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Paper V

The Concept of an Asian Community and the Unity of Religions Seen from Hindu Scripture

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My first acquaintance with Unification Thought dates back to December 1981, when I participated in the first 'God : The Contemporary Discussion' conference held on Maui Island (Hawaii, U.S.A.). That conference, organized by the International Cultural Foundation (New York), served as the starting point for many such conferences, programs and associations, like the Professors World Peace Academy (PWPA), to promote the cause of the Unification Movement, initiated by Rev. Moon, an offshoot of which is this present conference as well. I gained better understanding and appreciation of the Unification Thought through my participation in the 'Introductory Seminar on the Unification Movement' at Kandy, Sri Lanka in September (14-17), 1984. There, through regular discourses by the missionaries of the movement, delineating on the common Judaic-Christian-Islamic account of the creation by God, the fact was brought home to the participants that God the creator is the source of unity in these religions and the same was reinforced by pointing to the fact of the followers of these religions having common ancestors. This reminds me of a book titled Abraham Was Their Father by Warren Matthews of Old Dominion University Norfolk (U.

S.A.), published in 1981.

My participation in 'The Assembly of the World's Religions: A Global Gathering Dedicated to Spiritual Unity and the Future of the Earth,' sponsored by the International Religious Foundation with the theme "Recovering the Classical Heritage," and held November 15-21, 1985 at the Americana Great Gorge Conference Center, McAfee, New Jersey (U.S.A.) brought to me the conviction that the Unification Movement is going in the right direction. It is with that conviction that I venture to offer a short comment on the prospectus of this Sixth Asian Professors Symposium on Unification Thought. The first two sentences of the prospectus are: "The world has plunged into uncontrollable chaos. It is also faced with a great turning point, as the center of history moves from the West to the East." I cannot accept that the chaos is uncontrollable. With the turning point referred to in the second sentence, we have every hope of overcoming it. I am happy to note that my hope is fully shared by the organizers (the person or persons preparing the prospectus) of the symposium, and it is to that effect that I appreciate the recognition, on their part, of what is required when it is said, "....it is most necessary to establish a true God-centered ideology and build a new culture centered on God's love." More so when pointing out that "Western civilization has subjugated religion on the basis of humanism and has turned totally materialistic...." the exhortation is made in the words: "If we can conquer materialism and humanism by helping religions to fulfill their true mission according to the teaching 'love thy neighbor,' and manifest spiritual vitality of the gem-like religious ideologies and thoughts of oriental religions in the contemporary world, we can be assured that a unified spiritual culture, a world dominated by love, will arise to rescue mankind from the cultural crisis it now finds itself in."

The conquest of materialism and humanism, I am sure, shall not be in terms of their total rejection or even subjugation, but in those of accomodation, giving them their due place in the scheme of things and ideas -providing them fully the boundless love of God, for they too, in the ultimate analysis are His creations, in line with the monotheistic interpretation of Unification Thought that seems to be

currently followed by the Unification movement.

Another reason that makes me think in this way emerges from an elaboration of my remark that 'I became convinced that the Unification movement is going in the right direction.' I mean by that, the spirit of accomodation that is required for the unity of all religions is already there in it, and religions that are to be united include such versions of Hindu religion as admit of not only polytheistic, henotheistic and pantheistic interpretations but also non-theistic interpretations. The monistic Vedanta goes beyond God and both Jainism and Buddhism are godless religions, yet one cannot think about Hinduism without them. It remains true that Hinduism not only in its various theistic interpretations, but also in and through them represents that way of life which can be called religion in the true sense. To illustrate the same, I reproduce a letter of mine that I wrote to my son from New Jersey during the Assembly of The World's Religions :

ASSEMBLY OF THE WORLD'S RELIGIONS

November 15-21, 1985. Americana Great Gorge,

McAfee, New Jersey.

Dr. KEWAL ERISHAN MITTAL

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November 20, 1985.

Delhi, Delhi-110007 (INDIA)

Dear Aniruddha my son!

Very many blessings.

Inspired by my participating in the Assembly of the World's Religions on the theme "Recovering the Classical Heritage," I am penning down a few basic ideas of our tradition, the Hindu tradition, in its most comprehensive sense that includes the Vedic, Pauranic,

Saiva, Sakta and Vaisnava as well as the Jaina, the Buddhist and the Sikh traditions.

Dharma is the most important concept of our heritage. Speaking of the dharma, we find it recorded in the Dhammapada, the well-known Buddhist Scripture :

"Not with (Counter) enmity can enmity be ever destroyed. It is only with non-enmity that an enemy can be won. That is what is the Dharma-Eternal (Esa Dhammo Sanantano)."

Now, non-enmity is nothing other than friendliness (maitri) and the same can find its expression in life only when it is accompanied with, balanced and harmo-nized with, unperturbedness (upeksa), joy (nudita) and compassion (karuna). A life reflecting the blending together of the four attitudes is the one that Buddhism recommends by the name of Brahmavihara (a healthy, happy, gainful spiritual life). Such a life as the ideal one is endorsed and accepted by the other denominations of Hinduism as well.

