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THE BEGINNING

The human mind has always been in need and in search of peace and tranquillity. From the very beginning it has been in quest of an anchor to stabilize and protect it from tides and terrors, storms and onslaughts, it faces in the life-struggle. All the great religions, *dharams*, sects and schools of thought aim at satisfying this human urge. All of them are meant to lead the human being to *Anandpur*, the place of peace and eternal bliss. "All roads lead to Rome," though they have different alignments, different layouts, and pass through different regions, countryside, and give different glimpses of beautiful sceneries and grim grand passes, and though some are smooth and well tarred, others are rough and rigid, all of them are, thus, in a way, together at the bottom and meet at the top. It is in between that differences and troubles lie. Political considerations and ambitions, social systems and rituals, selfish interests and rivalries, superstitions and mental inhibitions, tend to take them apart and create schisms and classes and get the gulf widened. But they are all laid out to reach the top. Some of them are circuitous and tough, some are short and straight, and some are difficult, while some are easy to tread. Some of them are full of obstacles and labyrinths, while some pass through wilderness and jungles full of ferocious and poisonous predators. Through some, people are able to pass, while in others, they get lost.

Looking back, we find that this urge and quest have been present in the human mind even in its very primitive stage. The human mind seems to have been endowed with intellect from the very beginning. This urge and quest changed form as human

intelligence grew, developed, and progressed. In the very early stages when human beings lived and moved in the wilderness like any other living being, they had to face obstacles, difficulties, dangers and risks. They had to struggle and fight for existence and sustenance.

In the beginning, obviously, the first stage was of fear. It was natural because in an immature and raw intellect, only elementary crude things get to be understood. So, in the beginning only natural happenings could have had their effect on human minds. For instance, the thunder of the lightning in the clouds, the heat emanating from the flames of fire, the fury of the storms and typhoons had their terrifying effects. As human beings moved unprotected in the wilderness and lived on vegetation, fruits, and flowers, or on what they could kill, they passed through difficulties and dangers beyond our conception. In that condition besides the natural happenings, they had to guard against poisonous crawlers and ferocious animals like tigers, leopards, elephants, bisons and snakes. These dangers combined with the unending struggles and efforts to fill the stomach. Consequently, the human mind searched for some refuge and protection. Naturally, therefore, in its helplessness it had to bow before these calamities. This led to the idea of some god being enraged and the worship of lightning, fire, storms, whirlwinds, lions, and snakes started. The next idea that flashed across the human intellect was that there were certain things which were useful and advantageous. For instance, the rays of the sun provided warmth against severe cold, the moon at night gave light in pitch darkness, the moonlit nights looked pleasant and enjoyable, and waters of the rivers washed off dirt and mud, while clean water quenched the thirst. This added to the things worth worshipping and the worship of sun, moon and rivers, as gods started.

In the same way when power of progeny was observed in the human organs, the worship of lingam began. Its worshippers now have started to try to explain that this lingam represents the Formless One (निराकार). But this argument is not convincing. There can be no possible Form whatsoever of the Formless One. And the

figures depicting the “sex postures”, mentioned by Pandits Koka and Vatsyayan, that decorate the temples of Jagannath Puri, Khajuraho and some others in Southern India, speak loudly enough for themselves.

After this, when human intelligence progressed further, the idea of some power that kept the working of nature and creation in regular order and discipline, was generated. Without such a power running the whole show in proper and strict order and discipline, the whole creation would have shattered and scattered. This became the first concept of the Creator behind this creation, His manifestation. Because human intellect was still in its infancy, it could not go into deep and complicated ideas. It found easy answers to satisfy itself. The power behind the rains, behind the heat of the sun, and that of water and earth were all considered to be separate. In short all these different powers were considered to be different gods with different functions and began to be worshipped. The motive force behind all this being fear, the idea of seeking protection of that god who was directly concerned came into being. To seek his protection required efforts to please and appease a particular god. Then the question arose how to do this. The human findings, knowledge and approaches being very limited, the solution was found in offering what the human beings themselves liked and loved most. The first such item that struck the mind were things that were eaten and drunk. So they began to offer water to the sun and water mixed with other select eatables to fire, and milk to snakes. In this way many such customs came into being and some of them are still continuing. Similarly, when some destruction was done by storms and floods or by earthquakes or some epidemics caused widespread deaths, it was all considered to be because of some gods getting annoyed. Whenever there were some such happenings or calamities, these were considered to be due to the wrath of such god or goddess as *Sitla* or some ghosts and fairies. As every one had their own ideas, it became impracticable to enumerate the gods that were brought into existence.

