness. Shankara presents “*the goal of all Vedānta as the realization of the unity and the infinitude of the ātman as Pure Consciousness* (Shankara on B.S. 4). This Consciousness is the ultimate substratum or unified field from which the entire universe emerges and recedes into as well : “*Know that all beings have their birth in this. I (Pure Consciousness) am the origin of this world and its dissolution as well*” (B.G. 7.6).

Today in the significant parallels being drawn by scientists and authors of other disciplines between science and Eastern mysticism there is a concerned debate as to whether the quantum energy field of modern sub-atomic physics is equal to or equivalent to the *brahman* of the Vedānta. This aspect of the debate has engaged Hindu religious writers like Ranganathananda, Jitātmananda and others, on the one hand, and scientific - parascientific researchers like Capra, Zukav and Gribbin on the other. Can we assert that the quantum energy field is indeed *brahman*? From the Hindu standpoint Ranganathananda has clarified this issue by stating that the quantum energy field, which twentieth-century physics presents as beyond sensory verification, finds its counterpart in Vedānta as *cittākāṣa* or the subtle space-time continuum. The *cittākāṣa*, however subtle a field it may be, is certainly not *brahman*. It is only a subtle unitary or underlying field in nature. It is the substratum of the expressions of physical nature including its forces - electromagnetic, gravitational, nuclear, etc. (Ranganathananda : 1987 : 443 - 444). The Vedāntic concept of *brahman* lies beyond the *cittākāṣa* and therefore beyond the quantum energy field.

Fritjof Capra postulates that the quantum field is a well-defined concept in physics which only accounts for some of the physical phenomena. Capra (1983 : 233) states :

“Nevertheless the intuition behind the physicists’ interpretation of the sub-atomic world, in terms of the quantum field, is closely paralleled by that of the Eastern mystic who interprets his or her experience of the world in terms of an ultimate underlying reality. Subsequent to the emergence of the field concept physicists have attempted to unify the various fields into a single fundamental field which would incorporate all physical phenomena. Einstein, in particular, spent the last years of his life searching for a unified field. The Brahman of the Hindus, like the Dharmakaya of the Buddhists and the Tao of the Taoists, can be seen, perhaps, as the ultimate unified field from which spring not only the phenomena studied in physics, but all other phenomena as well.”

From the foregoing discussion on the nature of *brahman* the following stages may be identified for the purpose of this study. The Vedānta, as postulated in the Bhagavad Gita, presents *brahman* as being immanent (in nature) as well as transcendent. *Brahman* is present not only in the gross aspects of nature. As the unitary Consciousness it is also present in the subtle unified field of nature which Vedānta calls *citrākāṣa* or the equivalent of the quantum field energy of modern atomic physics. At this stage, Vedānta unlike physics, points out that this *citrākāṣa* is nothing but matter in a subtle form. As such the mystic realization of subtle matter is not the knowledge of *brahman*. It is the realization of ‘subtle materialism’. In this instance it is highly desirable, especially by the Hindu mystic, to know the distinction between subtle materialism and *brahman*. As much as this knowledge is a useful working concept, subtle materialism must be viewed as an ‘intruder’ on this path. It has to be left behind for *brahman* to be realized.

The state which is to be attained though the spiritual journey begins with the sense organs which are gross, and proceeds through comparatively subtler and subtler layers within the human person, as described in the *pañchakośa* theory, in order that the inner self or the *ātman* is realized. The *pañchakośa* theory of the Tai. Up. which has been given consideration in this study is a good working model to indicate the stages in raising the levels of consciousness from the gross to the subtle and finally to the infinitely subtle.

In a synoptic passage of this journey the Upanishad (Ka. Up. 2.1.1) states as follows :

parāñci kāni vyatṛṇat svyambhūs
tasmāt parān paśyati nāntarātman
kaścid dhīraḥ pratyog - ātmānam aikṣad
āvṛtta cakṣur amṛtatvam icchan

“The Self (ātman) cannot be sought through the senses. The Self-existent Lord pierced the openings (of the senses) outward, therefore man perceives things outwardly, but not the inward Self. A certain dhira (wise man) desirous of immortality, turned his senses (including the mind) inward and realized the inner Self.”

Commenting on this passage Shankara is of the view that the Self-existent Lord or Creator of the senses cursed or ‘injured’ the senses by turning them outward, that is to say, with an habitual capacity of outward attention, *himsitavān hananam kṛtavān* (Shankara on Ka. Up. 2.2.2). Radhakrishnan (1990 : 630) disagrees with this view and points out that such observations are disparaging to the legitimate use of the senses. Furthermore they lend an unworldly or life-

negating character to our work. The Upanishads call for the control and not the suppression of the senses. Yet this outgoing nature of the senses is a radical contradiction to the mystic's inward journey. The mystic aspirant must conquer the outward senses. Radhakrishnan (1990 : 630) proposes that the path involves an inversion of the natural orientation of our consciousness. This is not a contradiction in so far as the natural functioning of the senses are concerned. In fact the Vedānta sees it as a process to discover further human spiritual potential.

Now let us consider how the levels of consciousness may be raised to new heights of spiritual intensity. For information on this we must firstly take recourse to the primary texts. The Mun. Up. (2.2.4) summarizes the technique as follows :

*dhanur grhītvā aupaniṣadam mahāstram
śaram hy upāsā niśitam samdadhīta
āyameya tad bhāvagatena cetasā
lakṣyam tad evākṣaram
saumya viddhi*

*Aum is the bow;
the ātman is the arrow;
Brahman is said to be the mark.
It is to be struck by the undistracted mind.
Then the ātman becomes one with brahman,
as the arrow with the target.*

“Aum” is a mantra, a sacred sound symbol indicating *brahman*. It is also known as the *pranava*, the word-symbol of God. The Upanishads prescribe meditation on Aum. In the Vedic period the sacrificial fire would be started by rubbing two pieces of wood together. The Sw. Up. (1.12.13)

uses this process to illustrate a technique for meditating with Aum. The body of the meditator is to be considered the lower piece of wood and the sound Aum, the upper one. Repetition of Aum with faith and reflection on its meaning is likened to rubbing together the two pieces of wood. This repetition raises the mind to subtler and subtler levels of consciousness until it gradually comprehends the indwelling pure Consciousness. Self-knowledge or *ātman*-consciousness is the fire kindled by the friction of the wood.

According to the Vedānta, all sounds emerge from the ultimate primal sound, Aum. The vibrations of the sound Aum pervades all possible sounds and words. *Brahman* is the totality of all existence; anything that exists is in *brahman*. Since any segment of existence can be symbolized by a word, the totality of existence can be represented by Aum, the primal cause and support of all sounds and words. Since Aum is the immediate sound-symbol of *brahman* it is held as a direct link to the Absolute. While repeating Aum the meditator should think that the *ātman* hidden in the body is like the latent energy of heat in the wood. By the long and continuous repetition of Aum the fire of *ātman*-consciousness is ignited. (Shraddhananda : 1996: 175).

During this process of meditation the mind goes from the gross to the subtle. If one is using the *pañchakośas* as a model for inner psychological contours then one progresses in an ascending order of subtlety through the five sheaths until the *ātman* is reached. Whatever thoughts arise in the mind will at once be merged into the sound of Aum. All experiences will also merge into that sound vibration. Finally, that sound vibration also merges into the indiscernible silence of the *ātman*. By the repetition of Aum, the pure Consciousness that is latent in every part of the body and mind emerges as a tangible experience of *brahman*.

Shraddhananda (1996 : 176) compares this process to Pascal's law of hydrostatics : When pressure is applied to a body of water in an enclosed vessel, that pressure will exert an equal force in all directions. Using this analogy, during practice we should think that the holy sound Aum is reverberating through every fibre, every cell of the body ; it is exerting its force on every nerve, every muscle, every organ, every breath.

The regular repetition of Aum generates a spiritual power that transforms every part of the body and mind. It must be emphasized that this transformation is gradual. In the process the body and mind of the aspirant is prepared for higher mystical experiences.

The sound-symbol Aum is indeed a great resource to all Hindus. Returning to the image of archery mentioned earlier (Mun. Up. 2.2.4) we find that this imagery concerns shooting at a target with a bow and arrow. In meditation one is to visualize Aum as the bow and the mind as an arrow. Just as an archer fixes the arrow in the bow and aims at the target, in meditation one is to place the mind in the bow of Aum and aim the mind at the target, *brahman*. Meditation is the act of shooting. The mind is aimed by the repetition of Aum. As a result one-pointedness is achieved. The one-pointed or undistracted mind then meditates on *brahman* as pure Consciousness. Through meditation the mind becomes unified with pure Consciousness which is revealed as the meditator's true Self or *ātman*.

According to the discussion in the Man. Up., Aum has four measures (*matras*) : the three letters A, U, M and the fourth measure which is silence (*amatra*). In articulating Aum one should end in an amount of conscious silence. This fourth aspect of the *matra* does not belong to the category of sound; it cannot be described or even thought about. Whatever is within the reach of our minds and bodies belongs to the first three measures. The symbol of the formless *brahman* is this silence or the fourth expression of Aum.

If the foregoing techniques are considered too abstract for the aspirant then he or she may use Aum to meditate on the conditioned *brahman* represented by various deities like Vishnu, Shiva, Lakshmi, etc. Since the Hindu community is not made up of abstract thinkers alone this intermediate state of meditating on the conditioned *brahman* is most useful. The majority of the Hindus seek their spiritual opportunities at this level. This is scripturally sanctioned and may be used as a helpful means to reach the formless realization of the Absolute.

5.9 Alternate States of Consciousness, Trances and Miraculous Manifestations

Observational studies done over a protracted period with the South African Hindu community indicate that a sizeable portion of such people are either connected directly or indirectly with some manifestation of a trance state or with miracles genuine or feigned. The present researcher, in the course of religious counselling, has come across innumerable cases of people who have had some psycho-religious experiences that deserve the attention of this study. A typical reconstruction of a counselling interview would give a good insight into the religious understanding and possible opportunities that lie open for such persons. Vijay, a twenty-four year old person of the large sub-economic area of Phoenix (Durban) presented himself with a problem that seems to represent a common religious occurrence in the Hindu community :

Vijay : I am glad you granted me this appointment. I have had a spiritual problem that has been troubling me for the last three years.

Counsellor : You are welcome here. How old are you?

Vijay : Twenty Four.

Counsellor : Are you employed?

Vijay : Yes. I am a stores clerk.

Counsellor : What studies have you completed?

Vijay : Standard ten.

Counsellor : Are you married?

Vijay : No. But I do intend getting married soon.

Counsellor : Who do you live with?

Vijay : My father died three years ago. I live with my mother.

Counsellor : What exactly is your spiritual problem?

Vijay : During my father's last illness I was forced to seek employment. This was something difficult for me. I was not successful for a long time. I was feeling terribly insecure. At this time when I was passing through so much of anxiety my mother insisted that I visit the local temple where she had a middle-aged lady friend who was capable of getting into a trance to find out a person's problems as well as offer solutions. My insecurity got the better of me and the following day I went to the temple.

Counsellor : Tell me what kind of temple you went to?

Vijay : It is one of those small backyard temples which is very busy. People go there to be blessed. It was not one of the well-established temples.

Counsellor : What goes on at such a temple?

Vijay : There are rituals like the lighting of camphor and incense. Thereafter the lady-owner of the temple gets into a trance. We go before her, one by one, to present our problems and be blessed.

Counsellor : Describe her trance-state.

Vijay : She seems to be normal when she listens to our problems. Thereafter she lights up a piece of camphor and looking at it she enters into a trance. Her body becomes stiff. She sways to and fro slowly. Then she stops and gives us advice.

Counsellor : What advice did she give you?

Vijay : She said that I was cursed with 'bad luck'. She gave me some holy ashes - some to apply on my head and some to keep in my home. She said that I would get a job in three weeks. We then left as there were many people in the queue.

Counsellor : Did she charge you any money?

Vijay : Yes. My mother paid her two hundred rands which she asked for.

As a sequel to this episode Vijay did not in fact get his job in three weeks. His mother insisted that he return to the lady with the trance which he did. She told him that his 'bad luck' was too strong and recommended them to see a more 'powerful' trance. Having gone to the next lady with a trance state the subsequent episode ran as follows :

Counsellor : What was the new lady like?

Vijay : When she did her rituals she got a type of vigorous trance. She would jump up and sometimes she would go on her knees swaying all the while. Her tongue was protruding between her teeth. We were spell-bound and frightened. Later she told me that I could also get into a trance. I was afraid of this. But my mother insisted that I follow her instructions. She asked me to come back on a festival day. We went there. It was a bigger temple and there was a large crowd of people. The spiritual fervour was rising as a small group of musicians played on traditional musical instruments and sang. When the lady emerged from inside the temple in a trance state she danced about wildly. We were frightened. As she came near me I was overwhelmed and seem to have lost consciousness.