Jainism, for example, emphasizes on the importance of Ahimsa (non-violence) and Ahimsa can only be practised if one leads a life that is based on truth (satya), non-stealing (asteya), non-possession or non-coveting (apari grana) and continence (brahmacharya). Incidentally, all these are the practices, including Ahimsa that are enjoined by the others, especially by those accepting Yoga as the path of realization. Satya, ahimsa, asteya, aparigraha and brahmacharya constitute 'Yama' (self-control) as the first step of the eightfold Yoga of Patanjali.

Guru Nanaka, the founder of Sikhism, tells us that "The qualities of sweetness and humility constitute the essence of goodness" (Mithata Niwin, Nanake ! guna cangyayi tatta). A person with the qualities of sweetness and humility can be none other than the one who is friendly, unperturbed, compassionate and joyful, or the one who practices truth, non-violence, non-possession and continence.

Connectedness of all life is another idea that has been emphasized by our tradition. According to Buddhism, for example, suffering man of the world is one who regards himself a being sui generis, i.e. who

fails to recognize the truth of 'dependent origination.' The Pali word for such a being is puthujana (separate person). One of the greatest of the Punjabi poets, an esteemed Sikh faithful, the late Bhai Vir Singh, personifying 'exclusiveness' with the darkness of coal, writes :

"The coal was washed with soap,
Put into milk and curd ;
Boiled with the bleaching powder
yet changed it not its color.
Darkness caused by separation
Could not go without joining
Place the coal in fire.
What a glorious color it gains?"

It is the misplacement of something that makes it ugly and evil. Let us place each and every thing in its proper place and see for ourselves how a thing considered worthless acquires immense value. The excreta thrown as garbage, when made into manure, can raise for us a garden of sweet-smelling flowers. A proper care and use of all things is not only enjoined on us by a modern day ecology, but also by our ancient religio-cultural tradition. Life in every form, human, animal and that of birds is regarded sacred by us and we worship even trees and stones.

Our ancient sages have not failed to guide us even on the consequences of following the Adharma in place of the dharma. Our Nobel Lauriate Poet Gurudeva Rabindre Nath Tagore noticed and quoted, in a speech in China in 1924, a relevant observation as follows :

"By adharma man prospers,
Gains whatever he desires,
Conquers enemies ;
But perishes at the root."

Let us die and yet not perish. Death, in accordance with our understanding is only a stage in the continuous flow of life, a

harbinger of the next life at once if it is the end of the current one. A continuous hope to live the non-perishing eternal existence must keep us striving to conduct our lives in the way of dharma.

With all the best,

Yours affectionately,
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(Kewal Krishan Mittal).

The suggestions hinted in the letter reproduced can be for explanation later on in our discussions, but one of the observations that I have made regarding the inclusion of the Jaina, the Buddhist and the Sikh religious traditions under the overall Hindu tradition must be taken up just now. I have two reasons for the observation—one, based on the external evidence, quite simply is that the name Hindu from its geographical and a very late, historical origin and application is nothing more than an equivalent of 'Indian' and there should not be any difficulty in replacing the word by the latter and then nobody can and does have any objection to the same. The second, based on the internal evidence would need a little argument. I set forth that argument with this little prefacing that, I personally regard the Vedic-Upanisadic and Pauranic (Vaisnava, Seiva and Sakta) versions of Hindu religion (together with their very many internal differentiations) —to which alone these days the name Hinduism is applied, and Jainism, Buddhism and Sikhism are regarded as parallel religions to Hinduism in certain quarters — as well as the latter three as autonomous versions of Hindu religion, and each one of them represents Hinduism in its own best way. Yet I do not have any objection to treating them as separate religions so long as a perfect unity and harmony is seen among them. The argument is: It is a fact, needing hardly any restatement, that India has been, for centuries, a cradle for all the major world religions. The four, out of them, namely, Sikhism, Buddhism, Jainism and Hinduism, have been such that they have had their origin in this very country. They

naturally share among themselves a large number of common beliefs despite representing different overall philosophical outlooks. As a rule or on the whole, we-with all our differing pursuits of faith-have managed to co-exist with amity all the while. Conflicts and clashes, if any, have been very few and far between, as exceptions, and those too never inspired or justified by differences of faith, but by tensions which had been extra-religious-quite contrary to the spirit of our faiths. The partition of India, apparently on the basis of religious differences, could not dim the spirit. Because it is obvious from the declaration of the state that still remained India to be a secular state. Negatively, the 'state of India is impartial vis a vis the different faiths, i.e. it has been holding out the promise, and been doing its very best to redeem the promise that no citizen shall be discriminated against because of his or her creed, positively, the Indian people do believe in and live up to the 'ideal' of having 'respect for all religions' (Sarva dharma sanmana bhava), if not considering all religions to be the same in essence (Sarva dharma samabhava). Mahatma Gandhi had been one of the greatest champions of the latter view. In his prayer meetings, passages/verses from the scriptures of all faiths were read out or recited confirming unity in diversity, concord, friendliness towards all, compassion for all beings, and the like. We have had a very long and strong tradition of altruism, of helping others, and against egoism that serves as the source of quarrels and conflicts in terms of attachment (rage), hatred (dvesa) and infatuation (moha). Statements such as the following reinforce not only a spirit of accommodation and tolerance, but also of accord and acceptance:

"There is no enemy nor an alien,
Amicable to us is the company of all."

—Sri Gure Grantha Sahib

"Name (the recitation of God's Name) O Nanak!
means Ascendancy, May Thy Will (O God!) bestow benevolence
on all beings."

