



SAMRIDDHI

Edited by Dr. R. Saraswati Sainath

SAMRDDHI

(Collection of Articles Presented at the First Seminar on Indian Culture)

**Edited by
Dr. R. Saraswati Sainath**

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INTRODUCTION

Dr. R. Saraswati Sainath

Samṛddhi is the collection of papers presented at the First Seminar on Indian Culture organized by Vidyasthanam, Montréal. Vidyasthanam, School of Indian Music, Culture and Languages was started on 16 January 2015 in Chennai with just one student for Sanskrit. The school gradually extended its teaching in the fields of Hindi, Veena, Music, Slokas, and French. Children were given the training to recite slokas and participate in the Bhagavadgita competitions organized by Chinmaya Mission. The school also trained students to write Hindi exams conducted by Dakshin Bharat Hindi Pracar Sabha. In 2018 the school had around 25 students.

Teaching began in Montréal in September 2018 and teaching for Indian students continued online. The school continues to spread its teaching to various levels of students. The goal of the school is to teach the greatness and meaning of Indian Culture, Music, and Languages to Indians. In addition, the school strives to take research and Academic Study of Religion and Culture from universities and research institutions and spread it to the general public. The First Seminar on Hindu Culture taking place on September 6, 2021, online is one big step in that direction. The Seminar is being presided by Mr. Shankar Ramasami, Chartered Accountant and Banker from the USA. Many students are presenting papers and Vidyasthanam is very happy to release the collection of their papers titled Samṛddhi, which means prosperity.

India is a multi-cultural country. It is one of the ancient surviving civilizations of the world. Although the Government of India has recognized only 22 of its languages as official, the total number of languages spoken by Indians together with their dialects amounts to more than one thousand. Not just the language, every region of India is different and is characterized by its tradition, customs, practices, values, beliefs, and even cuisine. Niranjana Srikesh addresses the variety of cuisine that one can savor in various parts of India. India is a very colorful country and this color and variety are found in the traditional dresses worn by the people of various states and Ashwika Dinesh Mahtani captures this beauty.

Religion and Spirituality can be said to be the backbone of India. India has contributed four major religions to the world: Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism, and Sikhism. Besides, India has welcomed Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. All these religions are flourishing in India. These religions are marked by their narratives, festivals, and rites. Joshnika Phani Sappati shares some beautiful stories of Krishna. While Keerthana Srikesh gives an account of some of the Hindu festivals, Dr. Kiran Kumar Sappati groups festivals into three: national festivals, religious festivals, and seasonal festivals and elaborates on them. His thoughts on Indian Culture deserve a special mention:

“The culture in India encompasses many things such as people’s living, rituals, values, beliefs, habits, care, knowledge, etc. We can see culture in everything such as fashion, music, dance, social norms, foods, etc. Also, India is considered the oldest civilization where people still follow their old habits of care and humanity. Additionally, culture is a way through which we behave with others, and how softly we react to different things. It also indicates our understanding of ethics, values, and beliefs. People from the old generation pass their beliefs and cultures to the upcoming generation. Thus, every child that behaves well with others has already learned about their culture from grandparents and parents. Thus, India is one big melting pot for having behaviors and beliefs which gave birth to different cultures.”

In this connection, Lakshana brings out the aspects of Indian Culture such as diversity, pride, innovativeness, adaptability, harmony, and light-heartedness and shows how the Indian sub-continent successfully maintains religious harmony especially and is an example of Unity in Diversity.

How are people in India able to live in harmony within themselves and harmony with others? It is because of the wisdom passed on to us by our ancestors. R̥gveda is the most ancient text preserved in the history of human composition. The Vedas are the source of all knowledge. They prescribe sacrifices for the benefit of humanity and philosophical enquires and rituals paving the way for Self-realisation. The Vedas are the foundation of Hindu society. Deriving from the verb vid to know, the Vedas covered all the branches of knowledge. While the four Vedas R̥g, Yajur, Sāma, and Atharva deal with sacrifices for the benefit of humanity and philosophical enquires and rituals paving the way for Self-realisation, every branch of knowledge needed for individuals is also classified under various divisions of the Vedas. Thus various branches of knowledge such as Grammar, Medicine, Politics, Military Science, Mathematics, Astrology, Astronomy, Erotics, Music, etc., originate only from the Vedas. Although the Vedas mention that God is essentially free from any forms or attributes, the sages have prescribed six forms of worship and thus God can be worshipped as Ganeśa, Śiva, Viṣṇu, Śakti, Murugaṅ, or Sūrya. These are liturgical texts for these six kinds of worship, and they are called Āgamas. They deal with the various rules regarding their worship both at homes and temples and also deal with philosophy. Śiva Āgamas are one among them and Dr. Sivasri Balasarveswara Gurukkal deals with the rich information about the various kinds of Sivalingas and their worship based on these Āgamas. Jayalakshmi's article deals with sun worship.

The ancient sages effectively combined Science and Religion. It is well known that the concept of zero was invented by Indians and numerals that we use in daily life have their source only in Sanskrit. While in the Mahābhārata we find evidence of embryos being produced outside a woman's womb, there is enough scientific literature preserved in the Vedas that modern scientists can look to. India is the name given to us by foreigners while our ancestors called our land Bhāratavarṣa. Taking pride that he comes from this great Bhāratavarṣa Srinivasan Ramachandran deals with the concept of Time, Space, and Quantum Reality in Hinduism and discusses topics such as Time Dilation and Quantum Entanglement. In addition to giving us various knowledge needed for our life, the sages have prescribed measures for maintaining good health. Yoga, Āyurveda, Meditation, etc., enable us to maintain good health and one such important practice is fasting which is intermingled in the religion for thousands of years. Archana Prabhakaran in her article beautifully brings out the greatness of fasting in Hinduism.

Flexibility, adaptability, and openness to new knowledge are some of the praiseworthy qualities of Indians. With the Indian diaspora spreading to various countries of the world in this era of globalization, the exchange of ideas and knowledge between people of various countries and cultures has become a trend now. In this connection, Aparna Sainath Padinjare's article comparing Carnatic Music and Western Music opens new ideas to music lovers. As Indians immigrate to various countries for education and employment opportunities they continue to learn various methodological approaches to the study of Religion and Culture. Hindu sages always encourage logic, argumentation, debates, and freedom of speech and expression. These new hermeneutics if properly employed will enable Hindus to solve some of the problems in Hindu Religion and Culture. My article on the Academic Study of Religion works in this direction and tries to solve some of the questions in Hinduism about Rāmāyaṇa and Mahābhārata.

Samṛddhi is thus an effort of Vidyasthanam to spread the rich knowledge of ancestors to the general public dealing with various aspects of India Culture. I hope the readers will enjoy these varieties of articles like a sumptuous wedding meal served traditionally on a fertile plantain leaf.

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Place: Montréal

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Dr. R. Saraswati Sainath holds a BSc in Physics, MA, MPhil, and PhD in Sanskrit from Madras University. She has taught Sanskrit at two Canadian Universities: Memorial University of Newfoundland, St. John's, and McGill University, Montréal. She has served as an Assistant Professor at Dr. M.G.R. Janaki College of Arts and Science for Women, Chennai, teaching Sanskrit and Ethics. She also has a Diploma in Manuscriptology from Madras University and has worked in the New Catalogus Catalogorum Project as an Editorial Assistant. She has presented papers at many National and International conferences and has many publications to her credit.

She started a second PhD at McGill University in 2006 and dropped out in 2013 after writing her thesis. She is the Founder-Director of Vidyasthanam. She has been trained in Veena for thirteen years. Her Guru is Srimati Jnanam Chudamani, a disciple of Srimati Ranganayaki Rajagopalan, She has given many performances in India and Canada.

Dr. Sivasri Balasarveswara Gurukkal pursued his Vedic and Agamic learning under Brahmasri Sundara Gurukkal Kandamangalam Thiruvaiyaru, Tamil Nadu, India. He completed his Sahitya Siromani at Madras Sanskrit College in 1991. He continued his MA and MPhil in Sanskrit from Madras University and PhD from Pondicherry University in 2009. In 2006 he started his Srimad Srikantha Sivacarya Veda Sivagama Vidyapitha and Samskrta Vikasa Kendra and provides free education, boarding, and lodging for students. He has also started the Srimad Srikantha Sivacarya Research Institute. He publishes Srikantha Vijayam, a Tamil Sanskrit Bilingual monthly magazine.

Srinivasan Ramachandran is from Chennai, India. Currently, he is pursuing his Doctorate in computer science, in École de technologie supérieure, Montréal, Canada. He did his Bachelor's in Mathematics and showed interest in geometry since early childhood. This led him to pursue a career in computer graphics. He is studying Sanskrit and Bhagavadgita at Vidyasthanam since March 2021.

TRANSLITERATION

SANSKRIT

Vowels

अ	आ	इ	ई	उ	ऊ	ऋ	ॠ	ऌ	ॡ	ए	ऐ	ओ	औ	अं	अः
a	ā	i	ī	u	ū	ṛ	ṛī	ḷ	ḷī	e	ai	o	au	am or aṃ	aḥ

Consonants

क	ख	ग	घ	ङ	च	छ	ज	झ	ञ	ट	ठ	ड	ढ	ण
ka	kha	ga	gha	ṅa	ca	cha	ja	jha	ña	ṭa	ṭha	ḍa	ḍha	ṇa
त	थ	द	ध	न	प	फ	ब	भ	म	य	र	ल	व	श
ta	tha	da	dha	na	pa	pha	ba	bha	ma	ya	ra	la	va	śa
स	ह	क्ष	ऽ	ळ										
sa	ha	kṣa	'	ḷ										

TAMIL

Vowels

அ	ஆ	இ	ஈ	உ	ஊ	ஏ	ஈ	ஐ	ஓ	ஔ	ஔள	ஃ
a	ā	i	ī	u	ū	e	ē	ai	o	ō	au	ḥ

Consonants

க	ங	ச	ஞ	ட	ண	த	ந	ப	ம	ய	ர	ல	வ	ழ	ள	ற	ன
ka	ṅa	ca	ña	ṭa	ṇa	ta	na	pa	ma	ya	ra	la	va	ḷa	ḷa	ra	ṇa

CHAPTER ONE

STORIES OF KRISHNA

Joshnika Phani Sappati

The Birth of Krishna

Lord Krishna was born to King Vasudeva and his wife Devaki. Devaki's brother Kansa was a cruel man who engaged in heinous activities. During Devaki and Vasudeva's wedding rituals, Kansa is warned by the astrologers that their child would kill him. Hearing this, Kansa imprisons the couple and kills every child that is born them.

