

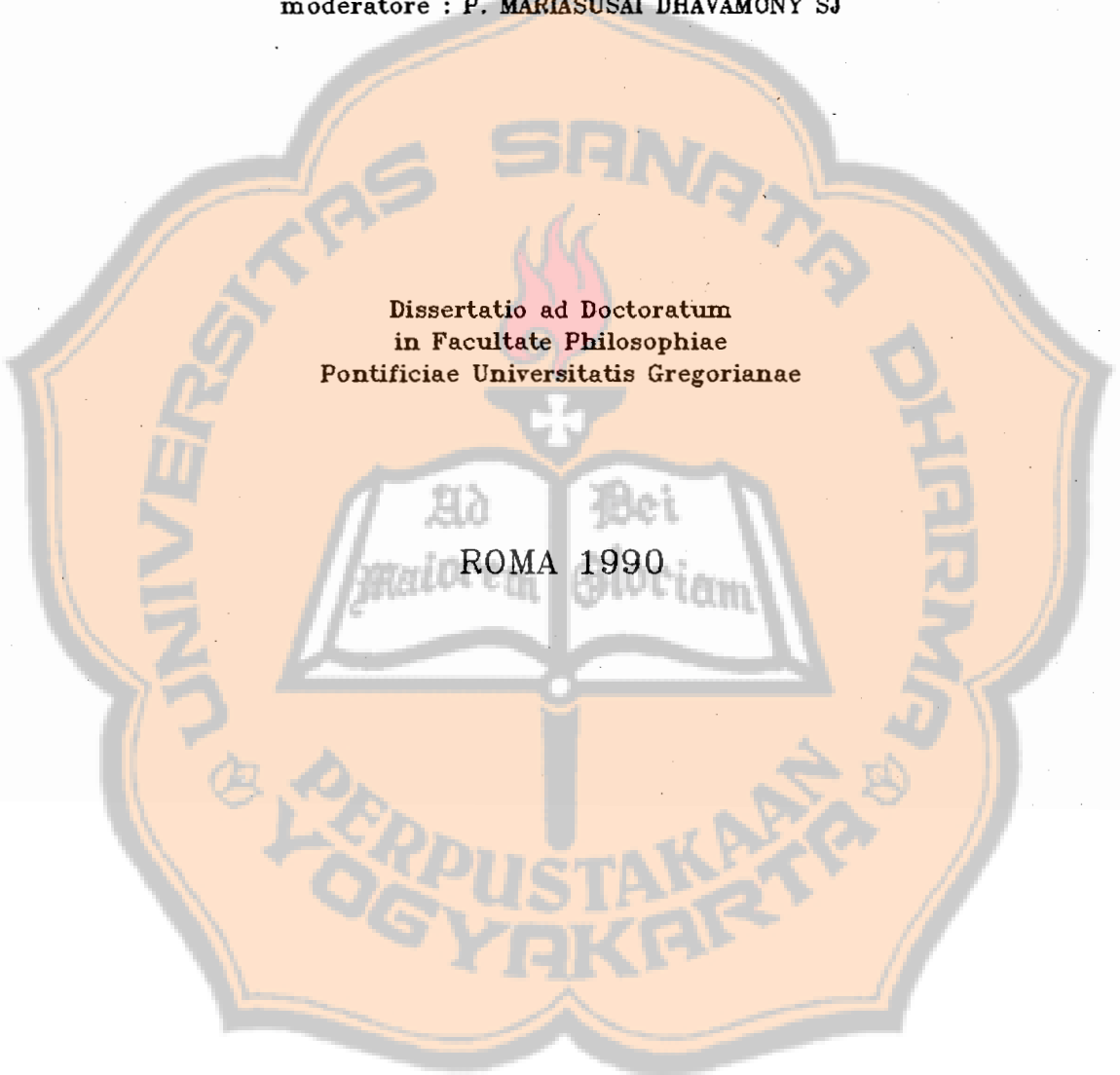
PONTIFICIA UNIVERSITAS GREGORIANA
FACULTAS PHILOSOPHIAE

THE IDEA OF GOD IN HINDUISM
ACCORDING TO PROFESSOR R.C. ZAEHNER

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Dissertatio ad Doctoratum
in Facultate Philosophiae
Pontificiae Universitatis Gregoriana

ROMA 1990



List of Abbreviations1. R.C. Zaehner's works

- AST : At Sundry Times, London, 1958
CCWR : The Catholic Church and World Religions, London, 1964
CD : Concordant Discord, Oxford, 1970
CS : The Convergent Spirit, London, 1963
CWH : The City within the Heart, London, 1980
DMM : Drugs, Mysticism and Make believe, London, 1972
DTZ : The Dawn and Twilight of Zoroastrianism, London, 1972
ER : Evolution in Religion, Oxford, 1971
Hin : Hinduism, Oxford, (1962), 1983
HMM : Hindu and Muslim Mysticism, London, 1960
HS : Hindu Scriptures, London, (1966), 1984
MSP : Mysticism, Sacred and Profane, Oxford, 1961
OSG : Our Savage God, London, 1974
Zur : Zurvan, a zoroastrian Dilemma, Oxford, 1955
ZBG : The Bhagavad-Gita, with a commentary based on the original sources, Oxford, (1969), 1973

2. Quotations from Hindu Scriptures

- RV : Rig-Veda
SV : Sama-Veda
YV : Yayur-Veda
AV : Atharva-Veda
SB : Satapatha Brahmana
Ait.U : Aitareya Upanishad
BA.U : Brihad-Aranyaka Upanishad
Ch.U : Chandogya Upanishad

Iś.U : Iśa Upanishad
Kau.U : Kausitaki Upanishad
Ke.U : Kena Upanishad
Kat.U : Katha Upanishad
Mai.U : Maitrī Upanishad
Mān.U : Māndukhya Upanishad
Mun.U : Mundaka Upanishad
Pr.U : Praśna Upanishad
Śv.U : Svetasvatara Upanishad
Ta.U : Taittirīya Upanishad

BG : Bhagavad-Gītā

MBh : Mahabharata

3. Others

SBE : The Sacred Book of the East. (Edited by Max Müller, Oxford, 1879-1910)

ERE : Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics. (Edited by J. Hastings, Edinburgh/New York, 1908-1926.)

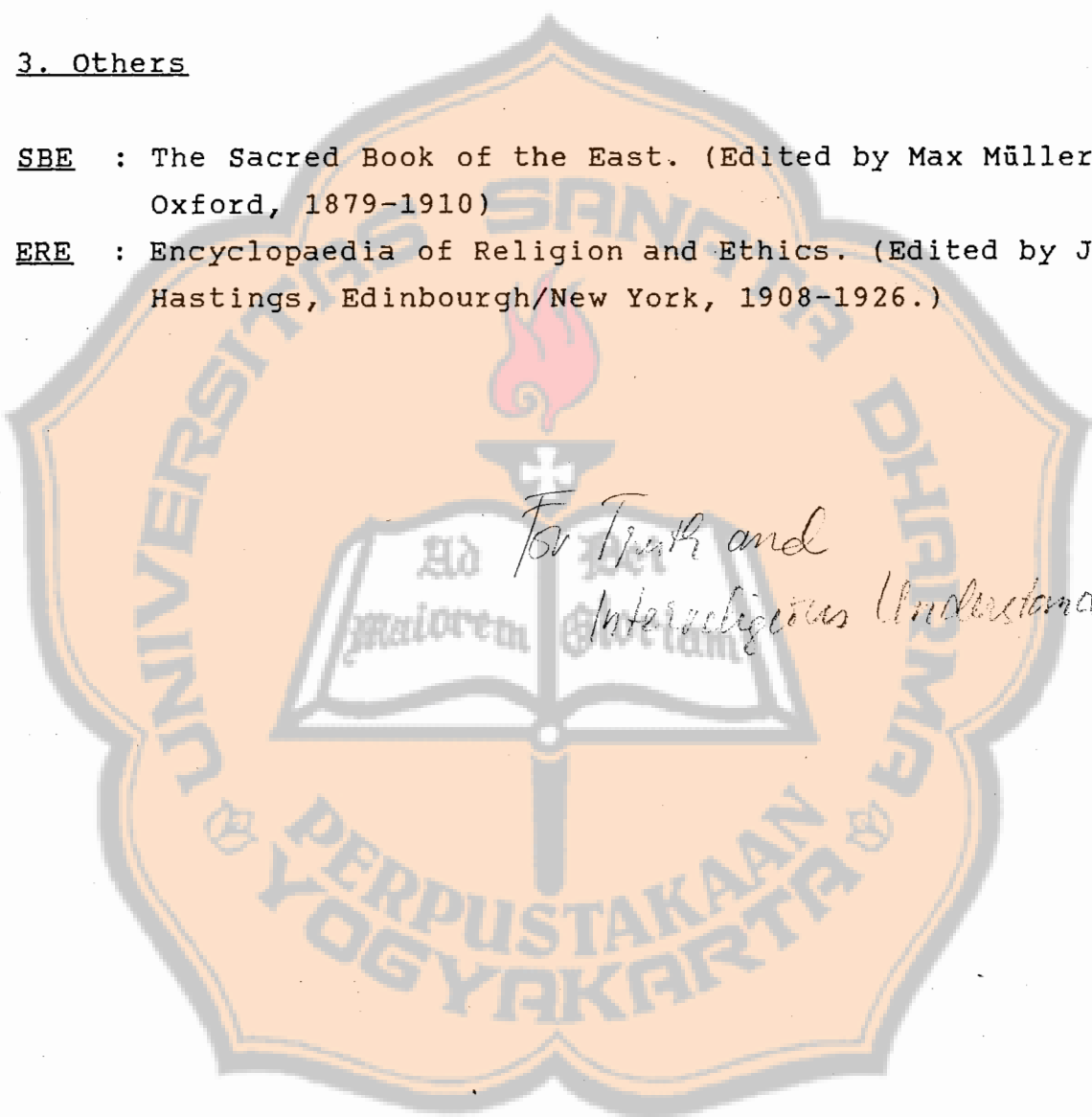


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GENERAL INTRODUCTION



GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1. Studies on Hinduism

Since the end of the last century, studies on Hinduism have strikingly increased in Europe. Publications have presented Hinduism in many different ways and highlighted the subject from many different points of view. Since Hinduism could mean both a religious form (or forms) and a cultural system, studies were made in both areas, ranging from the most scholarly critical to purely devotional. The term Hinduism itself was commonly understood as an invention by outsiders to serve the epistemological need of unity, to facilitate the study of that South Asian subcontinent.¹⁾ The

any problem

¹⁾. One of the good approaches to understand the term is offered by Brian K. Smith. In an article he classifies three different types of working definition which are often proposed in many studies. The first is a kind of, what he calls, inchoate definitions, which he considers as "too inclusive to be meaningful" for it includes the most general things. The second is the thematic type of definition which identifies categorically some principal concepts such as samsāra, karma and liberation from them, as definitive of the religion. The third is the canonical or the social type of definition which identifies either or both of two criteria as constitutive: (1) recognition of the authority of the Brahmin class and/or (2) recognition of the authority of the Veda. These criteria, according to Smith, important though they are, serve not constitutively but only referentially to Hinduism. Hence he suggests that "Hinduism is the religion of those humans who create, perpetuate, and transform traditions with legitimizing reference to the authority of the Veda." Brian K. Smith, "Exorcising the Transcendent: Strategies for defining Hinduism and Religion" in History of Religions, August 1987, vol. 27, number 1. Since our treatise concerns God and therefore views Hinduism in its religious aspects rather than cultural or social, his definition is aptly suitable in our case.

term and those who first invented it remain, however, a subject of controversy. Studies on Hinduism faced a great difficulty not only on account of the immensity of the subject, but also of the suppleness of its concepts and ideas. The reason is, as is generally known, that Hinduism does not distinctly separate philosophy from religion. Such a particular background had unfortunately induced uncritical studies to a common misapprehension regarding some Hindu doctrines and conceptions. There had been a common belief fortified by some dogmatical points of view which equated simply Brāhman with God, and considered by consequence identification of ātman and Brāhman as union between human soul and God without any particular qualifications, or characterized Hinduism in a very general way as taking the World as illusory (māyā), and so on. Some were trying to interpret certain passages in Hindu Scriptures in such a way as to find the slightly possible ideas of monotheism that might be conveyed in those texts. This century witnesses the rise of phenomenology of religion which had providentially rescued research from latent misunderstandings by revealing the different structures of mentality that lie in the background of the different forms and expressions of religions.

Faced with the vastness of these researches on Hinduism, a student of philosophy, whose concern is the "essence" of

things, could feel immediately discouraged. There was some similarity with the awkwardness and dejection which was once expressed beautifully by Louis Renou in the case of the research on Vedic texts:

"...There was a time not very long ago, when every Indianist (especially those of the German School) considered that a monograph on Vedism, or an edition of a Vedic text, was an ideal first piece of research to undertake. The fact that Vedic studies no longer occupy such a focal position is probably the outcome of this earlier concentration on them to the relative neglect of other fields. The student is likely to feel that there is nothing left to discover (although in this he would be wrong), or at least that what remains to be discovered would not repay the time and the trouble needed to attain a mastery of the subject."²⁾

Although our concern is not comparable to those students of the Vedas, for we are not doing textual research, we share nonetheless a somewhat similar position of facing an excess on the one hand and realizing a neglect on the other.

Hinduism is indeed a vast subject to be studied by many different disciplines and fields. Researches could provide any field with new data elucidated from its proper point of view. Phenomenology as typology in this case, however, does not concern itself with the discovery of new data any more than the revelation of the very essence of Hinduism as religion. Unlike those studies of different fields, phenomenology touches the core of the subject itself from the inside and grasps its manifestations. As such, phenomenology

²⁾ L. Renou, Religions of Ancient India, London, 1953, p.1.

deals with the general structure and similar patterns that are inherent in the existence of Hinduism. There remains, however, a crucial problem on this account for in such an approach, diversities that exist also in Hinduism might not be fully revealed, although phenomenology should take into account also the differences. The strong emphasis on opting for congruences and similar structures in a particular phenomenological approach induces in some way to the neglect of taking seriously the reality of discordances hidden even more deeply in that same womb of Hinduism. It is on this account that our choice of Professor R.C. Zaehner's studies find its *raison d'être*.

2. Professor R.C. Zaehner's Approach

Zaehner
R.C. Zaehner was appointed lecturer in Persian at the University of Oxford in 1950 and with the interruption of a period of one year as counselor to the British Embassy in Teheran, was in 1952 appointed Spalding Professor of Eastern Religious and Ethics at the same university. He began his active and prolific writings with his monumental work Zurvan, a Zoroastrian Dilemma (1955), a thorough and serious scholarly work on the Zoroastrian religion, which he claimed to be his major specialization. He knew Persian perfectly and, as he himself avowed, felt quite familiar with that language. On the base of this expertise, he placed much

importance on the philological approach, for as he said, "...In linguistic studies accuracy and a rigorous regard for the facts are the indispensable means for arriving at any new linguistic fact."³⁾ Later he extended his interest to many other religious and pseudo-religious forms which are still in existence. Starting with the study on mystical phenomena presented in the works of both profane and religious mystics,⁴⁾ he continued immediately with studies more exclusively centered on a comparison between mystical experiences in the two groups of prophetic and mystical religions, as he liked to distinguish religions of Semitic and Indian origin.⁵⁾ His attachment, however, remained mainly to that of a philologist and a phenomenologist.

interests
His interest, therefore, is not so much in the philosophical or theological doctrines as, as he himself says, in "those texts that each religion holds most sacred and in the impact that these have caused".⁶⁾ In his deep

³⁾ CD. p.6

⁴⁾ Mysticism, Sacred and Profane, An Inquiry into some varieties of praeternatural experience, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1957.

⁵⁾ At Sundry Times, An Essay in the Comparison of Religions, Faber and Faber, London, 1958; translated into French with an introduction of J.A. Cottat as Inde, Israel, Islam. Religious mystiques et révélations prophétiques, Desclée de Brouwer, 1965; Hindu and Muslim Mysticism, University of London, The Athlone Press, London, 1960.

⁶⁾ CD.p.19

penetration into the Scriptures of many religions, Zaehner attempts, as he intends, to arrive at the core of religions. The method of his researches is quite clear, i.e. to let the texts speak for themselves and to draw therefrom only with great cautions some conclusions.

mysticism

As to the impact that is caused by these sacred texts - we can already guess from the above mentioned studies - it is in the first place Zaehner's interest in the religious experience, primarily expressed in mysticism. For this reason Zaehner's attachment is not, once again, to the theological or philosophical treatises but to the texts written by mystics themselves or reports on their experiences. His reluctance to theological and philosophical approaches seem to be dictated by his aversion to the eventual objectification of religious experiences. Mystical phenomena constitute, in fact, one of the sharpest controversies that remain existing within religious discussions. The main reason is not merely that mystical experiences are not fully expressible in abstract terms, but also that mystics' concern are so subjective to the point of diverging one from the other. In order to understand more closely the reality of those experiences, Zaehner is compelled to resort to various disciplines like the philosophy of intersubjectivity, the study of mystical spirituality, depth psychology, in which

C.G. Jung's theory of personality seems the most favorable to him.

Hence Zaehner's approach to religious studies can be described as characterized by two things: (a) emphasis on the importance of the experiences; this means that subject of religious studies should be derived mainly from experiences, whether they were traditionally documented in the scriptures or written as mystical and devotional works. Zaehner seems to consider important also, that one should have some experience as the base for the comprehension of the subject of one's researches. Very impressive is his audacious experiment in putting himself under the effects of mescaline.⁷⁾ More * important to this is, however, the presupposition of one's recognizing one's own faith and religious experience in doing studies of other religions and religious experiences. It does not mean that in this Zaehner wants to lay his analysis on the basis of his own faith, let alone to judge them with the categories of his faith, as some would like to believe. Nevertheless, the fact of being drawn to academic activities by one's own personal interests and experiences, especially with regard to religious ones, is not only inevitable but indispensable for sincere researchers. Zaehner is adverse to any indifference in the search of truth.