—Sri Gure Grantha Sahib

"At First God created Light,
(and) All Nature's creatures ;
From one light has arisen the entire world,
Who are good, who bad ?"

—Sri Gure Grantha Sahib

These are, as is well known, the teachings in accordance with Sikhism.
Now the following from Buddhism :

"Tolerance and Forgiveness constitute Great Penance
The Buddhas declare Nirvana to be the Ultimate ;
One who kills and tortures others cannot be a wayfarer Sramana."

—Dhammapada 14.6.

"One should win anger through non-anger,
The wickedness be won through gentlemanliness ;
With donations be won miserliness,
With truth be won over the utterers of falsehood."

—The Rajovada Jataka.

From among the Jaina teachings we find :

"A wiser man should realize in his life the five
great vows of 'Non-violence,' 'Truth,' 'Non-stealing (Non-
misappropriation),' 'Continenence,' and 'Non-possession,' and should
thus follow the precepts taught by Bhagvana Jinesvara.

—Uttaradhyayana Sutra 21. Gatha. 12.

"Every living being be treated as equal to one's own self."

—A Jaina Sutra (occurring at many places)

"A man deft in self-control should not entertain
enmity or opposition towards anyone."

—A Jaina scripture

The faith that passes in the name of Hinduism subscribes to the

mental make-up that upholds the wisdom contained in sayings such
as the following :

"Let all beings be happy, all saints deathless ;
All should see good everywhere,
Let suffering be to none."

—A popular Vedic prayer

"In (through) the eighteen Puranas Vyasa teaches us
just two precepts ;
To do good others is meritorious, demeritorious is to harm oth
—A Vaisnava saying

"Treat as mother another's wife,
Other's wealth like clods of earth ;
Consider all beings like your own self,
One who thus perceives is a Pandita."

—From a Nuti gruutha

"That one alone can be regarded a Vaisnavajana who
knows other's misery,
He does good to those in suffering yet allows not pride to enter
his mind.

The refrain of a Gujarati
bhajana (devotional song) sung at the prayer meetings of
Mahatma Gandhi

Statements such as the ones quoted above from the sacred
teachings of the four of our major (indigenous) faiths can be
multiplied infinitely, but what is significant is that each one of such
statements is deeply embedded in the consciousness of the followers
of these faiths as being ingrained in the philosophy that each one
of the faiths can claim as its own, albeit not in any exclusive sense,
but as a matter of sharing and partaking of the common heritage.
The Rigveda set the tone when it declared that the "Truth is one

but the learned call it variously..... (Exam sad viprah vahuda vadanti)" and Sri Guru Nanak Dev confirmed the same when he declared; "Truth in the beginning, Truth throughout the ages, Truth it is and Truth it shall ever be (Ad sacca, jugad sacca, haisi bi sacca, Nanak hosi be sacca)." Yet neither the Veda nor Guru Nanak was unaware of the apparent prevalence and predominance of falsehood. Guru Nanak, the perfect guide that he was, awakened us to that fact through a whole verse addressed to one Bhai Lalo, how falsehood was prevailing and predominating in every walk of life. The refrain of that verse (Sabad) says; "O Lalo, untruth predominates." Since his own task was that of leading human beings from the darkness of untruth to the light of truth, he firmly assured them that "Ultimately Truth shall prevail," exactly in the same manner as we have the Vedic saying "Satyameva Jayale," adopted as the national motto.

About thirty-five years back, I myself wrote a short poem in Punjabi. A free English rendering of the same is as follows:

"Alas! the world today is divided in quarreling
factions, the Price of every thing has gone up but of man has
fallen down;
Humanity has gone to sleep, animality rules the roost, In place
of love in hearts, the fire of jealousy and ill will has got boost;
So long as from deep slumber human beings do not awake, Each
day new quarrels, ever new storms they make."

I had in mind then the socio-political divisions of the day. Now it seems the situation has worsened all the more, insofar as some partisans of divisiveness have started misusing religious differences to misguide common people, to wean them away from the truth of their faiths in order to fulfil their nefarious political ends. It is my firm conviction that, rightly understood, each of our great Religions, in its own way, can and does provide, really, the requisite philosophy of most cordial relations among people professing various faiths. What is needed is not to create a new hotch-potch, a syncretist creed like 'Dina-e-Ilahi' of Akbar; nor an indifference toward our great religions

in the name of secularism of the irreligious, or rather anti-religious kind preached by a political ideology, the propounders of which held that "the first need for human happiness is the abolition of all Religion." We need to realize our belongingness to Sikhism, Buddhism, Jainism, Vaisnavism or the like, each in our own way, to let the real unity (of all beings) manifest itself despite all apparent diversity.