But when Krishna is born, Vasudeva secretly arranges for the infant to be carried away and replaces him with another baby (Krishna's foster-mother Yashoda's daughter). When evil Kansa tries to kill this replaced baby, she turns into goddess Adi Parashakti and warns him that his death has arrived and nothing can change his fate.

Meanwhile, the newborn Krishna is carried to the other side of the river Yamuna, where he is rescued and fostered by Nanda and his wife Yashoda in Gokul. The birth of Lord Krishna is celebrated as Krishnashtami or Janmashtami.

Krishna and Arishtasura

One day, when Krishna was playing with his friends, an enormous bull enters Vrindavan and begins to attack everyone. People run helter-skelter, creating a commotion. Just then, Krishna sees the bull and confronts it. He realizes that the bull is a demon named Arishtasura, sent by his uncle Kansa to kill him. He challenges Arishtasura to a fight and after a fierce battle, kills him. The soul leaves the body of the bull, bows to Krishna, and tells him how he was cursed to become a demon when he did not obey and respect his guru Lord Brihaspati.

The Whole Universe in Krishna's mouth

One day, Krishna and his brother Balarama went to a garden to pick fruits and berries. As Krishna was still a toddler, he could not reach the fruits. He stuffs his mouth with dust and sand from the ground. When the other children see Krishna doing this, they go and complain to his mother. Yashoda comes running to Krishna and sternly asks if he ate mud. Krishna denies having eaten mud and refuses to open his mouth. But when Yashoda insists, he opens his mouth, leaving Yashoda startled. Krishna gives a naughty grin as Yashoda does not see any mud but the entire universe, including the sun, stars, skies, oceans, hills, rivers, and mountains. She realizes that her son is not an ordinary child.

Little Krishna Steals Butter

Krishna was fond of butter as a child and would steal it from home and neighbors too. His stories of stealing butter were famous all over Vrindavan. His mother, Yashoda, would hang the butter pitcher high up on the roof so that Krishna can't reach it. One day, when Yashoda goes out on an important task, Krishna gathers his friends to steal the butter. Initially, his friends refuse to help but later give in to their friend's pressure. Krishna takes the help of all his friends, stands up on their shoulders to reach the pitcher. Even as they are engrossed in the mischief, Yashoda comes in and witnesses their mischief. Krishna's friends escape quickly but he gets caught by his mother. Yashoda gets furious and runs after Krishna to punish him.

CHAPTER TWO

INDIAN CUISINE

Niranjana Sriresh

Indian cuisine is meant to be eaten socially, in groups, until everyone is fully satisfied. You will be served all your courses at once on a plate of food called a *thali*. Some foods are mild, some are sweet, and some are spicy and hot. Most dinners are served later at night as many Indians eat several smaller meals during the day. The food ranges from a very simple vegetarian fare to exotic dishes layered with texture and flavor. Great care is taken in the planning and preparation of meals no matter how simple or complex they are.

History of Indian Cuisine

Each region has its traditions, religions, and culture that influence its food. Indian food has been influenced by Mongolian, Persian, and Chinese cuisine, among others. The common thread throughout the centuries remains the distinct mixing of spices that invariably give Indian cuisine its flavor and aroma.

Ingredients

Indian ingredients are as varied as the Indian people and the available foods of each region. *Masala* means spice blend. Certain foods use certain spice blends. For instance, *biryani masala*—cardamom, cinnamon, cloves, and fennel—is used for *biryani*, an oven-cooked dish of rice with vegetables, seafood, or meat. Chilies, mustard seeds, gram flour, coconut, and yogurt are popular ingredients in all types of Indian cuisine. *Ghee*, a type of clarified butter, is used for cooking and has a toasty taste. Saffron is used to flavor and color dishes.

Regional Cuisine

Food choice varies according to various regions. North Indians eat flat pieces of bread like *chapati* and *naan*, while South Indians prefer to eat rice and coconut. The versatile coconut provides milk, thickens stews, makes a chewy snack, and is used in many sweet southern dishes as an ingredient or as a garnish. East Indian food relies heavily on rice, milk, and vegetables, prepared simply with yogurt, seeds, and spices steamed and curried. East Indians love their sweets and use milk and other dairy products abundantly in them.

Desserts

Sweet rice pudding, similar to rice pudding in America, is called *kheer*. It consists of basmati rice, milk, raisins, sugar, cardamom seed, and almonds. *Kulfi* is Indian ice cream made by boiling and reducing milk, which is then chilled and flavored with mango juice, rose water, and sweetened with sugar. *Gajar Halwa*, a carrot dessert, mango mousse, and *payasam* are also popular desserts. Eastern India is well known for its sweets.

Drinks

Chai is tea commonly consumed each morning. It is made by adding milk, sugar, and black cardamom pods to steeped teabags. *Sweet Lassi* is a yogurt shake that can also be flavored with mango, a popular fruit, much like a smoothie. Ginger and lemon tea are also popular and can be used for medicinal purposes, such as indigestion. Carrot Kheer is served by adding carrot to cold milk. Alcohol is rarely consumed as it is forbidden in many Indian cultures. Tea is more popular than coffee. Tender coconut water, mango, guava, and sugarcane juices are popular and are sold in roadside stands and kiosks. If you want something salty, *Jal Jeera*, a mixture of water and cumin, might be to your liking.

Indian Cuisine thus has a rich history, is variegated, is very nutritious, and is becoming popular all over the world.

CHAPTER THREE

TRADITIONAL DRESSES OF INDIA

Ashwika Dinesh Mahtani

Introduction

India is all about diversity in many ways like vegetation, climate, people, their varied cultures, customs, and of course, costumes. Owing to various climatic conditions and cultural backgrounds, people in different regions have been wearing different styles of clothes that are known to be their traditional dressing.

Some of the most common traditional dresses of India for Indian women are Saris, Ghagra Choli, and Salwar Kameez. The most widely worn traditional clothes for men include Dhoti-Angavastram, Sherwani, Dhoti-Kurta, Bandhgala, Kurta-Pajama, Angarkha, Lungi, etc. Ethnic clothing is one of the things that distinguish one part of India from the other. Traditional Indian clothes and attire have earned admirers from people all over the world.

Traditional Attires of Northern India

Some of the states in North India such as Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, and Uttaranchal experience extreme cold climate most of the year that requires proper clothing. In Jammu and Kashmir colorful Pherans and Shawls are worn by women, which are popular for the intricate embroidery styles and the stuff they are made of. They also wear Poots or double gowns that look colorful due to the unique threadwork. They cover their heads with well-tucked embroidered scarves. Men wear long robes made of pure wool known as Goucha, which is tightened at the waist. In Haryana, women wear short Ghaghras or skirts, Kurtis and Chunder or Chunris to go well with them and men wear Dhoti, Kurta, and Pagri.

Traditional Attires of Western India

Western states of India such as Rajasthan and Gujarat experience very hot and dry summers and chilly winters. Due to extreme weather conditions, people cover themselves adequately. Women wear Bandhini tie-n-dye sarees, Ghaghra-Cholis, and Odhnis that are adorned with explicit gota and zari work. Men wear Dhoti, Potia, Angrakha, Banda, Dhabla, Pachewara, and Bugatari. The most essential part of clothing is that head dress or turban or Pencha or Safa, tied uniquely.

In rural parts of Gujarat, men wear cotton shorts called Chorno. Their upper clothing is called Angarakhu. Along with this, they wear a thickly folded turban called Phento. Women wear heavily embroidered petticoats called Chaniyo and an equally embroidered bodice known as Choli. They also wear saris in colorful Gujarati prints. Males wear Dhoti, coat, and turban.

Maharashtrian men wear Dhoti and shirts along with the headgear Pheta or Patka or Rumal. Women wear a typical Maharashtrian sari known as Lugade with a mega-sleeved Choli or blouse. They wear sari in a traditional way involving a Kaccha which is tucking the cloth between the legs and inserting it in the back.

Traditional Attires of East and North-Eastern India

Bengali women wear white saree with red borders, especially during festivals or special occasions. Men wear dhoti-kurta, the traditional attire of Bengal.

The traditional costumes of north-east India comprising of Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Manipur, Nagaland, and Arunachal Pradesh, are different from the other Indian costumes. Women in Assam wear special Assam silk sarees. They also wear the three-piece dress known as Mekhla Chador.

There are many tribals in Arunachal Pradesh. The Buddhist Monpas tribal women wear sleeveless chemise and a jacket over it. A printed cloth is tied over their waist. Along with the dress, they wear a lot of artificial jewellery.

Manipuri women wear a shawl called Innaphi, a wrap-around called Phanek and a hard-stuff skirt called Sarong. Women wear Potlois during festive seasons, for bridals and dance performances.

In Meghalaya, the Garo tribal women wear an unstitched cloth known as Jainsen and a wrap-around. They wear the lovely Endi shawls which are quite popular for the fine work done on them.

Traditional Attires of Southern India

The clothing styles of all the states of south-India are almost the same. In Kerala, women wear a white-colored silk sari with a broad golden zari border and men wear Lungis and a shirt or short Kurta. On special occasions, they wear Mundu and Neriathu which match with the female costume in white color and golden zari border.

There are many tribals in Karnataka and their attire depicts their love and experimentation with colors. Men wear Lungis and a shirt along with a piece of silk or cotton cloth known as Angavastram that is kept casually on their neck, covering the shoulder area. Women wear Saris of various color combinations. The Kodava women in the state wear Sari differently with pleats at the back.

In Andhra Pradesh, women commonly wear Saris and men wear Dhoti-Kurta. Some Muslim women wear Salwaar and Kameez while men wear Kurta-Pyjama with special Fez cap.

In Tamil Nadu, women wear Kanchipuram Silk Saris that look beautiful with bright borders and heavy goldwork. Cotton, chiffon, and crepe Sari are also worn by women and men wear Silk Dhoti, Shirt, and Angavastram.

Conclusion

Along with a wide range of costumes that people wear in India, the fashion trends about Western outfits have been bringing about several changes in clothing style. Yet, the traditional wears are seen during special occasions such as festivals and marriages, and in villages. The explicit artwork on these costumes of India makes them unique. No matter how Westernized we may turn, our traditional outfits have always enticed us and will stay in demand even among people across the borders and seas.