⁷⁾ See appendix B to his Mysticism Sacred and Profane, New York, (1961)

In this scope Zaehner liked to identify his method with that of the Jesuits missionaries of the seventeenth century. He understands this method as "to study the main texts of the non-Christian religions in their historical development, to study them, so far as possible, from inside and having so studied them to try to correlate them with aspects of Catholic Christianity".^{a)} Study of religious experiences, to his mind, is not to judge them on the basis of one's own faith, but neither does it mean to excuse oneself from a sincere assessment of the subjects of the studies on the pretext of being objective. For Zaehner it is highly imperative to see the ultimate difference between his own faith and that of others so as to arrive at real understanding.^{a)} This raises, of course, a great problem in

^{a)} - CD.p.11.

^{a)} - For this reason Cuttat in his introduction to the french translation of Zaehner's At Sundry Times characterizes Zaehner's method as "dialogical" in comparison to some other methodes historically appearing as "polemic", "descriptive" and "concordist". In his method, Cuttat explains, Zaehner tries to avoid all the deficiencies of those three approaches, which dogmatically judge other beliefs, indifferently objectify them or simply associate one's belief to those of others pretending as if similarities could be easily found. In reality religions and beliefs are so different one from another to the point of diverging. In such a scope "dialogical" according to Cuttat means a real understanding of other beliefs and sincerely proposing his own belief as a share. R.C. Zaehner, Inde, Israel, Islam, religions mystiques et révélations prophétiques, introduction par Jacques-Albert Cuttat, Desclée De Brouwer, 1965, pp.7-60.

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 the field of scientific justification. We shall see it again at the end of our analysis.

Now we come to the second character: (b) the stress on interdisciplinary and correlative studies. Such a preoccupation had been for a long time the ideal of many researchers. As Zaehner himself attempted to do, he started with scholarly work on Zoroastrianism on the basis of his philological expertise. Provided with his own Christian belief, more precisely the belief of Roman Catholic Church, he began to apply a quite different approach when he expanded his interest to the studies of mysticism and religions. This concerns different fields such as hermeneutics, mythology, philosophy, psychology, history of religions. Since objectivity as such is not his final target with regard to the comparative studies, he does not seem to consider it a matter of importance to classify distinctly each field. Some would immediately see this as a confusion rather than an interdisciplinary approach.¹⁰⁾ The thing is not that he does not want to discern in objectivity, rather than that the

¹⁰⁾ An example is Samuel Z. Klausner who in his review to Zaehner's Mysticism Sacred and Profane compared Zaehner with Russell saying "...Russell writes in reasoned argument and with some humor. Zaehner does an incensed pedantic scissors and paste job. Russell explicates the issues well, draws biased conclusions, but allows his reader to think. Zaehner raises imaginary issues by use of a faulty methodology. His reader either agrees or feels pummelled..." Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, vol.I, 1962-63, p.228.

element other than reason that exists in man, which is usually called the religious impulse and its manifestations, as he put it, can never be objectified. We face here another difficulty in terms of categories with regard to truth, for categories are limited to single approaches or fields, whereas truth could never be limited and would be therefore more closely identified by interdisciplinary and interconnected approaches.

3. God in Hinduism

Within the ambit of his approach that we have been explaining above, we can now turn to the concern for God in Hinduism in Zaehner's works. Zaehner's interest on Scriptures and religious mysticism that we have mentioned above has led us to divide our research according to two main parts: God in the religious tradition and God in the philosophical system. Many subjects in Hinduism remain for a long time in fervid controversial discussions. The reason is, as we have mentioned earlier, because philosophy and religion in India are closely so related that many Hindu terms do not easily fit into strictly logical thinking.

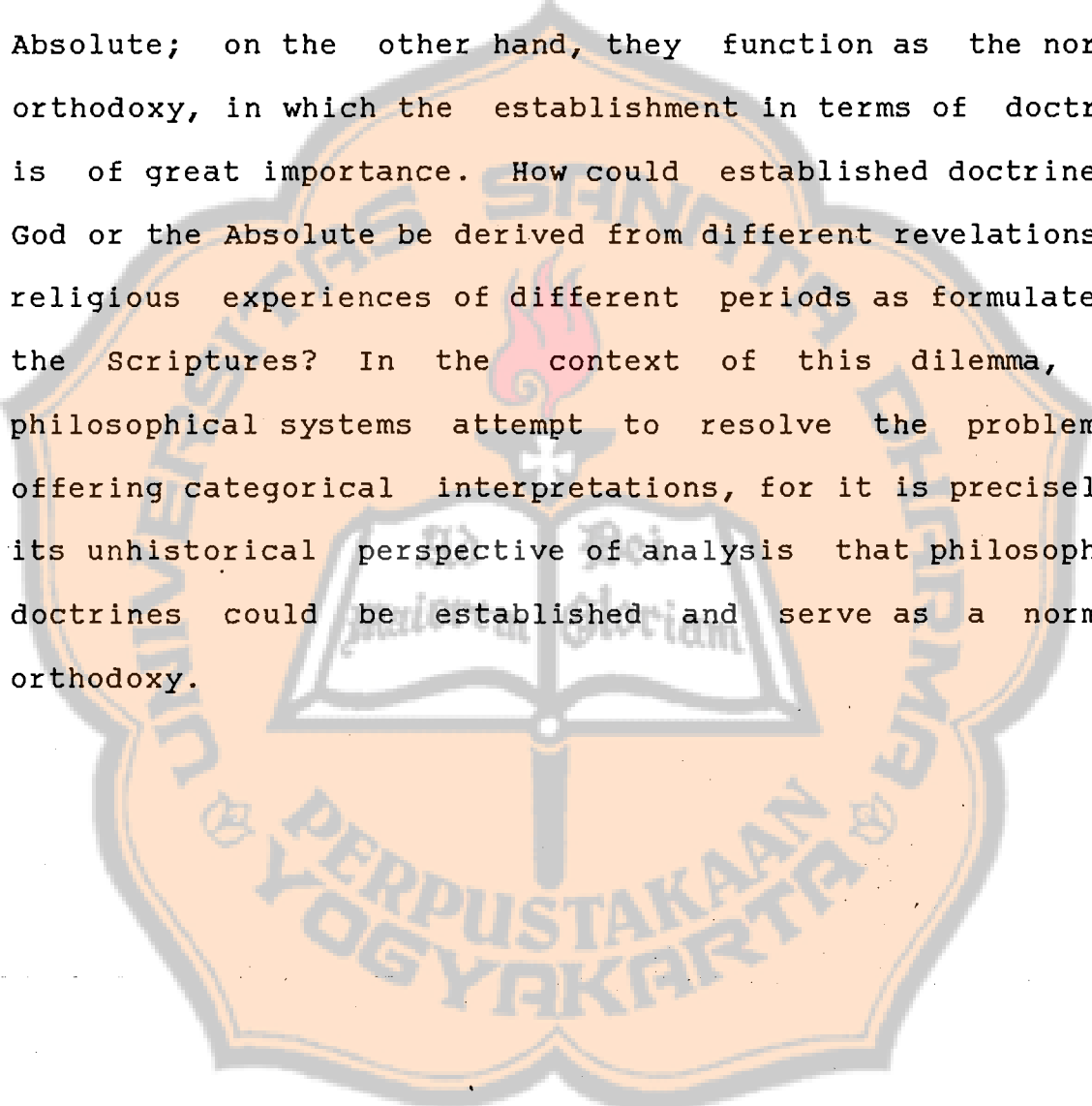
This applies even more to the subject of Hindu deities. Unlike in other religions such as Christianity or Islam, God is not something principal in Hinduism and therefore, by excluding the theistic Bhakti, we can say that the word God,

which for Christian or Islam has a proper notion, has no equivalent in Hinduism. We can find in its stead different words like Deva, Asura, Purusha, Brähman, Išvara, etc. We realize here immediately the terminological difficulty, for it would sound inappropriate to use God to cover those varieties of conceptions rich with notions and nuances. On the other hand, Zaehner does not try to invent any term, - like Paul Tillich's "Ultimate Concern", for example, - that pretends to cover the richness of notions of the Indian concepts on God, for such an invention would be against his proper intention that he has set up earlier, to leave the concepts of Hindu deities tell their own meanings. Therefore, unless something is categorically expounded, we consider the word God in our treatise as unspecified, to mention just what is commonly believed by the Hindus as the infinite, the transcendent, the immortal, or the Supreme Person. Only in certain cases, an alternative word is used, the Absolute, in contrast to God, when the impersonality of this transcendent being is emphasized.

3.1. God in the Religious Tradition

In the first part of our treatise, we shall present Zaehner's views on the conceptions of God in Hinduism as traditionally documented in the Scriptures. In the Hindu religion as in any other religion, Scriptures play a very

important role, for they function as the norm of orthodoxy. But unlike other religions, orthodox Hindus admit many Scriptures which emerged in different periods, extending between 1000 B.C. to 200 A.D. Quite understandably they have different forms of literature and express different preoccupations corresponding to the mentality of the periods. So if one is to define the concepts of God that may be conveyed in these Scriptures, one can define them only in terms of this dynamic of change and taking into account their historical nuance. There seems to be a dilemma. On the one hand, Hindu Scriptures which emerged in different periods provide inevitably many different concepts of God or the Absolute; on the other hand, they function as the norm of orthodoxy, in which the establishment in terms of doctrines is of great importance. How could established doctrines on God or the Absolute be derived from different revelations and religious experiences of different periods as formulated in the Scriptures? In the context of this dilemma, the philosophical systems attempt to resolve the problem by offering categorical interpretations, for it is precisely in its unhistorical perspective of analysis that philosophical doctrines could be established and serve as a norm of orthodoxy.

A large, semi-transparent watermark is centered on the page. It features a shield-shaped emblem with a cross at the top and an open book below. The text 'UNIVERSITAS SANTO YOHANES' is written along the top edge of the shield, and 'PERPUSTAKAAN YOGYAKARTA' is written along the bottom edge.

3.2. God in the Philosophical Systems

From the varieties of philosophical systems that Hinduism preserves, one can derive various doctrines of God or the Absolute, but from the fact of this variation itself, it becomes clear that Hinduism does not regard God as principal for orthodoxy. One can adhere to any school or philosophy, polytheistic or monotheistic, monistic or even atheistic, and remain a true Hindu. Zaehner is not, however, content with perceiving only their basic doctrines. He enters deeply into the comprehension of the essential problematics of each doctrine by analyzing their proper mystical experiences, and by comparing these experiences rather than the doctrines, which lie on the surface. He tries to find their basic differences and to show the discordance that exists in them. From this he can expound the proper position of each school with regard to their conceptions of God or the Absolute.

4. Analysis

At the end of our treatise, we shall present an analysis of Zaehner's comprehension of God in Hinduism, as the third and the last part. It becomes clear from the outset that our task is not an easy one, since we cannot locate Zaehner's approach in a distinctly limited discipline. What we shall attempt is to follow Zaehner's approach in presenting the problematics and in this way to analyze Zaehner's arguments in the two main preceding parts in order to draw inferences.

In such a way we can already presuppose that the analysis could shed light on two different aspects of Hinduism: its dynamics and its constancy as religion. In these two different contexts of analysis, God or the Absolute in Hinduism is presented both in the historical development and in the essential characteristics. Only from the dialectic between the two aspects can one approach the conceptions of God or the Absolute in Hinduism more closely to reality. Our principal difficulty in the analysis is, however, to expose Zaehner's approach in terms of the categories, because, in his efforts to take into relief of the different religious experiences, he did not limit himself to a single discipline of scientific research, but used various approaches such as historical, comparative and phenomenological.

To study Zaehner's approach, we have to settle our own methodology in this work. In brief, our methodology is twofold. With regard to the two earlier parts, which present Zaehner's analysis, we use history and phenomenology as the approach that is the most proper in philosophy of religion in which we place ourselves. In the third part, however, we attempt to analyze the subject that we have presented, following Zaehner's own terms without putting ourselves into the actual controversy of the studies of religions. We conclude this part with some critical observations and an evaluation.

PART ONE

GOD IN THE HINDU RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS



Introduction

In the first part of our treatise, we will concern ourselves with the concepts of God in the Hindu scriptures as understood by Zaehner in many of his works. Hindu scriptures can be generally divided into two classifications: śruti dan smṛti. The śruti consists of scriptures which are believed to contain the eternal truth which was revealed in times immemorial directly to the Hindu sages. The smṛti consists of scriptures which are believed to contain divine truths mixed with human elaborations which was transmitted only through the memories of human teachers. The śruti, being a direct revelation, is characterised as apauruṣeya, i.e. not invented by human beings. The smṛti, on the contrary, is formulated through a long tradition from one generation to another. Hence it is of secondary importance compared to the śruti. These different characteristics cause quite naturally a difference of position also in terms of authority.

The śruti comprises all scriptures which are compiled in and take as their general name the Veda, etimologically comes from vid meaning sacred knowledge.¹⁾ It is to be borne in

¹⁾ According to Radhakrishnan, the word Veda comes from the root vid, which means to know, hence Veda means knowledge par excellence, sacred wisdom. This is to be distinguished from science, which is, from this point of view, merely knowledge of secondary causes, of the created details, whereas wisdom is the knowledge of primary causes of the Uncreated Principle. See Radhakrishnan, The Principal Upanishads, text, translation and notes, London, 1953, pp.28-9;

mind, however, that Vedas can refer also exclusively to the sāṃhitās (compilation), which is only one type among the others in the long process of development of the Vedic literature so as to distinguish them from the others, which came after them. Chronologically, they are called Vedas, Brahmanas, Aranyakas dan Upanishads. Veda in the first notion uses the singular form to indicate the whole Vedic literature; in the second notion it is referred to as the Vedas, in the plural, for it indicates the four compilations: the Rig-Veda, Yayur-Veda, Sāma-Veda and the Atharva-Veda. We shall still have to see these scriptures in our next chapters.

As to the smṛti, it consists of other scriptures which were written in later date. Belonging to this class are the two great Epics, the Mahābhārata and the Rāmāyana; the eighteen Puranas which are dedicated usually to God Vishnu, Siva or Brahma; the tantras, which are divided in two classes, the Vaiśnavite treatise usually called also Sāṃhitas, and the Śaivite treatise or the Agamas; the sutras, or technical works of scholastic instruction; and finally the Mānavadharmasastra or the laws of Manu which are very important in ruling the social life of the Hindus²⁾ and other Law Books.

²⁾ Lemaître, Solange, Hinduism, New York, 1959, p.15

In our treatises we shall not discern about these scriptures of the smṛti, except the Epics and the Puranas. The Bhagavad-Gītā, a treatise contained in the Mahābhārata, one of the two great Epics, has gained a prestige which practically overcomes all other scriptures and is accordingly granted the rank of śruti.³⁾ One chapter, therefore, will be dedicated exclusively for it. Before we end the first part with a conclusion, we shall expound in one chapter the concept of God in the Epics and the Puranas. Unlike the other works of the smṛti, these two types of literature prominently present the two most important Gods of the Hindu devotees, Vishnu and Śiva. This seems to be the reason why Zaehner singles out these two works from many other works of the smṛti literature and retains some length the discussion on God of these two.

³⁾ M.Dhavamony, Classical Hinduism, Roma, 1982, pp.5-6.

CHAPTER I : GOD IN THE VEDAS

1. Introduction

Before beginning this section on gods of the Vedas, let us recall what we wrote in the introduction, that by the Vedas we mean the four compilations of collections (samhitās) of hymns and formulas; i.e. the Rig-Veda, the Sāma-Veda, the Yajur-Veda and the Atharva-Veda. Hence we are excluding from them the Brāhmanas and the Upanishads which will be taken up for later discussions. As we have mentioned earlier, Veda etymologically means "knowledge". The way this knowledge was received and transmitted is particular, for unlike the wisdom of some other religions, which stressed revelation as scriptures or books, Veda, though in recent form it is scripture, principally and originally it meant word which is heard and uttered, not which is written.¹⁾

¹⁾ "Le mot Veda signifie savoir. C'est un savoir que l'on acquiert par l'oreille, non par les yeux. Au lieu de: "Il est écrit" (comme en d'autres documents religieux), les textes portent: "Il est ouï". C'est "un ouï-dire sacré."; Félicien, Challaye, Les Philosophes de l'Inde, p.10. cf. Gonda, J. Les Religions de l'Inde, vol.I. Vedisme et Hindouisme Ancien, Paris, 1962, p.19, in which he sees the vedic tradition is originally oral. "Veda signifie 'savoir', c'est-à-dire connaissance des puissances supérieures et des moyens d'agir sur elles. ce 'savoir', qui, d'après la tradition indienne, est éternel, n'a été que formulé par divinité et 'contemplé' aux origines par des sages inspirés (Rsi's), est né pour la majeure partie dans des familles de chanteurs brahmanes, à partir de la croyance populaire et a été transmis dans les 'écoles' des brahmanes, les détenteurs de la science sacerdotale et ésotérique, pendant très longtemps sous la seule forme orale."

The first three Vedas, even if they were different in their dates of compilations,²⁾ were considered generally as a unity in regard to their common functions in ritual performances, and can hardly be separated from one another. Such is not, however, the case with the fourth Veda, due to its peculiar characteristics. The fourth Veda or the Atharva-Veda was compiled at a later date. In later times only three Vedas were spoken of and recognized as trayī vidyā or the triple science. In some regions Atharva-Veda is ignored even to this day.³⁾ The scholars have agreed that it is distinct from the other Vedas, also in the mentality that emanates from it, for whereas the first three Vedas deal with sacrificial rites, the Atharva-Veda deals with heterogenous personal interests. It contains many spells of an auspicious character. Moreover its most salient teaching is sorcery, for it is often employed against hostile agents. It has therefore a double function: to appease and bless as well as to curse.