If a Jaina, believing in a pluralistic world-view (Anekantavada), affirming the correctness of all views insofar as each view is a part and parcel of the over-all truth in accordance with Syadvada, realizes the truth of 'one who knows one, knows all, and one who knows all, knows one,' as asserted by Kundakundacarya, then with differences kept intact, he concurs in essence with the Advaita-Vedantin who declares his belief in the following verse:

"That (parabrahma) is Full and this (SopadhikaBrahma) Is Full,

This Full (of the nature of effect) arises out of that (causal)
Full,

The fullness of this Full (the apparent plurality) when taken
out of that Full (that One)

Leaves back the Full its

—Brhदारanyaka Upanisad V.1.1

The Buddhist, with a philosophy that maintains the impermanence (anityata), non-substantiality (anatmata) and dependent-origination (pratiya-samutpada) of all beings, which can be interpreted: realistically, as a philosophy of 'All is' (sarvastivada): dialectically, 'of that Reality which is beyond the four categories of Being, Non-being, Both and Neither (catuskoti vinirmukta), and is indescribable or ineffable (sunnyavada)'; and experientially, as that 'of experience or consciousness only (vijñapti-matrataavada or vijñanavada),' can and does live in perfect harmony with the followers of the other faiths through a life of balanced pursuit of friendliness (maitri), compassion (karuna), joy (mudita) and equipoise or indifference (upeksa)-The Brahmvihara.

The Sikh spirit for unity and against separatism has been given a beautiful expression by late Bhai Vir Singh through his poem on 'Coal,' to which reference has already been made in the letter.

For the proper inter-faith relationship, what is needed is a sense of belonging to one's own faith, in the first instance. Let a Sikh become a true Gursikh-a Gurmukh from a manmukh; a Buddhist, a true Buddhist-from a 'puthujana' (separate being) to an 'arhat' through becoming a 'sottapanna' (stream-returner), 'sakadagami' (once-returner) and 'anagami' (never-returner); A Jaina, a true Jaina-from a 'jiva' bound by papakarma (demeritorious deeds) a 'punyakari' (doer of good deeds) pursuing non-attachment (vitaragata); and a Hindu, a true Hindu-from a selfish fellow (lagucetsa) to an altruist (udara carita) person. They will all at once realize the truth of the one human family they all belong to-members of the largest family designated in Sanskrit 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam,' the one universal family occupying the Earth.

The unity among Vedic-Upanisadic and Pauranic Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism, and Sikhism is fully endorsed and reinforced by their scriptures, even though they are many and separate.

The Sikh scripture *Adi Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, compiled by the fifth guru, Sri Guru Arjan Dev, in AD 1604 and finalized by the tenth guru, Sri Guru Gobind Singh, in 1705, is a unique testimonial to the Hindu spirit of the unity of all religions. It contains in its standardized 1430 pages not only the compositions of the six Gurus-Guru Nanak, Angda, Amardas, Ramdas, Arjan Dev, and Tegh Bahadur-but also 'those of the Hindu bhaktas, Muslim divines and Sufi poets and God-intoxicated souls in quest of Truth and Love.' (See, *Guru Granth Ratnavali*, published by Punjabi University Patiala, p.28) Rightly has it been observed that 'Sikh philosophy, in its essentials, is completely in tune with ancient Indian thought regarding the genesis of the world and the ultimate nature of reality.' (Ibid., p. 29)

The second Sikh scripture, the *Dasham Granth*, contains the compositions of the tenth guru, Sri Guru Gobind Singh, the author of 'The concept of Khalsa (the pure being) whose Victory (Fateh) because of his being completely in tune with the Wonderful Guide

(Wahe Guru-God)' has been the Sikh salutation right from his own time to this day. The *Dasham Granth* occupied a pride of place alongside the *Adi Sri Guru Granth* till about the second or third decade of the twentieth century in every gurudwara (Sikh temple), and verses from it form an important part of the daily recitals (nitnem) that every Sikh is supposed to perform every morning and evening till this day.

But due to certain historico-political reasons-into which we need not go here-the *Dasham Granth* stands withdrawn from that place. A reference to this situation and circumstance is being purposely made, because I do want to offer a comment against a totally unjustifiable 'religious explanation' that is being put forward by certain scholars for that incident. That explanation is that the *Dasham Granth* has a section delineating the character of women (Triya caritra-upakhyana) through stories that are too sexy to be included in a sacred work.

My comment about it is: To regard sex as sinful or even dirty is foreign to the Hindu ethos, not only in the *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata* and *Pauranas* but also in the *Vedas* and *Upanisads*, which-as we shall see-are the sacred works according to the earlier versions of Hinduism. There have been references to sex through numerous legends in glowing terms. In many of the versions of Hinduism, a unified ideal of the pursuit of righteousness (dharma), economic well-being (artha), satisfaction of desire or sexual happiness (kama) and Salvation or release (moksa) is commended. Buddhism and Jainism, of course, emphasized too much the ideal last mentioned, in practice, and showed themselves to be monkish religions, though in their scriptures they too have much to commend the righteous life of the householder, and the very basis of a householder's life is sex.

Sikhism in particular emphasizes 'moksa' (salvation) the least as an ideal, and it is primarily, if not solely, a house-holders' religion. It is in that sense that Sikhism provides a necessary corrective to the excessive emphasis on asceticism. The gurus themselves lead house-holders' lives. It is here that I see a great affinity between this Hindu religion and the religion that the Unification movement represents. Not only because Rev. Moon himself is a married man

with a family-and so are many of the missionaries of his Church-but also because there is the least emphasis on the myths of 'sin and the Fall,' whereas there is ample of it in the pair of common parents of today's human being in the account of creation put forth by Unification Thought.