CHAPTER FOUR

INDIAN FESTIVALS

Keerthana Srikesh

India is a land of festivals and fairs. There are more festivals celebrated in India than anywhere else in the world. Each festival pertains to different occasions. Some welcome the seasons of the year, the harvest, the rains, or the full moon. Others celebrate religious occasions, the birthdays of divine beings and saints, or the advent of the New Year. Many of these festivals are common in most parts of India. However, they may be called by different names in various parts of the country or maybe celebrated in a different fashion. Some of the festivals celebrated all over India are mentioned below.

Janmashtami

Lord Vishnu is invoked in his human incarnation as Krishna on his birth anniversary in the festival of Janmashtami. This festival of Hindus is celebrated with great devotion on the eighth day of the dark fortnight in the month of Sravana (July-August) in India. According to Hindu mythology, Krishna was born to destroy Mathura's demon King Kansa, brother of his virtuous mother, Devaki.

Deepawali

Deepawali or Diwali is a festival of lights symbolizing the victory of righteousness and the lifting of spiritual darkness. The word 'Deepawali' literally means rows of deepas or diyas (clay lamps). This is one of the most popular festivals in the Hindu calendar. It is celebrated on the 15th day of Kartika (October/November). In South India, this festival commemorates the slaying of the demon Narakasura by Lord Krishna and in North India, it commemorates Lord Rama's return to his kingdom Ayodhya after completing his 14-year exile.

Holi

Holi often referred to as the "Festival of Colours", is one of the best-known festivals of India. The festival is centered around the burning and destruction of the demoness Holika, by Lord Vishnu who tried to harm his devotee Prahlada. Prahlada was able to achieve this through unwavering devotion to Lord Vishnu. This festival is marked by fun and involves people throwing colored powder on each other and squirting each other with water guns. This is also associated with Lord Krishna, a reincarnation of Lord Vishnu, who liked to play pranks on the village girls by drenching them in water and colors.

Ganesh Chaturthi

The spectacular 11-day Ganesh Chaturthi festival honors the birth of the beloved Hindu elephant-headed god, Lord Ganesha. Huge, elaborately crafted, and beautifully decorated statues of Ganesh are installed in homes and public podiums. The statues are worshiped every day throughout the festival. On the last day, they're paraded through the streets, accompanied by singing and dancing, and then submerged in the ocean. The best place to experience it is Mumbai.

Durga Puja, Dussehra, or Navaratri

Durga Puja, Dussehra, or Navaratri is the festival of Mother Goddess. She is worshipped in all her incarnations for nine nights throughout India. It also coincides with Durga's victory over the evil buffalo demon Mahishasura. In Eastern India, the festival is observed as Durga Puja. It's the biggest festival of the year in Kolkata. Huge statues of the Goddess Durga are made and immersed in the river. In North India, the tenth day, called Dussehra, celebrates the defeat of demon king Ravan by Lord Ram and monkey god Hanuman. Ramlila plays are held at night recounting episodes from the life of Lord Ram. In Delhi, they take place around the Red Fort. In South, India Navaratri involves a festive display of dolls and figurines. This is called Golu. This takes place during autumn. Women are worshipped and given gifts as part of the Navaratri festival.

CHAPTER FIVE

INDIAN CULTURE AND TRADITION

Dr.Kiran Kumar Sappati

India has a rich culture and that has become our identity. Be it in religion, art, intellectual achievements, or performing arts, it has made us a colorful, rich, and diverse nation. This essay on Indian Culture and Tradition is a guideline to the vibrant cultures and traditions followed in India.

India was home to many invasions and thus it only added to the present variety. Today, India stands as a powerful and multi-cultured society as it has absorbed many cultures and moved on. People here have followed various religions, traditions, and customs. Although people are turning modern today, they still hold on to their moral values and celebrate festivals according to their customs. So, we are still living and learning epic lessons from Ramayana and Mahabharata. Also, people still throng Gurudwaras, Temples, Churches, and Mosques.

The culture in India encompasses many things such as people's living, rituals, values, beliefs, habits, care, knowledge, etc. We can see culture in everything such as fashion, music, dance, social norms, foods, etc. Also, India is considered the oldest civilization where people still follow their old habits of care and humanity.

Additionally, culture is a way through which we behave with others, and how softly we react to different things. It also indicates our understanding of ethics, values, and beliefs. People from the old generation pass their beliefs and cultures to the upcoming generation. Thus, every child that behaves well with others has already learned about their culture from grandparents and parents. Thus, India is one big melting pot for having behaviors and beliefs which gave birth to different cultures.

Many different eras have come and gone but no era was very powerful to change the influence of the real culture. Hence younger generations are still connected to the older generations. Also, our ethnic culture always teaches us to respect elders, behave well, care for helpless people, and help the needy and poor people. Additionally, there is a great culture in our country that we should always welcome guests like gods. That is why we have a famous saying like 'Atithi Devo Bhava'. So, the basic roots in our culture are spiritual practices and humanity.

Indian Religion

India is the birth-place of four major religions of the world: Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism, and Sikhism. Religions such as Hinduism and Jainism trace their origin to ancient methods that are thousands of years old. Vedas are the sacred texts of Hinduism, and all the sacred Hindu texts are in the divine Sanskrit language. Evidence of Jainism is found in the Indus Valley Civilization. Buddhism emerged out of the teachings of Gautama Buddha and Guru Nanak was the founder of Sikhism.

Indian Festivals

The world without festivals will become a jungle where we lead a monotonous life. Festivals in India are much larger than almost any occasion. We consider them the best part of the year and wait for them eagerly. People of all ages and economic conditions find ways to enjoy themselves with their families and worship the gods and goddesses.

Festivals are the oldest rituals and traditions our countrymen follow to pay tribute to the almighty gods and goddesses. These celebrations are symbols of peace and happiness. India is a diverse country with multiple religions and cultures conglomered in a single form. Therefore, our

festivals draw a unique picture for the rest of the world to follow as a brilliant example of harmony.

In India, we have three types of festivals: national festivals, religious festivals, and seasonal festivals.

National festivals are celebrated on those days when something remarkable happened that changed the course of the history of our country. For instance, 26th January is celebrated as Republic Day. October 2 is Gandhi Jayanti, the birthday of Mahatma Gandhi, the father of the nation. These festivals were declared as gazette holidays many years back. All public and private offices celebrate these festivals and declare holidays for the employees. Independence Day is celebrated on August 15, 1947. On this day, we received independence from the colonial rule of the British Empire. We celebrate and pay tribute to the revolutionaries who led their lives to make us free from the shackles of British tyranny. Republic Day is celebrated gallantly in New Delhi, our capital. Our defense forces join hands to perform tricks and showcase their power to the public. These festivals are celebrated across the country.

The most prominent religious festivals that we celebrate are Dussehra, Diwali, Eid-Ul-Fitr, Christmas, Guru Nanak Jayanti, Holi, etc. Dussehra and Diwali are the prime religious festivals of India. The states celebrating these festivals get decorated like a new bride. New colorful dresses and tasty eatables are the prime attractions for kids. During this time of the year, people of all ages and economic stature unite at a single place to worship the gods and goddesses.

Every Indian religious festival has a story behind it. These stories carry a message for the common people. Most of the festivals convey the message of peace and the victory of good over evil. Every family prepares delectable preparations and invites guests, relatives, and other family members. Families reunite, people enjoy for a few days, and then get back to their monotonous lives. They eagerly wait for another year for the religious festivals to arrive wishing to see their loved ones again.

Seasonal festivals generally focus on cultivation or other seasonal phenomena. For example, Onam in Kerala, Pongal in Tamil Nadu, Bihu in Assam, etc. India is an agricultural country, and these festivals have immense importance in our history. These festivals generally depict the advent of new harvests. The farmers worship the Gods and Goddesses of agriculture and harvest wishing good yield for the next year. The amazing fact is that despite the cultural differences, the seasonal festivals related to harvests are celebrated at the same time of the year.

These festivals make India a single entity. It is the beauty of diversified unity that no other country can display. The festivals are the social glues that keep different communities together despite the social differences and make India stronger.

Thus, the rich culture and tradition of India consisting of various religions, festivals, rituals, knowledge, art, etc., is our legacy that we have been carrying from one generation to the other for ages.

CHAPTER SIX

ASPECTS OF INDIAN CULTURE

S.Lakshana

What Is Culture?

Culture is the characteristics and knowledge of a particular group of people, encompassing language, religion, cuisine, social habits, music, and arts. The word "culture" derives from the Latin "colere," which means to tend to the earth and grow, or cultivation and nurture.

The Importance of Indian Culture

The important characteristics of Indian Culture are civilized communication, beliefs, values, etiquette, and rituals. India is well known for its 'Unity in Diversity' across the world. That means India is a diverse nation where many religious people live together peacefully having their own different cultures.

Different Aspects of Indian Culture

There are various aspects of Indian Culture such as diversity, pride, innovativeness, adaptability, harmony, and light-heartedness. I now explain these aspects.

Diversity

The wide variety of something is "Diversity." Cultural diversity is the quality of diverse or different cultures, as opposed to monoculture meaning one culture. The term cultural diversity can also refer to having different cultures respect each other's differences. Every region of India has its own culture and for centuries Indians respect each other's cultural diversity and live in harmony. Although there are cultural differences among Indians, they are united as one people. Thus, India is a proud example of Unity in Diversity.

Pride

For centuries India has accepted all those who came here and many more. India's interactions with these individuals and communities have enriched its cultural identity and the inherent identity of India has changed these people as well. At the same time, India is one of the most ancient civilizations in the world and has a very rich heritage. Vedas are the oldest preserved texts in the history of human composition and Ayurveda is one of the most ancient medical systems of the world. Yoga which has spread to almost every country in the world is a contribution of India to humanity. It was Indians who invented the concept of Zero. The ancient text Mahabharata provides evidence of how embryos were produced outside a woman's body which modern science calls In-vitro Fertilization. Thus India is very proud of her ancestors.

Innovativeness

Although a very ancient country, India is always open to innovations. Companies like Biocon and Infosys have demonstrated how unleashing the power of entrepreneurship and innovation can bring multiple benefits to the country and usher in a better life for millions of Indians. Indians provide effective customer service support to many multinational companies of the world. Indians have become very successful abroad as well. Indians such as Sundar Pitchai and Sathya Nadella have become the heads of great companies such as Google and Microsoft.