The striking difference between the three Vedas and the fourth has led to speculations. Some scholars related the

²⁾ The Rig-Veda 1-9 are considered the oldest. Their compilation took some hundred years until their final formation at about 800 B.C. after a considerable interval, during which the Aryan people, moving more and more to the south, made acquaintance with the aboriginal tribes and began to compile the other Vedas, among which is the Rig-Veda 10. See Farquhar, J.N., An Outline of the Religion Literature of India, Oxford, 1920, p.15 ss.

³⁾ Farquhar J.N., Ibidem. p.25.

fourth Veda to the provenance of the native people, the so-called Dravidians, who had been living and improving their own culture, evidently much in variance to that of the invaders or the Aryans. Zaehner draws our attention to the parallelism between the adjunction of the fourth Veda to the bulk of the Vedas with the adjunction of the fourth class, the sūdras (servants) to the other three classes already existing in the Aryan society.⁴⁾

The difference amongst these Vedas might be of some help to understand the inconsistency that we will meet in dealing with the concept of gods. Yet even in their inconsistency, the seclusion of Vedic religion, and hence also its concept of gods, both from its different constitutive elements and from the subsequent religion, is still evident.

2. The Pantheon of the Vedas

It is said that gods in the Rig-Veda are thirty three in numbers. They are classified into three groups of eleven each according to their abodes in three different levels of the universe: heaven, atmosphere and earth. The names of some gods refer to natural phenomena which might correspond to their abodes, such as dyaus (heaven), pr̥thivi (earth), surya (sun), ushas (dawn), vāyu (wind), agni (fire), āpah (water) and so on. The naturalist school might thereby maintain that

⁴⁾ See Hin. p.38

the religion of the Vedas was a "nature-worship". Max Müller, * the exponent of this school, in one of his books analysed extensively the development of gods' names from natural powers. The Vedic sages, he said, proceeded from personifying natural powers due to their observable functions, into worshipping them for their intangibility. By personifying, we mean the way in which the Vedic sages conceived natural powers as persons by associating each with a certain personal character. Hence we have couples of words expressing the natural powers and their personal traits, like Sūrya asti (the sun breathes), Mā bhavati (the moon grows or watches), Bhūr vasati (the world dwells), Vāyur vāti (the wind blows), Indra unatti (the rain falls) and so on. They are not tangible objects that you can hold in your hand, but semitangible or even intangible. The greatness of these natural phenomena had led the Vedic people to feel awe and worship them.⁵⁾

This view of the naturalist schools might be likely supported by the philological method, held by Thieme and other philologists, which explained the nature of deities only by the etymology of their names. Philological approaches

⁵⁾ The whole explanation on this theory can be found in Müller, F.M., Origine et Developpement de la Religion, étudiés à la lumière des religions de l'Inde, leçons faites à Westminster Abbey, traduites de l'anglais par J. Darmesteter, Paris, 1879, pp.165-183.

in many cases are convincing and plausible.⁶⁾ Zaehner would not deny this, but he held, however, that such a consideration is not enough. Moreover philological arguments often fail to fit the evidence because "a god, like a man, grows and develops into something very much more than his name".⁷⁾ So according to Zaehner, an integral view has to apply complementary approaches of the different disciplines.

But how does this view explain the rank of sovereignty of gods? Are gods also of different levels regarding their sovereignty? Is there any supreme God above any other gods? It is always difficult in polytheism to make a classification of ranks, and this is even more so in case of Hinduism, when we do not find any supreme amongst them on whom to base categories with regard to the closeness or distance of the other gods' relation to him. Of course, it is precisely the very problem of early Indian deities to search for the supreme, not amongst the devas, the later Vedic writers would say, but beyond them. There seems to be no clear indication, moreover, on whether the different levels of the universe

⁶⁾ Viewed in single cases, the philological argument is often convincing. Thieme, for example, in an article argued the impossibility of reconstructing Proto-Aryan religious terms by projecting naively Rigvedic data into Proto-Aryan times. This would be against philological principle, which relies upon primary sources of Proto-Aryan. Paul Thieme, "The 'Aryan' Gods of the Mitanni Treaties", in Journal of the American Oriental Society, 1960, n.80, pp.301-17.

⁷⁾ See Hin. p.17.

where they dwell correspond to their rank of sovereignty, for gods sometimes change their abodes and hence have no constant position in regard to their rank. So it goes without saying that any attempts to form a neat pantheon rank of the Vedic gods would always meet failure, for ambiguity is characteristic of any God of the Vedas.

Another classification could be, then, viewed from their functions which are indicated by the gods' names, for they have names like Tvaṣṭṛ (artificer), Savitṛ (stimulator), Bṛhaspati or Brahmanaspati (lord of prayer). Dumézil one of the exponents of Vedic mythology, classified gods according to the threefold pattern of their functions: a) the magic-religious or juridic-religious function; b) the function of material force and military power and c) the function of * fecundity and economic prosperity.⁸⁾ In such a consideration the importance of gods lies not so much in their position any more than on the efficacy of their functions, and this to a great extent is related to their capacities in meeting the human needs. And if the mentality of Vedic religion was "do ut des" as some were prompt to call it,⁹⁾ the supremacy of any God or gods would be of secondary importance. The first

⁸⁾ These patterns are much discussed in almost of all the works of Dumézil, but especially in L'idéologie tripartite des Indo-Européens, collection Latomus, vol.31, Brussels, 1958.

⁹⁾ See, for example, Macdonell, A., Arthur, M.A., Ph.D., A History of Sanskrit Literature, London, 1900.p.73.

importance would be naturally their closeness and familiarity to men, their generosity or even their popularity.

This last consideration leads one to think immediately on the frequency with which gods are invoked in the hymns of the Vedas, as a basis for comparison. Some are invoked often, such as Indra (250 times), Agni (200 times) or Soma (100 times) and by this frequency one measures their popularity. It is very likely that this is to be considered as category for determining their importance. However, most of the gods are invoked only a few times, even less than 10 times, amongst whom is Vishnu.

Zaehner agrees that the importance of Vedic gods for the Vedic religion lies in their closeness to human needs and cravings, for it is precisely this characteristic of what he called "worldiness", which differentiates the Vedic religion from the inwardness of the Upanishads and the extravagances of the later theistic cults.¹⁰ Yet Zaehner would surely not be disposed to consider Vishnu insignificant only because he was invoked in a very few hymns. This is due, rather, to reasons which will be discussed later.

What can be said, then, of the Vedic pantheon? Can we perceive an order of ranks - if it exists at all - to arrive

¹⁰. Zaehner seemed to be disposed to hold that the Vedic religion was exempted from extreme tendencies both of the preceding religion of the conquered people with their phallus-worship, which would be revived in later cults, and of the following religion of the Upanishads. See Hin. p.15.

at a supremacy among the gods? To this question there seems no exact answer. Ambiguity in the order of the gods' rank has led Max Müller to his well known theory of Henotheism. In his theory he explained that the Vedic gods were adored one after another. For this reason, he also called his theory Kathenotheism. He maintained that such a theory is needed to distinguish the Vedic religious phenomenon from that which merits to be considered as Monotheism properly, for whereas Monotheism embraces only one supreme God, Kathenotheism embraces many gods but adores them exclusively one after another. In other words, Monotheism adores one God, whereas Kathenotheism adores single gods. In such a manner Henotheism or Kathenotheism would appear to reconcile the two views on classification of gods in regard both to their supreme position and their popularity, for in his theory Max Müller maintains that each God gained supremacy during the time he was invoked.¹¹⁾

But Henotheism has not yet answered the question concerning the supreme position as such of the Vedic

¹¹⁾. The theory of Henotheism can be found in Max Müller, Origine et Developpement de la Religion. On account of his terminology he said: "...C'est ce caractère particulier de la religion védique, ce culte successif de différents dieux suprêmes, que je demande la permission de désigner sous le nom d'Hénothéisme, ou d'un nom plus barbare encore, mais plus précis, de Kathénothéisme; je veux par ce nom distinguer cette phase religieuse de celle qui subordonne les dieux multiples à un dieu suprême, et qui, par suite, donne une satisfaction plus complète à la recherche de l'Un sans second. Ibid., p.246-247.

pantheon, for it does not adore only one God but single gods. Deep in its roots, Vedic religion still recognized many gods. This might be understandable, for Vedic religion was akin to the Indo-European, which was frankly polytheistic, and its mythologies were akin to those of Greece and Rome, which were polytheistic in nature. However, while the Greeks and Romans had succeeded in elevating Zeus and Jupiter respectively to the position of the Supreme, by whom the positions of the other gods had been definitely determined, the Vedas did not proceed so far.¹²⁾ Even if Indra could emerge to his position as "king of the gods", this position did not last for the whole Vedic period, for his importance was immediately subordinated to the sacrificial rite.¹³⁾

Hence the pantheon in the Vedas is something problematic, for it is neither polytheistic nor monotheistic in proper sense. Even though the Vedas recognized so many gods, they are not completely polytheistic, for their polytheism was always slipping over into Henotheism. On the other hand it is neither sufficiently proved that the Vedas recognized

¹²⁾ See CD. p.61

¹³⁾ See Hin. p.36 The oldest among the gods of heaven in the Rig-Veda, who was identical with the Greek Zeus and the Roman Jupiter, should be Dyaus. Yet still less than Indra, this personification of the sky as a god never went beyond a rudimentary stage in the Rig-Veda. Cf. Macdonell, A., Arthur, Ibidem p.74.

monotheism as such.¹⁴ According to Zaehner the Vedas remain hesitant between polytheism and monotheism.

3. Some Individual Gods

It would seem pointless to treat each god of the Vedas, not only because the greater part of the Vedic gods are referred to in only a few passages of hymns and therefore cannot be considered significant, but also and mainly because the individualities of the Vedic gods themselves are still quite debatable.

Thus, we will merely discuss the six gods of the Vedas to whom Zaehner devoted passages in his Hinduism, before we proceed to the hymns of creation in the late Rig-Veda, which will clear the way on the position of the Vedic pantheon before the Supreme One. These six gods are Agni-Soma, Indra-Varuna and Rudra-Vishnu and will be presented in pairs because Zaehner sees them as closely linked.¹⁵ They are

¹⁴. Gonda, J. and others maintained that the Veda is more important than the pantheon. "Selon la conception traditionnelle, le Veda est de première importance, et le panthéon d'importance secondaire; le Veda, en effet, est la vérité éternelle elle-même, l'autorité infaillible, le fil conducteur de la conduite, la source de toute connaissance". Gonda, J. Les Religions de l'Inde, vol. I. Vedisme e Hindouisme Ancien, Paris, 1962, p.27. But Veda is not God as they would consider the devas as gods, so in this sense, their appreciation to the Veda, need not to be taken into account.

¹⁵. For the general features of these six gods, from which to sift the peculiarities of Zaehner's view, I have taken materials from Gonda, J., Les Religions de l'Inde, vol. I Vedisme e Hindouisme Ancien, Paris, 1962, pp.5-128; Oldenberg H., Die Religion des Veda, Berlin, 1917, pp. 103-

considered important for respectively different reasons: Agni and Soma as gods of ritual importance because of their closeness to man, Indra and Varuna for their popularity in the spheres of war and ethics, Rudra and Vishnu for their future prospects as the Supreme Being.

3.1. Agni-Soma

Agni is the most intimate and familiar god to Vedic man. He is close to man for he dwells among man on this earth. When they turn to him with respect and affectionate familiarity, Agni does not leave them in the lurch, for he is their protector. He is ready to help in the times of difficulty. Sometimes he is considered the "friend", "brother", "guest" of the family or even an assistant in humble household tasks. He likes to manifest himself most preferably with surnames Agni Vaishvanara (Agni who belongs to all men).

Yet Agni does not dwell only in this earth among men, he dwells in the other two worlds as well. As fire, he is to consume sacrifices, which are important for maintaining and continually renewing life. Thus, according to the Vedic religion, Agni is born three times: on the earth by the friction of two fire-sticks he becomes fire, in the atmosphere he is born from the womb of clouds as lightning

306; Ragōzin, Zenaide A., Vedic India, London-New York, 1895, pp.131-187.

and in heaven he is born as the sun. In such a pattern Agni becomes the God that binds together the three worlds. This is even more the case in regard to the role he plays not only as fire that consumes the sacrifice, but as the priest who presents that sacrifice to gods. Indeed he is the Hotar, the divine priest, without whom no sacrifice could be approved. Quite naturally, he becomes the mediator between gods and men. To put it in Zaehner's words referring to an expression in the Rig-Veda,

"He is the meeting place of gods and men and the bond of union between them: pervading everything in heaven and atmosphere and earth as sun and lightning and fire he is non the less the 'navel of the earth' [RV.1.59.2], the sacral 'centre' of the family, the tribe, and ultimately of the whole universe".¹⁶⁾

But if Agni is the element which unites the three world-levels, his role, to some extent cannot be separated from Soma, for both as fire and priest, Agni still requires Soma, that which is sacrificed or devoured. This consideration leads to the necessity of the collaboration between Agni and Soma; the first is fire, the latter oblation; the first is consumer the latter consumption. The whole of existence fundamentally consists of two functions, the Devoured (Anna) and the Devourer (Annâda).¹⁷⁾

¹⁶⁾ Citation by Zaehner in Hin. p.20.

¹⁷⁾ This view is explicitly displayed by Danielou A., Le Polythéisme Hindou, Buchet/Chastel, 1960, pp.107-112.

Let us see the proper traits of Soma. Soma is the juice which comes out from the plant of that same name when squeezed during the soma cult. Such a plant was generally found in Vedic times in the mountains. As liquid Soma is drinkable. But more than just something intoxicating, Soma is renewing life, giving strength, rendering ever young those who drink it, in short it is an elixir of immortality (amrtam). It is no wonder that Soma is considered the drink of the Vedic gods just like nectar for the Greek gods, and this still even more true in the case of Indra, who is said to drink Soma in pailfuls at a sitting.

The effect of Soma was so potential and there would be accordingly no surprise that thorough preparations and proper arts are needed to produce such a particular kind of drink. The so-called Soma cult plays undoubtedly an important role in the Vedic religion, in which the plant soma is pressed and a certain liquid is squeezed out of it. In the hymns to Soma (Soma pavamāna) which cover the whole book 9 of the Rig-Veda, we can observe how the plant is pressed and the liquid is poured through a woolen filter into a vat containing milk and water. Many would hold that the Soma cult represents or symbolizes the natural phenomenon of rains falling down from the sky to the earth. This is a representation of divine reality, that is, the fall of subtle beings as the offspring of heaven, which pass through the atmosphere, reach the

earth, and become earthly creatures, vegetative and animal as well as human.

Basing himself on some distinct passages of the Rig-Veda, Zaehner however is disposed to conclude further that the Soma ritual, in Vedic view, is not only representation but an identification of that celestial phenomenon. Quoting some phrases of the Vedas, he says,

"the sieve which filters the juice, as we have seen, is likened to the sky; indeed it is the sky. Soma is 'in the navel of heaven, the woolen filter' [RV.9.12.4], it 'traverses the lights of heaven in the woolen filter' [ibid.9.37.3], or 'purifying himself in heaven ... he walks with the sun in the filter' [ibid. 9.27.5]. In none of this is any incongruity felt, for the cultic act creates a magical rapport with the entire cosmos, and the woollen filter thus becomes the center of the universe and identical with the sky. And so it is that the golden plant though born of the mountains on earth is also the 'child of heaven' [ibid.9.38.5] and though 'running in the vat' it is also 'heaven's Lord who has a hundred rays.' [ibid.9.86.11]."¹⁸⁾

Hereby Zaehner has noticed the magical tendency which would become clearer only in the later period, the period of the Brähmanas.

3.2. Indra-Varuna

While Agni and Soma are both considered to dwell on the same level of the threefold universe, that is the earth, Indra and Varuna dwell in different places, for Indra is of the atmosphere, but Varuna of heaven, the highest of the

¹⁸⁾ Citations by Zaehner in Hin. pp.21-22.

three. This is understandable enough for in the earlier Veda, Varuna is regarded as the most sublime god of heaven, the son of Aditi and therefore is called adityas, together with Mitra and Aryaman. Some traced the etymology of the name of Varuna, which is supposed to come from "vri" which means to cover or to envelop. Varuna means, therefore, the coverer or the enfolder of all. He is the sky god, the all-covering. As sky god, he is often associated with Dyaus and regarded as putting on his shoes. Concerning his sovereignty the Rig-Veda [1.24.6-7] says:

"None hath attained to thy sovereignty and power,
None to thine undaunted spirit, - (none,-)
Nor swift-winged bird, nor restless-moving water,
Nor (mountain) curbing wind's impulsive might.

In the bottomless (abyss) king Varuna
By the power of his pure will upholds aloft
The (cosmic) tree's high crown. There stand below
(The branches), and above the roots. Within us
May the banners of his light be firmly set!"¹⁹⁾

Sovereign though he is, his department is limited to the nocturnal sky. The stars are his eyes or again his spies that guard and watch the whole world and will catch men in their malice, covetousness and evil deeds. Of course he can put them in fetters until they implore his mercy to liberate them. He is omniscient and no one can hide himself from his watch. He is tough in punishing them. In these traits he is considered both the maker and guardian of rule. His rule

¹⁹⁾ Cf. HS.p.3

comprises both the spiritual and cosmological spheres, this means both ethical norms and the law of nature. In this consideration, Zaehner cannot help referring to the relation of this rule which the Vedas call Rta with the later Dharma.²⁰⁾

Varuna is indeed the embodiment of law. Rather than as guardian of cosmic order, his importance as the guardian of moral law is more meaningful, for in the latter case he is privileged to show quite distinctly the personal trait of Vedic deities, in which no other gods, except perhaps the other adityas, might share. In the Rig-Veda there is a constant ambivalence between the personal and the impersonal, but if the personal should be sometimes, dominant, it is due to the moral concepts represented by Varuna.