Counsellor : What did you feel?

Vijay : My mind went blank. I cannot remember anything.

Counsellor : What happened after that?

Vijay : Some of my relatives were at the same place. They later told me that I was rolling on the ground in various awkward poses. This was a great embarrassment

to me. I was to marry an educated girl. What if she came to know of it? What would my friends think of me? I don't want this to happen to me again.

Vijay, like many other such persons in the Hindu community, had a posttraumatic stress disorder as a result of encounters with such trance states. Before this study suggests any solution to Vijay's problem it would be necessary to look at the above interview in the context of both Hindu sacred psychology and those aspects of mysticism that deal with this theme.

Let it be clear that this study does not condemn the trance state. Vivekananda (CW 8 : 1985 : 550) is of the view that such trances are not bad : "*Even out of that much good will come.*" Hundreds of Hindus, both the less educated as well as academics and intellectuals, have gone to these trances. It has provided some temporary relief to their insecurities leaving them at the same time in a state of both wonder and ignorance regarding the trance state.

An individual's religious feelings and desires when taken to an emotional pitch are capable of producing almost any kind of sensory automation. We must consider this soberly, frankly and without prejudice. Is this a religious or mystical experience? Where exactly do we place such experiences in the mystical spectrum? It is only by contrast with genuine mystical experiences that we could arrive at some conclusion on this matter. For this purpose we may consider some of the mystical experiences and expression of those states in the life of the well known mystic - Ramakrishna, whose authenticity is well known to the Hindus of South Africa.

In the reminiscences of Swami Brahmananda (in Chetanananda : 1991 : 75) on his Master, Ramakrishna, we find the following key to the understanding of the trance states, "*One imbibes deeper impressions by observing a pure, God-intoxicated life than by reading hundreds of books*". Brahmananda's observations are presented as follows :

Adhar Sen (a devotee of Sri Ramakrishna) used to visit the Master quite often accompanied by a school sub-inspector, who sometimes experienced ecstasy (trance). One day when they arrived at the Dakshineswar Temple (in Calcutta where Ramakrishna lived) the Master (Ramakrishna) was in *samādhi* (superconscious state). There was such a smile on his face, as if it could not contain so much of joy. Then Adhar said to his friend :

“Seeing your trance, I conceived a disgust for it. It seemed to suggest great suffering within you. Can divine ecstasy ever cause pain? The blissful ecstasy of the Master has opened my eyes. I would have found it impossible to come here anymore if his ecstasy had been like yours”

Brahmananda adds, “Doubt would have remained in Adhar’s mind had he not gone to the Master and seen his *samādhi*. This is a result of holy (or a mystic’s) company”. Therefore Hindus would always need a standard by which they may compare trance states. A further eyewitness account of Ramakrishna’s superconscious trance is given by Nagendra Nath Gupta, who was not a devotee of Ramakrishna but a member of the Brahmo Samaj of Calcutta. Fortunately, Gupta observed and recorded some of the physical features of this state as well (in Chetanananda : 1991 : 429) :

“We intently watched Ramakrishna Paramahansa in samādhi. The whole body relaxed and then became slightly rigid. There was no twitching of the muscles or nerves, no movement of any limb. Both his hands lay in his lap with his fingers lightly interlocked. The sitting posture of the body was easy but absolutely motionless. The face was slightly tilted up and in repose. The eyes were nearly but not wholly closed. The eyeballs were not turned up or otherwise deflected, but they were fixed and conveyed no message of outer

objects to the brain. The lips were parted in a beatific and indescribable smile, disclosing the gleam of the white teeth. There was something in that wonderful smile which no photograph was ever able to reproduce. We gazed in silence at Ramakrishna's motionless form... ”

The above profile indicates the characteristics of a mystic in a motionless state of trance. But trance states are not only motionless. Mystics have danced in ecstasy. Here again we find certain characteristics that are not found in the swaying, dancing or other aspects of posture found in the grosser forms of trance. Another eyewitness, Saradananda, recorded his observations of Ramakrishna's ecstasy while in a trance state (Chetanananda : 1991 : 163) :

“An extraordinary tenderness, sweetness, and leonine strength were visible in every limb of the Master's body, and his face shone with a divine smile. It was a superb dance! In it there was not artificiality or affectation, no jumping, no unnatural gestures or acrobatics. Nor was there any absence of control. Rather, one noticed in the Master's dancing rhythmical and natural gestures and movements of limbs. It seemed as if an overflow of grace, bliss and sweetness surged from within, like a big fish happily swimming all over a vast, clear lake, sometimes slowly and sometimes fast. It was as if the dance was a dynamic physical expression of the surge of the blissful ocean of Brahman, which the Master was experiencing within.”

In this instance of trance state there is no abrupt or frightening behaviour. The body does not get into distorted postures. Furthermore, the countenance is always present.

According to Ramakrishna the physical and subtle bodies, that is, the body-mind complex must be gradually purified to withstand the increasing intensity of spiritual fervour and ecstasy.

Ramakrishna's view is that when an emotion is aroused, one understands very little about it. The blow that it delivers to the body is felt only after a long while. Using an analogy he states that when an elephant enters a small pool of water there is much splashing and turmoil. But when the elephant enters a large lake its splashing is hardly noticeable. Similarly when religious emotions are generated in an unpurified body-mind complex they create distortions and turmoil. It is only the purified person that can withstand such an uprise of spiritual fervour (Nikhilananda : 1977 : 322). In the grosser forms of trance we see religious fervour producing distortions that are not necessarily pleasant. In the purified and subtler experience of trance we notice a joy or ecstasy expressing itself through natural bodily configurations that are both wondrous and appealing.

The mystic's ecstasy certainly invites attention. The word ecstasy covers a plethora of experiences, from alcoholic and drug intoxication to possession by demons and the raptures of mystics. Articulating the Hindu view of this phenomena Radhakrishnan (1990 : 77) states, *"Ecstasy of the quiet contemplative type is different from the wild excitement induced by physical means and indulged in for their intoxicating effects. All experience of God when it becomes intense is ecstatic, though every ecstatic emotion is not an experience of God."*

It is evident that there is a certain temperament which predisposes its subject to emotional exaltation and the graceful and natural expression of that through the body which is quite different from a convulsed state introduced by unchecked and excited emotionalism. For the Hindu mystic, ecstasy is a noticeable landmark on the spiritual journey, but like visions, auditions and other miraculous occurrences they are considered to be of secondary importance. God-realization is the ultimate goal.

Coming into contact with grosser forms of trance one notices that these are produced in individuals who have very little grounding in Hindu religious education. The contents of the

primary textbooks of Hinduism are hardly known to them. If at all they have any religious education it stems from their traditional upbringing and the values set out for them by elders at home or in the community. There are exceptions to this rule. The present researcher has seen even university academics enter into these grosser forms of trance. But in the case of such academics it was noted that they were distinguished in their own field of academic discipline but poorly read in so far as Hinduism is concerned. Grosser forms of trance are not knowledge-yielding. In contrast with this the superconscious trance of a mystic transforms an ordinary individual into a person of recognized wisdom. On the 25 March 1896 Swami Vivekananda discussed this issue with the academics of the Graduate Philosophical Society of the Harvard University (USA). In the ensuing discussion Vivekananda (2000 : 95) emphasized the wisdom aspect of the superconscious trance :

Professor : "If you ever reach that state of superconsciousness, can you ever tell about it?"

Vivekananda : "No, but we know it by its fruits. An idiot, when he goes to sleep, comes out of sleep an idiot or even worse. But another man goes into the state of meditation, and when he comes out he is a philosopher, a sage, a great man. That shows the difference between these two states."

Empirical analysis of behaviour patterns of those who enter into grosser forms of trance will reveal that in the post-trance period their behaviour, even in terms of immoral conduct or anti-social behaviour, is the same as before they entered into the trance. Herein lies a great opportunity for religious education and upliftment. In Hinduism higher mysticism invites such persons from their stagnant positions to rise to greater heights of mystical excellence. If correctly

motivated and carried out such an exercise would be spiritually rewarding to the persons concerned.

5.10 Religious Counselling for Raising the Levels of Consciousness from Gross Mysticism to Higher Mysticism

The interview presented earlier between Vijay and the present researcher indicates the typical mind-set of an insecure young man trapped in a manifestation of grosser trance. This study will set out some guidelines that would be helpful to such a person.

Since the person was unemployed and suffering from economic insecurity he was motivated to find a job. It was emphasized to him that he did not belong to the '*unemployable*' type. He had good manners, integrity and work efficiency. These were qualities that put him into the *employable* group. In a further discussion he pointed out that over 40% of our population in South Africa are unemployed. He was then given an alternate path, that is, he could be *self-employed*. With some confidence building measures he could venture into some small-scale business. Vivekananda had pointed out that religion is not for the empty bellies. Hunger and economic insecurities must be addressed at this point. It is important for Hindu religious counsellors to take this fact into account. Economic insecurities can have a devastating effect on the religious lives of people and assistance must be provided even if it means directing such persons to welfare agencies.

The interview reveals that Vijay was suffering from a posttraumatic stress disorder brought on by his unemployment and the embarrassment of reconciling his distorted trance state with his relatives, more so with the lady that he wanted to marry. Indeed this is stressful especially in a Hindu home where the bridegroom-to-be is the centre of much attention. In this instance the counsellor encouraged Vijay to verbally reconstruct the various episodes of stress and trauma.

Painful though this may be, this is in itself a gain for whatever is embarrassing or inferior belongs to the person as a shadow. In this context Jung (1973 : 40-41) states, *“I must have a dark side also if I am to be whole; and in as much as I become conscious of my shadow I also remember that I am a human being like any other. In any case when I keep it to myself, this rediscovery of that which makes me whole restores the condition which preceded the neurosis or the splitting off of the complex. In keeping the matter private I have only attained a partial cure - for I still continue in my state of isolation.”* In Hinduism confession to the priest, guru or even a deity is of vital importance for religious health. It is only by such a therapeutic interview or confession that a person is able to throw himself or herself into the comfort of humanity and be freed from the burden of moral insecurity. Conventional psychotherapy refers to this process as catharsis (cleansing) - which is not merely an intellectual acknowledgement of the disturbing facts, but their conformation by the heart and the actual release of the suppressed emotions.

The afflicted person would require religious psychotherapy that must be individualized. This would mean that the counsellor must have a thorough grasp of the problem, its background and the religious elements at play. In the case of a poorly trained counsellor or in the instance of a cross-cultural encounter where the afflicted person and the counsellor come from two different cultural backgrounds the problems of understanding culture-specific emotions are exacerbated. This will diminish the counsellor's power of empathy. It may be better for such counsellors to refer these persons to specialized agents.

Traumatized persons must be guided to minimize and ultimately sever his or her links with such trances that disrupt their religious growth. For this purpose the support of relatives and friends may be enlisted. It may be vital to encourage the person to tabulate the lessons learnt from such painful encounters, to review them from time to time, and to plan one's spiritual life.

There should be a systematic desensitization of painful emotions. Counsellors may do well to gather together people who have had similar experiences. Group therapy workshops may prove useful.

It is of crucial importance to state that when traumatized individuals are receding from a painful past they should not be deposited in a psychological vacuum. At this point imaginal techniques may be introduced for their recovery. In this instance the higher forms of mysticism must be pointed out. Hinduism has a rich repertoire of scripture images and anecdotes from the lives of its saints and sages that will prove highly beneficial. For the purpose of this study we have already considered the distorted forms of gross trances with the spiritually graceful superconscious states of a mystic like Ramakrishna. This comparison is the key that would shift the attention of the afflicted person from the grosser manifestations of mysticism to its sublime aspects. It is for this reason that this study has focussed at some length on the eyewitness descriptions of Ramakrishna's trance states.

In order to be fully rehabilitated the concerned person must be provided with further religious education. He or she must get to know the nature of Hindu sacred psychology. This study has looked at the graded stages of spiritual growth as envisioned by Hindu mystics. A simple rule must be followed : *Take the person from where he or she is*. Guidance must be provided for upward spiritual mobility.