Adaptability

Cultural Adaptability is an individual's willingness and ability to adapt their manner of communicating, motivating, and managing, across countries and cultures. It also entails an openness to new ways of doing business and demonstrating respect for other cultures.

Harmony

In India, one can find not only harmony among people of various cultures but religious harmony as well. India has contributed four religions to the world: Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism, and Sikhism. Still, India has welcomed other religions such as Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. People in India are free to follow their religion without any hindrance. Religious harmony is a concept that indicates that there is love, affection, and respect among different religions in India. The Indian constitution supports and encourages religious harmony. In India, every citizen has the right to choose and practice any religion. At the same time, there are examples of Muslims and Sikhs building Hindu temples and Hindus helping others practice their religions. Thus, in India, different religious traditions live harmoniously.

Lightheartedness

The Indian traditional cultural values strongly emphasize that one should dedicate oneself selflessly to society. The Bhagavadgita stresses performing one's duty as an offering to God and the Indian culture emphasizes taking care of one's parents, family, guests, heritage, and even animals. Religious worship enables individuals to purify their minds and become lighthearted. An individual's behavior should accord with social and political values so that a harmonious environment can be created.

Following the values prescribed in the Indian culture enables individuals to be in harmony within themselves and also with society.

**India is a place where color is doubly bright.
India is the cradle of the human race
India has two million gods and worships them all.
Our India is Great
My Culture My Pride
Jai Hind**

CHAPTER SEVEN

INDIAN MUSIC VS WESTERN MUSIC

Aparna Sainath Padinjare

The term Indian Music is an umbrella term for different types of music. For example, we have Carnatic (Classical), Film (Bollywood), Folk, Rock, Hindustani, Pop, etc. Today I will be focusing only on Carnatic Music. Ever since I was a child, I have been fortunate enough to be surrounded by Carnatic music even though I grew up in Canada. My experiences include learning Carnatic Music for 8 years, learning the Veena for 7 years, and watching many Indian movies.

Being raised in Canada and going to school here, I was exposed to Western Music. Just like the term Indian Music, Western Music is also an umbrella term for Classical Music, Hip-Hop, Rock, Country, etc. When I mean Western Music I mean foreign music from North America and not a type of Country Music.

Since I grew up in a Canadian school, they taught me about Classical Music, the evolution of music, the types of music, and the famous composers of different times. They also taught me how to play a couple of songs on the Guitar, Recorder, Marimba, and multiple other instruments. I have talked about both types of music individually, now let's compare the two!

Carnatic Music Notes VS Western Classical Music Notes

In Carnatic Music, we have 7 basic notes and some of these notes have different variations (more than one) and some of them don't. The 7 basic notes are the following:

S R G M P D N

This table shows the different types of variation each note has:

Original Note	Note 1	Note 2	Note 3
S	S	X	X
R	R ₁	R ₂	R ₃
G	G ₁	G ₂	G ₃
M	M ₁	M ₂	X
P	P	X	X
D	D ₁	D ₂	D ₃
N	N ₁	N ₂	N _s

X = no variation

The reason these different variations exist is for the songs. When you're at a more advanced level you will be needing a certain pattern of notes to sing or play a song. As expected, the sound of a variation is completely different compared to its original. Every song in Carnatic Music has a pattern and this pattern consists of 2 elements: the Arohanam and the Avarohanam.

For example, the Arohanam and the Avarohanam of the raga Sankarabharanam are as follows:

Arohanam: S R₂ G₂ M₁ P D₂ N₂ Ś

Avarohanam: Ś N₂ D₂ P M₁ G₁ R₂ S

In Western Classical music too, there are seven notes but they are completely different. There are seven basic notes and there are flats and sharps for most of them.

English Notation: C D E F G A B

French Notation: do re mi fa sol la si

These letters are the notation of the sound but some notes represent a beat. Different notes represent the number of beats.

The table below shows all the notations with sharps and flats:

Notation	Sharp	Flat
C	C#	C ^b
D	D#	D ^b
E	E#	E ^b
F	F#	F ^b
G	G#	G ^b

A	A#	A\flat
B	B#	B\flat

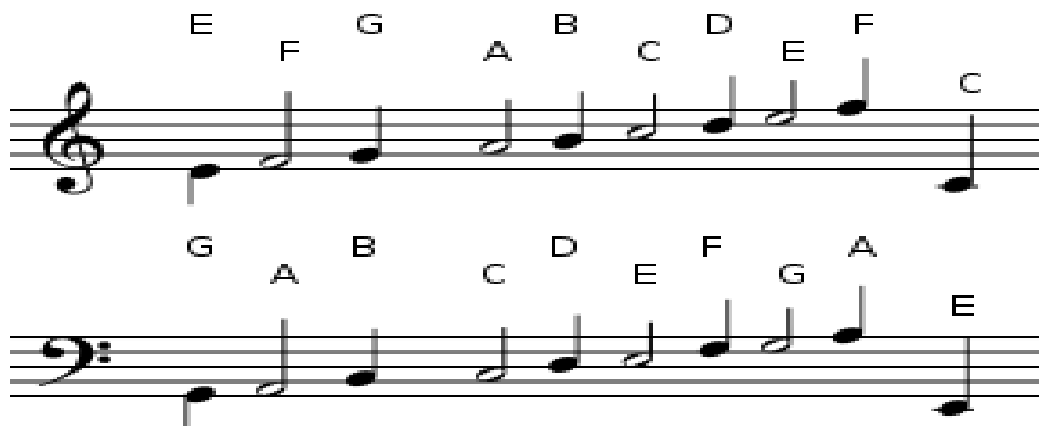
Carnatic Writing Format VS Classical Writing Format

In Carnatic Music, you write the notes (svaras) and beneath them, you write the corresponding lyrics (sahityam). When you're writing a Varnam, there is an order in which you write it. In simple words, you have to categorize your Varnam into 5 groups.

1. Pallavi 2. Anupallavi 3. Mukthai Swaram 4. Charanam and 5. Chittai Swaras

When you are playing Western Classical Music, you have something called Sheet Music which is a sheet of paper with the notes to the piece you play. In Classical Music, there is a special way to write notes for a piece. That is with a "staff". A staff is a body of five lines. Each line and the gap in between represents a notation. You put the corresponding note which will represent how many beats you hold it for according to the notation. Different notes represent a different number of beats. At the beginning of the staff, you have to put either a Treble Clef or a Bass Clef.

Example:



Carnatic Music Meaning VS Classical Music Meaning

In Carnatic Music all songs have lyrics. Therefore, there is a meaning behind a song. Most of the Carnatic songs are pieces that talk about a God. They either sing about all of the things they did, they might sing about their greatness or beauty. If you ever look at a Varnam book you will find that there will be the notes for the songs and right below it, you will see the lyrics.

In Western Classical Music, however, there are songs and these songs are essentially poems that sing about many different topics such as love, war, life, etc. And every song has a different theme.

In the end, everyone can agree that both Carnatic Music and Western Classical Music are amazing to listen to!

CHAPTER EIGHT

SCIENCE OF FASTING AND HINDUISM: UNDERSTANDING BOTH

Archana Prabhakaran

Introduction

Hinduism includes fasting as an integral part of its practice. A major purpose of fasting associated with Hinduism is to transcend the materialistic nature of the world and understand the all-encompassing and blissful nature of Brahman. Pursuing the path of spirituality continuously in daily life is not easy. For this reason, we strive to impose restraints on ourselves to focus on spiritual attainment. The practice of fasting is one form of restraint.

Hinduism and Fasting Practices

In Hinduism, fasting (*vrata* or *vratham* or *upavās*) is a way to demonstrate one's ability to sacrifice physical desires for the sake of spiritual growth. As per the scriptures, fasting produces a harmonious relationship between the body and soul that enables us to be attuned to God. This, therefore, provides the individual with essential physical and spiritual needs. We also have various health benefits of fasting.

Distractions keep people from pursuing the spiritual path in this world. Therefore, we must strive to put restraints on ourselves of which fasting is one way. Fasting involving abstinence from food is observed in many religions for a religious ceremony or ritual.

Abstinence can be of various kinds, including abstaining from eating, drinking water, talking, and sexual activity. In Hinduism, fasting cannot be viewed in isolation but is intricately woven with the ancient systems of health care, such as Yoga, and Āyurveda. All yogic practices are always advised to be done in empty stomach conditions and most of the Āyurvedic medicines are supposed to be consumed early in the morning before drinking or eating anything.

In Hinduism, each day of the week is dedicated to a particular deity, and depending upon personal preference, a devotee can fast on any day. Fasting is not only a means for worship but is also a great way to exercise self-control. It is a way to harden the body and mind, endure hardships, persevere under difficulties, and not give up. Fasting in Hinduism is a declaration of faith and resolve and a way to build character, strength, and purity as part of one's preparation for liberation. It is also helpful to restrain the mind and senses and practice detachment, austerity, and self-control.

Although fasting is a flexible practice, it leads us to our objective of salvation if we do it sincerely. In almost all devout Hindu households, fasting is primarily performed by women, but it is done by men as well. Pregnant women are not allowed to fast. As per *Manusmṛiti*, women should not observe fasting when they are living apart from their husbands. Regular fasting helps in purifying oneself both physically and mentally. Fasting in Hinduism is spread all through the year which enables us to follow the fasting plan at our convenience. These have been followed for many centuries and proved to be more effective than new-age dietary routines.

There are different kinds of fasting that people follow. These are usually linked to religious festivals:

- People usually avoid eating fish and meat during auspicious days or any religious rituals.
- Some avoid solid foods and have only a liquid diet.
- Some have only fruits, nuts, and milk.
- Some consume only water throughout the day and consume solid food only after completing the ritual.
- Few avoid having citric food on specific days.

- Some abstain from having food that has salt for the whole day.

Contemporary Ideas on Fasting

Fasting helps us in leading a life with self-discipline and keeps us active. It also helps us in consuming less salt as overconsumption of salt leads to water retention which leads to high blood pressure and heart-related problems.

Toxic substances in the human body cause diseases. By fasting, the digestive system is rested and it helps in cleansing and correcting all mechanisms. Having lemon juice with warm water during fasting prevents flatulence. As our body accounts for 60 to 70 percent of water, the gravitational force of the moon affects the fluid contents of our body. This leads to emotional imbalance which leads to tension, irritability, etc. Fasting helps in lowering the acidic content of our body and keeps us sane.