What can be said of Indra in relation to Varuna? Is not he of the different world from that of Varuna? Far from being collaborators like Agni-Soma, is not Indra the rival of Varuna? The answer is definitively affirmative, for even though he dwells in the second level of the universe, Indra is the most frequently invoked in the Vedas and remains the greatest rival to Varuna in competing for the shoes of Dyaus, the sky god. Moreover since he succeeded in smashing Dasas, the pre-Aryan population of the Indus valley and the great

²⁰⁾ See Hin. pp. 30 and 35.

adversaries of the Aryan people, Indra gained even more popularity.

Indra is also regarded as the god of warriors and acquires the epithet "Vṛtra-han" (slayer of Vṛtra). Since Vṛtra could be interpreted in three different ways the myth of Indra could also be interpreted in three ways. Firstly Vṛtra can mean "obstruction", "defence" or "vigour". So the myth of Indra slaying Vṛtra can be interpreted as the destruction of the power of enemy, whose fortresses were mountains. Secondly, Vṛtra is considered also the "demon of drought"; hence, the victory of Indra means the liberation of waters, wealth and prosperity. In this case Indra's mace is the thunderbolt which delivered sunlight from darkness. Thirdly, the myth of Indra means the restoration of the cosmic order from chaos, for by the Vṛtra's imprisonment, Indra refashioned the new world. In short, Indra's victory is the Aryan victory.²¹⁾

Indra is the hero, but his heroism is still more distinctive for it implies his taking over Varuna's authority. And this has made a great shift in the Vedic sense concerning the meaning of the words asura and deva, the epithets used by Varuna and Indra respectively. In the Vedas Varuna is always king by divine right and is called universal

²¹⁾. This three interpretations of Indra's myth is found in Hin. p.23

universal (monarch)
 monarch (samrāj). He is god of morality, as we have mentioned above, god of reason and cunning, asuras "par excellence". In the earlier Vedas, asuras still retains its original meaning of "sovereign gods" equivalent to ahuras in Iranian religion.²²⁾ Devas, which are equivalent to Iranian daevas, are supposed to be a class of demons, the adversaries of asuras. With the rise of Indra, everything is turned upside down. Indra is known as king for his strength - we remember his quaffing of the Soma - and for slaying his enemies. He becomes monarch in his own right (svarāj): As god of rains and lightning, he is a nature god, terrible and menacing.

With the rise of Indra, Varuna 'fades away. The devas become sovereign pushing out the asuras, who come to be considered demons. Indra's victory implies also his taking over Varuna's attributes. Hence, Zaehner comments,

"attributes that had formerly been proper to Varuna now pass over to Indra. Varuna is the guardian of the law, cosmic order, and truth (ṛta), the sworn enemy of falsehood: he is the punisher of sin. Indra also arrogates to himself the administration of law [RV.1.133.1]. Free from falsehood [ibid. 3.32.9] he 'burns out all spirits of untruth' [ibid.1.133.1],

²²⁾ In Iranian religion the ahuras coalesced into the one figure of Ahura Mazda, and this Ahura is close to Vedic Varuna. This can be seen through the similarities of each in his own scripture. For example, Ahura is always connected with Mithra, just like the Vedic Varuna with Mitra; again in the Gatha (Zoroastrian Scripture), Ahura is connected exclusively with Asha, Truth, something which is so typical also of the Vedic Varuna. In Zaehner's words: "He (Varuna), like Ahura Mazda is ṛtavan (=Avestan shavan), 'possessed of truth' or 'maintaining order' he is the guardian of Truth (ṛtasya gopa), the 'lord of truth and light who increases Truth by means of Truth itself'." DTZ.pp. 67-68.

sharpens his arrows against the lie and drives our sins away [ibid. 4.23.7]. Even the 'craftiness' or 'guile' (māyā) which typified Varuna passes over to him, and to crown all the gods bestow on him the dignity of asuras of which his destruction of Vrtra has made him worthy."²³

3.3. Rudra-Vishnu

Rudra and Vishnu are taken up in only a few hymns in the Vedas, and Zaehner himself in his Hinduism does not speak much of them compared to the other gods we have mentioned. But as he insists, both gods are indisputably important in reference to their later positions, each in his own way as the Supreme Being. Such might never have been presumed by the Vedic Aryan.

Rudra is to be the "dreadful" and at the same time "tender" Śiva of the later period in Hinduism. Yet in the Vedas Śiva is only an epithet for Rudra, which means "mild" and "auspicious", something which as yet does not have a very clear correlation with the characteristics of the later Śiva. The dreadfulness of Rudra, however, can be perceived in some passages of the Vedas, when it is said, following Zaehner's citations, that Rudra

"the divine archer, pursues a solitary course, seeking whom he may devour. He, the 'great Asura of heaven' [RV.2.1.6] and universal lord, shoots his arrow at whom he will, and his arrows bring death and disease, 'fever, cough, and poison' [AV.11.2.22] ..."²⁴

²³ · Citations by Zaehner in Hin. p.28

²⁴ · Citations by Zaehner in Hin.p.33

As for his tenderness, this can be perceived from some passages, for the sage of the Veda said:

"As a son bows down to a father who esteems him,
So, Rudra, (bow I) to thee, as thou drawest nigh:
(Thee,) giver of much, the lord of truth I praise,-
And praised, thou givest us thy healing remedies.
[RV.2.33.12].²⁵⁾

And he is said to be a physician whose hand is "soothing, healing, and cool" [RV.2.33.7].²⁶⁾ In both cases, dreadfulness and tenderness, Rudra reminds us of the characteristics of Varuna who punishes severely and forgives with compassion. This paradox is applicable both to Varuna and Rudra.²⁷⁾

The other reference that relates Rudra to the later Śiva is found in the Atharva-Veda, in which Rudra is given the title paśupati (the "lord of cattle"), as is Śiva in the later period. Zaehner alludes to the similarity of this trait to the figure from the Harappā seals, in which an ithyphallic Yogin was surrounded not only by cattle, but by all kinds of wild animals. This again refers to the later Śiva who is god of phallus and a yogin as well.²⁸⁾ As for Vishnu, he is mentioned only in six hymns of the Rig-Veda. It is evident that he would gain his popularity only in the later period.

²⁵⁾ . Hin.p.33 cf. HS.p.6

²⁶⁾ . Idem.

²⁷⁾ . See Hin. pp.33 and 35.

²⁸⁾ . See Hin. pp.16 and 34.

If the paradoxal characters of Varuna are applicable to Rudra, it is Indra's heroism that is close to Vishnu. One of his heroic acts, which has given rise to many interpretations, is his three miraculous steps with which he measures out the whole universe.

"I will now proclaim the manly powers of Vishnu
Who measured out earth's broad expanses,
Propped up the highest place of meeting:
Three steps he paced, the widely striding !"

For (this), his manly power is Vishnu praised
Like a dread beast he wanders where he will,
Haunting the mountains: in his three wide paces
All worlds and beings (bhuvana) dwell.
[RV.1.64.1].²⁹

Zaehner assumes that this act is a faint adumbration of the doctrine of samsāra, for it would mean that "Vishnu circumscribes the cosmos in space: he sets a limit to the finite world. So too in time he sets the 360 days and nights in motion 'like a self-revolving wheel'."³⁰

4. Some Notes on Earlier Vedic Gods

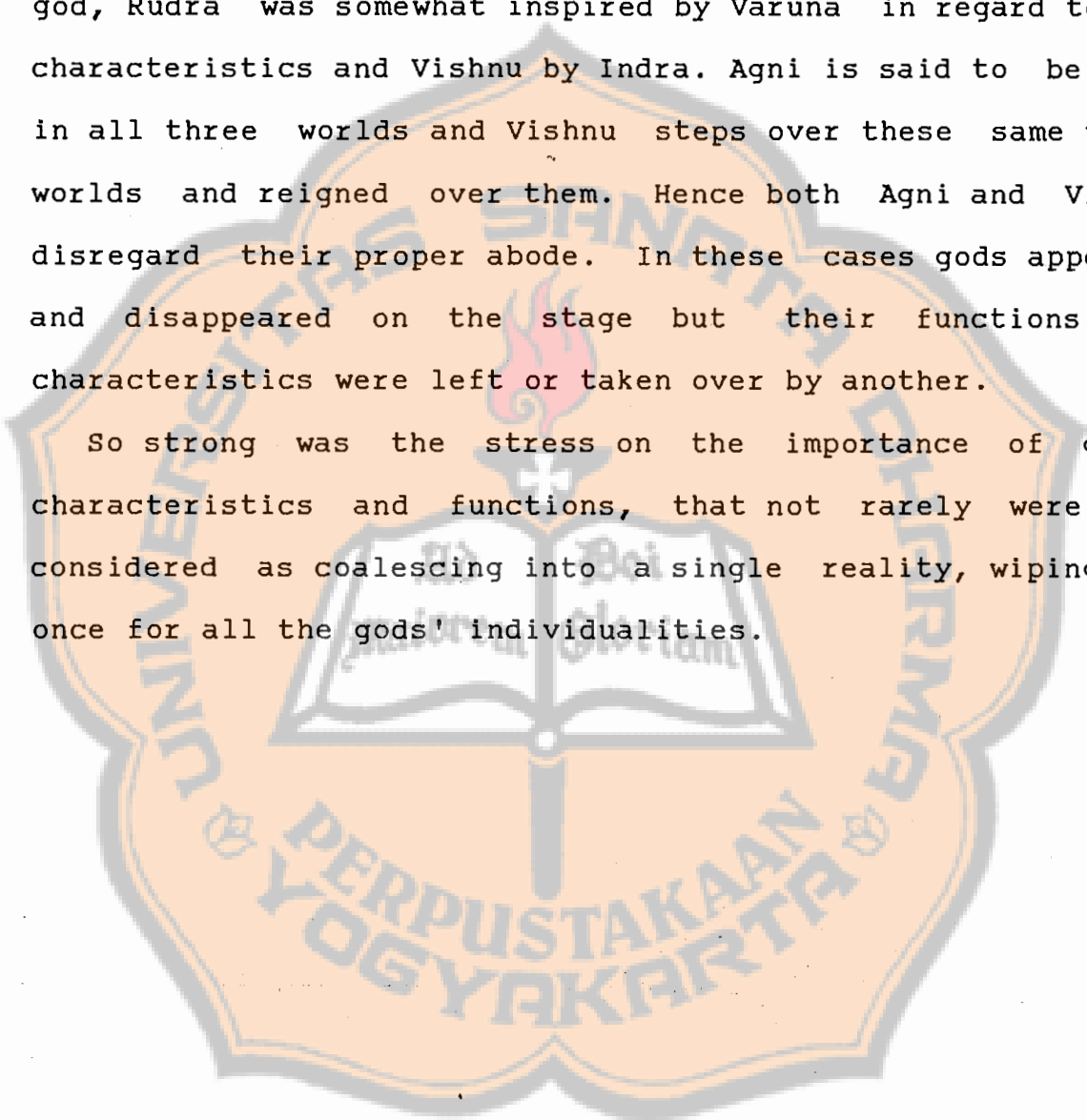
So far we have spoken of the earlier Vedic gods. Before proceeding further into the treatment of the conception of godhead in the late Rig-Veda, it is worth noting some significant points. There are at least two points that can be summed up as follows:

²⁹ - See HS. p.4

³⁰ - Hin. p.34

The first point is on the disposition of gods regarding their individualities. The individualities of gods are still much attached to their characters. Scholars are of the same accord that the Vedic gods gained their importance for their functions rather than for their individualities, and not vice versa. This we have alluded in the precedent pages and made manifest through the treatment of some individual gods. Functions and characters of gods did indeed matter more than their individualities, for it is said that the gods compete with each other to gain those functions or characteristics. Hence Indra took over Varuna's authority as the sovereign god, Rudra was somewhat inspired by Varuna in regard to his characteristics and Vishnu by Indra. Agni is said to be born in all three worlds and Vishnu steps over these same three worlds and reigned over them. Hence both Agni and Vishnu disregard their proper abode. In these cases gods appeared and disappeared on the stage but their functions and characteristics were left or taken over by another.

So strong was the stress on the importance of gods' characteristics and functions, that not rarely were they considered as coalescing into a single reality, wiping out once for all the gods' individualities.



App p. 333 in
 "They call it Indra, Mitra, Varuna, or Fire; or again it is the celestial bird Garutma. What is but one the wise call by manifold names." [RV.1.164.46].³¹⁾

This is no indication at all of monotheism, Zaehner insists, for it would seem to oversimplify the thing, but shows only that the Vedic polytheism is always unsteady and ever slipping into henotheism. In short there is nothing which can be stated safely or definitely about the disposition of the earlier Vedic gods.

The second point which can be drawn out from our recourse to Zaehner's treatment of the Vedic gods is the allusion to the religious comprehensions of the later epoch, which to some extent already existed in the Vedic atmosphere. Zaehner's choice of the six Vedic gods, who need to be retained, to some extent seems motivated by this interest. In case of Rudra-Vishnu, this interest is evident, for these two gods have no great significance except in reference to their future prospects, for each would become the supreme God in his own way. In this consideration Varuna's significance is his being the guardian of Rta, for this would become the later Dharma. Meanwhile the competition of Indra-Varuna may be showing the competition between the class of Brāhmanas and Kshatrya which proceed contemporaneously in the history of

³¹⁾ Zaehner cites this well known passage more than once in his books as if it summed up the whole idea on gods of the earlier Vedas. See p.e. Hin. pp.19 and 39; AST. p.29; CD. p.62.

India. In the figure of Soma, Zaehner refers to the tendency clearly shown during the soma cult to identify what is happening in the ritual with the reality itself. This tendency was developing further more in the Brāhmanic era, and would surely "pave the way for that greatest identification of all - that of the human soul with the Absolute itself -"³² in the Upanishads. Yet these are all no more than faint forebodings, out of which we can not yet draw any inference.

5. God in the Myths of Creation

We have seen how the earlier Vedic gods merge into one another. The Vedic sages were likely searching for similarities among gods rather than considering them as individuals by excluding each other. This manifested the desire to gain one principle which could bind them together. At the end of the Rig-Veda, such a desire is showed with much zest in the so-called cosmological hymns, that is the hymns that render homage to the firstborn amongst all, beyond and before the other creatures. He is called Viśvakarman, Prajāpati, or again Purusha. These names are all proposed to meet the need of answering the question of the One, the Supreme, the source of all. Do they succeed in this mission? Let us see.

³². See Hin.p.21

There is a clear shift in the concept of deities from the earlier Vedas to this late Rig-Veda.³³ Zaehner laboriously worked out this late Rig-Veda, limiting himself to the myths of creation in the five hymns, which according to him gave the clearest idea of this shift. The shift of the concept of deities lies in the fact that the earlier gods, although they transcend mere natural phenomena and gain their proper names such as Indra or Varuna, do not even raise any question about the supreme One. They remain therefore in their plurality and still compete with each other for a better position in front of man. The new gods, we would say, are not so much concerned with man's oblation as with the process of creation, the "how" everything is produced or made, the source of everything, the supreme One who creates all.

The difference between the new gods and the earlier ones can be noticed also from the names that they embrace. Whereas the earlier gods by transcending natural phenomena somewhat leave their originality and become abstract, the new gods with new names like Prajāpati (the "Lord of Creatures"), Viśvakarman (the "All-Maker") and Purusha (the "Primal Man") represent a new reality to the Vedic man. In this lies the

³³. There is no exact date regarding the compilation of the late Rig-Veda 10, but it seems safe to push the date to some period when the Aryan people had reached the upper part of Jumna river and had contacts with the native people whom they took later as their servants. See footnote no.2.

beginning of philosophy, for curiosity was piqued and the first speculations began to be formulated.³⁴⁾

In general Zaehner distinguishes three modes of creation which the late Rig-Veda seems to perceive. The first mode is by carving out some preexistent material into a certain form, the second is by the fertilization of the waters out of which an embryo was generated and the third is by the sacrifice of the so-called Primal Man. In the following passages we will see their relations.

5.1. Creation by carving out of some preexistent material

In the Rig-Veda 10.81 and 82 the Vedic sage dedicated his hymns to what he called Viśvakarman. There are some ideas on the creation of the universe that are contained in these two hymns. The central actor is Viśvakarman. Already in the first stanza of the first hymn, he is also called the original seer, father and high priest. In those traits Visvakarman acts as maker or creator of all. But as clearly seen from the hymn, he does not create out of nothing, because it is stated that there already existed material:

³⁴⁾ . See AST.p.31. Elsewhere Zaehner compares the beginning of philosophy in Hinduism with that among the Greeks. Both started by pushing out the old gods of polytheism and searching for a principle of unity. These two philosophies however were developing differently in later times. But the peculiarity of the development of philosophy in India in later times is much shown by this comparison. See "The Ghost of Heraclitos" and "The Phantom of Permenides", two chapters of OSG. pp.74-132.

"What was the wood? What was the tree
from which heaven and earth were fashioned forth?"
Ask, ask, ye wise in heart, on what did he rely
That he should (thus) support (these) worlds?
[RV.10.81.4].³⁵⁾

Hence there are two distinct elements in the act of creation: the God creator, i.e. Viśvakarman and the wood, the tree or to use the philosophical term "materia prima" (adhiṣṭhāna). They are distinct as the fashioner and that out of which something is fashioned, the efficient cause and the material cause.

No explanation is given regarding the "materia prima", so that it remains obscure throughout the hymn. As for the action of creating it is described as "bringing forth", "forging together", "unfolding" or "fashioning forth", all of which indicate that no creation out of nothing is being conceived. This leads us to the conclusion that there is a dichotomy between the creator himself and the "materia prima". The God creator is considered only as the "efficient cause" of the universe, as Zaehner puts it, but not as the "material cause."³⁶⁾

³⁵⁾ HS. p.7 ; All the hymns analysed in this part can be found in the Hindu Scriptures, translated and edited by Zaehner, R.C., London, 1984 (1966).