This researcher has noticed that most persons who frequent trances are oblivious of the four-fold goals of Hinduism: *dharma* (righteous duty), *artha* (legitimate earning of wealth), *kama* (enjoyment of legitimate pleasures) and *mokṣa* (ultimate liberation or God-realization). Devotees earn wealth and enjoy mundane pleasures. Sometimes these need not be through righteous means. But many devotees stagnate at this level. The two other values of life, *dharma* and

mokṣa, are either unknown, neglected or known and abandoned. This is the root cause for religious illnesses. The neglect of these values in the South African Hindu community has led to various traumatized states which could have otherwise been avoided. It is these values that constitute the vital map for future spiritual progress. The goal (*mokṣa*) is explicit. *Dharma* provides the set of uplifting values that counteracts demoralization and stagnation. The Upanishad declare : “*Arise, awake and stop not till the goal is reached.*” (Ka. Up. 1.3.14). The counsellor must play a meaningful role in clearly defining the goal (*mokṣa*). He or she must not only highlight but seek to make attainment of the goal a permanent *samskāra* (impression) of that mind. Furthermore, the counsellor must create and freely use goal-oriented mechanisms that would wean the disadvantaged person away from lower mysticism to *mokṣa*. Motivation must be generated by showing in a convincing manner that this journey, difficult as it may seem, is in fact the unfoldment of the individual’s higher potential that would contribute to self-development and the joy and wisdom that higher mysticism brings.

It may not be out of place to record in this very context that a large number of para-suicidal persons in the Hindu community also lacked or totally neglected the values of *dharma* and *mokṣa*. This resulted in their stagnant, distorted and unmotivated religious life which produced a life-negating psyche. Hindu mysticism is therefore of the view that goal-setting mechanisms, due motivation and clarity of the goal should be a permanent feature of every Hindu mind. More information on the varieties of approach to this matter may be found in the lives and utterances of Hindu mystics, especially those that came into contact with large numbers of people. This study would recommend religious works like the ancient *Srimad Bhagavatam* and the voluminous *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (1886) as excellent source material for motivational data and goal setting mechanisms. Both these works are well known to the Hindus of South Africa. Printed copies are available. Only a more diligent study has to be undertaken by the said Hindus.

5.11 The Attainment of Ultimate Liberation

In Vedānta we come across the *jīvanmūkta* ideal. The *jīvanmūkta* is a *jīva* (soul) that has attained *mokṣa* while still living in the physical body within the context of empirical (*saṃsāric*) existence. Such a person breaks through the fetters of attachment to *saṃsāra* and frees himself or herself from ignorance (*avidyā*) and its paralyzing effects (Grimes : 1989 : 156; Nikhilananda : 1987 : 115). This ideal has been postulated as the highest goal of life by several branches of Indian philosophy (Sankhya, Yoga, Saiva Siddhanta and Vedānta). Since the ultimate concept of liberation expounded in this work concerns the Advaita Vedānta it would be necessary to look at the primary texts, its subsequent interpretations by Shankara and its modern exposition by the guiding lights of the Neo- Vedānta Movement, viz. Ramakrishna, Vivekananda, Radhakrishnan, etc.

The *jīvanmūkta* ideal may be traced back to the Upanishads themselves (Tait. Up. 3.10.5 ; Br. Up. 1.10). On the basis of these literary works it may be easily gleaned that this ideal was well established in the Upanishadic period. In contrast with this Arapura (1986 : 124) argues that while the material for this notion can be found in the classical texts and in Shankara, its origin as an articulated ideal lies outside them, in fact in certain texts of popular spirituality. Arapura has perhaps been drawn to this conclusion because the Upanishads themselves do not give detailed accounts of the *jīvanmūkta*. Arapura (1986 : 124) is of the notion that the Upanishads only reveal generalizations of spiritual matters. Concepts like *jīvanmūkta* and *avatāra* (Incarnations of God) are particularizations that are not emphasized in the Upanishads as they are in secondary texts. Primary texts do not particularize; their work is to ‘show’ (expound) revelations. Radhakrishnan (1990 : 121-123) on the other hand constructs his definition of the *jīvanmūkta* from the passages of the Upanishads themselves. Whatever the points of dispute it can be clearly shown that the primary texts ‘explicitly admit’ the ideal of the *jīvanmūkta* and in fact Shankara favoured this ideal (Hiriyanna 1956 : 279).

There are two views in the Upanishads regarding *mokṣa*. According to one of them *mokṣa* is attainable only after death - “I shall remain here (in the world) only so long as I shall be released (from ignorance). Then I shall reach *mokṣa*.” (Ch. Up. 6.14.2). This is designated *vedehamukti* or liberation after death. In this instance even after the person has attained the intuitive knowledge of the *ātman*, the body-mind complex continues to exist on account of the momentum of past *karmas*. When the gross physical body dies its elements return to their source. The remaining aspects of the individual’s personality, which is technically speaking the other four *kośas*, gets resolved into their macrocosmic source. *Mokṣa* implies that all *kośas* ‘leave’ their ‘empirical home’ and dissolve in their macrocosmic source. This accounts for the identity of *ātman* with *brahman* and not with any one of the *kośas*. Mahadevan (1952 : 69) feels that this view (*vidhehamukti*) or attaining liberation as a post-death experience is an inheritance from the eschatological doctrines of the early Vedic period (Brāhmaṇas) according to which heaven is a far-off place which could be reached by the soul only after it has cast off its physical body.

According to another Upanishadic view *mokṣa* can be attained here in this very life, “Verily, even while we are here we may know this *ātman*” (Br. Up. 4.4.14). “ He who knows that (*ātman*), which is hidden in the cave (of the heart), breaks loose from the bonds of ignorance here on earth itself” (Mun. Up. 2.1.10). This state is known as the *jīvanmūkta* (liberated while retaining the body and interacting with the world). This is the world-affirming ideal that needs to be revisited and its implications explored for the good of humankind.

5.12 The *Pañchakośas* in the Pre-intuitive State

The aspirant of mysticism seeking *mokṣa* must be a *mumukṣutva*, that is, he or she must have an intense desire for *mokṣa*. All Hindu mystics have isolated ‘*yearning for God*’ as the essence of spiritual practices. Mechanical practices do not yield the fruit of God-realization. Within the

context of the *pañchakośa* model yearning for the *ātman* implies the formidable task of turning the attention of the *kośas*, individually and collectively, away from the world and towards the *ātman*. It is a movement from matter to spirit, from the empirical to the transcendent. This journey of purification, introspection and contemplation is a powerful undertaking and involves a break from the obvious in terms of lifestyle and the entire content of one's consciousness. It is a strenuous exercise of preparatory labours, of ethical culture and the development of an indomitable will. The Ka. Up. (1.2.24) states that this path is not for the person of bad conduct, nor for one who is not tranquil or composed. The turbulent-minded cannot qualify for this realization. Furthermore, the path itself is described by the Upanishads as being, "*impassable as a razor's edge, which when sharpened, is difficult to tread on*" (Ka. Up. 1.3.14). Commenting on this path Shankara (on Ka. Up. 1.3.14) states, "The idea is that since the object to be known is very subtle, they (the sages) speak of the path of knowledge leading to it as impassable."

The Upanishads have developed a technique to eliminate the gross and to rise to subtler and subtler levels of consciousness. This technique may be referred to as the '*via negativa*' method. It employs the psychological tool of '*neti*', '*neti*' ('not this', 'not this') (Br. Up. 2.3.6). In actual practice this would mean that when the *ānnamayakośa* is ignorantly perceived to be consciousness or the *ātman*, the aspirant focuses attention on this unspiritual mode of perception, discriminates, employs the '*neti*', '*neti*' assertion, declares the unreality of this perception, transcends it, and reaches the next layer of subtlety. But this layer of subtlety is not the goal. It is just another *kośa*. The technique is applied with respect to this and other successive *kośas*. When this technique is carried out repeatedly it creates a conviction that all *kośas*, gross or subtle, are not the *ātman*. The *ātman* is indeed 'that which is left'. The powerful assertion of the *ātman* is carried out by what the Vedānta calls *mahāvākyas* (great statements) These statements are considered supremely important and are listed as follows :

- i) *prajñānam brahmā* - Consciousness is *brahman* (Ai. Up. 5.3 of RgV).

- ii) *aḥam brahmāsmi* - I am *brahman* (Br. Up. 1.4.10 of YV).
- iii) *tat tvam asi* - You are That (Ch. Up. 6.8.7 of SV).
- iv) *ayamātmā brahman* - This *ātman* is *brahman* (Man. Up. 2 of SV).

The use of these powerful affirmations is calculated towards driving out the subtlest trace of materialism and affirming the Spirit. The maturity of this process leads to a type of consciousness in which the mind is freed from the bondage of materialism or phenomenal existence. This consciousness is technically referred to as *chittaśuddhi*. In this state of ripe habitual purity the *jīva* waits for *mokṣa*. There are certain landmarks which distinguish this state. In the Sv. Up. (2.11) it is said that one in this state of consciousness experiences the following visions :

nīhāradhūmārkānilānalām
khadyotavidyut sphaṭikaśaśīnām
atāni rūpāni puraḥsarāṇi
brahmanyabhivyaktikarāṇi yoge.

*“Forms that appear (to the purified mind) like
snow, smoke, sun, wind, fire, fireflies,
lightning, crystal and moon, precede the
manifestation of brahman in yoga practice.”*

Let it be emphasized that only when these visions appear to the purified mind are they recognized as a state of spiritual advancement. This state is never akin to the schizophrenic's perception or the delusional disorder of a psychiatric patient.

While the Upanishads speak of such lofty visions it would be too inconclusive on the part of this study to suggest that such visions have not been experienced in modern times. Let us consider one such instance from the life of Ramakrishna. A young man, Niranjan, was initiated into spiritual life by Ramakrishna with a *mantra*. He later described this experience (Chetanananda : 1997 : 246) :

“He (Ramakrishna) wrote a mantra on my tongue and asked me to repeat it. What an experience! After returning home, even when my eyes were closed, I begin to see innumerable fireflies in my room. The mantra was vibrating in my head and in every limb of my body...”

More such accounts may be found in books like *Autobiography of a Yogi* by Paramahansa Yogananda. Describing the significance of these landmark events in spiritual life Ramakrishna offers the following interpretation (Nikhilananda : 1977 : 203) : “When you see those signs of longing (for God) in an aspirant, you can rightly say that for him the vision of God is not far to seek. The state of the servant's house will tell you unmistakably whether his master has decided to visit it. First, the rubbish and jungle around the house are cleared up. Second, the soot and dirt are removed from the rooms. Thirdly, the courtyard, floors, and other places are swept clean. Finally the master himself sends various things to the house, such as a carpet, a hubble-bubble for smoking, and the like. When you see these things arriving, you conclude that the master will very soon arrive.”

This pre-realization state of consciousness-purity is well recognized by Hindu mystics. The purity of the *kośas*, their inward direction and the experiences that come with this stage are self-consistent and correctly correlates experiences that are predictable. Yet this not the ultimate state of *mokṣa*. It is only a kind of existential force or a type of rich milieu that promotes the intuitive knowledge of the *ātman*. At this stage the experiences may be classified as a powerful

intellectual registration or assertion of the path already traversed and the goal that lies ahead. Human effort is exhausted at his point. There is complete surrender on the path of the aspirant and there is a yearning for divine grace.

5.13 Divine Grace and Revelation

In the Ka. Up. (1.2.23) we discover that all the existential effort up to this point is inadequate for the realization of the *ātman* :

“This ātman cannot be attained by the study of the Vedas, or by the intellect, or by vast learning. The ātman, which the seeker yearns for, is attainable only by one whom the ātman chooses. To such a one the ātman reveals its own nature”

This passage firmly asserts that in the ultimate conclusion God-realization is only attained by divine grace. This passage is fraught with a typical Upanishadic paradox. It seems most paradoxical that the vast effort employed and the experiences gained thus far seem useless. This paradox is itself intrinsic to the approach. It suggests that the *ātman* is within reach yet it is ultimately ungraspable by human effort. It invokes a profound sense of *helplessness*. This experience of *helplessness* in this context is an extraordinary spiritual phenomena. It is considered to be the grace of the *ātman* or in a more theistic sense, God.

For the Hindu, in every sense, all life is derived from God. Therefore the aspirant's yearning is considered to be made up of the active support of God's grace. If individuals become aware of God's presence in the soul, it is due to God's own working in the soul. It is beyond the power of the unassisted *kośas*, despite their spiritual maturity, to be perfect instruments for God-realization. Human nature feels so weakened that it is 'helpless of itself' to help itself. If the soul is to escape from itself, as it actually does, and reach the freedom from which it is made, it needs

a transforming from within - the capacity for spiritual intuition. The soul feels that this heightened capacity of intuition becomes operative and evident not completely through its own efforts, but through an experience from beyond, from the incomprehensible *ātman* (Radhakrishnan : 1990 : 619; Shankara on Ka. Up. 1.2.24).