The human brain is usually active when hungry and sedentary when satiated. Many scientific/clinical studies speak about the beneficial effects of fasting and how it helps. Some are mentioned below:

- Short-term intermittent fasting or alternate-day fasting helps in controlling blood sugar by reducing insulin resistance.
- Fasting reduces inflammation, which helps people with heart disease, rheumatoid arthritis, and cancer.
- Fasting with a combination of chemotherapy for a variety of malignancies may help in reducing the side effects of the treatment than those who had a standard diet.
- Long-term fasting helps in reducing the ill effects of Rheumatoid Arthritis where the pain is reduced considerably.
- Few animal studies show that fasting improves brain function and could protect against Alzheimer's disease and Parkinson's.
- Fasting increases our metabolism and helps to reduce body weight and body fat.
- Fasting could also delay aging and extend longevity.

This age-old tradition has now come back to us with a new name called "Intermittent fasting" where:

- People are trying to fast for 16 hours and eat only twice during 8 hours.
- Eat normally for 5 days and control food intake for the remaining two days.
- Alternate days fasting where people eat normal meals on alternate days and control food intake on the remaining days.
- Control the food intake only during specific hours of the day. The best option is to eat between 7.00 am to 3.00 pm or 10.00 am to 6.00 pm but not later in the evening.

We should also exercise caution where people with diabetes could have spikes in blood sugar because of fasting and that could be dangerous. Furthermore, fasting is not recommended for older adults and people who are underweight without proper medical supervision.

Conclusion

Overall, fasting in moderation is good for the mind and the body. It purifies the system, besides making you feel light and good. Fasting helps us in attaining a harmonious relationship between our body and our soul. Fasting is also considered good *karma*.

Scientifically, fasting promotes optimal health and reduces the risk of many chronic diseases. Fasting when combined with a nutritious diet and a healthy lifestyle could benefit our health.

CHAPTER NINE

THE SUN IN INDIAN CULTURE

S. Jayalakshmi

Sūrya (also known as Āditya) is the Hindu Sun god. The Sun god occupies an important place in Hinduism. He is considered the creator of the universe and the source of all life. He is the supreme soul who brings light and warmth to the world. Each day he travels across the sky in his golden chariot pulled by seven horses and driven by red Aruṇa, a personification of Dawn. The god's most famous temple is at Konark in Orissa, north-east India and he is worshipped across the Indian subcontinent.

The Sun in the Vedas

Sūrya first appears in literature in the R̥gveda, the oldest of the sacred Vedas said to be composed between 1500 and 1000 BCE. Sun worship is an integral part of Vedic ritual tradition and Vedic religion traces its roots to Sun worship. Sūrya is invoked in the important Gāyatrī mantra which is recited before all auspicious pūjās.

The Sun in Ancient Indian Architecture

The Sun god had many temples and shrines across ancient India but certainly, the most celebrated temple built in honor of Sūrya is in the Orissa region at Konark. Constructed in the 13th century CE using sandstone, it has 12 pairs of huge stone wheels incorporated into the sides of the building to represent the months of the year and gives the impression that the whole temple is the chariot of Sūrya. The effect is further enhanced by seven horses sculpted at its front and standing on either side of the staircase. Statues of the Sun god adorn niches on the temple exterior. One example panel shows Sūrya wearing a conical crown and standing above his seven chariot horses. He is bedecked in jewels and accompanied by a smaller figure of Aruṇa.

Another famous temple dedicated to the god is at Mārtāṇḍ in the Śrīnagar valley of Kashmir. It was built in the second half of the 8th century CE by the Kārkoṭa king Lalitāditya Muktapīḍa. Today the temple is a mere ruin of its former self, but it remains the earliest Hindu monument in Kashmir.

Worship

Various festivals mark the deity Sūrya and these vary regionally in India. Poṅgal or Makara Saṅkarānti is the most widely celebrated Hindu festival dedicated to the Sun God. This celebrates a good harvest. Other festivals that focus on Sūrya include Chhath of Bihar, Eastern Uttar Pradesh, and the neighboring regions, Chhath is celebrated immediately after Diwali with fasting for three days followed by bathing in a river or tank with the remembrance of the Sun. Saṁba Daśamī and Ratha Saptamī are also major festivals celebrated in honor of Sūrya. Similarly, Āyṭar Pūjā is celebrated in Goa. This is known as Āditya Ranubāi in Maharashtra.

The Poṅgal festival of Tamil Nadu is dedicated to the sun god and corresponds to Makar Saṅkrānti, the harvest festival under many regional names celebrated throughout India. The four days of the Poṅgal festival are called Bōgi Poṅgal, SūryaPoṅgal, Māṭṭu Poṅgal, and Kāṇum Poṅgal. The second day of the Poṅgal harvest festival is dedicated to Sūrya in Tamil Nadu and is called "Sūrya Poṅgal".

Making oblations to the Sun with water in the morning, afternoon and evening is a standard priestly tradition of Hinduism. Since he symbolizes Brahman himself, he is worshipped for the illumination of the mind and flowering of self-knowledge.

Just as Brahman can be worshipped as Brahmā, Viṣṇu, and Śiva, Sūrya also is worshipped in these three forms. In the morning, he is verily Brahmā (golden yellow); in the afternoon, Maheśvara (bright white); and in the evening, Viṣṇu (dark blue). Āditya Hṛdaya compares him to Brahmā, Viṣṇu, and Śiva and praises that by worshipping Āditya one becomes free from the darkness of sorrow, suffering, sin, sickness, poverty, enemies, mortality and incurable diseases. Some hymns describe the sun as one of the solar deities (ādityas), and the son of Aditi, the mother of all gods, who represents the infinite, primordial space. His awakening, creative, nourishing, protecting, life-enhancing quality, and procreative power are personified by Savitr, to whom the Gāyatrī Mantra is addressed.

The Sun in Indian Dance and Exercise

Classical Indian dances such as the Bharatanāṭyam include poses that signify rays of light beaming towards all the beings of the universe, as a form of homage to Sūrya. Ornaments shaped in the form of sun and moon called Candra-prabhā (the Moon) and Sūrya-prabhā (the Sun) are fixed on the left and the right sides of the hair parting to endow a dancer with their beauty and shine.

Sūrya namaskāra means sun salutation. It is a Yoga warm-up routine based on a sequence of gracefully linked āsanās. The nomenclature refers to the symbolism of the Sun as the soul and the source of all life. The great Sage Patañjali in his Yoga Sūtra has mentioned salutation to Sun God.

The Sun in Ancient Indian epics

In the Rāmāyaṇa we find the popular Āditya Hṛdaya. It was recited by the sage Agastya to Rāma in the battlefield before fighting with the rākṣasa king Rāvaṇa. In it, Agastya teaches Rāma (who is fatigued after the long battle with various warriors of Laṅkā,) the procedure of worshipping Āditya (for strength) to defeat the enemy. In the Mahābhārata, Kuntī receives a mantra from a sage, Durvāsa; if recited, she will be able to summon a god and bear children by him. Believing in the power of this spell, Kuntī unwittingly summons Sūrya. But when Sūrya appears, she gets scared and requests him to return. However, Sūrya should fulfill the spell before returning. Sūrya miraculously makes Kuntī give birth to a child while maintaining her virginity so that she, as an unmarried princess, would not have to face any shame or be the target of questions from society. Kuntī feels compelled to abandon her son, Karṇa, who grows up to be one of the central characters in the great war of Kurukṣetra.

The Sun in Everyday Life

Kōlams/ Raṅgolī are designs made in front of the house and are thought to bring prosperity to homes. At millions of households in Tamil Nadu, Telangana, and Andhra Pradesh, every day early morning during the break of dawn, women draw kōlams in front of their home entrance. Traditionally kōlams are drawn on the flat surface of the ground with white rice flour. When color is added to the designs it is called raṅgolī. Each morning before sunrise, the front entrance of the house, or wherever the kōlam may be drawn, is swept clean, sprinkled with water, and thereby making a flat surface. Kōlams are generally drawn while the surface is still damp so the design will hold better. Through the day, the drawings get walked on, washed out in the rain, or blown around in the wind; new ones are made the next day. Instead of rice flour, even white stone powder (veṅkacaṅkaḷ poṭi or kōlappoṭi) can be used for creating kōlams/ raṅgolī. Occasionally, cow dung is also used to wax the floors. In some cultures, cow dung is believed to have antiseptic properties and hence provides a literal threshold of protection for the home. It also provides contrast with the white powder. The geometric designs in the kōlams may also represent powerful religious symbols, placed in and around household shrines.

மேலும் லிங்கமானது இருவிதமாகும். சலம்-அசலம் என்று. சலம் என்றால் அசையக்கூடியது. அசலம் என்றால் அசையாதது என்று பொருள். மேலும் அவ்வொவ்வொன்றும் மூன்று விதமாகும். அவை வ்யக்தம் வயக்தாவ்யக்தம் அவ்யக்தம் என. அதாவது உருவம்- உருவாருவம்- அருவம். வீடுகளில் பூஜிக்கப்படும் லிங்கம் சலம் **चलम्** ஆகும். கோயில்களில் பூஜிக்கப்படும் லிங்கம் அசலம் **अचलम्** ஆகும். அசலலிங்கத்திற்கு **स्थिरलिङ्गं** என்றும் பெயர். அது ஐந்து விதமாகும். இதையே ஸித்தாந்தசேகரத்தில்

तल्लिङ्गं द्विविधं प्रोक्तमचलं च चलं तथा ।
प्रत्येकं त्रिविधं ज्ञेयं व्यक्ताव्यक्तोभयात्मकम् ॥
प्रासादे स्थापितं लिङ्गं अचलं तच्छिलादिकम् ।
स्थापितं तच्चलं गेहे स्थिरलिङ्गमथोच्यते ।
पञ्चधा तत् स्थिरलिङ्गं स्वायंभूर्देवबाणकम् ।
आर्षं च मानुषं लिङ्गं तेषां लक्षणमुच्यते ॥

சைவாகம் பரிபாஷா மஞ்ஜரீ என்ற நூலில் லிங்கத்தின் நான்கு நிலைகள் எடுத்துரைக்கப்பட்டுள்ளது.