³⁶⁾ See Zaehner, R.C., "Creation in the Early Hindu Scriptures", in Studia Missionalia, XVIII, Roma, 1969, p.18. We rely very much on this article in fashioning the interpretation of Zaehner on the gods in the Rig-Veda 10.

The second hymn to Viśvakarman [RV.10.82] stresses his supremacy by giving him attributes like "Disposer, Ordainer, highest Exemplar, the One beyond the Seven Seers ... beyond the heavens, beyond this earth, beyond the gods, beyond the Asuras." These all indicate that he is the Supreme Being, the One from whom all else proceeds.

The fifth and sixth stanzas of this second hymn depict with much clarity that the One, this All-Maker is begotten from the waters:

"Beyond the heavens, beyond this earth
Beyond the gods, beyond the Asuras,
What was the first embryo the waters bore
To which all the gods bore witness ?

He was the first embryo the waters bore
In whom all gods together came
The One implanted in the Unborn's navel
In which all the worlds abode."
[RV.10.82.5-6].³⁷⁾

Even though he is beyond everything, even though all gods came from him, even though all the worlds abode in him, still he is not himself without beginning. In such a case he is akin to Prajāpati, the actor of the second mode of creation, who was also out of waters.

5.2. Creation by generating an embryo out of water

The second mode of creation by generating an embryo out of waters is clearly shown in the hymn of Riq-Veda 10.121. It shows deep dissatisfaction with the earlier gods in their

³⁷⁾ Cf. HS. p.8

plurality and the zeal to search for the supreme One. The question of "What God shall we rever with oblation" is repeated in every stanza with much insistance. The hymn sounds so despairing that the answer of the last stanza gives much relief:

"Prajāpati ! none other than you has comprehended
All these creatures brought to birth
Whatever desires be ours in offering up
The oblation to thee, may that be ours !
May we be lords of riches!"[RV.10.121.10].³⁸⁾

Who is Prajāpati, this "Lord of Creatures"? He is exposed in the first stanza as the "Golden Embryo" who was born "in the beginning" but "once born he was out of the waters, yet after his birth he takes over the whole universe, including the waters itself, for after his birth he "looked upon the waters, looked on them with power."³⁹⁾ It seems obvious that in this second mode of creation, the new Veda can not avoid the same problem of the dichotomy which already existed in Viśvakarman, for here again two things exist: the God of all, the "Lord of Creatures" and the waters, who gave birth to him. But the problem here appears more acute because the focus of the whole hymn is the birth of God himself. Should it mean that he is subsequent to them, and therefore inferior? And yet, he "looked upon the waters, looked on them with power"?

³⁸⁾. Cf. HS.p.11

³⁹⁾. R.C. Zaehner, *Ibidem*, p.21.

To clear up (or to confuse?) the matter we will have to trace the idea of waters, following Zaehner, by proposing the hymn of Rig-Veda 10.129. The first and the second stanzas of the hymn bring us to "the beginning" of time, when nothing can be stated with certainty.

"Then neither Being nor Not-being was
Nor atmosphere, nor firmament, nor what is beyond
What did it encompass? Where? In whose protection?
What was water, the deep, the unfathomable?

Neither death nor immortality was there then
No sign of night or day
The One breathed, windless, by his own energy
Nothing else existed then." [RV.10.129.1-2].⁴⁰

To this stanza Zaehner can not help seeing a parallel with the Genesis 1.2 which says: "Now the earth was a formless void, there was darkness over the deep and God's spirit hovered over the water".⁴¹ Obviously the stanza deals with darkness, a formless void, the deep, unfathomable or as expressed in the following stanza, "darkness swathed in darkness" or again "the void". These are all in the new Vedic sage's view the description of "the beginning", which in no way means an historical time, but the stage of the source of everything. These are all, in short, identical with "waters" or in singular form simply "water", the chaotic and undifferentiated state.

⁴⁰ - HS. pp.11-12

⁴¹ - R.C. Zaehner, Ibidem, p.22

What is there to say of the Being and Not-being? In the fourth stanza, it is said that the "bond of Being" is found in "Not-being"; in Zaehner's view this would simply say that "Being" is considered to derive from "Not-being", just as the Golden Embryo issues from the waters. Proceeding still further, Zaehner says that "Not-being" is the equivalent of primal, undifferentiated matter; as such it is not perceptible to the senses because it is as yet "unmanifest". Being on the other hand, means no more than what we conceive to be the objectively real in the phenomenal world.⁴²⁾ This means that Being, the "Golden Embryo" is the first born of all creation, yet so far we have not settled the problem for the mystery of creation remains obscure, as is expressed in the last stanza :

"Whence this emanation hath arisen
 Whether God disposed it, or whether he did not, -
 Only he who is its overseer in highest heaven knows,
 He only knows, or perhaps he does not know."
 [RV.10.129.7]⁴³⁾

In this last stanza we come across suddenly an idea of a transcendent God, who is above and quite out of the whole process of the generation. He is too remote to intervene or to take control over the process of generation. And perhaps

⁴²⁾. Ibidem, p.23. Zaehner notes that the discussion on Being and Not-being becomes more acute in the Upanishads, where the inverse interpretation i.e. the predominance of Being over Non-being could be also held.

⁴³⁾. HS.p.12.

"he does not know" at all what was happening. But who is he? Is he not the God, father of both Prajāpati and the "materia prima"?

5.3. Creation through the sacrifice of the Primal Man

Through an analysis of the Rig-Veda 10.90, we come to the third mode of creation. The hymn is entitled "Purusha Sukta", the sacrifice of the "Primal Man". The central idea is that the whole universe was fashioned through the sacrifice of this "Primal Man", which is clearly expressed from the eight stanza on:

"From this sacrifice completely offered
The clotted ghee was gathered up:
From this he fashioned beasts and birds,
Creatures of the woods and creatures of the village."
[RV.10.90.8].⁴⁴⁾

More striking is perhaps the ninth stanza, for it tells the origin of the Vedas:

"From this sacrifice completely offered
Were born the Rig- and Sama-Veda;
From this were born the metres,
From this was the Yajur-Veda born."
[RV.10.90.9].⁴⁵⁾

The fashion of the four classes is being told in the tenth and eleventh stanzas through the division of the "Primal Man":

"When they divided (primal) Man
Into how many parts did they divide him?
What was his mouth? What his arms?"

⁴⁴⁾ · HS.p.9

⁴⁵⁾ · Idem.

What are his thighs called? What his feet?

The Brahman was his mouth,
The arms were made the Prince,
His thighs the common people,
And from his feet the serf was born."
[RV.10.90.10-11].⁴⁶⁾

The remaining stanzas similarly speak of the fashioning of the natural bodies, the three worlds and other things always through the division of the body of the "Primal Man".

But what or who is this "Primal Man"? Zaehner explains that he is the personification of the universe: he is the cosmic man, as the stanzas themselves have clearly shown, for he is identical with the whole universe, and every piece of the universe has its share in the "Primal Man". But such an explanation does not yet suffice, if it is not totally mistaken, for the preceding stanzas say something more. They show the true nature of this "Primal Man", which is so gigantic in scale that the whole universe merely form a quarter of him, whereas three quarters remain hidden and immortal in heaven.⁴⁷⁾

To this ambiguous hymn, Zaehner offers two possible interpretations. The hymn can be interpreted as showing pantheism, because the world is not distinct from God; they substantially the same. Yet it can be interpreted as not pantheistic as well, because by his three quarters which are

⁴⁶⁾ HS.p.9

⁴⁷⁾ R.C. Zaehner, *Ibidem*, p.24.

immortal, he transcends everything which is mortal.⁴⁸ Just as the transcendent God, which suddenly appears in the last stanza of the hymn to Prajapati, this concept of transcendence is also puzzling in a different way, by giving an ambiguous position of God regarding his relation to the world. Again in Zaehner's view, this state can be considered as monist and dualist at the same time, - monist insofar as all beings are one in the "Primal Man", yet dualist because in this one Being there is a dichotomy between "the universe" and "the immortal in heaven".⁴⁹

→ However something peculiar is noticeable in this hymn when it is compared to the other hymns, for whereas the other hymns show the predominance of "materia prima" (or waters, void, darkness, Not-being, in short matter) to God (either Viśvakarman or Prajāpati), the spirit of creation, by considering the latter as being born from or generated by the former, this hymn shows it the other way round. Here the "Primal Man", the male principle is predominant to the female, i.e. the whole universe which shares only a quarter of him.⁵⁰ This consideration is further supported by passages from the fifth stanza:

"From him was Virāj born,
From Virāj Man again,

⁴⁸ . See AST.p.33.

⁴⁹ . See CD. p.74

⁵⁰ . See CD. p.73

Once born, - behind, before,
He reached beyond the earth."
[RV.10.90.5].⁵¹⁾

And Virāj is, according to Zaehner, the female principle, creative and active. ^{Virāj} ~~He~~ ^{She} is the creator God, like the "Golden Embryo", in opposition to the inactive principle of eternity, which is quite naturally the male principle. And the second Purusha, or Man born from Virāj, is no one else than the victim of the cosmic sacrifice which we found in the other stanzas of which we have spoken.⁵²⁾ Hence there exist a certain relation between this hymn and the other hymns which we still have to discuss.

6. Some Notes on the Late Vedic Gods

We have seen how the late Rig-Veda presents an atmosphere quite distinct from that of the earlier Vedas. It introduced new conceptions of gods through its myths of creation in five principal hymns: RV.10.81; RV.10.82; RV.10.121; RV.10.129 and RV.10.90.⁵³⁾ The late Veda no longer paid attention to the old gods, who took great care, one might say, for everyday life of the people. It immersed itself instead in a deeper concern for the inquiry into the supreme God, the source of

⁵¹⁾. HS. p.9

⁵²⁾. See Zaehner, R.C. Ibidem, p.25. See also CD.p.73

⁵³⁾. These are the only hymns of the Rig-Veda 10 that Zaehner chose for his edition of the Hindu Scriptures and are obviously amongst the dearest hymns to him.

all, the principle of unity of the whole universe. Such an inquiry found its answers in the myths of creation. But as the analysis has clearly shown, the myths supplied different ideas of the supreme God:

1). God who created the whole universe by carving out some preexistent undifferentiated mass. This is the creator God, the All-Maker, Viśvakarman.

2). God who is generated by waters, but once born he is the Lord of every being, for he sustains all things, gives them life, rules everything. He is the "Golden Embryo" who once born becomes Prajāpati.

3). God who fashioned the world through self-sacrifice, i.e. dividing himself (or rather part of himself) into pieces which then become all mortal things. Three quarters of him, however, remain immortal in heaven. This mysterious God is Purusha, the Primal Man.

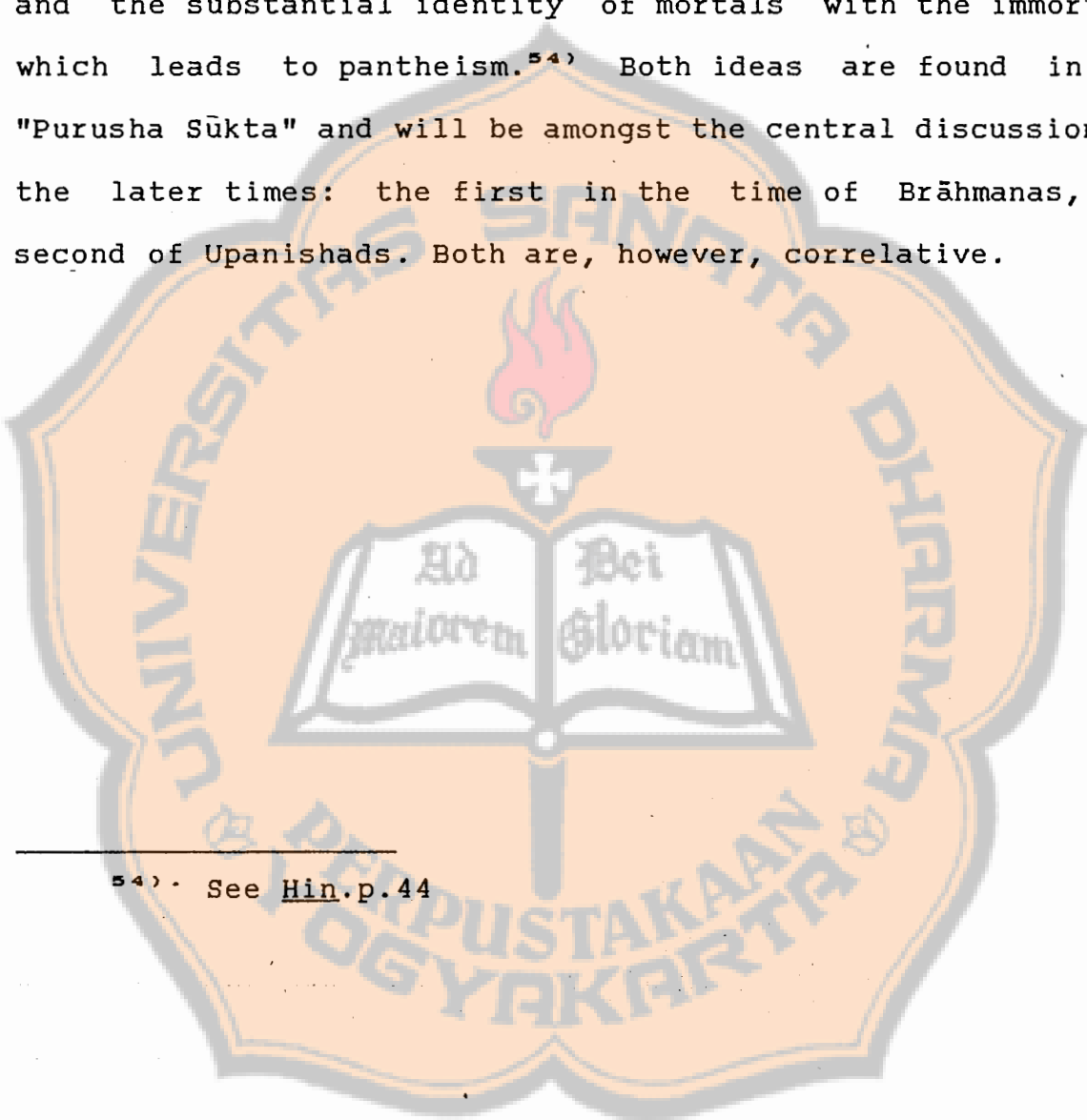
One can perceive that these ideas are not very clear. The late Vedas does not seem to be giving clear statements in the hymns. In some stanzas we even perceive odd ideas which puzzle us.

In spite of this, Zaehner did not fail to see the common sense which spreads all over the hymns. It deals with the fight between the matter and the spirit, which in the hymns can have taken different names, like wood, primal matter, waters, void, darkness for the matter and the God himself,

that is either Viśvakarman, Prajāpati, or Purusha, each in his peculiarity, as the spirit. In all the hymns but one, matter seems to be superior because the hymns speak of the God being born from the waters. In the hymn of "Purusha Sūkta" on the contrary the God is supreme and dominating matter, for the hymn introduces the idea of transcendence. In all this the late Veda anticipates the fight of the two principles, male and female, which is still to take place in the later times.

Two other significant points which can be drawn from this late Veda are the idea of sacrifice as the act of creation and the substantial identity of mortals with the immortal, which leads to pantheism.⁵⁴⁾ Both ideas are found in the "Purusha Sūkta" and will be amongst the central discussion of the later times: the first in the time of Brāhmanas, the second of Upanishads. Both are, however, correlative.

⁵⁴⁾ See Hin.p.44



CHAPTER II : GOD IN THE BRAHMANAS1. Introduction

The Brāhmanas emerged as a new literature following the end of the compilation of the three Vedas. This new literature dealt with the sacred significance of the sacrificial ceremonial and are different in form from the Vedas, for whereas the earlier Vedas were written in poetry, the Brāhmanas were in prose. This is understandable for the Brāhmanas, even though they deal with the sacrificial rituals like the three Vedas, yet they are not concerned with the performances of the rituals as such, but are commentaries and explanations of them. In this way, the Brāhmanas can be considered to stand apart and give practical sacrificial directions as well as mythological and theological speculations on the nature of things. Nevertheless both the Vedas and the Brāhmanas remained closely linked with regard to their concern for sacrifices.

The Atharva-Veda, which was quite distinct from the other Vedas, as we have seen, grew contemporarily with the Brāhmanas and its peculiarly magical tone is shared by the Brāhmanas.¹⁾ Following Zaehner's observation, we will see how the Brāhmanas showed this tendency for magic through their overemphasis the sacrificial rituals.