The intuitive spirit goes beyond the workings of rational knowledge and predictability. Rational knowledge can only be classified as it is obtained through reason. The intuitive experience, which transcends the subtlest pinnacle of reason, and which in fact is not a process that is measurable, cannot be termed irrational, it is extra-rational. Hindu epistemology, which has debated this issue from various angles, recognizes this special faculty of intuition as being an established norm in higher mysticism. Even in the modern context logicians decry the fuzziness of intuition, just as exclusive intuitionists find it difficult to accept the structures of logic. But holistic knowledge is incomplete without a synthetic understanding of both the empirical analysis and the extra-rational dimension of this theme (that is, *aparāvidyā* and *parāvidyā*).

In a working hypothesis of intellectual intuition Capra (1983 : 39) constructs a model in which he states that these insights (intuition) tend to come suddenly and, characteristically, not when sitting at a desk and working out the equations, but when relaxing, in the bath, during a walk in the woods, on the beach, etc. During these periods of relaxation after concentrated intellectual activity, the intuitive mind seems to take over and produce the sudden clarifying insights which give so much joy to the researcher.

From the Vedāntic standpoint the above model represents what we have classified as intellectual intuition. This is the Vedāntic epistemological position on such a model. Intellectual intuition would be a form of awareness in which the subject somehow creates the object in becoming aware of it, so that there is no epistemological gap between the two. Mystical experience as

reported in a cross-cultural setting and that of the 'mystical', that is, direct experience as conceived and conceptualized as the epistemological pre-supposition of cognition in Vedānta, avow to be 'immediate' in the sense that spatial and temporal dimensions do not exist in it and thus suggest the possibility that human beings can experience noumenal reality. At this level, apart from Infinity, there is nothing that can, strictly speaking be called human (Sivaraman : 1989 : 199).

The state of the highest mystical consciousness is known as *nirvikalpa samādhi* in Hinduism. It is a state where all awareness of multiplicity, the subject and object, and that of oneself as being distinct from *brahman*, is completely dissolved. The affirmation of a superior state of consciousness is a well known part of Vedāntic methodology. This is achieved with a view to demonstrating phenomenologically the possibility of direct experience. Sivaraman (1989 : 198) crystalizes the Vedāntic objective s follows, "To object *a priori* to the positioning of it, is to eliminate by fiat the possibility of experience in the unmediated sense, rather than to provide an argument for its impossibility."

The experience of *nirvikalpa samādhi* is demonstrated in Vedānta by appealing to the edge that normal waking consciousness has over sub-wakeful states, like dream sleep and deep sleep. When I am awake I *know* that I am awake rather than dreaming or being in deep sleep. This is the meaning of being awake. I know this not merely by observing the greater coherence of my experience, or by some other inference. I know this immediately, by noticing the qualitative difference between the state of waking consciousness and dream consciousness. When I am dreaming, I may think I am awake, but it is wrong to conclude that similarly when I am actually awake I have no more basis for supposing that I am awake than I do when I am dreaming. The Vedānta's epistemologically superior standpoint of the non-ordinary *nirvikalpa samādhi*, likewise, can no more be comprehended or effectively criticized from the perspective of

ordinary, normal human consciousness, than can waking consciousness be comprehended and criticized from the state of dreaming consciousness.

The state of *nirvikalpa samādhi* is beyond the three states of mind (waking, dream sleep and dreamless sleep). It is the “Fourth” - *turīya*. It is a state of pure Consciousness, which strictly speaking cannot be termed a ‘state’ because it transcends what we know to be ‘states’. It has no connection with the finite mind and its modifications. It is only experienced when the *ātman* is realized. The Man. Up. (7) draws the distinction between pre-*nirvikalpa* states of mysticism and the ultimate *nirvikalpa* experience as follows :

“The Fourth, say the wise, is not subjective experience, nor objective experience, nor experience intermediate between these two, nor is it a negative condition which is neither consciousness nor unconsciousness. It is not the knowledge of the senses nor is it relative knowledge, nor yet inferential knowledge. Beyond the senses, beyond the understanding, beyond all expression is the Fourth. It is pure unitary consciousness, wherein awareness of the world and of multiplicity is completely obliterated. It is ineffable peace. It is the supreme good. It is one without a second. It is the Self. Know it alone!”

This passage ‘hints and suggests’ as to what the ultimate Reality is like in the experience of *nirvikalpa samādhi*. It is a Reality which is beyond the distinction of subject and object - a Reality that is above and not below this distinction. It is super-theism and not atheism or anti-theism . It is pure Being (Radhakrishnan : 1990 : 689).

Among South African Hindus the workings of divine grace is a study that is poorly neglected. This study has already emphasized that both the spiritual quest and the ultimate realization can

only occur by the grace of God (Ka. Up. 1.2.23). There is an inherent paradox in understanding divine grace. Such grace itself does not follow any predictable logic. The following conversation with Vivekananda indicates the transcendent nature of grace (CW 6 : 1978 : 478) :

Disciple : Is there, Sir, any law of grace?

Vivekananda : Yes and no.

Disciple : How is that?

Vivekananda : Those who are pure always in body, mind and speech, who have strong devotion, who discriminate between the real and the unreal, who persevere in meditation and contemplation - upon them alone the grace of the Lord descends. The Lord, however is beyond all natural laws - is not under any rules and regulations, or just as Sri Ramakrishna used to say, He has the child's nature - and that is why we find some failing to get any response even calling on Him for millions of births, while someone else, whom we regard as a sinful or pertinent man, or a disbeliever, would have illumination in a flash! On the latter, the Lord perhaps lavishes His grace quite unsolicited! You may argue that this man had good merits stored up from previous lives, but the mystery is really difficult to understand. Sri Ramakrishna used to say sometimes : *"Do rely on Him; be like the dry leaf at the mercy of the wind."* And again he would say : *"The wind of His grace is always blowing; what you need to do is to unfurl your sails."*

Disciple : But, Sir, this is a most tremendous statement. No reasoning, I see, can stand here.

Vivekananda : Ah, the limit of all reasoning and arguing is in the realm of *māyā*; it lies within the categories of space, time and causation.

But He is beyond these categories... He on whom His grace descends, in a moment, goes beyond all law. For this reason there is no condition in grace.

5.14 The Identity of the *Ātman* with *Brahman*

In the Upanishad the unity of the *ātman* and *brahman* is explicitly and repeatedly asserted. How is it possible for the *ātman* which is “*smaller than a grain of rice, smaller than a grain of barley*”, etc. (Ch. Up. 1.14.3) be contemplated upon as being all-pervasive? The minuteness in this context is a reference to its subtlety and not size. The Ka. Up. (2.4.10) states :

“What is within (ātman) is also without (brahman). What is without is also within. He who sees difference between what is within and what is without goes ever more from death to death” (that is, reincarnates on account of ignorance).

For the purpose of practical meditation Shankara (on B.S. 1.2.6) resolves or reconciles the *brahman-ātman* paradox by stating that the case is analogous to that of the ether in the eye of a needle, which is spoken of as small, whereas in fact it is all pervading.

What are then the benefits of realizing *brahman* or the pure Being. The Upanishads assemble certain specific qualities that come to the mystic on account of this realization. The knower of *brahman* attains the *Highest (brahman)* (Tai. Up. 2.1.1). If a man realizes *brahman* here then the very *purpose of his life is fulfilled*. Having perceived *brahman* in every being the wise depart from the world and become *immortal* (that is, they are not reborn) (Ken. Up. 2.5). Verily the *highest joy* attends the yogi whose mind is perfectly tranquil, whose passions are calmed, who is free from stain and has become one with *brahman* (B.G. 6.27). These spiritual attainments are

the birthright of all individuals. While the mystic has realized them the average individual is urged by the Hindu scriptures to pursue this path and attain this ultimate state of Beatitude.

5.15 Retrieving the *Pañchakośas* after *Nirvikalpa Samādhi*

Nirvikalpa samādhi need not be an experience of long duration. The mystic must return to consciousness of himself or herself and the world around. But this return from non-empirical consciousness to the empirical state has a new dimension to it. In the pre-intuitive state the mystic, as a part of spiritual disciplines, had to negate the *kośas*, individually and collectively, in order to reach pure Being which is non-empirical. On returning to the *pañchakośas* in the post-*nirvikalpa* experience the mystic perceives the *ātman* as the supreme Reality, unchanging and immortal and the *pañchakośas* as a changing relative reality, temporal and mortal. “The knowers of *brahman* speak of them (non-empirical existence and empirical existence) as being like light and shade” (Ka. Up. 1.3.1). Further, the mystic does not perceive a multiplicity of consciousness with respect to the *kośas* or the world. “There is nothing like multiplicity here” (Ka. Up. 2.1.11). Schrödinger (1964 : 18-19) used an analogy to clarify this new perception in which he said, “the plurality that we perceive is only an appearance, it is not real. Vedāntic philosophy, in which this is fundamental dogma has sought to clarify it by a number of analogies, one of the most attractive being the many-faceted crystal which, while showing hundreds of little pictures of what is in reality a single existent object, does not multiply that object.”

The mystics *jīvanmūkta*-consciousness is indeed the realization of the supreme Unitary Consciousness underlying the multiplicity of names and forms that the empirical universe is filled with. Schrödinger, from the viewpoint of both the Upanishads and modern science, gives us a synoptic view of this expanded vision (Schrödinger : 1964 : 21-22) :

“Hence this life of yours which you are living is not merely a piece of the entire existence, but it is in a certain sense the whole; only this whole is

not so constituted that it can be surveyed in one single glance. This as we know, is what the Brahmans express in that sacred, mystic formula which is yet really so simple and so clear : Tat tvam asi, This is you. Or, again, in such words as ‘I am in the east and the west, I am below and above, I am this whole world’.”

For the mystic this experience is real and does not require the supportive structure of any empirical knowledge. With reference to this supreme state of Reality the Upanishads declare that in such a mystic, “*all doubts are dispelled*” (Mun. Up. 2.2.9). Such a mystic ecstatically sings the chant (*sāman*) : “Oh wonderful! Oh wonderful! Oh wonderful!” (Tait. Up. 3.10.5).

5.16 Unitary Consciousness - its Implications for the Modern Context

The Neo-Vedānta Movement, of which Ramakrishna-Vivekananda have been the pioneering spirits, has responded in a variety of ways to contemporary challenges. The spiritual foundations of this movement rests on experiences and ideas that are much more characteristically Hindu than are those of the Brahma Samaj or even of the Arya Samaj. The patriotism of Vivekananda is not political but spiritual to the very core. This is rooted in his passionate faith in the ancient religious traditions of India, notably the Upanishads. He felt that these traditions of ancient India, if given the correct orientation, would be the cure for contemporary ills. The present Indian thinking in general and the Hindu psyche in particular could rid itself of its failures, not by diluting it with Christianity - as the Brahma Samaj did - but by a rediscovery of what is believed to be its real source of power, namely, the primary texts of Hinduism.

The conscious and deliberate restructuring of the message of Vedānta to fresh ends such as the modern world demands of it was the task of Vivekananda. Ramakrishna was a seer of super-sensuous truths, not an apostle. It was left to Vivekananda to give articulation to the ancient

Hindu truths as envisioned by Ramakrishna. The combination of these two complementary natures, one the seer, the other the apostle, has supplied a remarkable impetus for the rejuvenation of Hinduism (Macnicol : 1979 : 115-116).

Medieval Hinduism was largely influenced by Shankara. This influence continued up to the eighteenth century. With the birth of a number of social and religious reformers like Ram Mohan Roy, Dayanand Saraswati, Keshab Chandra Sen, Ramakrishna and Vivekananda, the landscape of Hinduism went through definite attitudinal changes. Shankara had equated *jīva* (soul) with *brahman*. There was an uncompromising identity of these two. Vivekananda spoke of the potential divinity of the *jīva*. By implication Vivekananda meant that the Truth is not merely to be *recognized*, but has to be striven for, attained and manifested. This spirit of religious exertion characterizes Vivekananda's approach.

One is led to believe that for Shankara the truth of *brahman* and the appearance-status of the world are equally important, whereas Vivekananda does not seem to be interested in giving any ontological appraisal of the world. He speaks in terms of controlling nature, both internal and external, and not negating it. His stress is on the unity of existence (*brahma-vada*) and not the view of Shankara which is an apparency of the world (*māyā-vada*).

Shankara upholds the path of *Jñāna* (discrimination and knowledge) as the exclusive discipline to realize the *ātman*. According to Shankara the other well known paths of Hinduism, namely, that of *bhakti*, *karma*, etc. are only aids that support *jñāna*. Vivekananda teaches the harmonization of all these paths. Vivekananda's speciality is that he made an original contribution to the path of *karma yoga*. Speaking from the Hindu perspective he said, "*I have made a new path and opened it up to all. Up till now it was thought that liberation could be attained only by meditation, repetition of God's names, scriptural discussion and so forth. Now*

young men and women will attain liberation by doing the Lord's work" (Chetanananda : 1997 : 369). This is a radical departure from Shankara and medieval Hinduism. Vivekananda institutionalized the ideal of service in a most pronounced way within Hinduism. His concept of service is based on his own mystical insight, his temporal experiences in India and abroad, the teachings of his guru - Ramakrishna, and his own ingenuity and logical arguments that are in consonance with the spirit of the Upanishads.