சிவாதிகம் - ஸ்வயம்பு - அமர்ந்த நிலை
சமகண்டம் - ஆர்ஷம் - தியானநிலை
வர்த்தமானம் - மானுஷம் - நின்றநிலை
த்ரைராசிகம் - தைவிகம் - நடந்தநிலை

அவ்யக்த நாதமே ப்ரணவம். விசித்ரமான ப்ரபஞ்சம் பிரணவத்தில் புதிது புதிதாய் தோன்றுவதற்க்கும், ஓடுங்குவதற்க்கும் காரணமானது லிங்கம் என்று அஜிதாகமம் கூறுகிறது.

लयं गच्छन्ति भूतानि संहारे निखिलान्यपि ।
निर्गच्छन्ति यतश्चापि लिङ्गमित्युच्यते बुधैः॥

நாத வடிவமான பரமேஸ்வரன் தனக்குப் பிடித்தமானது பூஜையே என்ற அவாவை தேவியிடம் உரைத்தார். இதற்குச் சான்று சேக்கிழாரின் பன்னிரண்டாம் திருமுறையில் திருக்குறிப்புத் தொண்டர் நாயனார் புராணத்தில்-

எண்ணில் ஆகமம் இயம்பிய இறவைர்தாம் விரும்பும்
உண்மையாவது பஞ்சனை எனவூரதை தராள
அண்ண லார்தமலை அர்ச்சனை பாரியஆ தரித்தார்
பண்ணில் நல்லவ ளாயின பரெந்தவக் கொழுந்து.

ஸ்ரீமத் ஸீப்ரபேதாகமத்தில் சிவபூஜைக்கு ஸமமான புண்யம் இருந்ததும் இல்லை இருக்கப் போவதும் இல்லை என கூறப்படுகிறது.

शिवपूजा समं पुण्यं न भूतं न भविष्यति ।

ஆகமத்தில் கூறப்பட்டதைப் போலவே சிவதர்மோத்திரத்திலும் லிங்கார்ச்சனையை விட அதிகமான புண்யம் வேறெதுவும் இல்லை வேறெதுவும் இல்லை என்ற காரணத்தால் மிகுந்த முயற்சியோடு எப்போதும் சிவபூஜை செய்ய வேண்டும் என்று குறிப்பிடப்பட்டுள்ளது.

नास्ति लिङ्गार्चनात् अन्यत् पुण्यमप्यधिकं क्वचित् ।
इति विज्ञाय यत्नेन पूजनीयस्सदा शिवः ॥

ஸ்ரீமத் அப்பையதீக்ஷிதரும் சிவபூஜையானது அவச்யம் செய்ய வேண்டுமென உபதேசிக்கிறார்
अवश्यकार्थं शिवानां आत्मार्थं शिवपूजनम् ।

பூஜையின் பலனும் பூஜா என்னும் சொல்லின் பொருளும்

சிவபூஜை செய்வதனால் நமக்குக் கிடைக்கும் பலன் யாதெனில் ப்ராரப்தம், சஞ்சிதம், ஆகாமி என்றுள்ள மூன்று விதமான கர்மாக்களையும் நிறைவு செய்து ஆத்மாவிற்க்கு சிவஞானத்தினை அளிக்கவல்லதாகும். பூர்யந்தே என்ற சொல்லிலுள்ள “பூ” என்ற முதல் எழுத்தும் “ஜாயதே” என்றச் சொல்லிலுள்ள முதல் எழுத்தும் சேர்ந்து “பூஜா” என்றச் சொல் கிடைக்கிறது என்பதை ஸ்ரீமத் காரணாகமம் உபதேசிக்கிறது.

पूर्यन्ते सर्वकर्माणि जायते ज्ञानमात्मनि ।
पूरणाज्जायते यस्मात् पूजाशब्दमिहोच्यते ॥

Śivaliṅga and Śivapūjā
Dr. Sivasri Balasarveswara Gurukkal

Translated by Dr. R. Saraswati Sainath

Śivaliṅga= Śiva+liṅga. Śiva= Śi+va. Śi=Parameśvara and va=Parāśakti. The word liṅga has been formed from the root ligi citṛikaraṇe. Ligi citṛikaraṇe (ligi citṛikaraṇe= lingyate=citṛikriyate (jagat) anena iti liṅgam) means this manifold world and jīvātmas have been created from liṅga and they lapse back into liṅga. The word pūjā has been formed from the roots arca pūjāyām and arha pūjāyām.

Types of Liṅgas

Śrīmad Suprabhedāgama¹ mentions nine kinds of liṅgas:

दिव्यं स्वायंभुवं पूर्वं दैवतं गणपं तथा ।
आसुरं सुरलिङ्गञ्च आर्षं राक्षसकं तथा ॥
मानुषं बाणलिङ्गञ्च लिङ्गं नवविधं भवेत् ॥

divyaṃ svāyambhuvaṃ pūrvam daivatam gaṇapam tathā ।
āsuraṃ suraliṅgañca ārṣaṃ rākṣasakaṃ tathā ॥
mānuṣaṃ bāṇaliṅgañca liṅgaṃ navavidham bhavet ॥

Śrīmad Kāraṇāgama divides liṅga into seven types:

स्वायंभूर्दैविकञ्चैव दिव्यमानुषमार्षकम् ।
राक्षसं बाणलिङ्गञ्च सप्तैति लिङ्गमुच्यते ॥
svāyambhūrdaivikañcaiva divyamānuṣamārṣakam ।
rākṣasaṃ bāṇaliṅgañca saptaiti liṅgamucyate ॥

Jrṇottara Daśaka mentions six kinds of liṅgas.

स्वायंभुवं बाणलिङ्गं दैविकञ्चार्षकं त्विति ।
गणपं मानुषं लिङ्गं षट्प्रकारं प्रकीर्तितम् ॥
svāyambhuvaṃ bāṇaliṅgaṃ daivikañcārṣakam tviti ।
gaṇapam mānuṣaṃ liṅgaṃ ṣaṭprakāraṃ prakīrtitam ॥

Siddhāntaśekara mentions five kinds of liṅgas:

पञ्चधा तत्स्थिरं लिङ्गं स्वायंभूर्देवबाणकम् ।
आर्षं च मानुषं लिङ्गं तेषां लक्षणमुच्यते ॥
pañcadhā tatsthiraṃ liṅgaṃ svāyambhūrdaivabāṇakam ।
ārṣaṃ ca mānuṣaṃ liṅgaṃ teṣāṃ lakṣaṇamucyate ॥

The caryā pāda of Siddhāntasārāvalī divides liṅga into five as svayambhū, daivika, gāṇapa, ārṣa and mānuṣa. Of these, svayambhū is the liṅga that is formed of its own, daivika is the liṅga worshipped by the Goddess, gāṇapa is the liṅga worshipped by śivagaṇas, ārṣa is the liṅga established by sages and great people and mānuṣa is the liṅga established by kings. In addition, liṅga is of two kinds: movable (cala) and immovable (acala). These in turn are of three types: vyakta (possessed of a form), vyaktāvyakta (form and formless) and avyaktam (formless). Liṅgas that are worshipped at homes are cala and those worshipped at temples are acala. Acalaliṅga is also called sthiraṅga. It is of five types. Siddhāntaśekara mentions this as follows:

तल्लिङ्गं द्विविधं प्रोक्तमचलं च चलं तथा ।

¹ Āgamas are liturgical texts. There existed Āgamas for all the six faiths of Gāṇapatya, Saura, Vaiṣṇava, Śaiva, Śākta, Kaumāra and also for Brahmā. However, currently, Vaiṣṇava, Śaiva, Śākta, and Kaumāra Āgamas are available. Āgamas have four pādas: caryā, kriyā, yoga and jñāna. Of these caryā pāda deals with pūjas related to temples and festivals, kriyā pāda deals with the construction of temples, yoga pāda deals with sāmādhi and other yogas, and jñāna pāda deals with discussions about mokṣa. Śiva Āgamas are 28 in number-Translator.

प्रत्येकं त्रिविधं ज्ञेयं व्यक्ताव्यक्तोभयात्मकम् ॥
 प्रासादे स्थापितं लिङ्गं अचलं तच्छिलादिकम् ।
 स्थापितं तच्चलं गेहे स्थिरलिङ्गमथोच्यते ।
 पञ्चधा तत् स्थिरलिङ्गं स्वायंभूर्देववाणकम् ।
 आर्षं च मानुषं लिङ्गं तेषां लक्षणमुच्यते ॥

talliṅgaṃ dvividhaṃ proktamacalaṃ ca calaṃ tathā ।
 pratyekaṃ trividhaṃ jñeyaṃ vyaktāvyaaktobhayātmakam ॥
 prāsāde sthāpitaṃ liṅgaṃ acalaṃ tacchilādikam ।
 sthāpitaṃ taccalaṃ gehe sthiraṅgamathocyate ।
 pañcadhā tat sthiraṅgaṃ svāyaṃbhūrdaivabāṇakam ।
 ārṣaṃ ca mānuṣaṃ liṅgaṃ teṣāṃ lakṣaṇamutyate ॥

Śaivāgamaparibhāṣā Mañjarī mentions four postures of the liṅga. They are:

Śivādhika-Svayāmbhu-Seated Posture
 Samakhaṇḍa- Ārṣa-Meditating Posture
 Vartamāna-Mānuṣa-Standing Posture
 Trairāśika-Daivikam-Walking Posture

Unmanifested sound is praṇava. The Ajitāgama mentions that liṅga is the cause for the variegated world to be created afresh from the praṇava and lapse back into it.

लयं गच्छन्ति भूतानि संहारे निखिलान्यपि ।
 निर्गच्छन्ति यतश्चापि लिङ्गमित्युच्यते बुधैः॥

layaṃ gacchanti bhūtāni saṃhāre nikhilānyapi ।
 nirgacchanti yataśchāpi liṅgamityucyate budhaiḥ॥

Parameśvara who is the personification of nāda expressed his wish to the Goddess that pūjā is very dear to him. Evidence for this statement is found in the section Tirukkuṛippuṭ Tuṅṭar Nāyaṇār Purāṇam of Cēkkiḷār's Twelfth Tirumuṛai.²

எண்ணில் ஆகமம் இயம்பிய இறைவர்தாம் விரும்பும்
 உண்மையாவது பரிசுனை எனவாரதைத் தருள
 அண்ண லார்தமனை அர்ச்சனை பாரியஆ தரித்தாள்
 பண்ணில் நல்லவளாயின பரெந்தவக் கொழுந்தா.

eṇṇil ākamam iyampiya irāivartām virumpum
 uṇmai yāvatu pūcanai eṇavurait taruḷa
 aṇṇa lārtamai arccaṇai puriyaā tarittāḷ
 peṇṇil nallavalāyina peruntavak koḷuntu

Śrīmad Suprabhedāgama mentions that there neither existed a puṇya equal to the śivapūjā nor will it exist in the future.