With further development of human intellect, the question arose how to deal with such a frightful and powerful god as devil

(ghost or fairy). There being no anchor or reasoning capacity to pacify and tranquillise the mind which became so much terrified and shaken from its roots that people became inclined and in most cases, urged to offer in sacrifice what was dearest and nearest to them like their wives, children and even themselves. In this way, offerings in one form or the other have continued in almost every culture and school of thought, even after the human intellect made great and marked progress. In fact, this has been very effective to satisfy, pacify, and steady the mind.

We find that the hymns in the *Rig Ved* are mostly invocations to gods who were powers of nature personified. Thus, these gods can be divided into three groups; one pertaining to the high up (sky gods), the other to midway between (mid-air gods) and the third to the earth itself (*prithvi*). In the first category, there were gods like Mitra, Surya and Varuna, and in the second category, there were Indra, Vayu, Maruts, etc. In the third category came the Earth (*Prithvi*), Fire (*Agni*), and Soma Ras, etc. At that time the female god, Devi, was considered to be only one and that was Usha (Goddess of Dawn). Later on the number of gods was restricted to three, i.e., Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh. At that time, the female goddess came to be known as Durga or Kali. In *Sam Ved*, we find mostly sacrificial hymns. In *Yajur Ved*, the stress seems to be mostly on formalism and ritualism; while in the *Atharva Ved* the hymns are mostly spells, charms, and sorcery, to get rid of ghosts, demons, enemies and diseases.

As intellect developed and progressed further, this terror from the calamities of nature and living beings that gave direct and crude shocks, was by and by replaced by the ideas of some power and strength that worked behind them. So the concept of some powers that could not be seen, prevailed. This imperceptible power came to be known as God (*Shakti*). This concept of God differed according to different countries, different conditions, different languages and different developments of human intellect. The names are also different according to these different ideas. And this appears to be the beginning of different religions, sects and schools of thought.

Those who were brave and valiant began to praise God as the All-Powerful and Almighty. Those who were savage and tyrant, considered Him to be a Terror who was cruel and who did not forgive any one. When someone was in dire need and this need was fulfilled, he called Him the Great Benefactor. To the learned, thoughtful, and farseeing persons, He appeared to be Knowledge Personified (*Gian Saroop*). And to those who loved luxury, enjoyment, and were easy going, He appeared to be a clarionet Player and a Dancer. Courageous knights and the compassionates observed him with quoit (*Sudarshan Chakkar*) in His hand. To them, He always appeared well-armed and riding a lion. Those who were weak and dejected, considered Him to be riding about on birds and harmless animals and even riding on rodents and mice. Some people considered Him immanent while others believed Him to be sitting on a throne in the seventh heaven. If some considered Him to be without parallel, others saw Him with various companions. Some considered Him to be issuing writs while sitting above and unconnected with creation, and some called Him Eternal, and also put *Parkirti* and spirits at the same level with Him. Some people became so engrossed with these different concepts and their philosophical arguments that they ignored the worldly aspect of life. While some stress so much on character building and good actions that they almost forget about the existence of the Supreme Being. If one was monotheist, the other divided the Supreme Power into three functionaries. If one considered Him All-Powerful, the other refused to believe in His very existence. Some loved while others rebelled against Him. Some people saw Him functioning and manifest in His Creation, while others repaired to forests and wilderness in His search.

In India, the development of *dharma* and religions took the same course. Human sacrifices, worship of the lingam and the effect of ghosts and spirits were prevalent amongst the early Indians called Dravidians. When the Aryans came, their learned leaders called *Rishis* etc., composed the *Vedas* in the Punjab and later on different philosophies came into existence. In Kapil's *Sankhya Shastra* only matter and soul were considered as eternal and God

(*Parmatma*) was not recognised. The *Karm* theory was depicted as working automatically. In *Nyaya* and *Vaisheshik Shastras*, the principles of duality were accepted. Patanjli in his *Yog Shastra* lays stress on concentration, different practices, exercises and postures. It also explains the different ways to keep the body fit and obtain longevity and activate latent powers in human beings. As a consequence of the effects of this admixture of different thoughts and teachings of the *Vedas* and *Shastras*, the people remained concerned only with what is called *Karm Kaand*, ceremonial rituals, formalism and superstitions. As a reaction to this, Jain and Buddhism came into existence, and they raised the flag of rebellion against this hair-splitting.

The Vedic teachings had slid into being mere ceremonial ritualism at that time. The priest class, called Brahmins, were in charge of everything and they exploited their position in every way. To perpetuate their hold, the caste system was introduced to keep the masses divided in watertight compartments. This led to segregation of higher and lower castes. The high castes became aggressive and looked down on the lower ones; while the lower castes being kept illiterate and deprived began to hate the upper castes. As a consequence, we find that these divisions had so much separated the people that there could develop no such feeling as patriotism and nationalism in India. This ended in ruination and slavery for the country.