A brief view of Vivekananda's interpretation of *karma yoga* must be considered for this study as it has benefits, both mundane and spiritual, for all Hindus. Whereas the *karma yoga* doctrine advocates working without the idea of agentship and offering the fruits of action to God is based on dualism, Vivekananda's ultimate ideal of service stands on the Advaita Vedāntic concept of the unitary Consciousness. Vivekananda said, "*According to Advaitism, love every man as your Self and not as your brother as is Christianity. Brotherhood should be superseded by universal Selfhood.*" Here, God is directly worshipped. While serving the poor, the diseased and the downtrodden, an aspirant views him or her as God. Vivekananda's Vedānta was not world-negating. It was world-affirming in that it enjoined deification of the world. But deification of the world does not mean having a hasty perception of the world as God. It means giving up the world as we ordinarily think of it through the medium of the senses and the mind and to know it for what it really is. In this context Vivekananda's concept of Advaita is closer to the experiential Advaita of the Upanishadic rishis than to the rationalistic Advaita of Shankara. Nevertheless, when a person attains *nirvikalpa samādhi* his world-view stands revolutionized; his realized perception of unitary Consciousness - that God alone has become all living beings, prompts him to serve all beings in the true Advaitic spirit. The same spirit of service in its rudimentary form inspires an aspirant who arduously endeavours to make his actions approximate to the Supreme Ideal. What the mystic has attained colours the attitude and life-style of the aspirant. An aspirant who makes his actions approximate to the ideal gains spiritually; and one who through making

sincere attempts fails to catch the spirit of the ideal, gains in moral strength and mystic conviction.

Though Vivekananda's Neo-Vedāntic doctrine of service stands firmly on the Advaita or monastic principle, it has not closed its doors on those who are not temperamentally or otherwise fit for that. Among South African Hindus, for instance, the majority are dualists in their worship and attitude towards God. But in this scheme dualists have a rightful place. In this context Prabhananda (1994 : 410) clarifies this point, "At the dualistic level a practitioner may serve God as an entirely separate entity in the tabernacle of the human body. In the next phase he serves with the belief that the same transcendental God has become manifest in the person he is serving. And finally, ascending vertically to the unsullied monistic experience of unity, he serves man with the conviction that the same Brahman is as much present in his own self as in the beneficiary."

In the mystical elements of the Neo-Vedānta Vivekananda has offered a synthetic ideal by juxtaposing the vow of service to humanity with the usual classical vow of one's own salvation. He coined the phrase : *ātmano mokṣārtham jagaddhitāy ca* - "for one's own salvation and for the salvation of humankind". Mystics and aspirants of Neo-Vedāntic mysticism take this very vow. They are not only permitted to strive for their own liberation, but also to work for the good of the world. There should be no schism between meditation and service. This new vision of mystical insight and its direct relation to humankind has had vast beneficial implication for humankind. Institutions and individuals with mystic tendencies of a contemplative nature are now serving humanity with spiritual motivation. This is a great source of strength to Hinduism.

CHAPTER SIX

Conclusion

This study has focussed on some of the prominent features of the sacred psychology and mysticism of the South African Hindu Community. The religious inheritance of this section of society came down from a disadvantaged past. As such it did not reflect, in adequate measure, the wisdom and intuitive insights that are commonplace occurrences in the primary religious texts of Hinduism. This lapse, which has been all too feebly checked, has resulted in several religious and spiritual aberrations which has manifested itself as an absence of a comprehensive value system and the resultant insecurities. The community's religious vision and practices always came from the limited religious lore and traditions that were with them. These may be designated as endogenous sources of religious transformation. This source with its limitations came directly into contact with a set of powerful exogenous factors of social transformation which were manifest in a series of '*izations*' - politicization (through the insecurities of apartheid and even the present democracy), industrialization, secularization, decentralization and above all modernization. These '*izations*' together with the limitations of religious studies and practices have grouped together to weaken the fabric of Hindu collectivism. When the '*izations*' referred to above were introduced into the Hindu society the limited value-orientation embedded in its already compromised religious ethos was gradually eroded. Erosion, however, is a process that may be effectively checked and its deterioration reversed and replaced by sound enough principles that will contribute to the strength of such a structure. This work endeavours to make a contribution towards this end. A work of this nature can only consider some of the religious insecurities of this community and address them with selected resources taken from the repertoire of Hindu realizations and beliefs.

Hindus are of the view that their original scriptures, that is, the Vedas and Upanishads, are revelations from God. These revelations came through human channels which were first transmitted by oral traditions and only later recorded as the sacred Vedic texts. The Vedic texts comprise two portions, namely, the ritualistic section (*karma kāṇḍa*) and the section on intuitive wisdom (*jñāna kāṇḍa*). Taken together these two sections represent a vast gamut of religious beliefs, aspirations and realizations. Primitive religious practices, ethical issues, theistic postulations and mystical revelations are to be found in these works. Hindu sacred psychology takes into account that human beings are evolving from grosser states of spirituality to subtler and more intuitive manifestations of religions. Society is not made up of abstract thinkers. The Hindu scriptures therefore uphold the view that grosser forms of rituals are an essential human need. At this level people practice fetishism, totemism, animism and ancestor worship. Their mundane insecurities are addressed by indulging in a variety of such practices. From the standpoint of religious classification all these beliefs and practices belong to the childhood of spiritual development and are indulged in by people who have not outgrown their spiritual infancy. At this stage such people have no clear sense of spiritual and moral values and the ultimate concept of God (*brahman*) is unknown or vague. Since this study has been conducted among South African Hindus it has noticed that sections of this population are stagnant at the level of gross rituals. There seems to be an almost paralytic state of consciousness which incapacitates them from moving ahead. In contrast with this, this research has emphasized that within grosser rituals may be found the roots of mysticism. Ritual mysticism may be isolated and identified at this point. It is that awareness of ritual saturation and the urge to leave behind and transcend these practices that leads the devotee to the next degree of subtlety. This paradigm shift, which is in fact spiritual growth, is not only desirable but urgently so. The Hindu scriptures not only outline the next stage but motivate growth.

Hindu rituals, when viewed in isolation of mystical growth, becomes morbid and religiously counter-productive. Yet a larger understanding of the ritual has unlimited potential for social well-being and spiritual growth. Ritualism has a **historical function**. According to Sharma (1980 : 21) it binds together not only the different units of Hindu society during a generation, but also the different generations of a race. It binds the present with the past and secures a visible continuity for religion. Some semblance or modification of the Vedic rituals are still retained and practised by the South African Hindus. Through this they have the advantage of identifying their religious 'roots'. Strong religious identity without the elements of fundamentalism may be considered to be the basis for religious security among South African Hindus.

Ritualism has an important **social function**. In the temples of South Africa large groups of believers have been congregating to witness or to participate in the rituals. This process embodies varied degrees of faith and binds together different sections of the community into a cohesive whole.

One of the principal functions of ritualism is determined by its **symbolism**. Most of the rites that are performed by Hindus are intended to visualize belief and mystical realizations. The fire-altars in the shapes of birds, etc. (Chapter 3) are intended for powerful visualization with the intention, or rather the compulsion as it were, to take to flight towards the next intermediary goal. This study recommends that religious teachers and priests within the Hindu fold use symbolism in a much more emphasized and meaningful way to render mystical truths more transparent, especially to those that are long stagnant at the level of gross rituals. It is this very symbolism which when explained with rationality and some systematization that becomes the motivating force for upward growth. Ritually assisted mysticism is the firm ground upon which the abstract concepts of supersensuous truths may be developed and understood.

The above three functions of rituals, namely, historical, social and symbolic may be considered to be objective functions that are capable of promoting mysticism at the gross level. But for mystical growth these three functions are inadequate. Rituals must be cherished for its subjective influence. Emotions try to seek an outlet in action. Religious emotion too craves for expression and finds it in one of the prescribed rituals. The devotee has the satisfaction, after going through a long ritual ceremony, that he or she has done something with a sacred purpose and that this act is different from anything secular. This is the **psychological function** of ritual. It is in cultivating this psychological subjectivity that mysticism becomes subtle and inward. Here we observe a major paradigm shift from outward sense-bound objective experiences to subjective cognitive experiences. From here onwards it is through a carefully motivated plan and its resultant action that the aspirant ascends, step by step, on the mystical spiral. This implies a slow but definitive transformation of the mind.

This inward journey has been mapped out in the Tait. Up. Its inner contours comprise the *pañchakośas* which have an ascending degree of subtlety. With each step of upward mobility the aspirant encounters new and higher dimensions of spiritual consciousness. The various levels in religion that are apparent within the wide bounds of Hinduism are explained due to graduations in spiritual evolution and the need of catering for the spiritual needs of each section. One of the articles of Hindu faith is to believe in the evolution of the knowledge of God. Hinduism does not distinguish ideas of God as true or false, adopting one particular idea as the standard for the whole of humanity. It accepts the fact that humankind seeks its goal at various levels and in various directions and feels sympathy with every stage of the search.

Spiritual intuition is another aspect that needs to be carefully explored by South African Hindus. In the Upanishads the intuitive experience (*pratyakṣānubhūti*) is mentioned with brevity. The process leading to this state is not systematized in the Upanishads. The reason for this is that the

Upanishads are only concerned with intuitive insights, which, by their very nature do not comply by the standards of human logic. This study has gathered various strands of both the intuitive process and the nature of this experience and assembled them in some coherent order. Through this means South African Hindus may discover a relatively unknown faculty which undoubtedly has immense potential for their spiritual growth. The development of the intuitive faculty is fundamental in Hindu sacred psychology. As such it ought to be explored with purposeful vigour.

In Hinduism ultimate liberation or *mokṣa* comes only after a long process of spiritual evolution. The *jīvanmūkta* is a rare being but the *jīvanmūkta* ideal may be sought after by all. Human beings possess everything that is needed for *ātman*-consciousness, but these elements are in a latent state. It is like ice and water; ice possesses the nature of water. In the state of ice the properties of water are not apparent. Human beings are of the nature of God, but in a state in which this knowledge is not apparent. Apparently they are not divine, or to put it differently, they possess *ātman*-consciousness, but do not know it or have the security and joy of it.

The immortality of the *ātman* merits some mention here. Almost all anxieties associated with death and dying are connected in some way or the other with a habitual awareness of mortality. This is the human individual's incapacity to perceive the immortal *ātman* within the mortal body. This crisis of perception must be addressed by the individuals concerned both in theory and practice. This study has a hierachial structure that spans the gross material body (*annamayakośa*) to the subtlest mode of matter (*ānandamayakośa*). Attaining ascending modes of subtlety, step by step, is in fact a journey to the immortal *ātman*, which by its very nature, is infinitely subtle. Setting foot on this journey brings its own reward. "Even a little of this *dharma* saves one from great fear (of mortality)" (BG 2.40). The person who has not attained the goal of *mokṣa* in this birth may continue with this quest in the next life. "No effort is lost" (BG 2.40). In fact, karmic

merits due to purposeful striving accumulate and form the impetus for the onward journey of the soul (BG 4.43) :

“There he regains the (mental) impressions (of ātman-consciousness) which he had developed in his previous life and with this (as the starting point) he strives again for perfection.”

The ultimate hope is also declared by the scripture, “By his former practice, he is carried on irresistibly (to *mokṣa*)” (BG 6.44). These assurances are not just nebulous adventures in faith ; they constitute the foundational experiences of Hindu faith. Furthermore, this assurance is a source of solace to all, “the most sinful person can attain it” (BG 4.36).

The South African Hindus need to visualize the above goal of mysticism with thoroughness and certainty. Goal-setting mechanisms, suggested in this study may be carefully considered. Faith in this course of the ultimate destiny is a ‘yes’, a positive point in self-commitment. This faith cannot bring about a quick miracle of realization, for, a positive probability does not become an immediate certainty. However, progress on the path brings its own rewards.

In South Africa, as it is in many parts of the world, there is a good measure of confusion regarding the guru or the one who lives and expounds mystical teachings. Within this work there are authoritative texts from primary scriptures and secondary sources indicating that the mystic-guru is an important necessity on this path. Such a person, male or female, must comply by the ethical prescriptions enjoined in the scriptures. Above all, such a person must have had access to supersensuous experiences that are directly related to God-realization. In the absence of such a person an advanced aspirant on the path of mysticism may be taken as a suitable guide. Today when innumerable charlatans proliferate as gurus it is a socio-religious necessity to know the

defining parameters of a guru. This study emphasizes that the true mystic-guru is not a miracle-monger, a palm-reader or an astrologer. Aspirants for genuine mystical understanding should keep aloof from such persons. This researcher has encountered many despondent aspirants that have been misled by naively surrendering their independence to such persons. Our rational faculty should not take leave of us when approaching a mystic-guru.