शिवपूजा समं पुण्यं न भूतं न भविष्यति ।

śivapūjā samaṃ puṇyaṃ na bhūtaṃ na bhaviṣyati ।

Just as in the āgama, the śivadharmaṇṭara too mentions that there is no greater puṇya than the arcanā to the liṅga. Hence it is mentioned that the śivapūjā must be done earnestly.

नास्ति लिङ्गार्चनात् अन्यत् पुण्यमप्यधिकं क्वचित् ।

इति विज्ञाय यत्नेन पूजनीयस्सदा शिवः ॥

² Śaiva saints, called Nāyaṇārs, are sixty-three in number. They lived in Tamil Nadu from the fifth to the tenth century C.E. Their poems amounting to more than 18,000 have been grouped into twelve books called the Tirumuṛais. The twelfth Tirumuṛai is the hagiography of the Nāyaṇārs by Cēkkiḷār. This is called as Tiruttuṅṭarpuṛāṇa or popularly as Periyapurāṇa. Tirukkuṛippuṭ Tuṅṭar Nāyaṇār was a washerman who had the practise of washing a Śiva devotee's cloth first before others. He reached the lord through his service to other Śiva devotees-Translator.

nāsti līngārcanāt anyat puṇyamapyadhikam kvacit ।

iti vijñāya yatnena pūjanīyassadā śivaḥ ॥

Śrīmad Appaya Dīkṣita too advises that it is mandatory to do śivapūjā.

अवश्यकार्यं शैवानां आत्मार्थं शिवपूजनम् ।

avaśyakāryam śaivānām ātmārtha śivapūjanam ।

Result of Pūjā and the Meaning of the Word Pūjā

Śivapūjā enables us to annihilate our prārabdha, sañcita and āgāmi karmas and attain śiva knowledge.

Śrīmad Kāraṇāgama mentions that the word “pūjā” is formed from letter “pū” from the word “pūryante” and the letter “jā” from the word “jāyate”.

पूर्यन्ते सर्वकर्माणि जायते ज्ञानमात्मनि ।

पूरणाज्जायते यस्मात् पूजाशब्दमिहोच्यते ॥

pūryante sarvakarmāṇi jāyate jñānamātmani ।

pūraṇājāyate yasmāt pūjāśabdamihocyate ॥

CHAPTER ELEVEN

HINDUISM: TIME, SPACE AND QUANTUM REALITY

Srinivasan Ramachandran

Introduction

Humans have been constantly searching for answers to eternal questions related to consciousness, its origins, and understanding the cosmos. Contemporary science has not failed to provide a window for mankind to decipher the nature of our reality and to address these questions. However, science often feels itself to be limited when dealing with subjects outside classical physics and mathematics. One reason owing to this limitation can be attributed to the fact that the experiments conducted with complex sensors and the observations made from them are always understood by our primitive faculties, i.e, our primary senses. The objective of the aforementioned statements is not to demean or belittle the field of science, rather the author of this document is trying to emphasize transcending the faculties through which we experience reality.

Hinduism or *sanātana dharma* often misunderstood as an organized religion is rather a rather large community adhering to different schools of thought, which offers its two cents to various aspects of reality that are both materialistic and metaphysical. The vast knowledge originating from the *Bhāratavarṣa*, popularly known as India, is mostly available in the anecdotal form today and has a high probability to be dismissed as fantasy or mythology by someone looking at it with rudimentary optics. However, deeper digging results in fantastical information on the intricate and complex layer of the nature of reality, in which the scientific details might be abundant, yet to be discovered. It is possible for the reader at this point to dismiss these claims as an absurd or evangelical notion. However, the author humbly requests the reader for some patience as the upcoming sections shall throw light on these claims with fair reasoning.

Foundations of Space, Time, and Quantum Reality

Contemporary science has gained a lot of insights with a good level of evidence towards our understanding of the cosmos and our position in it. It presents the idea of our material universe as a construct of space and time. Space implies the dimensions of freedom through which our material body can traverse and time is self-explanatory. For the reader to understand further sections, they must be introduced to the theory and ideas related to the topic.

When length or distance is discussed, it implies aspects in the spatial dimension relating to movement, area, and volume. However, when the distances become large, as in the case of the distance between planets and galaxies, the values become utterly meaningless. Hence, the notion of light-years is taken into account when discussing large distances. A light-year is a distance traveled by light throughout the year. For example, if light travels at $X \frac{\text{meters}}{\text{second}}$ then light year implies

$$X \times 60 \times 60 \times 24 \times 365$$

Here, X according to the contemporary scientific studies is a value of $300,000 \frac{\text{kilometers}}{\text{sec}}$. Hence, the light travels a distance of $946100000000 \text{ kilometers}$ in a year. The distance between the Earth and the nearest star system Alpha-Centauri is 4.367 light-years, which means it is at $41316187000000.0 \text{ kilometers}$ by calculating based on light year speed. It is also true that the speed of light is a constant and nothing in the universe in its physical form can cross the barrier of the speed of light. In such an event, when an object crosses the speed of light, the space will stretch itself to keep the object from crossing this speed barrier.

Time Dilation

When two clocks register two different times, the difference between them is called time dilation. Many factors owe to this difference such as velocity and gravity (Wikipedia, n.d.b). There are places in our physical universe where this phenomenon can be experienced. For example, the time at the outskirts (event horizon) of the black hole passes differently than on Earth.

According to Einstein's theory of relativity, time stops altogether when traveling at the speed of light (University of South Maine, n.d.). This means that when moving at the speed of light, time ceases to move forward, while, for others, time progresses naturally. Considering the example given previously, if you travel at the speed of light towards Alpha-Centauri, the travel will be instantaneous for you while your family on Earth would have aged by 4.367 years more than you. This is also another way to experience Time Dilation.

Quantum Reality: Duality, Entanglement

This is perhaps the most interesting and most mysterious concept even to eminent scientists of contemporary scientific society. To keep it simple, scientists have observed that atoms, subatomic particles simply put forth as matter, exhibit a dual nature (Greiner 2011) of being a particle and a wave. To help understand this better, consider an object such as a pen on your desk, wave-particle duality states that the pen exists everywhere. Its position on your desk is finalized only when observed by a conscious observer. For more clarity, it can be said that the matter forming your pen exists in a wave of possibilities and collapses as particles to take the shape of the pen at your desk only when observed. This seems magical but this is what has been observed with tiny particles like photons, atoms, and subatomic elements. This is called as Wave-Function collapse (The Information Philosopher, n.d.).

The above-stated theories gave rise to an interesting topic called Quantum Entanglement. Quantum Entanglement proposes that when two or more particles are entangled (connected), their independent state cannot be described without taking into account the other entangled particles (Schrödinger 1935; Wootters 1998; Horodecki et al. 2009).

To help understand the reader about entanglement, the author wishes to present an unrealistic scenario. For example, if you can entangle two different colored pens on your desk, then writing in one pen causes the other pen to write by itself, no matter how far these pens are lying apart

from each other. This means writing with one pen will subconsciously control the other pen to write by itself reflecting the words the entangled pair is imprinting on a paper.

An interesting aspect of Quantum Entanglement is that when two entangled particles are separated spatially, even by a larger distance (across the ends of the universe), the information about the properties of one particle is transmitted to the entangled particles instantaneously, beating the speed of light. Let us see in the upcoming section how these ideas on time dilation and quantum reality have been expressed from the anecdotal accounts found in the Vedic literature of *Bhāratavarṣa*.

Hinduism: Time, Space, Time Dilation: Kakudmi

The story of King Kakudmi trying to find a suitable bridegroom for his daughter Princess Revati is an interesting account of time dilation (Rajagopalachari 1970; Kurniawan 2021; Gupta and Valpey 2013). Often this story is misrepresented as time travel. Instead, this story is about how time dilation played a role in Princess Revati finding herself a suitable husband at a time that was eons apart from her time.

This story begins with the King and the Princess traveling to *Brahmāloka* to meet Brahmā himself, to seek his counsel on finding a suitable husband for the Princess from a list of suitable grooms that the King vetted himself. A few minutes passed before the King and the Princess could seek an audience with Brahmā. Brahmā mentions that in their few minutes of waiting eons have passed on Earth i.e *27 caturyugas*, *1 caturyuga* *4 yugas*). Each *caturyuga* spans across 4.32 million years. Although this is the popularly accepted number of years, other texts propose different values for the number of years spanning *yugas* and This resolves to 4.32×27 years. However, the author wishes to inform the reader that there are other pieces of literature from *Bhāratavarṣa* that propose different values for the number of years spanning *yugas* and *caturyuga* (Wikipedia, n.d.c).

The author wishes to postulate two different factors owing to the time dilation as experienced by the King and the Princess. The first factor is the distance between *Bhūloka*(Earth) to *Brahmāloka*(abode of Brahmā). Although there is no exact account or record of the distance between these two celestial worlds, it might involve multiple light-years of travel. With light years of journey time, it is only plausible that these travelers would have achieved this feat with a speed that is in a large ratio closer to the speed of light. Even with the journey time accounting for time dilation, it will not be sufficient to cause eons to pass on *Bhūloka*. The second factor is that *Brahmāloka* exists on a different plane of existence as mentioned by Brahmā in the texts. This perhaps implies that the celestial body of *Brahmāloka* causes time to pass differently due to its gravitational field. Do the actual texts discuss more details on the journey time, distance to *Brahmāloka*, or the time taken for the travelers to reach *Brahmāloka*? This implies that we have to consider analyzing this literature from a scientific perspective and digging for more information can throw light on making some rudimentary calculations to understand the cosmos better.

Hinduism: Quantum Mechanics

Astamā Siddhis are the eight supernatural powers that can be obtained by doing immense *sādhanā*. They have been mentioned in Vedic literature and mythologies (Banerjea 1855; Rajagopalachari 1970) in anecdotal form. The type of *Siddhi* we are interested in from the context of this report is *Īśita* i.e, Control of animate and inanimate objects.