In the sixth century B.C., Jainism came into existence as a revolt against Brahminism. It preached four main principles — first not to injure life, second not to speak falsehood, third not to steal, and fourth not to possess anything. Later on, two more injunctions were added. One not to be immoral, second not to wear clothes. Jainism gave no place to God in its teachings. In 563 B.C., Mahatma Buddha, founder of Buddhism was born. Both Jainism and Buddhism were in a way rebellions generated by Kshatriyas against Brahminism. Buddhism protested and worked against expensive Brahminical rituals and bloody sacrifices. It mainly laid stress on pious living and practical ethics. It could also be said that it was more a social movement than a religious

one. Its main principle was that the world is full of sorrows, and our wishes and requirements, hopes and fears, put us into the cycle of life and death. If the desire for earthly things is killed, it results in emancipation (*nirwan*). Desires could be killed by following the path called *Arya Ashtangik Marg* (the eight-fold path); 1) Right faith, 2) Right thought, 3) Right speech, 4) Right means of livelihood, 5) Right action, 6) Right endeavour, 7) Right remembrance and 8) Right meditation. In Buddhism, we find that *karm* theory and transmigration of soul are the presiding principles, which function by themselves. It has not denied the existence of God as such; but in Buddhism, there is no importance, use, or necessity for Him.

As people were fed up with the exactions of Brahminism, Buddhism easily spread out in the sub-continent. In Ashoka's time, it became the state religion. This gave a fillip to it and it spread far and wide into the Eastern countries, China and Japan. Because of the lack of any Divine base or reliance on the Almighty, it turned out to be mainly a propagator of agnosticism and atheism.

Its principles of non-violence and renunciation evolved to such an extreme that people became absolutely helpless and weak, unable to defend themselves or their faith. Non-violence and renunciation cannot and do not fit in with a state and its governance. Along with it, there being no faith in the Almighty God, people lost reliance even upon themselves. Because people did not feel to be supported by the All-Powerful One, they were being knocked and rocked about like an anchorless boat. That is why, when Brahminism was revived by the ruthless efforts of the Shankracharya, they could not stand before its drive. By the 14th century A.D., Buddhism disappeared altogether from the subcontinent. Unfortunately, while taking away its bag and baggage, it left the country imbecile at the mercy of invaders, plunderers and adventurers from outside. We find that after that whoever took it into his head to invade India, he walked into it at his pleasure and conquered and plundered it. As a matter of fact, Ashoka's embracing of Buddhism may well be considered to be a noble personal achievement, but politically, renunciation of the

sword undid the glories of India that were. That day of the battle of Kalinga which Ashoka won after great bloodshed and which is glorified as the day of Realisation and Transformation, could very well be treated as the day of the beginning of the downfall of Hindu supremacy in India. After Ashoka, disintegration of Bharat started and its boundaries began to shrink and close in.

When Brahminism was revived, it had to face mostly the force of Buddhism. Buddhism and Jainism had several common features. But Buddhism had spread its roots more firmly and widely than the other. To wash away the effects of Buddhist teachings, Vyas Rishi composed *Uttar Mimamsa*. The philosophy of the *Uttar Mimamsa* and *Purv Mimamsa* set down the principles of One Supreme God. It said the “matter” (*parkirti*) and soul (*jiv*) ultimately are absorbed in *Parbrahm*. It also laid down that the whole of *maya* had its end and was, hence, untruth (*assatt*). This philosophy of Vedant was very effective and worked successfully in the beginning; but later on, it adopted several shapes. Under its effect some people began to consider themselves as “God” (*Brahm*) while others took everything to be “Nothing”. As a result of this teaching, people lost all idea or feeling of neighbourliness, sympathy or mutual help and service or any love for their nation. In a way, this philosophy had its effect on thoughtful people like Wordsworth in Europe too.

Similarly, *Bhagwat Gita* also laid down the principles of one transcendent deity and this, it said, was Sri Krishna himself. Along with it, Vaishnav and Bhakti Marg also took their birth. But all these conceptions remained confined to God in some perceptible form (*Sakaar*). After driving out Buddhism from the land, Vedic Brahminism held the field. All the learning and knowledge was monopolized by the Brahmins. In fact, all the powers and driving force came solely under their control. People in general could only go to them and make requests and express their desires and make offerings. By and by, their control and power covered besides social and religious functions, the political and administrative field too. Ultimately, they turned out, in a way, to be king-makers. To make their hold permanent, the idea was hammered into the minds

and thinking of the common people that a family man cannot attain spiritual advancement or do any religious work which had been made too expensive for the common man.