Mysticism as a body of knowledge is the science or art, by which a person can realize his or her own spiritual ideal, be it the personal God or the abstract *brahman*, and thus become a mystic. For the Hindu, mysticism is also a temper, a mood, rather than a systematic philosophy or a doctrine of life. The mystic believes in a world of divine reality behind and within the world of sense-perception. To such a person human beings, nature and God are but the manifestations of the “**One Inseparable**”. It is the one undivided changeless life (*brahman*) in all lives, one inseparable in the separate. The Hindu mystic is convinced of the eternity of the human soul (*ātman*), death being a mere transformation. He or she also believes that all things in the visible world are but forms and manifestations of the One Divine Life, and that these phenomena are changing and temporary, while the soul that ‘*informs*’ them is eternal or immortal.

The Neo-Vedānta Movement has harnessed the above realization and directed it towards socio-welfare activities of a spiritual kind. Motivation is a general term for the process of initiating, directing and sustaining physical or mental activities. The mysticism embedded in Neo-Vedānta draws its motivational power from the Advaita - that is, to see the same Divine Spirit in all. Mystics generally practice renunciation of the world. Involvement in anything mundane was felt to be anti-mystic. The mystic should have only one desire and that is total absorption in God-consciousness. But to understand the world-affirming mysticism of Neo-Vedānta one must understand the dynamics of ‘desire’. Vivekananda made strenuous endeavours to convince spiritual seekers that God would accept their service only if done without any taint of selfish

desires. Service should be done with humility and reverence. He introduced the phrase, *daridradevo bhava* (the poor is God). In this he did not deify hunger or indirectly contribute to the perpetuation of poverty. Instead of only offering ritual worship or chanting hymns in praise of God, a hungry person should be appeased by offerings of food and drink. In this vision Vivekananda and subsequent Vedāntic teachers like Radhakrishnan linked the mystics' contemplation with service. In this context service is primarily practitioner-oriented and selflessness is viewed as an astute spiritual discipline for mystic realization. For South African Hindus this avenue of selfless service as a means for God-realization holds innumerable opportunities for spiritual growth.

Mysticism for the average South African Hindu is something that lies outside the vast spaces of the average human mind. Its yearnings, insights and experiences are a heritage of our present state of life. They are an intrinsic part of our humanity. Shorn of religious trappings and fundamentalism, the mystical quest is not apart from the dailiness of life but pervades and fills life at its most profound layers. This research has culled from both primary and secondary resources the necessary elements of Hindu sacred psychology. A psychological appropriation of mysticism is certainly not the intention of these reflections. But an exposed sacred psychology as it has been rendered in this work is only a means for mystical understanding. Yet this means may be considered twofold. Firstly, it will complement other modes of psychological understanding. Secondly, for the Hindu mind it would provide the means for psychoanalysis and psychotherapy.

This work strongly recommends that among South African Hindus religious counselling be given greater importance. The role of such counselling should be to help people identify irrational religious beliefs, to challenge them and to replace them with rational beliefs taken from Hindu sacred psychology and the authoritative primary and secondary scriptures of Hinduism. Such people must be encouraged to be more accepting of themselves and should be persuaded to

follow long-term goals like *mokṣa* while tolerating unchangeable life-conditions. Furthermore, the religious counsellor must facilitate the individual's acquisition of the necessary skills to help prevent a relapse into the old mode of thought and action. In short such disadvantaged Hindus must not be left stagnant or stranded. This will be a great opportunity for service.

With the current globalization process in full momentum and the present democratic ethos being unfolded in South Africa many of the previous religious, cultural and historical prejudices are being obliterated. This is generating unparalleled opportunities to forge the kind of shift in paradigm we need to survive in this new millennium. Hindu mysticism as expounded in this work views the universe as a comprehensive and interconnected whole. The development of this ideal implies a helpful cross-cultural borrowing. From the Hindu position there is nothing richer to give, nothing so profound to impart than its mystical realization of the Unitary Consciousness. For the Hindu this means a return to the mystical traditions and intuitive insights. Immediate and urgent attention must be paid to this aspect. Otherwise we would have a feeble mystical identity that is incapacitated from identifying itself with a pluralistic society. Hindu mysticism in South Africa should not be an unconnected island being washed down as flotsam in the mighty river of pluralization and globalization. While retaining its identity it should make its contribution towards the evolving new South African ethos.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

WORKS CITED AND USED EXTENSIVELY IN THE TEXT

Adiswarananda, Swami. 1994 **Facing the Restless Mind in Living Wisdom - Vedanta in the West**. Hollywood (USA) : Vedanta Press.

- 1988 in **Meditation - Monks of the Ramakrishna Order**. Madras : Sri Ramakrishna Math.

- 1999 in **Global Vedanta** (Vol. 4; No. 3). Seattle (USA) : Vedanta Society of Western Washington.

-2000 **Faith or Reason in Global Vedanta**. Washington : Vedanta Society of Western Washington.

Arapura, J.G. 1986 **Hermeneutical essays on Vedantic Topics**. Delhi : Motilal Banarsidass.

Aurobindo Sri. 1985 **A Practical Guide to Integral Yoga**. Pondicherry (India): Sri Aurobindo Ashram.

- 1989 **The Life Divine**. Pondicherry : Sri Aurobindo Ashram.

Basham, A.L. 1954 **The Wonder that was India**. London : Sidwick and Jackson.

- 1968 **Swami Vivekananda : A moulder of the Modern World in Swami Vivekananda in East and West** . London : The Ramakrishna Vedanta Centre of London.

- 1990 **The Origins and Development of Classical Hinduism**. Delhi : Oxford University Press.

Bhajananda, Swami. 1995 in **Concepts of Knowledge : East and West**. Calcutta : The Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture.

- 1996 **Values, Yoga and Reality in Values - The Key to a Meaningful Life**. Chennai : Sri Ramakrishna Math.

- Bhaskarananda, Swami. 1999 in **Global Vedanta** (Vol. 3; No. 4). Seattle (USA) : Vedanta Society of Western Washington.
- Bhattacharya, Bishnupada. 1978 Sanskrit Prose in **The Cultural Heritage of India** (Vol V). Calcutta : The Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture.
- Bhattacharya, Surendranath. 1936 The Philosophy of Shankara in **The Cultural Heritage of India** (Vol 1). Calcutta : Sri Ramakrishna Centenary Committee.
- Bhattacharyya, Krishnachandra. 1936 Advaitavada and its Spiritual Significance in **The Cultural Heritage of India** (Vol 1). Calcutta : Sri Ramakrishna Centenary Committee.
- Borman, William A. 1990 **The Other Side of Death: Upanisadic Eschatology**. Delhi : Sri Satguru Publications.
- Bucke, Richard Maurice. 1969 **Cosmic Consciousness**. New York : E.P. Dutton and Co.
- Capra, Fritjof. 1983 **The Tao of Physics**. London : Fontana Paperbacks.
- 1987 **Uncommon Wisdom**. London : Century Hutchinson Ltd.
- Chakravarti, Prabhat Chandra. 1978 The Spiritual Outlook of Sanskrit Grammar in **The Cultural Heritage of India** (Vol V). Calcutta : The Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture.
- Chand, Devi. 1988 **The Yajurveda**. (Sanskrit text with English translation). Delhi : Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt.Ltd.
- 1990 **The Samaveda**. (Sanskrit text with English translation). Delhi : Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt.Ltd.
- 1990 **The Atharvaveda**. (Sanskrit text with English translation). Delhi : Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt.Ltd.
- Chatterjee, Satischandra. 1963 Swami Vivekananda's Neo-Vedantism and its practical application in **Swami Vivekananda Centenary Memorial Volume**. Calcutta : Swami Vivekananda Centenary Committee .

- Chetanananda, Swami. 1991 **Ramakrishna as we Saw Him**. St. Louis (USA) : Vedanta Society of St. Louis.
- 1997 **God lived with Them**. St. Louis : Vedanta Society of St. Louis.
- Chowdhury, Tarapada. 1957 **The Vedas in History of Philosophy Eastern and Western** (Vol 1). London : George Allen and Unwin Ltd.
- Dandekar, R.N. 1978 Literature of Brahmanism in Sanskrit in **The Cultural Heritage of India** (Vol V). Calcutta : The Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture.
- Dasgupta, S.N. 1992 **Hindu Mysticism**. Delhi : Motilal Banarsidas.
- Dasgupta, Surendranath. 1992 **A History of Indian Philosophy** (Vol 1). Delhi : Motilal Banarsidass.
- Deussen, Paul. 1987 **The Systems of the Vedanta**. Delhi : Karan Publications.
- Diwaker. R.R. 1976 **Mahayogi - Life, Sadhana and Teachings of Sri Aurobindo**. Bombay : Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan.
- Farquhar, J.N. 1877 **Modern Religious Movements in India**. New Delhi : Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt.Ltd.
- Frey-Rohn, Liliane. 1976 **From Freud to Jung**. New York : Dell Publishing Co., Inc.
- Gambhirananda, Swami. 1986 **Taittiriya Upanisad** (with commentary of Shankara). Calcutta : Advaita Ashrama.
- Ghanananda, Swami. (Undated) **Mind and Consciousness**. London : Ramakrishna Vedanta Centre.
- Gnaneswarananda, Swami. 1995 **Yoga for Beginners**. Madras : Sri Ramakrishna Math.
- Gopal, Sarvepalli. 1989 **Radhakrishnan – A Biography** . Delhi : Oxford University Press.
- Griffith, Ralph T.H. 1957 **The White Yajurveda**. Banaras : E.G. Lazarus and Co.
- 1976 **The Hymns of the Rg Veda**. Delhi : Motilal Banarsidass.
- Grimes, John. 1989 **A Concise Dictionary of Indian Philosophy**. New York : State University of New York Press.

- Hariyanna, M. 1952 **The Quest After Perfection**. Mysore : Kavyalaya Publishers.
- Heisenberg, Warner. 1989 **Physics and Philosophy**. London : Penguin Books.
- Hume, R.E. 1991 **The Thirteen Principal Upanishads** (translation and commentary). Delhi :
Oxford University Press.
- Isherwood, Christopher. 1980 **Ramakrishna and His Disciples**. Hollywood : Vedanta Press.
- Jitatmananda, Swami. 1986 **Modern Physics and Vedanta**. Bombay : Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan.
- Jung, C G. 1973 **Modern Man in Search of a Soul**. London : Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd.
- Kakar, Sudhir. 1991 **The Analyst and the Mystic**. New Delhi : Viking.
- 1981 **The Inner World: A Psycho-Analytic Study of Childhood and Society in India**. Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Katz, Steven T. (Ed). 1983 **Mysticism and Religious Traditions**. New York : Oxford University Press.
- Kluckhohn, Clyde. 1962 **Culture and Behaviour**. New York : The Free Press of Glenco.
- 1984 **Outlines of Hinduism**. Bombay : Chetna Pvt. Ltd.
- Macnicol, Nicol. 1968 **Indian Theism From the Vedic to the Muhammadan Period**. Delhi :
Munshiram Manoharlal.
- 1979 **The Living Religions of the Indian People**. Delhi : Oriental Books Reprint Corporation.
- Madhavananda, Swami. 1970 **Vivekachudamani of Shankara**. (translation and commentary).
Calcutta : Advaita Ashrama.
- 1989 **Vedanta Paribhasa** (translation and commentary). Calcutta : Advaita Ashrama.
- Mahadevan, T.M.P. 1957 **The Upanisads in History of Philosophy Eastern and Western**
(Vol. 1). London : George Allen and Unwin Ltd.
- Maslow, Abraham. 1982 **The Farther Reaches of Human Nature**. New York : Penguin Books.
- Maxwell, Diesel and Naidoo. 1995 **Living Faiths in South Africa**. Cape Town : David Philip.