The author of this report postulates that the powers are similar to the ideas presented in quantum entanglement. *Īśita* can be seen as a way to use entanglement for controlling matter. However,

the author honestly acknowledges a lack of knowledge in the literature on how to achieve these *siddhis*.

Quantum Entanglement

Ādi Śaṅkara was an eminent saint hailing from the Kerala region of the southern part of *Bhāratavarṣa*. He lived during 8th century C.E.

There is an interesting account of the life of this eminent saint where he enters the body of a king to answer a question in a debate at the same time (Sadhguru, n.d.). In his account, Sadhguru discusses the specific details of how to achieve the feat of controlling a corpse using *Īśita*. Interested readers can also see the specifics or criteria of how a suitable corpse was chosen (Sadhguru, n.d.). It discusses the various life energies involved in the body and the duration after which they leave the body, rendering it useless for such a feat.

Bōgar (Wikipedia, n.d.a; Palani Temple Administration, n.d.) an eminent *Siddha* (Saint, yogi, muni, etc) hailing from the Tamil Nadu region of the southern part of *Bhāratavarṣa* has contributed towards the literature about these *siddhis* and is famous for *Īśita*.

With contemporary experiments related to quantum entanglement, one can find how complex it is and the criteria involved in a successful entanglement of mere particles. Whether the *siddhis* involve quantum entanglement and if it does, then how do they successfully entangle with various animate and in-animate matters? Answers to these questions by inquiring more into the Vedic literature can help immensely to improve our knowledge and evolve ourselves as an advanced civilization.

Conclusion

The idea of the presented report is not about proving that the aforementioned scientific theories have been already proved in Vedic literature or for any claims of ownership of solutions. Originally, the author intends to present the idea that contemporary science can learn and rediscover ideas from the Vedic literature provided it is willing to approach it with an open mind. The ability to gain knowledge and achieve results from the Vedic literature often seems to be unorthodox or unscientific when looked at from different cultural optics. When there are anecdotal pieces of evidence about complex scientific theories directly or indirectly, it then warrants a thorough investigation no matter the source of information, i.e, mythology or folklore. As mentioned in the introduction science hits with limitations because it relies on documenting knowledge that is attained from the experiences of primitive sensory faculties. Also, the author is not advocating the aspect of faith either, which is a topic purely adhering to the religion. Rather science needs to make efforts in investing time and efforts to understand Vedas from an objective viewpoint. This objective viewpoint can help science to gain knowledge with higher experiential faculties where it becomes relatively easier to understand the concepts of time and the nature of quantum reality.

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CHAPTER TWELVE

ACADEMIC STUDY TO THE RESCUE OF RELIGION

Dr. R. Saraswati Sainath

Study of Religion can be of two types: Confessional Study of Religion and Academic Study of Religion. Confessional Study of Religion is done in a traditional setting by the follower of the religion. It emphasizes the belief in the traditional values upheld by the religion and strict adherence to the principles of the religion. Academic Study on the other hand is done in a research environment in which logic is given importance. Inscriptional evidence, court records, internal evidence provided by the author in his work, or documentation provided by other authors in their works are used to determine the time of the author or text. Hindus consider time as cyclic and hence traditions are not assigned to one time period. Vedas and Āgamas are considered to be divine in origin and are said to be *anādi* which means their time of origin is unknown. Likewise, many philosophical schools attribute the origination of their systems to God himself and hence maintain that their system is very ancient and has been established from time immemorial. Academic study on the other hand places the texts in a particular time. Although oral tradition cannot be dated to a particular time, a text should have been written in a particular time. Hence the research proceeds based on assigning dates to various texts.

The word “Religion” is derived from the word Re-Ligare. Ligare means to “bind” or to “connect.” and Re-Ligare means to “re-bind” or to “re-connect”. Religion binds an individual to the family, community, and society. Religious beliefs and God as the creator of everything and giver of results of actions induce discipline and the urge to follow the path of righteousness. The Hindu sages emphasize that individuals have to perform daily prayers, should worship their ancestors, should feed animals, should feed guests and other people, and study the scriptures. These are considered as sacrifices and are respectively called as *devayajña*, *pitryajña*, *bhūtayajña*, *manuṣyayajña*, and *brahmayajña* (Kane: 696).

The Vedas prescribe various duties and different kinds of worship to individuals. These rites are to be performed jointly by the husband and wife. A man cannot perform any of the rituals prescribed in the Vedas without his wife by his side. Thus, women are taken care of. Protection of women and children enables the protection and continuation of society. Many rites prescribed for an individual right from his birth, his marriage, etc., are considered purificatory rites (*samskāras*) (Kane: 193). Proper performance of these rites enables individuals to slowly purify themselves and attain God.

Belief in the concept of God as the witness of actions (*karma*) and the giver of results of one’s actions, is vital to the existence of law and order in society. The belief that the performance of good *karmas* gives good results and performance of bad *karmas* will lead to suffering brings in discipline and individuals strive to become virtuous. Moreover, belief in a God enables people to share their sorrows with him and at the same time remain strong during times of trouble. Strong adherence to God enables people to develop detachment and transcend their sorrows and be in peace with themselves even in the state of adversity. Hence religion renders strength to an individual and society. To enable individuals to achieve this purpose the Hindu sages divided a person’s life into four stages called *āśramas*. They are that of a celibate (*brahmacarya*), that of a householder (*grhastha*), that of a forest dweller (*vānaprastha*), and that of an ascetic (*sannyāsa*) (Kane 416). Throughout the centuries Hindu sages and philosophers have taken steps to preserve these religious beliefs. Although faith is an underlying factor for any religion, logic, and argumentation have always been accommodated within the Hindu religion. Many Hindu religious traditions have a strong philosophical component to their teachings and logic, argumentation, and debates play a major role in the history of these philosophical traditions. The Hindu sages encouraged asking questions to the teachers and to get the doubts clarified. It may be pointed out that many of the philosophical discussions in the Upaniṣads are recorded in the form of a conversation between the student and the teacher. The *Bhagavadgītā* (4.34) emphasizes this point further-

*tadviddhipranipātena paripraśṇena sevayā |
upadekṣyanti te mārgam jñāninastattvadarśinaḥ ||*

Translation: Know that through prostration, inquiry, and service. The wise ones who have realized the Truth will impart the knowledge to you.

Hence it is the onus of Hindu philosophers, teachers, and students to adapt to various hermeneutics and solve important issues in their religion and philosophy so that the sincere followers of the religion can be convinced of the greatness of the values imparted by their tradition. In this light, I would now like to take two problems in Hinduism and offer a solution by applying the principles of the Academic Study of Religion.

The first is Rāma’s treatment of Sītā in the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* which is considered an epic by the Hindus. Rāma is an example of an ideal son, husband, and human being in general. Yet, those who read the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* will be puzzled to see Rāma forcing his innocent and chaste

wife Sītā to perform the *agnipraveśa* to prove her chastity. Does Sītā who abandoned all luxuries and followed Rāma to the forest and remained sincere to him even when she was abducted by Rāvaṇa deserve this? This has earned a reputation for Rāma that he is a cruel husband and an oppressor of women and some people in the past have even gone to the extent of offering a garland of sandals to Rāma. This question may be answered by mentioning that the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* is based on the story of *Rāmopākhyāna* found in the *Mahābhārata*. The story deals only until Rāma's coronation. Many innovations are introduced by Vālmīki when he writes his *Rāmāyaṇa* which is considered the first ornate poetry (*ādikāvya*). *Mahābhārata* on the other hand is history (*itihāsa*). The *agnipraveśa* is a pure innovation of Vālmīki to extoll the character of Sītā in the minds of the readers.

In the same light, it may be pointed out that Rāma's second cruel treatment of Sītā in the *Uttararāmāyaṇa* wherein he sends away his pregnant wife to the forest too is not found in the *Mahābhārata*. *Uttararāmāyaṇa* is also a latter addition to the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*. Given that the *Mahābhārata* is history and the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* is the first ornate poetry it can be said that neither did Rāma force Sītā to do the *agnipraveśa* nor did he drive her away to the forest when she was pregnant.

The second problem I consider here is the polyandrous marriage of Draupadī found in the *Mahābhārata*. Polyandry is a practice of women having more than one husband. While the Hindu sages and the society impose strict laws on women, it is indeed surprising why there is evidence of polyandry in ancient India. Even today it can be observed that the number of females born is comparatively lesser than the number of males. For example, as per the 2011 census, the female to male sex ratio in India is 943 females per 1000 males and in some states, it is lower than the national ratio. Polyandry is inevitable in any society where the number of females is relatively very low compared to the number of males in society. Hindus divided human years into four *yugas*: *kr̥ta yuga* or *satya yuga*, *trētā yuga*, *dvāpara yuga* and *kali yuga*. Some practices were allowed in some *yugas* whereas they were prohibited in the other *yugas*. Polyandry was permitted in the first three *yugas* but was prohibited in *kali yuga*. Before the polyandrous marriage of Draupadī, Yudhiṣṭhira mentions two instances of polyandry. One is the case of Jaṭilā of the Gautama race who married seven sages and another, the daughter of an ascetic Kaṇḍu and Praṁlocā, who married the ten Pracetas brothers. Reference to these two examples are found in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* (IV. 30. 13-16). The same *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* does emphasize the birth of male children to Vaivasvata Manu (9.2). Svāyaṁbhava Manu had three daughters(4.1) and even among their descendants, we find the predominance of sons over daughters. Thus, the total number of females should have been very low and the sages, who were the law-givers in ancient India, had to permit polyandry. As the *yugas* progressed their population also should have increased, and they should have prohibited the practice. Because it was sanctioned by sages, Draupadī and other women who had polyandrous marriages are considered chaste. It may be recollected that female infanticide was vigorously practiced in many parts of India a few years ago. It can be predicted that polyandry will return to those communities where the female population is scarce.

In the above pages, I have shown how the Academic Study of Religion can enable us to solve some of the problems we have in Religion. The *Ṛgveda* prays that let noble thoughts come to us from every side. Hence good aspects of the Academic Study of Religion must be adopted to offer clarifications and explanations. This is extremely important especially in the case of religion because belief in religion enables people to develop the strength to transcend their problems.

Hindus always incorporated science within the religion and still allowed religion to dominate as Religion is stronger than Science.

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