¹⁾ See Farquhar, J.N., Ibidem, p.23

myths and rite.still to be explained

With the coming of the new literature, a problem arose from the beginning. It dealt with the question on whether the Brāhmanas, since they were closely linked with the Vedas, were to be attributed to the old body of literature or were to be compiled separately. The schools of the Rig- and Sāma-Vedas, considering the arrangement of the vedic texts as sacred and therefore uninterrupted, compiled their Brāhmanas separately. // They used to call afterward the hymns and prayers of the Vedic texts mantras, to distinguish them from the didactic texts of the Brāhmanas. The Yajur-Veda school in the meantime divided into two groups; the first group, under the tutelage of Vajasaneya followed the example of the other schools in separating the Brāhmanas from the vedic texts, whereas the second, considering that the new literature would throw new light on the old texts, attributed the Brāhmanas to the Vedic part. Hence we have until today two kinds of Yajur-Veda, the white and the black. The Brāhmanas of the white Yajur-Veda, that is, of Vajasaneya's school, are known as Śatapatha Brāhmanas (the Brāhmanas of a hundred paths).²⁾

2. The Re-evaluation of the Sacrifice

Myth and rite have important role in religions, and they are closely linked each other. Myth and rite are just two different forms of externalisation of the same fundamental

²⁾ Idem. pp. 25-26.

excitements of human sentiments toward the Absolut. In rite the externalisation is in the mimetic form, while in the myth it follows an historical pattern.³ Yet it is not "historical" in the sense of evolving in time, for the Absolut is beyond space and time. It is rather in the sense of what Eliade called "in the beginning" or "in principio", that is a primordial and non temporal instant, a moment of "sacred time".⁴

Since myth and rite are so closely linked, it follows that the shift of meaning in the mythical domain will give effect to ritual acts and vice versa. This is what happened in the time of the Brāhmanas. In the preceding chapter we saw how the late Rig-Veda had introduced new myths of creation. One amongst those myths which had an outstanding effect in the Brāhmanas is the myth of "Purusha Sūkta" or the sacrifice of the Primal Man. This myth developed into more intricate speculations together with the evergrowing practice in ritual performances.

Now, rite is enactment⁵ of myth, Zaehner said. In the

³ See p.e. Langer, Susanne K., Philosophy in a New Key, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts 1942.

⁴ See Eliade, M., Images and Symbols, Kansas City, 1961, p.57. Eliade distinguishes the "mythic or sacred time" qualitatively from "profane time", which is the continuous and irreversible time of our everyday, de-sacralised existence.

⁵ Citing Professor Mircea Eliade from his Pattern of Comparative Religion, Zaehner wrote: "Every myth, whatever its nature, recounts an event that took place in illo

"Purusha Sūkta" we saw the process of creation conceived as the self immolation of the Primal Man. The Brāhmanic ritual performances were represented as the enactment of this myth. It means that each sacrificial ritual was to repeat and consequently actualize the process of creation time and again. This dealing was not, however, simple. Rules had to be observed in order to represent the precise features of the process of creation. These rules were extremely complex, that the whole of the Brāhmanas can be said practically to contain explanations and commentaries on related matters. In such an atmosphere, it was quite understandable that the magical tendency, which we have hinted, could be easily growing, for people no longer cared for the gods so much as for the right order in the sacrificial performances, which had more efficacy for the maintenance of the universe.

The significance of the sacrifice in the Brāhmanas being elevated above the "do ut des" principle, it became what Eliot called a scientific method of acquiring immortality and temporal blessing. In such a manner magic and religion in the Brāhmanas were not separated.⁶⁾

tempore, and constitutes as a result, a precedent and pattern for all the action and 'situation' later to repeat that event." See HMM. pp.22-23.

⁶⁾ Eliot, Sir Ch., Hinduism and Buddhism, vol.I, London, 1962 (1921), pp.66-67.

Unsur logical ini juga dilihat oleh S. Langer for continuity and sharing in a religious community.

3. The Brāhmans

We have stated that the three Vedas (Trayi Vidya) were in one block, all functioning together in the ritual performances. This can be clearly seen from the way the Vedic religion distinguished the three kinds of priests dealing with the sacrificial performances; the Hotṛ who was in charge of invocation of gods, the Udgāṭṛ who was in charge of chanting aloud and the Adharvayu who was in charge of the action of sacrifice itself. They used as manuals the Rig-, Sāma-, and Yajur-Veda respectively.⁷⁾

During the sacrificial performances all the three priest were actively officiating, yet a Brāhman was to be present supervising the whole process. Who are these Brāhmans, whose authority appeared with so much prestige on the ritual stage? They are the chief priest of the sacrifice who are privileged with such a prominent position. According to Zaehner, etymologically Brāhman could be derived from the root of brhat, which means great or large, Zaehner remarks. But this we can ignore immediately, for it does not correspond with the original meaning of Brāhman, which is "sacred word" or "sacred formula". In the cosmological hymns of the RigVeda, we noticed the development of the idea God, which tended to personalization. The One Supreme was desperately being searched passing through several names, like Purusha, the

⁷⁾ See Hin. pp.16-17

Golden Seed, and Prajāpati. Since the beginning there had been another tendention too, which venerated an impersonal force as the supreme principle, like Vac (word) in the RigVeda, breath, desire, time, the leavings of the sacrifice in the Atharva-Veda. Brāhman, the "sacred utterance" appeared to be predominant in the course, leaving aside the other terms we have mentioned.⁸⁾

In the Brāhmanas too, there had been mentioned Brāhman as the One and yet many, as the Śatapatha Brāhmanas noted,

" I praise what has been and is yet to come, the great Brāhman, the imperishable One - the manifold Brāhman, the imperishable One; for truly all gods, all beings pass into that imperishable: it is both the Brāhman and the kshatra (the Brāhman and Kshatriya classes). The Brāhman is Agni (the priest god) and the kshatra Indra (the warrior god); and the All-gods are Indra and Agni." [SB.,10.4.1.9].

This suggestment is important in the framework of argument, in which everything is being united in the "imperishable" Being. This is a hint on the identification of microcosmic man with the universe or even with the creator of the universe itself and that the community thereby became the Brāhmanical society, hence receives the eternal sanction of Brāhman.⁹⁾

The word Brāhman comes from brāhman (sing.neuter), which originally means "sacred utterance". Brāhman came primarily

⁸⁾ See Hin. p.46

⁹⁾ See Hin. p.49.

to mean "one imbued with the power of the sacred utterance or word"; this could be either gods or men. In the first case, the divine Brāhman was crystallised later in only one figure, Zaehner says, which the orientalist used to call Brahmā (sing.), God creator "par excellence", one among the three figures of the Trimurti. In the case of men, Brāhman would be replaced gradually by Brāhmana, a member of priestly class who would gain a prominent position.¹⁰ Such a prominent position was already hinted in the Atharva-Veda, we have mentioned above, when it is said "Whoso in Man knows Brāhman, knows the highest Lord (paramēsthin)." [AV.10.7.17].¹¹ To avoid any confusion, Zaehner explains, Brāhmana would be taken as referring to the literature as we have proceeded so far, whereas to the priestly class who gain that prominent position, we continue to use the word Brāhman.

4. Some Features of the Brāhmanic Period

There are three features at least characterizing the Brāhmanic period that we can note from Zaehner's observation. They are coherently correlated one another and formed an integral view.

¹⁰. Hin. p.46-47 cf. AST.p.59; See also Hin.p.37

¹¹. HS. p.20

4.1. Passion for Identification

The central idea of the sacrificial rite in the Brāhmanas is that an animal,¹²⁾ chiefly a horse, was to be sacrificed so that the cosmos be re-created. In this manner, the "Purusha Sūkta" myth was to be taken as a model. The horse, like the Primal Man, might be dismembered into pieces to enact the process of creation of every being of this world. Here we can see how the analogy was being applied by the Brāhmanic priests in executing the power of the Primal Man in the process of creation.

Following Edgerton,¹³⁾ Zaehner stated that the Brāhmanas were equipped with so much passion for identification. In the Vedic time the tendency for identification had already existed, as we saw it when dealing with the soma cult. In the Brāhmanic times, the tendency grew into passion. This passion could be very clearly seen from the following passages:

"The dawn (it says) is the head of the sacrificial horse; the sun its eye, the wind its breath, universal fire its mouth. The year is the self of the sacrificial horse, the sky its back, the atmosphere its belly."
[SB.10.6.4].¹⁴⁾

¹²⁾ The sacrifice of man, it is suggested, was probably ever practiced before. See Roussel, Alfred, La Religion Védique, Paris, 1909, pp.195-198; cf. Hin. p.44.

¹³⁾ See HS. p.vii Zaehner cited Edgerton words, "... a very striking feature of these works is their passion for identification of one thing with another, on the slenderest possible basis; indeed, often on no basis at all that we can discover."

¹⁴⁾ See HS. p.viii

Such passages were endlessly repeated or varied in the Brāhmanas and of the sacrifice. Their identifications grew gradually, primely identification between the horse and the Primal Man, then between the pieces of the slaughtered horse with the cosmic beings, and finely everything was identified with everything else.

4.2. Decrease in the Worship of Gods

The second feature which characterized the Brāhmanic period is the decrease in the worship of gods. This decrease grew coherently with the elevation of the sacrificial rituals. If sacrifice became the centre of creation, then quite naturally it became more important than gods.¹⁵⁾ It follows, the earlier gods fading away from the stage, including unfortunately the gods of the late Veda (Viśvakarman, Prajāpati, Purusha) as well, the would-be supreme One that the late Veda sages were searching for. In this sense, we could quite properly put Hiriyan's expression "that monotheism in the ordinary sense of the term proved abortive in the Vedic period".¹⁶⁾

¹⁵⁾ Just to put Zaehner's own words, "...the correct performance of an incredibly complex system of sacrifices ousted the gods from the centre of the religious stage." See HMM. p.22.

¹⁶⁾ Hiriyan did not elaborate the late Veda exclusively, but since some believed that the Vedas might have embraced monotheism, the point was made just the same. See Hiriyan, Outlines of Indian Philosophy, London, 1951, p.39.

The great deficiency of Vedic gods, which by the rise of the Brāhmanas was hereafter revealed, is their - what Zaehner hinted as - mythological character.¹⁷ In such a state, however, the gods might have probably still appeared in religious issues, yet with much less significance.

4.3. Pan-en-henic Mysticism

With the elevation of the sacrificial ritual, something new was also invented in the Brāhmanic era. It dealt with the transformation from self consciousness into cosmic consciousness. In the sacrificial rite, the Brāhmanas identified the process of the sacrifice with the cosmic process. This openness to cosmic perception paved the way for the conception of an impersonal power which later would be called Brāhman and would dominate the discussion in the following period. To show the growing of this cosmic

¹⁷. Zaehner in fact never gave a definition of "myth" nor of what he meant exactly by "mythological" characteristics. "The Rig-Veda and the Brāhmanas had been fully mythological", he said, "in them we find myth interpreted and represented as ritual". CD. p.117. Elsewhere he maintained that "...the mere fact that they (gods) had all of them individual characteristics of a mythological nature disqualified each from becoming the undisputed Creator and Lord of creation." HMM. p.22. In these cases we could not help to perceive that by "myth" or "mythological characteristics" he meant simply the notion in the ordinary sense as something unreal.

→ see p. 312. Z's interest in myths is made revealed.

consciousness, we take some passages from the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa as Zaehner cited several times:¹⁸⁾

"This whole universe is Brāhman ...

"He who consists of mind, whose body is the breath of life, whose form is light, whose idea is the real, whose self is space, through whom are all works, all desires, all scents, all tastes, who encompass all this universe, who does not speak and has no care - he is my Self within the heart, smaller than a grain of rice or a barley-corn or a mustard-seed, or a grain of millet, or the kernel of a grain of millet; this is my Self within the heart, greater than the earth, greater than the atmosphere, greater than the sky, greater than all these worlds.

"All works, all desires, all scents, all tastes belong to it: it encompasses all this universe, does not speak and has no care. This my Self within the heart is that Brahman. When I depart from hence I shall merge into it. He who believes this will never doubt." [SB.10.6.3]

According to Zaehner, the text shows clearly the phenomenon of the "cosmic consciousness", that is the experience, in which the individuality dissolves and fades away into boundless being.¹⁹⁾ Such an experience still has its trace in the passion for identity, for in this case it is the self identifying with the "greater than all these worlds" which happens. In many of his later writings, when he compares different types of mysticism, Zaehner likes to call this

¹⁸⁾ - Hin.p.50; DMM.p.43; AST.pp.65-66; CD.p.79; MSP.p.136; HMM.p.41; these passages would be taken by the Chāndoqya Upanishad and would become one amongst the important text, known later on as Sandilya-Vidya or the wisdom of Sandilya. *p. 98 = pantheism in the Upanishad*

¹⁹⁾ - "Cosmic Consciousness" is a term taken by Zaehner from R. Bucke, to describe a mystical phenomenon in which the soul merges into Cosmos and loses its own individuality. MSP. p.43

Nature Mysticism

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characteristics of the Brāhmanic mysticism as "pan-en-henism", a term which he uses, too, to describe some profane "Natural Mysticism".²⁰⁾

One might think that the Brāhmanas were immersed in the practice of sympathetic magic. If this had been really the case, their magic would have been no more on a small scale which dealt with only personal incantations, than the magic of the process of creation itself. Man, in this case the Brāhmans, who knew the right order of the sacrificial performances, could create the new world and thereby become God. This is a clear token, however, Zaehner would insist, that the Brāhmanical mysticism eventhough concerns very much with the identification between the soul and the Nature, microcosm and macrocosm, it could not simply be associated with "Nature Mysticism", for here the Brāhmans searched for a definition of the Godhead, which in the case of Nature mysticism is denied.

5. Note on the Aranyakas

By the end of the Brāhmanas period, a new literature appeared which they called Āraṇyakas, which means "forest treatises". As the name indicates, they emerged from the

²⁰⁾ The term becomes very much familiar in his Mysticism Sacred and Profane where he uses it throughout the whole work. In Hindu and Muslim Mysticism, he wrote that literally "pan-en-hen-ism" means "all-in-one-ism" and is very aptly used to diverge distinctly from "pantheism" commonly known as "all-God-ism". HMM.p.28

quietness of the forest. It is apparently not yet settled whether the Āraṇyakas should be separated either from the Brāhmanas or the following literature, the Upanishads. As in the other cases, the shift from one period to the other was so smooth that one would find difficulty in marking the threshold.²¹⁾ In his Hinduism, Zaehner considered the Āraṇyakas as portions of the Brāhmanas, not yet divorced from the sacrificial act, eventhough they began to be concerned with the inmost nature of man and the universe.²²⁾

To end this part we should say that Zaehner said almost nothing of the Āraṇyakas. He hinted here and there the role of the Brāhmanas in bridging the different mentalities between the Vedic religion and the Upanishadic, but of the Āraṇyakas we don't have any idea from him. Yet both the Brāhmanas and the Āraṇyakas, in general, can be ignored, since they contained extremely the complex theories of sacrificial acts which sound magical and incomprehensible to the modern mind.²³⁾

²¹⁾. In the context of Vedic culture and education, K.M. Sen recognized even that Āraṇyaka is just another name for Upanishads. Obviously he meant "Vedic" as period of time comprising the whole Śruti literature. See Sen, K.M., Hinduism, Middlesex, 1984 (1961), p.52.

²²⁾. See Hin.p.38.

²³⁾. See AST.p.35. Prof. Zaehner's animosity towards the Brāhmanas and the Āraṇyakas is also shown from the fact that he hardly cited any passage from them.

CHAPTER III : GOD IN THE UPANISHADS

1. Introduction

The transition from the Brāhmanas and the Aranyakas to the Upanishads was so smooth, as in the previous case when the Brāhmanas originated from the Vedas, that we can hardly notice the threshold between these last two sequence periods. For when the Brāhmanas and the Aranyakas were detached from the Vedas, they showed some continuity with the Vedas but also discontinuity with them and began to furnish themselves with philosophical speculations, which developed into the proper doctrine of the Upanishads. On the other side the earlier Upanishads too still kept the pantheistic spirit, which once was drawn from the Brāhmanic tradition. The passage from the opening chapter of the Brihadāranyaka Upanishad show such a trait with much evidence:

"The dawn (it says) is the head of the sacrificial horse; the sun its eye, the wind its breath, universal fire its mouth. The year is the self of the sacrificial horse, the sky its back, the atmosphere its belly...." [BA.U.1.1.1].¹⁾

The identification of the sacrificial horse's members with the universe was typically Brāhmanic and this steady insistence on the materials or elements from the preceding literature keeps up the continuation of the Hindu spirit

¹⁾ · CD.p.68 cf.HS.p.viii This is a passage of the Brihadāranyaka Upanishad, which was drawn from the Śatapatha Brāhmana [10.6.4].

throughout the history. We have observed that the whole Brāhmanas were preoccupied by sacrificial performances, to the level of leaving aside the mythical superpowers of this world. Now in the Upanishads, things were shifted once again, for their preoccupation was directed no more to the exterior activities of sacrifices than to the interior or mystical ~~quest~~ ^{quest} of man, something which was never even being figured by the Vedic and Brāhmanic sages. This corresponds very aptly to the new faith on the transmigration of souls and immortality or life after death.²⁾ The liberation of one's soul becomes more important than enjoying one's life in this world, for according to the Upanishads this worldly life is perishable. Such a gloomy vision was so strong in the Upanishads that man became desirous for release from this world in order to gain "liberation" of his soul.

The doctrine of the transmigration of souls implied also the doctrine of the rebirth into the world to endure earthly life repeatedly. In this it was presumed that the soul was eternal and that after death it would either gain its liberation or else repeat its worldly life in a different form - better than before, if he lived rightly, or worse if on the contrary he lived wrongly. In the Brāhmanas it was

²⁾ In a passage Zaehner said, "...it obviously makes a tremendous difference what one believes about death. If death is final, if it is simply the stoppage of the process of change and therefore of life as we know it, then surely there is nothing to worry about." CD. pp.64-65.

stated that the sacrifice of a man could expiate the wrong deeds of his ancestors.³⁾ In this a hint to the doctrine of the transmigration of soul might be seen. Yet, it is only in the Upanishads that the human soul is strictly regarded in its individuality or else in its unity with the world soul rather than in its relation or bond with the other living beings. In either case the sacrifice lost its importance albeit performed by its close relatives or family.