- Müller, Max. 1971 **The Six Systems of Indian Philosophy**. Varanasi : The Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series Office.
- 1975 **The Sacred Books of the East** (Vol 1 - The Upanishads). Delhi : Motilal Banarsidass
- 1894 **Three Lectures on the Vedanta Philosophy**. London : Longmans, Green, and Co.
- Nikhilananda, Swami. 1968 **Man in Search of Immortality**. London : George Allen and Unwin Ltd.
- 1977 **Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna**. New York : Ramakrishna Vivekananda Center.
- 1982 **Hinduism - Its Meaning for Liberation of the Spirit**. Madras : Sri Ramakrishna Math.
- 1987 **Self-Knowledge** (of Shankara). Madras : Sri Ramakrishna Math.
- Pandit, M.P. 1987 **Traditions in Occultism**. New Delhi : Sterling Publishers Pvt. Ltd.
- 1987 **Traditions in Mysticism** . New Delhi : Sterling Publishers Pvt. Ltd.
- 1988 **Upanishads – Gateway of Knowledge**. Wilnot (USA) : Lotus Light Publications.
- Patkar, M.M. 1978 **Sanskrit Lexicography in The Cultural Heritage of India** (Vol V). Calcutta: The Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture.
- Prabhananda, Swami. 1994 **in Vivekananda - A Hundred Years Since Chicago**. Calcutta : Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture.
- Prabhavananda, Swami and Manchester, F. 1969 **The Spiritual Heritage of India**. California : The Vedanta Society of Southern California.
- Prabhavananda, Swami. 1974 **Vedic Religion and Philosophy**. Madras : Sri Ramakrishna Math.
- Prajnanananda, Swami. 1992 **Is a Jivanmukta Subject to Ignorance**. Calcutta : Ramakrishna Vedanta Math.
- Puri, B.N. 1971 **A Study of Indian History**. Bombay : Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan.
- Pusley, Edward B. 1952 **The Confessions of Saint Augustine**. New York : Pocket Books Inc.

- Radhakrishnan, S. 1936 Introduction to **The Cultural Heritage of India** (Vol 1). Calcutta : Sri Ramakrishna Centenary Committee
- 1939 **Eastern Religions and Western Thought**. London : Oxford University Press.
 - 1948 **Religion and Society**. London : George Allen and Unwin Ltd.
 - 1957 **The Vedanta - the Advaita School in History of Philosophy Eastern and Western** (Vol 1). London : George Allen and Unwin Ltd.
 - 1989 **The Bhagavad Gita** (translation and commentary). Delhi : Oxford University Press.
 - 1990 **The Principal Upanishads**. Delhi : Oxford University Press.
 - 1990 **Radhakrishnan Reader** (an anthology). Bombay : Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan.
- Raja, Kunhan C. 1936 The Vedic Culture in **The Cultural Heritage of India** (Vol 1). Calcutta Sri Ramakrishna Centenary Committee.
- 1957 **Pre-Vedic Elements in Indian Thought in History of Philosophy Eastern and Western** (Vol 1). London : George Allen and Unwin Ltd.
- Raju, P.T. 1957 **The Vedanta - the Advaita School (Post Shankara) in History of Philosophy Eastern and Western** (Vol 1). London : George Allen and Unwin Ltd.
- Ranganathananda, Swami. 1971 **The Message of the Upanishads**. Bombay : Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan.
- 1987 **Eternal Values for a Changing Society** (Vol 1). Bombay : Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan.
- Sarcar, Mahendranath. 1988 Sri Ramakrishna a Study in Spiritual Consciousness in **Studies on Sri Ramakrishna**. Calcutta : The Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture.
- Sarma, D.S. 1988 **Essence of Hinduism**. Bombay : Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan.
- Sastri, Gaurinath. 1978 Sanskrit Poetics in **The Cultural Heritage of India** (Vol V). Calcutta : The Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture.

- Sastri, Ramaswami K.S. 1936 **The Puranas and their Contribution to Indian Thought in The Cultural Heritage of India (Vol 1)**. Calcutta : Sri Ramakrishna Centenary Committee.
- Sastri, Venkatarama T.T. 1936 **The Smritis : Their Outlook and Ideals in The Cultural Heritage of India (Vol 1)**. Calcutta : Sri Ramakrishna Centenary Committee.
- Sastry, Allodi Mahadeva. 1980 **The Taittiriya Upanishad**. Madras : Samanata Books.
- Satprakashananda, Swami. 1968 **Ethics and Religion**. St. Louis : The Vedanta Society of St. Louis.
- 1974 **Methods of Knowledge**. Calcutta : Advaita Ashrama.
 - 1977 **The Universe, God, and God-Realization**. St. Louis : The Vedanta Society of St. Louis.
 - 1981 **The Goal and the Way**. Madras : Sri Ramakrishna Math.
- Satprem. 1970 **Sri Aurobindo or the Adventure of Consciousness**. Pondicherry : Sri Aurobindo Society.
- Schrödinger, Erwin. 1964 **My View of the World**. London : Cambridge University Press.
- Sharvananda, Swami. 1936 **The Vedas and their Religious Teachings in The Cultural Heritage of India (Vol 1)**. Calcutta : Sri Ramakrishna Centenary Committee.
- 1958 **Taittiriyaopanisad**. Madras : Sri Ramakrishna Math.
- Shraddhananda, Swami. 1996 **Seeing God Everywhere**. Hollywood : Vedanta Press.
- Sudarshan, ECG. 1995 **The Divine Peacock in The Divine Peacock - Understanding Contemporary India**. New Delhi : Indian Council for Cultural Relations.
- Suhbhanarayanan, N. 1975 **Occult Psychology of the Hindus**. Pondicherry : Dipti Publications (Sri Aurobindo Ashram).
- Swahananda, Swami. 1987 **Panchadasi of Sri Vidyanarany Swami**. Madras : Sri Ramakrishna Math.
- 1980 **The Chandogya Upanisad**. Madras : Sri Ramakrishna Math.

- Talbot, Michael. 1993 **Mysticism and the New Physics**. Harmondsworth (UK) : Penguin Books Ltd.
- Tapasyananda, Swami 1992 **Srimad Bhagavatam** (Vol 4). Madras : Sri Ramakrishna Math.
- Underhill, Evelyn. 1974 **Mysticism**. New York : New American Library.
- Velankar, H.D. 1978 **Sanskrit Metres : Their Evolution and Principles of Division in The Cultural Heritage of India** (Vol V). Calcutta : The Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture.
- Vidyarnava, Srira Chandra. 1979 **The Daily Practice of the Hindus**. New Delhi: Oriental Books Reprint Corporation.
- Vireswarananda, Swami. 1982 **Brahma Sutras** (translation and commentary of Shankara). Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama.
- Vivekananda, Swami. 1972 **Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda** (Vol 7). Calcutta : Advaita Ashrama
- 1978 **Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda** (Vol 6). Calcutta : Advaita Ashrama.
 - 1979 **Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda** (Vol 3). Calcutta : Advaita Ashrama.
 - 1984 **Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda** (Vol 1). Calcutta : Advaita Ashrama.
 - 1992 **Jnana Yoga** . Calcutta : Advaita Ashrama .
 - 1995 **Talks with Swami Vivekananda**. Calcutta : Advaita Ashrama.
 - 1999 **Vivekananda Writes to You**. Madras : Sri Ramakrishna Math.
 - 2000 **Selections from the Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda**. Calcutta : Advaita Ashrama.
- Vrat, Satya. 1978 **Sanskrit Grammar in The Cultural Heritage of India** (Vol V). Calcutta : The Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture.
- Walter, Grey. 1953 **The Living Brain**. Bristol : Burden Neurological Institute.
- Wilber, Ken. 1980 **The Atman Project**. London : The Theosophical Publishing House.
- 1982 **The Holographic Paradigm and other Paradoxes**. London : New Science

Library.

– 1984 **Quantum Questions**. London : Shambhala Publications Inc.

Winternitz, Maurice. 1977 **A History of Indian Literature**. Delhi : Oriental Books Reprint Corporation.

Zaehner, R.C. 1962 **Hinduism**. London : Oxford University Press.

Zukav, Gary. 2000 **Soul Stories**. London : Simon and Schuster UK Ltd.

OTHER WORKS CONSULTED

- Abhedananda, Swami. 1975 **Doctrine of Karma**. Calcutta : Ramakrishna Vedanta Math.
- Choudray, K.P.S. 1981 **Modern Indian Mysticism**. Delhi : Motilal Banarsidass.
- Debroy, Bibek and Debroy, Depavali. (undated) **The Atharva Veda**. Delhi : Books for All.
Drucker.
- Peter, F. 1990 **The New Realities**. London : Mandarin Paperbacks.
- Eknath, Easwaran. 1987 **The Upanishads**. California : Nilgiri Press.
- Ganapati, S.V. 1992 **Sama Veda**. Delhi : Motilal Banarsidass.
- Graf, Stanislov. 1985 **Beyond the Brain**. New York : State University of New York Press.
- Harshananda, Swami. 1990 **A Dictionary of Advaita Vedanta**. London : Rider and Company.
- Iyer, Krishnaswamy K.A. 1936 The Philosophy of Advaita or Non-Dualism in **The Cultural Heritage of India** (Vol 1). Calcutta : Sri Ramakrishna Centenary Committee.
- Iyer, Subrahmanya V. 1936 The Essentials of Vedanta in **The Cultural Heritage of India** (Vol 1). Calcutta : Sri Ramakrishna Centenary Committee.
- James, William. 1958 **The Varieties of Religious Experience**. New York : The New American Library, Inc.
- Kishore, B.R. (undated) **Yajurveda**. Delhi : Diamond Pocket Books Pvt. Ltd.
- Kramer, Kenneth . 1988 **The Sacred Art of Dying**. New Jersey : Paulist Press.
- Kubler-Ross, Elisabeth. 1986 **Death – The Final Stage of Growth**. New York : Simon and Schuster Inc.
- Kuppaswamy, B. 1990 **Elements of Ancient Indian Psychology**. Delhi : Konark Publishers Pvt. Ltd.
- Lokeswarananda, Swami. 1989 **Practical Spirituality**. Calcutta : The Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture.

- Madhavananda, Swami. 1936 A Bird's Eye View of the Upanisads in **The Cultural Heritage of India** (Vol 1). Calcutta : Sri Ramakrishna Centenary Committee.
- Majumdar, R.C. 1991 **Ancient India**. Delhi : Motilal Banarsidass.
- Mascaro, Juan. 1981 **The Upanishads**. England : Penguin Books Ltd.
- Munshi, K.M. 1978 Introduction to **The Cultural Heritage of India** (Vol V). Calcutta : The Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture.
- Pereira, Jose. 1991 **Hindu Theology**. New Delhi : Motilal Banarsidass.
- Prabhavananda, Swami. 1969 **Yoga and Mysticism**. Hollywood : The Vedanta Society of Southern California.
- Sarma, D.S. 1936 The Gita and Modern Life in **The Cultural Heritage of India** (Vol 1). Calcutta: Sri Ramakrishna Centenary Committee.
- Schumacher, E.F. 1986 **Small is Beautiful**. London : ABACUS.
- Siddheswarananda, Swami 1975 **Some Aspects of Vedanta Philosophy**. Trichur : Sri Ramakrishna Ashram.
- Singh, Karan. 1990 **Essays on Hinduism**. New Delhi: Ratna Sagar (P) Ltd.
- Singh, Satya Prakash 1981 **Upanisadic Symbolism**. New Delhi : Meharchand Lachhmandas.
- Sircar, Mahendranath. 1936 Glimpses into the Upanishads in **The Cultural Heritage of India** (Vol 1). Calcutta : Sri Ramakrishna Centenary Committee.
- Skolimowski, Henryk. 1991 **Dancing Shiva in the Ecological Age**. Delhi : Clarion Books.
- Srinivasas, K. 1993 **A Dictionary of Philosophy**. Delhi : Ashish Publishing House.
- Tejasananda, Swami. 1936 Vedanta and Science in **The Cultural Heritage of India** (Vol 1). Calcutta : Sri Ramakrishna Centenary Committee.
- Williams, Monier-Monier. 1981 **A Sanskrit-English Dictionary**. Delhi : Motilal Banarsidass.
- Yatiswarananda, Swami 1961 **Adventures in Vedanta**. London : Rider and Company.
- Zukav, Gary. 1979 **The Dancing Wu Li Masters**. London : Fontana Paperbacks.

GLOSSARY OF SANSKRIT TERMS

<i>abhyāsa</i>	Practice; practice of spiritual discipline.
<i>ācārya</i>	Spiritual teacher.
<i>ādhibhautika</i>	Proceeding from <i>bhūtas</i> or elements.
<i>ādhidivika</i>	Pertaining to gods.
<i>adhvaryu</i>	One of the priests officiating at a sacrifice, his duty being to measure the ground, build the altar, prepare the sacrificial vessels, etc. While he is engaged in these duties, hymns from the Yajur Veda are recited.
<i>adhyātmika</i>	Pertaining to the <i>ātman</i> .
Advaita	Non-duality; a school of Vedānta Philosophy, teaching the oneness of God, soul and universe, whose chief exponent was Shankara.
<i>āgāmi (karma)</i>	One of the three kinds of actions in the theory of <i>karma</i> in Indian Philosophy, the other two being <i>prārabdha</i> and <i>sañcita</i> . <i>Āgāmi</i> is the action performed in this life which will produce its results in a future life.
Agni	Deity presiding over fire ; fire.
<i>ahankāra</i>	Ego or 'I'-consciousness; one of the four functions of the inner-organ. (See <i>antahkaraṇa</i>).
<i>ajñāna</i>	A term of Vedānta Philosophy meaning ignorance, individual or cosmic. According to non-dualistic Vedānta, <i>ajñāna</i> is responsible for the perception of multiplicity as also for man's bondage and suffering.