Besides, Sikhism asserts the existence of the Creator God (Katta Purkh)-as emphatically as does Unification theology. But unlike the latter, it holds the world to be a 'real play of that True One (us sache ki sachi khed), as eternal as the Lord Himself'-a view approaching quite near to those of Buddhism and Jainism, which hold the world to be beginningless (anadi) and endless, requiring no God creator-requiring no specific day for its beginning, as well as the end, the day of judgment (doom's day). Further, it allows the world a measure of autonomy when it maintains that 'the guises (shapes and forms in every way) of the beings of the world are determined by their own actions (karmi ve Kadda), but salvation (moksa) is to be achieved through God's grace only (nadrin mokh dvara). It reaffirms its real affinity with the indigenous religions.

Before we pass on to the Vedic-Upanisadic, Epic-Pauranic, Buddhist and Jaina scriptures-in that order-a remark based on the Dasham Granth would be quite appropriate. It is in Dasham Granth that we find a clear declaration by Sri Guru Gobind Singh that he is a Hindu and his mission is the welfare of all. In one of his compositions, titled Akal Ustati (In Praise of The Eternal), the Guru speaks of "the unity of all beings" and advises us to 'recognize the light (jot) or race (jat) of all men to be one (Manas ki jot/jat sabbe ek pachhanavo)."

The most ancient Hindu scripture is the Veda, but the same does not denote a single work, but the corpus of "an entire literature spread over many centuries and over different localities," yet "there is a thread of logical development running through them, and it is this that imparts to them a distinctive unity." (See *Languages and Literature*, Vol. V of *The Cultural Heritage of India* published by the Ramakrishana Mission Institute of Culture, Calcutta, 1978, p.13) This is sub-divided into four portions :

I. Samhitas (Collections), which are four in number :

1. Rig-Veda Samhita (containing 1028 suktas, or hymns, and divided into ten mandalas, or books, it contains a lot of material that is of ritualistic interest, but also some that is of philosophical interest.)

2. Sama-Veda Samhita (containing 1,549 mantras or single verses, 'all of which, except 78, are taken from the Rig-Veda, mostly from its eighth and ninth mandalas ; it is a collection of mantras prescribed for chanting at various Soma sacrifices] yajnes [by the udgatr-singer-priest-and his assistants.')

3. Yajur-Veda Samhita ('like the Sama-Veda, the Yajur-Veda is essentially ritualistic in character. But while the Sama-Veda concerns itself exclusively with the Soma sacrifice, the Yajur-Veda treats of the entire sacrificial system.' It too repeats within it the mantras of the Rig-Veda.)

4. Atharva Veda Samhita (a heterogeneous collection of mantras, 'its interest is varied and its impact irresistible.' Side by side with incantations for sorcery and black magic, it contains highly theosophical or philosophical speculations.)

II. The Brahmana Granthas-"Many Vedic texts are traditionally called brahmanas" (prose works explaining the procedures for rituals in order to guide the householders performing them), but the more important among them are the Aitreya and the Kausitaki belonging to the Rig-Veda ; the Taittiriya belonging to the Krsna Yajur-Veda ; the Satpatha belonging to the Sukla Yajur-Veda ; the Jaiminiya and Tandya belonging to the Sama-Veda ; and the Copathe belonging to the Atharva-Veda." (Ibid., p.23)

III. Aranyakas-The forest books meant for the guidance of the Vanaprasthis (dwellers in the forests). "They mark the transition from the ritualism of the Brahmanas as to the spiritualism of the Upanisads." (Ibid., p.26)

IV. Upanisads-Intimate doctrines, containing the esoteric teachings imparted by the teachers to pupils sitting near

to them. "There are over 200 Upanisads, including such recent works as the Khristopanisad and the Allopanisad. The Mukhtikopanisad gives a traditional list of 108 Upanisads, of which 10 belong to the Rig-Veda, 19 to the Sukla Yajur-Veda, 32 to the Krsna Yajur-Veda, 16 to the Sama-Veda and 31 to the Atharva-Veda; but usually thirteen Upanisads are regarded as the principal Upanisads." (Ibid., p.28) They are: Isa, Kena, Katha, Prasna, Mundaka, Mandukya, Taittiriya, Chandogya, Brhदारanyaka, Svetasvatara, Maitrayani and the Kausitaki.

Speaking about the "Essence of Vedic Religion," C. Kunhan Raja rightly observes: "When the teachers themselves meet, there can be no conflict, insofar as they all see the same truth, and what differences there may be cannot become conflicts. They saw the unity in such differences and recognized the reality of such differences. That is how in Vedic times there grew up a 'Union of Religions,' with the many gods and the many teachers and the many rituals." (The Vedas, Waltham, 1957, p.97) He adds, "There is a belief in the Indian tradition that at the closing stage of the vision of the various passages in the Vedas, all the poets had a common vision of the entire text. Anyway, the common will to maintain unity in religion is reflected in this closing passage. The poet to whom this final hymn is assigned is now known as Samvanana, 'Common Will.'" (Ibid.)

Then the hymn is quoted with the preface, 'The poem that concludes the Rig-Veda, which contains the essence of the Vedic religion.'

- 1.O Fire full of vigour, being noble, you verily unite all;
You remain kindled in the Altar Place; bring to us all benefactions.
- 2.Come together; speak together; may your minds know together,
In the same way in which the gods in ancient times, Knowing together, partook of their portions.
- 3.Their sacred prayers are common; their assemblies are common;
their minds along with their thoughts are common;
I am now addressing you a common sacred prayer; I am now making an offering to you with a common offering.
- 4.May your aspirations be common; may your hearts be common;
May your minds be common, so that there is maintained your common-weal."