The removal from the sacrificial mentality of the Brāhmanas in general is also seen from the new phenomena in the religious domain. Princes and nobles (kshatria), who being dissatisfied with the ritualistic and magical activities of the Brāhmanas, sought for the more satisfying answers to the quest of their ultimate desire for happiness. Some of them became parivrājakas (wanderers), bhikshus (beggars) and sannyāsīs (renouncers). They burned with zeal

³⁾ - Biardeau saw the three contexts of sacrifice in Brāhmanism. The first is the context of cosmogony, in which the sacrifice played the principal role in recreating the cosmos. The second is the context of socio-cosmic. In maintaining the good relation between human beings and the invisible world, gods and ancestors, sacrifice could not be ignored. It is in this context that a son was so exigent for a family to perpetuate the capability of offering sacrifices. The third context placed the sacrifice in the individual life. Biardeau, M. & Malamoud, Ch., Le Sacrifice dans l'Inde ancienne, Paris, 1976, pp.14-57.

to renounce this world, their riches, to live with austerity, in a celibate and ascetic life.⁴⁾

As in the cases of the Vedas and the Brāhmanas, scholars had difficulties also in fixing the date regarding the emerging of the Upanishads. This is made still more difficult by the fact that many authors were prompt to title their works as Upanishads. And this tendency grew even stronger in the medieval times. The Encyclopedia of Religion, edited by M. Eliade, classified the Upanishads into Vedic Upanishads and those which came very much later.⁵⁾ These later Upanishads were less known and, for the most part, they were medieval works. They were not considered as śruti and will be ignored in our present presentation also. Among the Vedic Upanishads, Eliade classified the Brihadāranyaka, Chāndogya, Taittirīya, Aitareya, Kaushītakī and Kena (prose part) as the

⁴⁾ Based mostly on Buddhist literature, Eliot disposed to depict the social shift as having correlation with the emergence of Jainism and Buddhism, which took an important role in raising the precedence of such movements. This is quite reasonable, for the emergence of Buddha and Jain was at the same time as the emergence of the earlier Upanishads. The only difficulty is, as Eliot himself supposed, the Buddhist literature spread in the East (Bihar, Oudh), whereas the Upanishads spread in the West (Kuru, Pancālas, Videha). Eliot, Ch., Hinduism and Buddhism, an historical sketch, vol. I, London, 1962 (1921), pp.95-6. This issue stirres also a discussion as to whether the Upanishads were written by the Brāhman priests or by the Khsatrias.

⁵⁾ Op.cit. vol.15, London; New York, 1987, p.150-151.

earliest ones.⁶⁾ All were written in prose, followed by the Katha (or Kathaka), Iṣā, Śvetāśvatara, Mundaka and Mahanarayana and the metrical part of Kena Upanishads.⁷⁾ and these again were followed by the third group the Praśna, Maitrī (or Maitrayaniya), Jabala, Paingala and Māndūkya which were written in prose again.⁸⁾ Commentators argued about which amongst the Upanishads were originally attached to the Vedānta (the end of the Veda) and hence they were also at variance in their considerations regarding the principals amongst the Upanishads. Excluding the Mahanarayana, Jabala and Paingala, Zaehner in his Hindu Scriptures took the thirteen Upanishads mentioned above as the principals.

2. The Import of the Upanishads

It has been customary to regard the Upanishads as the end and the peak of the Vedas. The Indian sages called the

⁶⁾ - Idem.p.150 According to Farquhar, these Upanishads emerged just before the time of Buddha. "...and scholars believe that we may safely assume that by 500 BC. this body of literature was already in existence. Buddha began to teach about 525 BC."cf. Farquhar, J.N. Ibidem, pp.54-5 Their order of seniority was though still disputable.

⁷⁾ - Idem. p.150 cf. Farquhar, J.N. Ibidem, p.58. Their order of seniority was dated between 500 BC. (Kathaka) and 300 BC. (Mahanarayana).

⁸⁾ - According to Farquhar, the Praśna, Maitrayana and Māndūkya were classified as belonging to the original Vedanta texts, whereas the Jabala and Paingala might diverge in some degree from the original Vedanta texts. Farquhar, J.N., Ibidem, pp.79-80

Upanishads the Vedānta, which means the end of the Veda, a name which will be taken by the philosophical schools at a later time to claim their orthodoxy. The Upanishads themselves, as many scholars maintained, do not hold a single philosophical tradition. Being a compilation of writings of many authors and sages, Upanishads conserved many trends or doctrines which might flow together, not rarely contradict each other and therefore would never have any logical coherence. On the other hand one could state that the Upanishads thanks to these varieties promises a wide range of philosophy, out of which were set up different schools. Obviously one cannot, Zaehner insisted, design the whole Upanishads into a single system without being trapped by inconsistencies. This is what had been done by the medieval Indian philosophers.⁹⁾

It is peculiar to the Upanishads that their philosophical characteristics tended to leave aside the concern of everyday interests and through deep meditations they began to produce philosophical speculations. Indeed in the late Vedas they had began their speculations too, but by the Upanishads this

⁹⁾ Zaehner was quite cheered by professor Dasgupta, who himself as an Indian and having authority in Indian philosophy, dared say "...that a modern interpreter of the Upanishads should turn a deaf ear to the absolute claims of these (ancient) exponents, and look upon the Upanishads not as a systematic treatise but as a depository of diverse currents of thought - the melting pot in which all later philosophic ideas were still in a state of fusion." This is quoted by Zaehner in AST. p. 35-36 cf. MSP. p.117.

mental change was so radical because they left the practical form of worshipping gods which in our last consideration was based on the Vedic mythical hymns. The doctrines of the Upanishads are more philosophical than those of the Vedas.¹⁰⁾

The importance of the Upanishads for the Indian religion becomes evident also from the fact that the philosophical schools of a later time always claimed to be orthodox by showing their loyalty to the Upanishads. On this account the Upanishads gain more authority than the four Vedas or the other śruti. To exaggerate somewhat we can say with Raju, that Indian philosophy like European philosophy with respect to Plato, consists of footnotes to the Upanishads.¹¹⁾

With the rise of the Upanishads, the Indian religion entered into a new period which together with the Brāhmanas is well known as Brāhmanism.¹²⁾ In the Upanishads one can find so many key concepts. Dharma-Moksha-Samsāra-Karma are

¹⁰⁾ - CD. p.116-117.

¹¹⁾ - See Raju, P.T., The Philosophical Traditions of India, London, 1971, p.15. Geoffrey Parrinder added, though, that of Indian philosophy, the case would be more true than the western philosophy; Parrinder, Geoffrey, The Wisdom of the Forest, London, 1975, p.10.

¹²⁾ - Father Dhavamony in the preface of his Classical Hinduism classified the periods of Hinduism as Vedism, Brahmanism, classical Hinduism, Sectarian Hinduism, Medieval Hinduism, Modern Hinduism and Contemporary Hinduism. But he reminded us that such classification should never be considered as "water-tight compartments", for they merge into one another. Dhavamony, M., Classical Hinduism, Documenta missionaria 15, Roma, p.1

just some amongst the most important beside Brāhman which are treated in some length by Zaehner in his Hinduism.¹³⁾ In the context of our present discussion, we need only to hint briefly at these concepts in so far as they clear the way to the discovery of Brāhman which is now the key of our observations.

Dharma¹⁴⁾ means originally law which rules individual lives and keeps the universe in order. With this kind of law we are reminded of the Vedic Varuna, who being the guardian of ṛta took control of the order of the universe. It is in this same sense that dharma is primely to be understood. If the God of the Vedas could be perceived as playing an eternal "game" with his creation, dharma then is the rule of this "game". So dharma determined the relation between God and his creatures. Consequently, it could be considered as moral law for human beings or order in the universe. Later in the

¹³⁾ To my surprise Zaehner did not feel the need to explain also ātman, in his introduction to his Hinduism (see p.5). The reaction to this surprise might be found in page 49, where it is stated that ātman in many passages means not the individual soul but the "soul of all", that is another word for Brāhman. Somewhere else Zaehner stated that ātman could mean simply "self" or "Self" depending on the context. "Self" with capital S, would mean the ground of the Universe, whereas "self" with small s, would correspond to the human or individual subject. See HS.p.xxi cf. MSP.p.137, HMM.p.33 and AST.pp.105-6. The context, however, is not always clear.

¹⁴⁾ Zaehner dedicates one chapter in his Hinduism to discover the development of the concept of Dharma, which began from the Upanishads but then was chiefly elaborated on in the Bhagavad-Gītā. See Hin.pp.102-124.

Bhagavad-Gītā, dharma is considered as the law of caste which must be obeyed. Finally dharma became also the word used by the Hindus to call their religion, which is Sanātana Dharma (eternal law).¹⁵⁾

The concept of moksha¹⁶⁾ and samsāra are closely related and both are peculiar to Hinduism. There is no comparison for them in the other religions - excluding Buddhism and Jainism naturally which originated from the same cradle - for they imply the doctrine of rebirth, reincarnation and the transmigration of souls. There was not even explicit trace of this doctrine in the previous religions, Vedic and Brāhmanic. Samsāra is the term for describing the perpetual flux of this world. Since the soul is immortal, and the soul could be reborn repeatedly in the world, samsāra could be a terrible prolongation of life. As to moksha, the Hindus used the word to describe the liberation of the soul from samsāra. Both concepts were much elaborated in Hindu philosophy at a later time.

The concept of karma is also closely related to that of samsāra which is the "fruit" of human activities in this world and their reward or punishment in the next birth. Thus it leads to the transmigration of the soul. But karma in

¹⁵⁾ See also the introduction of Hinduism; Hin.p.2ss.

¹⁶⁾ Also about the development of the concept of Moksha Zaehner dedicates one full chapter. See Hin.pp.57-79

Hinduism, according to Zaehner, does not necessarily mean by itself a future life after death. In the present life, karma means simply works or activities which by their nature produce individual involvement and hence also attachment to this world.¹⁷⁾

Since the Upanishads are concerned mostly with Brāhman in its relation to the soul and the world, the above concepts have only importance in so far as they portray the condition of men and of the world in relation to Brāhman. But as Zaehner himself very often insisted, Brāhman is a word which has no equivalent in European languages and this renders it even more difficult to speak about the Hindu conception of God.¹⁸⁾ Does Brāhman represent God as other religions conceive of Him or simply the Absolute?

3. The Doctrines on Brāhman in the Upanishads.

It has been stated above that the Upanishads do not hold a single coherent system of philosophy, but being compiled from different sources, furnish some of the principal doctrines of the "classical Hinduism", which would be put into discussions throughout the history of the Indian religion. Yet we can fairly clearly see that in their inconsistencies, the Upanishads show their consistent concern with Brāhman.

¹⁷⁾ See Hin. pp. 59-61 and 102-103

¹⁸⁾ Hin. p. 6 cf. HS. p. xxi.

It has been noted, also, that Brāhman is the key concept and the most important one in the Upanishads. That is why the philosophy of the Upanishads is sometimes called "Brāhmanism"¹⁹ or else "Brāhma-vidya"²⁰ and the recapitulation of the essential teaching of the Upanishads is called "Brāhma Sutras".²¹ In the preceding chapter we have observed how the word Brāhma was derived from the sacrificial context and thereof gained its notion as sacred "power" or "something or someone obtaining the power from the sacred acts", which were performed through mantras or sacrifices. In the Upanishads this notion is still retained and extended even more keenly. The magical tone is still felt, but the sacrificial context has now been replaced by meditations and tapas (austerity).

In the West God is presented as the Absolute or the Supreme One. In the United States Tillich tried to give a new apprehension of the Absolute as the "ultimate concern", to cover up the "belief" of the unbelievers. In Upanishadic India things are very different, for Brāhman is an elusive word which could not be caught easily. It could mean both personal God or impersonal Absolute.

¹⁹). Hume, R.E., The Thirteen Principal Upanishads, a translation with an outline of the philosophy of the Upanishads and an annotated bibliography, Oxford, 1983 (1921), p.13.

²⁰). Radhakrishnan, The Principal Upanisads, ed. with introduction text, translation and note, London, 1953.p.24.

²¹). Idem.p.25

3.1. Brāhman: in terms of its nature as the "ground" or the "principle" of the universe.

Like the first Greek philosophers, the Upanishadic sages sought primarily the "arche" of the universe, the essence of the whole reality. They tried to trace everything into its primal state. And like the first Greek philosophies the early Upanishads were also searching for the primal state of everything, examining everything through some principal material like heat, water, food, [Ch.U.6.1-6] or again breath [main theme of the Kaushītakī Upanishad].²²⁾ Yet more intelligently than the Greek philosophers, the Upanishadic sages did not call arbitrarily any of these mere natural phenomena the principle of the universe, rather showed how these functioned in the maintenance of life and the growth of everything.²³⁾ So the Upanishadic sages were not materialistic, let alone atomistic, like Demokritos who considered the whole universe an accumulation of atoms, for they still pursued the fundamental function of this principle matter in supporting this world. Hence they came to the idea of food and the process of eating.

The most illustrious text for this argument is the Taittirīya Upanishad 2.2 :

"From food indeed are creatures engendered,
Whatever creatures dwell on earth.
Then again by food they live

²²⁾ · MSP.p.65.

²³⁾ · AST. p.60 cf. HMM.p.29

And again pass into it at the end.
 For food is the chief of beings,
 Whence it is called the elixir of all things.
 Whoso reverences Brāhman as food
 Gains all food:
 For food is the chief of beings,
 Whence it is called the elixir of all things.
 From food are (all) creatures engendered;
 When born by food do they grow up.
 It is eaten and eats (all) creatures.
 Therefore is it called food
 (an-na = eatable)."²⁴⁾

Food is indeed material, but it is the most important of all materials, for food gives life and all living creatures become food at the moment when they die, giving life to the other creatures. Hence they are maintaining life in the universe. The life of individuals is participating in the life of the whole universe and in this sense death is indeed overcome. Zaehner saw how in such a manner, the Upanishads anticipated the dialectical materialism of Marx-Engels and to realize this is a great joy as it is very well and aptly expressed in that same Upanishad [3.10.6]:

"O rapture, o rapture, o rapture!
 I am food, I am food, I am food!
 I am an eater of food, I am an eater of food,
 I am an eater of food!
 I am a maker of verses, I am a maker of verses,
 I am a maker of verses !
 I am the first-born of the universal order
 Earlier than the gods, in the navel of immortality !
 Whoso gives me away, he, verily, has succoured me !
 I, who am food, eat the eater of food !

²⁴⁾. AST. pp.62-63. cf. HS.p.138 with a slightly different translation.

I have overcome the whole world !".²⁵⁾

So far it is so convincing that food is the most basic of all, for the whole life is sustained by it. But like the first Greek philosophers, who discussed the "arche" of this universe, were not satisfied with a single argument, so also the Upanishadic sages, dissatisfied by their own discoveries, began to argue the principle of the universe.

One among the most frequently cited is - not the "bread of life" any more than - the "breath of life". The Brihadāranyaka Upanishad (6.1.7-14) for example, skillfully worked out his argument through a parable of a competition amongst the bodily functions, where the speech, the eye, the ear, the mind, the seed and the breath were participants. Each of them left the body for some time and returned. To their surprise, the body still lived, though it was for some time dumb, blind, deaf, feeble-minded or became eunuch. But when the breath was on the point of going off, there came a consternation:

"...As a great and goodly stallion from the Indus country might tear up the pegs to which it is tethered all together, so was the breath of life (on the point of) tearing up the (other) bodily organs. They said: 'good sir, do not go away; for we will never manage to live without you'." [BA.U.6.1.13].²⁶⁾

²⁵⁾. AST.p.63-4 cf. HS.p.144 with a slightly different translation.

²⁶⁾. HS.p.79

The texts which displayed this competition among the bodily functions showed with much clarity the reality of the "hierarchy of being" (nihśreyasādānā) [Kau.U.3,2] among them, not in the sense that there was a rank of potencies in the body, but in the sense that there existed one principal and the most basic among them, without which the others missed their significance all together. In such a manner, the "breath of life" gained its supremacy, defeated the other bodily functions completely. It was indeed incomparable to them.

Now, breath is more important than food, Zaehner maintained, for it is "spirit" (prāṇa) of life. It must be no merely material aggregate that comes out of the human mouth any more than an enlivening power, which Zaehner very keenly compared with the Spiritum Sanctum, Dominum et vivificantem in the Nicene creed of the christians. "Breath, therefore, is Brāhman".²⁷⁾

Such a conviction can also be found in the last resume of the dialog between Vidagdha Sakalya and Yajnavalkya concerning the number of gods. After a long discussion on the number of gods, in which they progressively reduced the number, finally they settled the number by proposing the one God, "the breath of life, and that is Brāhman, the beyond (tya)" [BA.U.3.9.9]. In this consideration the Vedic devas

²⁷⁾ - AST. p. 64

|| manas - akar
as the Absolute

still meant gods, that is celestial beings, but surely inferior to this breath of life, Brāhman.²⁸⁾

But our conviction of the supremacy of the breath of life above the other things or gods and their identification of it with Brāhman, as it was proposed by some Upanishadic sages, was again altered when we perceived that other passages with incredible freedom like to identify Brāhman now with speech, then with breath, sight, hearing, mind, heart, name, conception, meditation and so on. Two of the most illustrative passages in that are the Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upanishad [4.1.1-7] and the Chāndogya Upanishad [7.1-15]. In the first text, Yajnavalkya imparted long instructions to Janaka, king of Videha about Brāhman, whereas in the second the same subject was being discussed by Narada and Sanatkumara. One could probably be confused by those instructions of Yajnavalkya, who time after time denied what he had stated previously, only to arrive at the conclusion that Brāhman is not describable. However, for Zaehner it means simply that in the early Upanishads Brāhman is indeed devoid of precise meaning.²⁹⁾

→ It could be "breath" → spirit }
bread → matter }

²⁸⁾ See AST. p.104. For the Scripture text compare to HS.p.58.