<i>antahkaraṇa</i>	The inner-organ comprising <i>manas</i> (mind), <i>buddhi</i> (intellect or determinative faculty), <i>citta</i> (mind-stuff), and <i>ahaṅkāra</i> (ego).
<i>ānanda</i>	Bliss.
<i>ānandamayakośa</i>	Sheath of bliss.
<i>annamayakośa</i>	Sheath made up of food, physical body.
<i>aparāvidyā</i>	Empirical knowledge.
<i>apāna</i>	A modification of the vital breath, by the action of which the unassimilated food and drink go downward and are ultimately ejected; also the movement of the out-going breath.
Āraṇyaka	A section of the Vedas (See Vedas).
<i>āśrama</i>	Stage of life. There are four <i>āśramas</i> in the life of a Hindu : (1) <i>brahmacarya</i> (student), (2) <i>gārhastya</i> (living in the household), (3) <i>vānaprastha</i> (retiring to the forest) and (4) <i>sannyāsa</i> (renunciation).
<i>ātman</i>	The Self or the Soul ; consciousness viewed within the context of the individual. According to non-dualistic Vedānta it is non-different from the supreme soul (<i>brahman</i>).
<i>Aum</i>	The most sacred word of the Vedas; It is the symbol of both the Personal God and of the Absolute.
<i>avidyā</i>	A term of Vedānta Philosophy meaning ignorance, individual or cosmic.
<i>bhāṣya</i>	Commentary.
<i>bhokta</i>	Enjoyer.
<i>bhuh</i>	Earth.
<i>bhuvah</i>	The space between earth and heaven; the atmosphere.

<i>brahmaloka</i>	The plane of Brahma, roughly corresponding to the highest heaven of the dualistic religions, where fortunate souls go after death and enjoy communion with the Personal God.
<i>brahman</i>	The Absolute; the Supreme Reality of non-dualistic Vedānta.
<i>brahmavidyā</i>	The knowledge of <i>brahman</i> .
Brahma	The Creator-God; the first person of the Hindu Trinity, the other two being Viṣṇu and Siva.
Brāhmaṇa	One of the two main sections of the Vedas.
<i>buddhi</i>	Intelligence or determinative faculty; one of the four divisions of the inner-organ or <i>antahkaraṇa</i> according to Indian Philosophy (see <i>antahkaraṇa</i>).
<i>caitanya</i>	Pure consciousness.
<i>cit</i>	Pure consciousness.
<i>chandraloka</i>	The sphere lunar light, where souls repair after death to enjoy the fruit of their meritorious deeds done with a selfish motive.
<i>darśana</i>	Philosophy.
<i>dharma</i>	Righteousness; duty; the intrinsic nature of a thing which governs its growth.
<i>devas</i>	(Lit. shining ones). The gods of Hinduism.
Gāyatrī	Vedic <i>mantra</i> ; Vedic metre of twenty four syllables.
<i>guṇa</i>	(1) Quality ; (2) Ingredient ; (3) Merit ; also the three constituents of <i>prakṛti</i> viz. <i>sattva</i> , <i>rajas</i> and <i>tamas</i> - <i>sattva</i> stands for placidity, <i>rajas</i> for restlessness and activity and <i>tamas</i> for inertia.
<i>hiranyagarbha</i>	A name of <i>brahman</i> ; the first manifestation of <i>brahman</i> ; the cosmic form of the Self creating the subtle universe.

<i>hotṛi</i>	A priest conducting a sacrifice; especially one who recites the prayers of the Ṛg Veda at the sacrifice.
Indra	The king of gods in the Vedic Religion.
<i>indrīyas</i>	Organs. There are two types of organs : <i>pañcajñānendrīyas</i> (five organs of knowledge –ears, the skin, the eyes, the nose and the tongue) and <i>pañcakarmendrīyas</i> (five organs of action – organs of speech, the hands, the feet and the organs of evacuation and generation).
<i>Īsvara</i>	<i>Saguna brahman</i> or <i>brahman</i> with attributes, as the ruler of the universe.
<i>jagat</i>	The universe.
<i>jāgrat</i>	Wakefulness, waking state.
<i>japa</i>	Repetition of a holy syllable or sacred formula as a religious discipline.
<i>jīva</i>	The individual soul.
<i>jīvanmūkta</i>	One enjoying liberation while in the body.
<i>jīvātma</i>	Individual soul
<i>jñāna</i>	Knowledge, the process of reasoning by means of which ultimate Truth is attained.
<i>jñānakānda</i>	The knowledge (philosophical) portion of the Vedas.
<i>jñāni</i>	Knower; a follower of the path of discrimination.
<i>kāraṇa</i>	Instrument.
<i>karma</i>	Action in general; duty; ritualistic worship; results of action.
<i>karmakanda</i>	The part of the Vedas that deal with rituals and sacrifices.
<i>kārika</i>	A type of commentary in verse; the famous <i>kārika</i> of Gaudapada on the Māṇḍūkya Upanishad.

<i>kośa</i>	(Lit. sheath or covering). The following are the five <i>kośas</i> as described in Vedānta philosophy : (1) The <i>annamayakośa</i> or gross physical body made of and sustained by food, (2) the <i>prāṇamayakośa</i> or vital sheath or energy sheath, (3) the <i>manomayakośa</i> or mental sheath, (4) the <i>vijñānamayakośa</i> or the sheath of intelligence, and (5) the <i>ānandamayakośa</i> or the sheath of bliss. These five sheaths cover the <i>ātman</i> which is the innermost reality of the <i>jīva</i> and is untouched by the characteristics of the sheaths.
<i>lakṣaṇā</i>	Implication, secondary meaning.
<i>lokas</i>	Regions or worlds, subtle dimensions.
<i>manana</i>	Cogitation.
<i>manas</i>	Mind.
<i>manomayakośa</i>	Mind or mental sheath
<i>mantra</i>	Holy Sanskrit text; the sacred formula used in <i>japa</i> , or repetition of God's name. Also one of the two main sections of the Vedas.
<i>māyā</i>	A term of Vedānta philosophy denoting ignorance obscuring the vision of Reality; the cosmic illusion on account of which the one appears as many, the Absolute as the relative.
<i>mokṣa</i>	Liberation.
<i>mukta</i>	The liberated one.
<i>mumukṣu</i>	Aspirer after liberation.
<i>nididhyāsana</i>	Meditation.
<i>nirvana</i>	Final deliverance.
<i>nirvikalpa</i>	Indeterminate.

<i>nirvikalpa samādhi</i>	The highest state of <i>samādhi</i> in which the aspirant realizes his total oneness with <i>brahman</i> .
<i>niṣkāmakarma</i>	Motiveless action - action done without expectation of any return.
<i>nityakarma</i>	Daily duties.
<i>Pañcadaśī</i>	(Lit. five and ten) fifteen; here the name of the work used in this (as it has fifteen chapters) the author of which is Sri Vidyanaraya Swami. It is a work on Advaita Vedānta with a chapter on the <i>pañchakośas</i> .
<i>paramahansa</i>	One belonging to the highest order of sannyasins, or monks.
<i>Pitṛyana</i>	The Southern Path, or Way of the Manes, by which departing souls attain to Chandraloka, or the sphere of lunar light.
<i>pradhana</i>	The primary or unevolved matter; another epithet of <i>prakṛti</i> , the source of the visible universe.
<i>prajñā, prajñāna</i>	Consciousness.
<i>prakṛti</i>	Primal nature, also see <i>pradhana</i> .
<i>prāṇamayakośa</i>	Vital sheath ; energy sheath.
<i>prārabdha karma</i>	The portion of the work performed in a previous life which is bearing fruit in the present life.
<i>pratyakṣānubhuti</i>	Intuition; direct perception
<i>purāṇa</i>	Ancient; a type of semi-mythological and semi-historical documents of the Hindus.
<i>puruṣa</i>	Soul; so called because it is experienced as abiding in the cavity of the heart.
<i>rajas</i>	One of the three <i>guṇas</i> that constitute <i>prakṛti</i> , whose nature is restlessness and activity.
<i>rishi</i>	A seer of Truth to whom the wisdom of the Vedas was revealed.

<i>sāma</i>	Song; name of one of the four Vedas and also a name of <i>brahman</i> .
<i>samādhi</i>	Superconscious trance; absorption in the goal meditated upon.
<i>samsāra</i>	Phenomenal existence and transmigration, empirical existence .
<i>samskāra</i>	Impression.
<i>sañcita karma</i>	Actions performed in a previous life which remain stored up, to bear fruit in a future life.
Sankhya	One of the six systems of orthodox Hindu philosophy, which teaches that the universe evolves as the result of the union of <i>prakṛti</i> (nature) and <i>purusha</i> (consciousness). According to this system, which is attributed to Kapila, there are as many <i>purushas</i> , or units of consciousness, as there are living beings.
<i>śarīra</i>	Body.
<i>satcitananda</i>	Existence, knowledge and bliss-absolute. This is the intrinsic nature of <i>brahman</i> .
<i>sattva</i>	Purity
<i>savikalpa</i>	Determinate.
<i>śloka</i>	Verse.
<i>smṛti</i>	What is remembered. Manuals of moral codes of the Hindus, secondary scriptures of the Hindus.
<i>soma</i>	The juice of a creeper, used in Vedic sacrifices.
<i>śravaṇa</i>	Hearing (of the scriptural truths from the preceptor).
<i>śruti</i>	What is heard or revealed; Vedas.
<i>śukla</i>	White or bright.
<i>sukṣmaśarīra</i>	Subtle body.
<i>sushumna</i>	Among the innumerable nerves in the nervous system, the <i>sushumna</i> is the most important. It is situated within the spinal

column and extends from the base of the spine to the brain. The *sushumna*, through which the awakened spiritual energy rises, is described as the *Brahmavartman*, or Parthway to *brahman*.

<i>suṣupti</i>	Deep sleep.
<i>svaḥ</i>	Heaven
<i>svapna</i>	Dream.
<i>taijasa</i>	Soul identified with the mind or subtle body in dream experience.
<i>tamas</i>	One of the constituents (inertia) of <i>prakṛti</i>
<i>tāmasika</i>	Of or pertaining to <i>tamas</i> (inertia).
<i>udgātri</i>	One of the officiating priests in a Vedic sacrifice; his duty was to recite from the Sāma Veda.
<i>upādhi</i>	Limiting adjunct. A term of Vedānta philosophy denoting a limitation imposed upon the Self or upon <i>Brahman</i> through ignorance.
<i>upāsana</i>	Meditation, worship.
<i>vairāgya</i>	Dispassion.
<i>vāsana</i>	Latent impression.
<i>vedānga</i>	Auxiliaries of the Vedas. They are six in number, viz., <i>śikṣā</i> (science of pronunciation), <i>kalpa</i> (the code of rituals) <i>vyākaraṇam</i> (grammar) <i>niruktam</i> (etymology) <i>chandasa</i> (metre) and <i>jyotiṣm</i> (astrology).
Vedānta	(Lit. The essence or the concluding portion of the Vedas). A system of philosophy ascribed to Vyasa, discussed mainly in the Upanishads, the Bhagavad Gita and the Brahma Sūtras.
Vedas	Primary scriptures of the Hindus made up of Brahmanas that deal with rituals, Āraṇyakas or forest books that discuss the movement

from gross mysticism to subtle mysticism and the Upanishads which are intuitive insights of the Rishis.

<i>videhamukti</i>	Liberation after the physical death of the body.
<i>vijñāna</i>	Knowledge; Self-realization.
<i>vijñānamayakosa</i>	The intellectual sheath.
<i>vikalpa</i>	Doubt; fancy; determination; modification.
<i>viksepa</i>	Projection; one of the two powers of <i>ajñāna</i> , due to which contrary objects are projected.
<i>viveka</i>	Discrimination.
<i>vṛtti</i>	Modification; thought impressions.
Yama	The king of death, a Vedic deity.
<i>yoga</i>	Union of the individual soul (<i>ātman</i>) with the supreme Soul (<i>brahman</i>) ; the discipline by which such union is effected, Yoga System (one of the six systems of Hindu Philosophy ascribed to Patanjali).
<i>yogi</i>	One who practices <i>yoga</i> .