(Rig-Veda, X. 191)

Now the Upanisads do form the end portion of the Vedas (Vedanta), and the conclusion about "The Fundamental Doctrines of the Upanisads" can be thus presented in the words of Maurice Winternitz: "That which is of the greatest value in the Upanisads is those fundamental thoughts, on the basis of which we can speak of a 'philosophy of the Upanisads' above all, the fundamental doctrine which pervades all the genuine Upanisads, and which can be summed up in the sentence: 'The universe is the Brahman, but the Brahman is the Atman,' which in our mode of philosophical expression would be equal to: 'The world is God, and God is my soul.'" (A History of Indian Literature, vol.1, Calcutta, 1927, 2nd Edition, 1972, p.247) He illustrates this through the following: "... the true Brahman is to be sought only in the intelligent spirit (Purusa) in man, i.e., in the Atman, in the self. As a spider spins her web out of herself, as out of a fire the little sparks fly in all directions, so out of this Atman emanate all vital breaths, all worlds, all gods and all beings." (Ibid., p.253)

Countering Schopenhauer's assertion "that the Upanisads present the 'fruit of the highest human knowledge and wisdom,' and contain 'almost superhuman conceptions,' whose originators, can hardly be regarded as mere men," (cf. M.F. Hecker, *Schopenhauer und die Indische Philosophie*, p.7) Winternitz opines: "The Upanisads do not contain 'superhuman conceptions,' but human, absolutely human attempts to come nearer to truth and it is this which makes them so valuable to us." (Ibid., pp.265-66) He tells us also: "From the mystical doctrines of the Upanisads one current of thought may be traced to the mysticism of the Persian Sufism, to the mystic-theosophical logos doctrine of the Neo-Platonics and the Alexandrian Christians, down to the teachings of the Christian mystics Eckhart and Tauler, and finally to the philosophy of the great German mystic of the nine-teenth century, Schopenhauer. What Schopenhauer owed to the Indians he has himself told us often enough. He himself calls Plato, Kant and 'the Vedas' (by which Schopenhauer always means the Upanisads) his teachers." (Ibid., p.266) He (Winternitz) goes

on: "The fundamental doctrine of the Upanisads, however, is the same which, according to Schopenhauer, 'was at all times the ridicule of fools and the endless meditation of sages,' namely, the doctrine of Unity, i.e. the doctrine 'that all plurality is only apparent, that in all the individuals of this world, in whatever endless number they may present themselves after and beside one another, yet only one and the same, truly existing Being, present and identical in them all, manifests itself.' And if Ludwig Stein, who once said: "The philosophy of the present is monism, that is the interpretation of all that happens in the universe" as one unity is right, then this "philosophy of the present" was already the philosophy of the ancient Indians three thousand years ago." (Ibid., p.267)

Now, monism can be interpreted in many ways—as ajativada (the world has never originated, is totally unreal) of Gaudapada; or mayavada (the world is only mysteriously there) of Samkaracarya; or saktivada (the world as a potency of God as the Omnipotent) of Ramanujacarya; or Srstivada (The world as creation—with different accounts of it) by Sudhadvaitavadi Valabhacarya, Acintyabheda-dabhedavadi Caitanya Mahaprabhu, Bhedabhedavadi Nimbaraka and the like as I have shown in Chapter 9, on "Vedantic Thought" of my book *Materialism in Indian Thought* (New Delhi, 1974), and also as materialism as I have argued in the same book in Chapter 3 on "The Pre-Systematic (Vedic and Upanisadic) Thought."

There is a whole range to the meaning of unity vis-a-vis diversity, from 'absolutism' to a 'togetherness' of the many (referred to in the concluding hymn of the Rig-Veda) through 'non-dualism,' 'qualified non-dualism,' 'pure non-dualism,' 'unthinkable difference non-difference,' 'difference non-difference' and 'Dualism' and beyond.

The four great utterances of the Upanisads (the Mahavakyas): 'All this is verily Brahman' (Sarvam khaluidam Brahma); 'This soul is Brahman' (Ayam Atma Brahma); 'I am Brahman' (Aham Brahmasmi); and 'That thou art' (Tat tvam asi), have the same meaning, but require different terms for their explication. Dualism (dvaitavada), of Madhvacharya for example, denies monism but not unity as it seeks to achieve the latter through the various

relationships of devotion (bhakti).

A polytheistic pluralism allowing maximum role even to materialism, as we have it in the Purva Mimamsa system of Indian philosophy that seeks to achieve unity through the doctrine of 'action (Karma),' is not only based on the earlier portions of the Vedas but also receives ample support from the Upanisads. To refer to just one example, the Purva Mimamsa idea that 'determined by one's Karma, a being gets birth as a human being, a demon or a god' seems to be reflected in the Upanisadic legend that once demons, men and gods went to their 'Common father, Prajapati' to get instructions for leading a better life. Prajapati uttered a single letter 'da.' Each of the three groups got the appropriate message from the same, as the demons, who took pride in being cruel, interpreted it to mean 'daya' (loving kindness or mercy), the men who were prone to accumulate wealth thought that 'da' meant 'dana' (charity), and the gods who were given to self-indulgence and sensuality got to know that they required 'dama' (self-control).