This weakness was not confined only to Hindu society and Hinduism, but it had its effect on those who had come from outside and settled down in the country. Before the Muslims invaded India, there were others also who made inroads into the country and some of them like Scythians, Parthians, Sakas, Kushans, Gujjars and Huns settled down here. Those who settled down here were mostly assimilated into and absorbed by Hinduism. But later on, when the Mohammedan invaders came and settled down here, they could not be absorbed like others, though great effort was made to do so. This effort to assimilate them crossed not-required-limits during the period of Emperor Akbar, when Hindu rulers offered their daughters to the Mughal Emperor in marriage. To please and appease and win over the Emperor, they began to call Akbar an incarnation of Vishnu. Even a holy book was brought into being called *Allah Upnishad*. Yet, the Mohammedans retained a separate identity. But in spite of this, Hinduism had its effect on the Mohammedans too. Amongst them, like Brahmins, the power passed on into the hands of the *Mullah* and *Qazi*. Exhibitory ceremonials, rituals, superstitions, worship at tombs, talismans, etc., became common among them too. Class differences also became perceptible.

Whereas every Brahmin could not be a learned *Pandit*, similarly every *Qazi* and *Mullah* could also not be an *Alam*. To satisfy their ego and to show up their superiority, they began to find out and invent easy stunts and kept people in ignorance and misled them away from reality. Those who followed such leaders, their pitiable condition can very well be imagined. For them, the religious and spiritual duty boiled down to simply visiting some *Teeraths* or *Mecca*, the holy places, to make pilgrimages, have a dip in some 'holy' water, recite *Mantra* or *Nimaz* (which may not be understood by them at all), keep fasts, (*Vrat* and *Roza*) paying homage at crematoria or tombs, and request Brahmins or *Qazis* to read Scriptures, and invite them to their homes to repasts and offer

them the choicest of their produce and other valuables. There was no place for any meditation or building of character or living a noble and useful life.

Under the influence of such ignorance and misguidance, people groped in the dark and due to misconception of their *dharmik* duty, they became fanatics and began to hate the followers of religions other than their own, and committed barbaric atrocities.

This basic weakness and misguidance caused social, economic and political degradation in India. People became self-centred, selfish and materialistic, being cut off from spiritual and religious functions of life which were restricted to the priest class. In their helplessness and anchorlessness, people lost confidence in themselves and also the power and will to defend themselves, their hearths and homes, their children and their country. There was a time, like the *Ramayan* and *Mahabharat* periods, when people could look after themselves and protect their interests and country. No outsiders could then make inroads into India with any success. We find that Alexander the great, started his conquests from Greece and marched right up to India, but could not dare to go beyond the Beas, though he had only one serious engagement with Porus in India. But after the introduction of Jainism and Buddhism, with their teachings of non-violence and renunciation, the conditions changed entirely. No foreign invasion could then be stemmed. Consequently, India has remained subjugated and enslaved for almost one thousand years. It is astonishing to observe that an alien invader when conquered the country and settled down here, could not stand against the attack of the next invader to come. People had become so selfish, unsympathetic and mean that the whole subcontinent consisted of small principalities. When Alexander attacked, instead of joining hands with Porus to defend the land, the rulers of Taxila and Avisara straight away surrendered to the invader. Greater part of the subcontinent was then ruled by the Nanda King, but he did not feel concerned about what was happening on the western borders. When Mohammed Ghauri attacked Prithvi Raj of Delhi, Jai Chand of Kanoj celebrated Delhi's defeat, never thinking that he would be the next in line. This policy

to pick up one by one the scattered rulers has been followed very fruitfully both by the Mohammadan conquerors and the British.

On close observation, we find that great havoc has been wrought by moral degradation in India. Our people had been sinking to the lowest level to obtain their personal desires. From the very beginning, we have been following the policy of appeasement. To gain the goodwill and patronage of the Mughal rulers, not only did the Hindu *Rajas* offer their sisters and daughters to Mughal kings in wedding, but also felt pride in siding with them to get their own brothers butchered and destroyed when the Mughal Emperor decide to have his meals after collecting a *maund* and quarter of the 'holy threads' from the Hindus. It is mentioned in our history that even well-known nobles staked their kingdoms, their wives, and their belongings in gamble. Yudhishtra, known as the virtuous, lost his kingdom, wife, and honour in a gamble with Duryodhan. They did not feel any shame in disrobing women, like Draupadi, in open court. Kidnapping and eloping was a rule of law even in the highest society. Rukmani's case is a historic instance. Prithvi Raj also carried away at night Sanjogita, daughter of Jai Chand. This led to their enmity which cleared the way for Mohammad Ghauri's conquest. Later on, if one king sided with the East India Company, the other sided with the French. We also need to keep this in mind that when at Anandpur Sahib the tenth Satguru accelerated the preparation to face and fight against tyranny and bigoted fanaticism of the Mughal ruler of Delhi, it were the Hindu Hill *Rajas* who first opposed the Guru.