Incidentally, here is a reference to the ideals of righteousness (Dharma) explained beautifully in a couplet by the poet saint Tulsi (whose 'Ramacarit Manas,' his version in Hindi of Ramayana, one of the great epics, is a scripture in its own right):

"Kindness O Tulsi! is the root of Righteousness
And that of the unrighteousness is Pride
One should not leave kindness
So long as there is the breath in you."

(Daya Dharma Ka mula hai, papa mula abhimana; Tulsi Daya
no chodiye jab lag ghat mein prana.)

Righteousness, economic well being (Artha) and satisfaction of desire (Kama). The Purva Mimamsa concerns itself with these three ideals and leaves apavarga or Moksa (salvation) for the Uttara-Mimamsa (Vedanta).

The next set of Hindu scriptures that may be referred to now, consists of the Puranas and the epics. "The Puranas are a very important branch of the Hindu sacred literature, they enable us to

know the true import of the ethos, philosophy and religion of the Vedas ... were written with the object of popularizing the truths taught in the Vedas ...". Thus do we read in *The Cultural Heritage of India* (Vol. V, p.64). Content-wise they are supposed to deal with primary creation (sarga), recreation after periodic dissolution (pratisarga), genealogies of gods, patriarchs, sages and kings (vamsa), periods of different Manus (manvantras) and histories of royal dynasties (vamsanucarita). "The principal (maha) Puranas are eighteen in number, viz. Brahma, Padma, Visnu, Vayu, Bhagavata, Naradiva, Markandeya, Agni, Bhavisa, Brahmapurana, Linga, Varaha, Skanda, Vamana, Kurma, Matsya, Garuda and Brahmanda. Sometimes Vayu Purana is substituted for Siva Purana in the list. There are also eighteen secondary (upa) Puranas." (Ibid., p.66) Their sectarianism is only apparent, rather than real. Their task being only to amplify the Vedic truths, they cannot but stress the unity of all beings, even though they seem to treat one of the trimurti (trinity) of Brahma (the creator), Visnu (the preserver) and Siva (the destroyer) as the only supreme. In Brahma Purana, Visnu tells Markandeya about his being identical with the Siva (Br. Pu. LVI. 69-171), and it is stated in Padma Purana that "Brahma, Visnu and Mahesvara, though three in form, are one entity" (Pa. Pu. I.2. 113-116; 7.28); Visnu Purana (I. 8.21) identifies Visnu and Lakshmi with Siva and his Consort Gauri.

If of one of the two epics, the Mahabharata, it is rightly said (because of its vastness) that it "is not one poetic production, at all, but rather a whole literature" that it is "essentially and purely secular in origin," but "legends of gods, mythological narratives of brahmanic origin, and to a great extent, even didactic sections referring to brahmanic law were received into the Mahabharata," and that "at least 1,500 years ago this Mahabharata was already just as we possess it today in our manuscripts and editions," then why wonder if the Indians regard it not only as an epic, "a work of poetic art (kavya), but also as a manual (sastra) of morality, law and philosophy supported by the oldest tradition (Smṛti)" and "furnish it with incontestable authority." (Winternitz, op. cit., pp.316, 318-19 and 321) In its own introduction we read: "Whosoever

presents a Veda-knowing and deeply learned Brahmana with a hundred cows with gilded horns, and he who hears daily the sacred stories of the Bharata poem-these two acquire equal religious merit." Further, "This is a sacred manual of morals (Dharma); it is the best manual of practical life (artha), and Vyasa, the author, and one of boundless wisdom, recited it also as a manual of salvation (Moksha)." And "All sins, whether of thought, word or deed, depart immediately from the man who hears this poem." Finally "What is not written therein, can be found nowhere else in the world." (Ibid., pp.325, 326) In the Mahabharata (Book VI. 25-42) we find the most famous Hindu Scripture, Bhagavadgita, about which Winternitz, after giving a brief resume of the didactic portions of the Mahabharata (Ibid., p.425), tells us: "Of all these didactic portions of the Mahabharata, none has attained to such popularity and fame as the Bhagavadgita, or the 'Lord's Song.' In India itself there is scarcely any book which is read so much and esteemed so highly as the Bhagavadgita. It is the sacred book of the Bhagavatas, a Visnuite sect, but it is a book of devotion and edification for every Hindu, to whatever sect he may belong ... outside India, too, the Bhagavadgita has gained many admirers." (Ibid., pp.425-6) The Bhagavadgita, with its philosophy of 'perfected excellence of disinterested action' (niskama karma vega) and the concept of a 'person steadfast in wisdom' (Sthitaprajna) achieved through the means of a 'way of life that balances devotion, knowledge and action' (Bhaktijnana-Karma Samuccaya), inspires man to get 'engaged in activities for the good of all' (Sarvaloka Hiteh ratah).

The epic Ramayana is both a popular epic and an ornate poem by Valmiki, who is regarded as the first poet (adi Kavi) of the classical Sanskrit language. Teachers and masters of numerous religious sects draw upon the Ramayana to propagate their moral and religious doctrines, and so do poets, including Kalidas and Bhavabhuti, to create good poetic works. A Hindi version of the Ramayana, that has already been referred to above, is spoken of by Winternitz as follows: "The religious-philosophical Hindi poem Ramacarita-manas, based on the ancient epic and composed about 1574 A.D. by the celebrated Tulsi Das, has become almost a gospel for

millions of Indians." (op.cit., p.477) Just one line from the Ramacarita-manas will suffice to illustrate how much this Hindu scripture supports the idea of unity or unification. That line is :

"Regarding the world as an embodiment of Rama and
Sita, I bow with folded hands." (Siya Rama maya sab jag jani ;
Karun pranama jorijugpani.)

Let us remember that Rama, the hero of the Ramacarita-manas, is the incarnation of the preserver god Visnu, and that Sita, its heroine, is that of the goddess Laksami, the consort of Visnu, who is famous as the goddess of wealth, and see how God and Mammon can be worshipped together.

The Buddhist scriptures, in the Pali language, both canonical (the Tipitakas-Vinaya, Sutta and Abhidhamma) and non-canonical; the Tripitaka in Sanskrit; Sanskrit works on Hinayana Buddhism, the Nine Mahayana Sutras or Vaipulyasutras, like Saddharma Pundarika and Lankavatara Sutra; the Sanskrit works Asvaghosa, Nagarjuna, Aryadeva, Asanga, Vasubandhu, Dignaga, Dharmakirti, Santaraksita and Santidev and those on the Tantras are all Hindu scriptures in letter and spirit, as explained in the following observation of Winternitz: "Buddhism, whose birthplace is India, will remain forever incomprehensible to him who does not know the Veda. For the teaching of Buddha is in the same relation to the Veda as the New Testament is to the Old Testament." (op.cit. p.52) They all promote the 'Unity of being' by projecting a philosophy of 'universal flux' upholding impermanence (anityata), non-substantiality (anatmata) and dependent origination or connectivity of all that is through the causal relation (pratitya samuppada) under any of its three formulations of Sarvastivada, Sunyavada (Madhamika) and Vijnanavada (Yogacara).

The Jaina scriptures, whether comprising the 12 Angas (divisions), 12 Upangas (sub-divisions), 10 Prakiranas (analyzed or scattered pieces), six Cheda Sutras, two Culika Sutras and four Mula Sutras as acceptable to the Svetambara sect, or such texts which are acceptable to the Digambaras, whether canonical or non-canonical,

insofar as they are religious texts, stand all for 'The Unity of all living beings.' The same point emerges very clearly when we read the following from a Jaina text such as the Ayaramga Sutra: "I speak thus, All Saints (Arhats) and Lords (Bhagavats) in the past, in the present and in the future; they all say thus, speak thus, announce thus and declare thus: One may not kill nor ill-use nor insult nor torment nor persecute any kind of living being, any kind of creature, any kind of thing having soul, any kind of being. That is the pure, eternal, enduring commandment of religion, which has been proclaimed by the sages who comprehend the world."

"You yourself are the (being) which you intend to kill; you yourself are the (being) which you intend to ill-use; you yourself are the (being) which you intend to insult; you yourself are the (being) which you intend to torment; you yourself are the (being) which you intend to persecute. Therefore the righteous one, who has awakened to this knowledge, and lives according to it, will neither kill nor cause to kill." (1.1, 4, 11; 5, 5, 4) —See A History of Indian Literature by Maurice Winternitz, Revised Edition, Delhi, 1983, pp. 419—20.)

Verse 25 of the Jaina Stotra text—Bhaktamara-Stotra (Panegyric of an Immortal Devotee) praises Jaina Rsabha thus:

"Thou art Buddha, because the gods praise the
awakening of Thy mind,
Thou art Samkara, because Thou workest out the salvation of the
three worlds ;
Creator art thou,
Because through thy doctrine thou hast
Created a pathway to salvation ;
Thou, O lord, art Purusottama, the highest of all the beings."
(Ibid., p.528)

This does reflect an attempt towards a Unity among Jainism, Buddhism, Sikhism, Saivism, Vaisnavism, Saktism, and the like. It is interesting to note that in accordance with a traditional classification of the schools of Indian philosophy, Buddhist and Jaina philosophies

are said to be atheistic (nastika). And so they are, not so much because God is not accepted in them, but because they do not accept the authority of the Vedas. But what is all the more interesting and baffling is the fact that, out of the six schools which are said to have the Vedas as their source-Vedanta, Purva-Mimansa, Sankhya, Yoga, Nyaya and Vaisesika-the first goes beyond God in some of its aspects, the second and third are clearly and openly atheistic, and about the other three there is a controversy whether or not they accept a Creator God. Thus 'God' is not the source of unity among the Indian religions.

Paper VI

The Concept of an Asian Community and the Unity of Thought Systems Seen from Chinese Thought

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Part A

The early classical work of the Confucian school of China, the *Biography of Gong Yang of the Spring and Autumn Period*, explains the description of history by Confucius (B.C. 551—B.C. 479), saying that some of the historical events were witnessed by himself (during his lifetime), others were told by people he had heard of (times before him) and still others were told by people he had never met (remote times). In his *Notes on Gong Yang of the Spring and Autumn Period* He Xiu (129—182) of the Eastern Han Dynasty extended (further developed) the above view by claiming that remote times were times of trouble, past times were times of peace and present times were piping times of peace, expressing vaguely an idea of evolution of history from chaos to order and from order on a small scale to order on a large scale. This was a general reference and not a particular one to any era.

The noted leader of modern China's Reform Movement, Kang Youwei (1858—1927), developed this "theory of the three kinds of times" claiming that the times of trouble referred to monarchism, i.e.