²⁹⁾ AST. p.29

3.2. Brāhman: in terms of its nature as the "source" or the "beginning" of the Universe.

The nature of Brāhman as the source of the universe can be seen through some passages in the Upanishads. To deal with this nature means literally to perceive Brāhman as God, the creator. But God, the creator in Hindu Scripture, Zaehner insisted time and again, means not only that He is the efficient cause but the material cause as well.³⁰⁾ It means that God himself gives his substance to his creature precisely like a spider to its web. This is very much true in the Upanishads as it is stated:

"As a spider emerges (from itself) by (spinning) threads out (of its own body), as small sparks rise up from a fire, so too from this Self do all the life-breaths, all the worlds, all the gods, and all contingent beings rise up in all directions. The hidden meaning (Upanishad) of this is the 'Real of the real'. The life-breaths are the real, and he is their Real." [BA.U. 2.1.20].³¹⁾

For this similarity in substance, there is in fact no creation in sensu stricto, in which God brings something into existence ex nihilo. From the Upanishadic point of view "creation" should be then an emanation.

There is, however, a view in the Upanishads which perceive "creation" as multiplication of the One. In principle emanation and multiplication of the One referred to the same

³⁰⁾ Just to note some hints on this statement, see p.e. AST.p.89; Hin.p.55; HS.p.x.

³¹⁾ See HS. p.44.

phenomenon, in the sense that there is no real substantial difference between the One, the source or the Origin and the results, the offsprings, so to speak. They are substantially equal. Emanation is indeed a common philosophical term, but in early Indian thought, as it is shown in several passages in Hindu Scriptures, Zaehner rather sees the creation in the Upanishads as multiplication of the One. Take for example some passages in the Brihadāranyaka Upanishad [1.4.1-3 and 1.4.17].³²⁾ The texts depict the origin of the universe as multiplication of the One, which is the "Self", by way of splitting himself. The "Self" in Zaehner's consideration is just a different way to say Brāhman or (Cosmic) Man.³³⁾ In such an account, we can perceive that the whole thing, that is, the whole universe was originated by a certain determinate agent. The Upanishads, however, are not consistent, as we have stated, for they also offer precisely the opposite argument.

In the Taittirīya Upanishad [2.7], it is stated that

"In the beginning this (universe) was Not-Being only, Therefrom was Being born:
(And Being) itself made (for itself) a self:
Hence is it called 'well-done'".³⁴⁾

³²⁾ See HS.pp.35 and 38.

³³⁾ This is often seen in Zaehner's article "Creation in the Early Hindu Scriptures", Studia Missionalia, XVIII, Roma, 1969.p.27.

³⁴⁾ See HS.p.140

As the text clearly shows, "Being" made a "Self", hence It determined Itself or became determinate, in comparison to Not-being, which is indeterminate. This indetermination of Not-being as the origin of Being is depicted in the Brihadāranyaka Upanishad [1.2.1] as Death and Hunger.

"In the beginning nothing at all existed here. This (whole world) was enveloped by Death, -by Hunger. For what is death but hunger? And (Death) bethought himself: 'Would that I had a self!'...".³⁵⁾

We can see in these passages a trace of the disputation in the late Rig-Veda on the priority between spirit and matter, and the question whether the Origin of all things is determinate or indeterminate.

To complicate matters, we can still quote what the Chāndogya Upanishad [6.2.1-2] tells us,

"In the beginning, my dear, this (universe) was Being only, -one only, -without a second. True, some say that in the beginning this (universe) was Not-Being only, -one only, -without a second, and that from that Not-Being, Being was born".

"But, my dear, whence could this be?" said he. "How could Being be born from Not-Being? No, it was Being alone that was this (universe) in the beginning, -one only, without a second."³⁶⁾

This statement and counter statement convinces us of the uncertainty of the earlier Upanishads regarding their view on the Origin of the world. The Origin was not as yet safely stated whether determinate or indeterminate, spirit or

³⁵⁾ See HS.p.33

³⁶⁾ See HS.p.105

matter. In Zaehner's consideration both interpretations are possible, but they imply different consequences regarding the meaning of Being. In the first case, where it was stated that everything came out from Being, Being was interpreted as Spirit, indeterminate. In the second case, on the contrary, where it was stated that Being came out from Not-Being, Being was to be interpreted as the phenomenal world, determinate; it was the objectively real which came from the indeterminate chaos. Can one safely state, then, the priority of whether Being or Not-Being? The answer is plainly negative, for the Upanishads themselves seem desperately never to be able to find the solution. In either case, however, "creation" was never considered as "ex nihilo".³⁷⁾ *

"Being" in the Chāndogya Upanishad [6.8.4,7] was viewed as the root, foundation or the "Self" of the universe.

"My dearest child, all these creatures (here) have Being as their root, Being as their resting-place (āyatana), Being as their foundation"
...

"This finest essence, -the whole universe has it as its Self: That is the Real: That is the Self: That you are, Svetaketu!".³⁸⁾

In these passages, Being is not viewed as the origin of the universe in the same sense any more as in the previous passages, but as the origin of things in their "becoming". In

³⁷⁾ - See again Zaehner's article in Studia Missionalia, pp.23-30

³⁸⁾ - See HS.pp.108-9

1. some efficient
causes materialis
agents

this sense Being is similar to the Aristotelian concept of the Absolut as "the unmoved mover". This "unmoved mover" is the principle of all the world changing and growth to perfection, but He himself does not change nor grow.³⁹ He is "the finest essence", invisible by Svetaketu when he cut up a small seed of a fig tree, yet indispensable for the survival of that fig tree and the continuation of its kind [Ch.U.6.12]. Of course there is no similarity at all with the semitic traditional idea of the creator-God in this concept, yet Being is the "source" of the universe nonetheless. We see in this last consideration how the "One" as the "principle" of the universe blurs into the "One" as the "source" of the universe.

3.3. The Notion of Personal and Impersonal Absolut

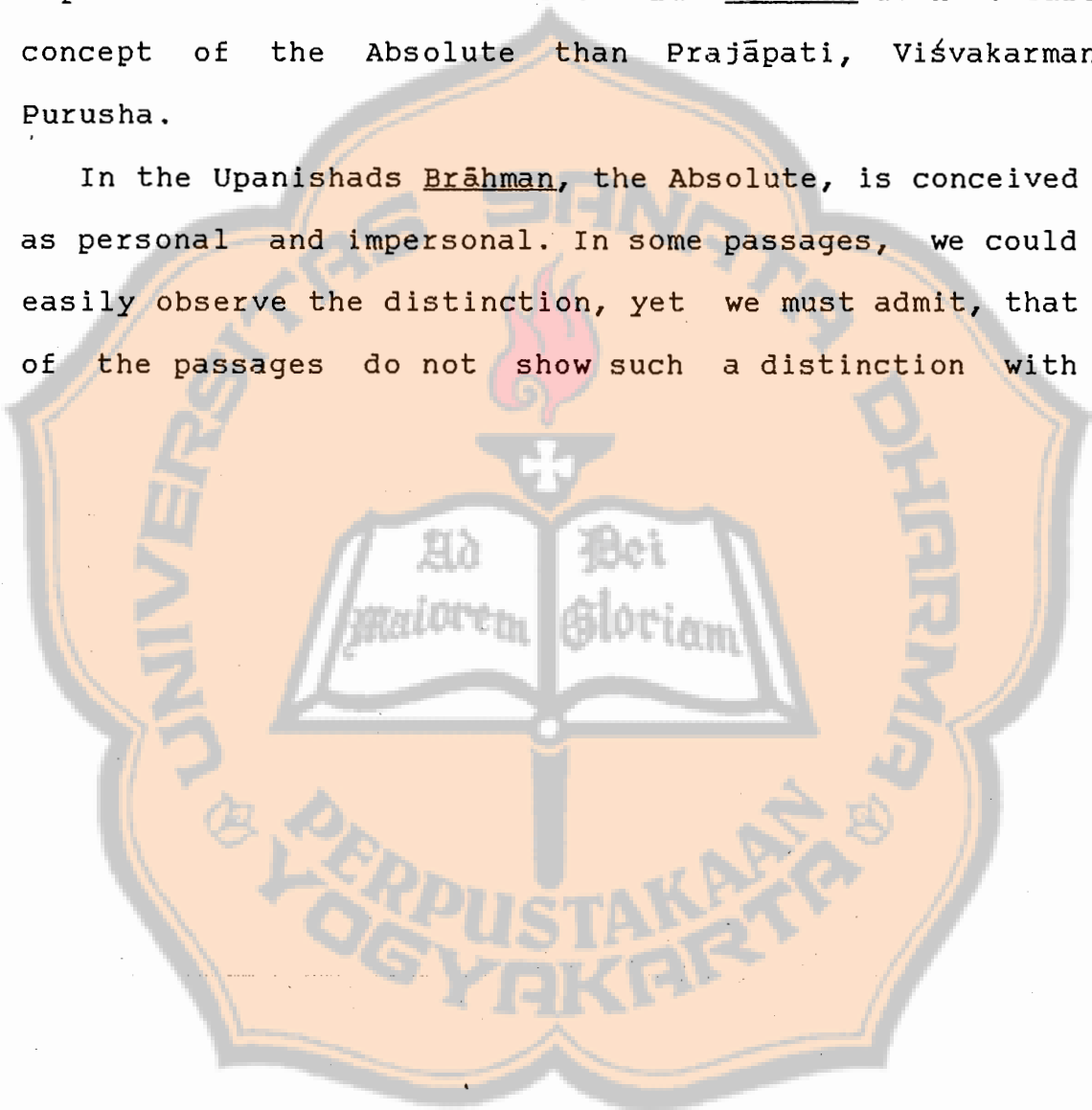
We have observed earlier that the late Rig-Veda showed its interest in looking for the principle of everything, the "One" which transcends the plurality of Vedic deities. They were groping beyond the plurality of Vedic deities and found

³⁹ · In the Aristotelian conception, God is the "unmoved mover". To him the relation of God to the whole universe principally similar with the soul in the human body. The soul is the principle of becoming, which moves human mind in creating arts and every kind of human activities. In such a manner God also incites the process of becoming of the whole universe, not as if from outside, for according to Aristotle there is not such a distinction between outside and inside, but as the eternal Self, pure substance, pure actuality, activity and energy. See "Our Father Aristoteles" in the OSG.pp.161-201.

such figures like Prajāpati, Viśvakarman and Purusha. These were, so to say, the first conceptions of the personal God. These first conceptions of the personal God were always shaded though by impersonal figures like waters, wood, void, darkness or the primal matter. The two tendencies were competing with each other along with the Vedas and the Brāhmanas.

Such a searching still persisted through the whole Upanishads. They found the concept of Brāhman in the place of those above mentioned names. Brāhman itself was originally a concept that was derived from the sacrificial context, as an impersonal "sacred utterance". But Brāhman is no clearer a concept of the Absolute than Prajāpati, Viśvakarman or Purusha.

In the Upanishads Brāhman, the Absolute, is conceived both as personal and impersonal. In some passages, we could very easily observe the distinction, yet we must admit, that most of the passages do not show such a distinction with much



conviction. And this could upset one in translating the Upanishads into other languages.⁴⁰⁾

To perceive Brāhman as the ground of material things like heat, water, food or breath would not, I think, be so difficult. Materia Prima is a common term to describe the first and principal matter out of which the whole universe is formed. To perceive Brāhman as an impersonal Absolute perhaps is more difficult, for we need certain traits to categorize this impersonality. Since impersonality is the negation of personality, what we need here are then the traits of personality itself. It remains, hence, for us to discern the personal notion of the Absolute, after which the impersonal notion could follow.

According to Zaehner, as early as the Katha and Mundaka Upanishads, we could already perceive a drift ^{orah} to personal theism. Zaehner took these following passages:

"More minute than the minute, yet greater than the great
Is the Self hidden in the depths of a creature.
Him does one who lets go of his will behold, all sorrow gone,
By the grace of the Creator (dhatuh) he beholds the greatness of the Self.

⁴⁰⁾ One example is Zaehner's criticism to R.E. Hume's translation of the [BAU.3:8:8] which were written as follows: "without eye, without ear, without voice, without mind, without energy, without breath etc...". This according to Zaehner suggests very much to something impersonal. In Zaehner's version "it is not eye or ear; it is not voice or mind; it not light or life etc..." for it overcomes the distinction of personality and impersonality. See, CD. p.105 cf. Hume, R.E., The Thirteen Principal Upanishads, Oxford, 1983 (1921) p.118

Sitting, he ranges far,
Lying, he goes everywhere.
Who else than I can know
That God who rejoices without joy.

Bodiless among bodies,
Abiding among things that abide not,
Great, present everywhere (vibhum)-
Pondering on Him as Self, the wise man does not grieve.

This Self cannot be found by instruction,
Not by intellect, nor yet by much lore heard;
He can be found only by such as He chooses,
To such does He reveal His bodily form."
[Ka.U.2.20-23].⁴¹⁾

In these passages God is identified with the "Self" which remains hidden in the depths of his creature. Yet such a mystery could be found by the soul only thanks to the grace of Him. Instruction or Yoga, can be of some help, but the last decision remains in God's hand to reveal himself and to come to whomsoever he chooses. It is not, however, stated here whether this personal God is Brāhman in himself or manifestation of Him. Many commentators would claim that Brāhman in Himself is never known and remains hidden from human knowledge. There is no need, therefore, to take it into consideration here.

In the Mundaka Upanishad God is depicted as "beyond the imperishable beyond". The following passages shed some light:

"This is the truth.
As from a blazing fire sparks
Alike in form issue forth in their thousands,
So from the imperishable, my friend, are being manifold
Generated, and thither do they return.

⁴¹⁾. AST.pp.106-7 cf.HS.p.175 with a slight difference of translation.

Heavenly, not formed is this Person
 Comprising both 'without' and 'within', unborn.
 He does not breathe, nor does He think (discursive);
 pure is he,
 Beyond the imperishable beyond." [Mun.U.2.1.1-2].⁴²⁾

The first verse shows the state of Brāhman as the source of the manifold, as Zaehner clearly maintained. Somewhere else [Mun.U.2.2.2] Brāhman is characterized as the imperishable, immortal, manifesting itself as a breathing spirit, speech, and mind. God is, however, as we learned from the second verse above, the Person, beyond this imperishable Brāhman and naturally also beyond the perishable world. The imperishable Brāhman is like the ideal world of Plato beyond this passing world.

This last notion is very close to that in the Isā Upanishad, in which God is referred with Iś (Lord). In Zaehner's consideration, the Isā Upanishad accepts also the distinction between the perishable and the imperishable, but does not fall into dichotomy, for in both of them remains the "Self" as the unitary agent. In other words, the "Self" which is "the sum-total of phenomenal existence grounded in the Imperishable", weaves the whole universe.⁴³⁾

He, the wise Sage, all-conquering, self-existent,

⁴²⁾ - AST.pp.107-8 cf. HS.p.187 with a slight difference of translation.

⁴³⁾ - This interpretation on the Isā Upanishad 1-7 by prof. Zaehner is found in CD.pp.108-109. Taking the Isā Upanishad as precedence, Zaehner vigorously defended the whole tenor of the Upanishads against the tendency to interpret in a dualistic way.

Encompassed that which is resplendent,
 Incorporeal, invulnerable,
 Devoid of sinews, pure, unpierced by evil:
 (All) things he ordered each according to its nature
 For years unending [Iś.U.8].⁴⁴⁾

The supremacy of this Lord of the Iśā Upanishad is shown by his encompassing what is "resplendent, incorporeal, invulnerable, ...unpierced by evil", which in Zaehner's consideration is Ātman-Brāhman in so far as it is an eternal mode of being. We have still to see Ātman-Brāhman, considered as a state of substantial oneness. This might be then the perfect and ideal mode of being but the Lord of the Iśā Upanishad is prior to this.

The most prominent of the Upanishads which consistently teach personal theism is the Śvetāśvatara. In this Upanishad, the absolute god appears in the figure of the Vedic Rudra-Śiva but has been eminently worked out. To have some grasp of Zaehner's view on the theology of the Śvetāśvatara Upanishad, it is worthwhile to cite here one paragraph of At Sundry Time which shows his neat formulation on God of the Śvetāśvatara Upanishad.

"The first chapter sets the ontological scene on which the theistic doctrines of the later chapters will be enacted. Various identifications of Brāhman with time, fate, chance, etc. advanced by the Brāhmavadins, the 'discourers on Brāhman', are summarily rejected. Against these is set the view of the contemplative Yogins (dhyāna-yoga) who see the origin of all things in 'the self-power of God' (devātma-sakti) hidden in His qualities [1.3]. God is the One 'who presides over all causes endued with time and self' [ibid.]. He stands

⁴⁴⁾ Cf. HS.pp.165-166

beyond time and individuation. God and His power or śakti form an indissoluble unity. As God He is unmoved, as śakti He is the mover; as God the Self of all things, as śakti He who causes motion (preritaram) [1.6]. Śakti is the creative principle in God [4.1:6.8] 'by whom all thing were made'.⁴⁵

So in the Śvetāśvatara Upanishad the two ideas of the Absolute as the "principle" of the universe and as the "source" of it were combined nicely, for, as Zaehner stated, He is both God, the One 'who presides over all causes endued with time and self', the "Self" of all things, and Śakti, the power and creative principle. These two sides of God in the Śvetāśvatara Upanishad are not separated. This oneness in Himself goes beyond all separation and all distinction. It follows that this state goes beyond even the distinction between the imperishable and the perishable .

"In the imperishable, infinite city of Brāhman are two things;
For therein are knowledge and ignorance placed hidden.
Now ignorance is a thing perishable, but knowledge is a thing immortal.
And he who rules the ignorance and the knowledge is another." [Śv.U.5.1].⁴⁶

Here 'knowledge' is identified according to Zaehner with the immortal Brāhman, whereas 'ignorance' is identified with the perishable. And he, the Lord who rules them both is another.

⁴⁵. AST.p.109 Numbers within brackets indicate the reference to the Śvetāśvatara Upanishad.

⁴⁶. AST.p.110 cf.HS.p.212 with a slight difference of translation.

This statement appears very much more personal than that in the Isā Upanishad.

4. Brāhman in the experiences of human soul

In Mysticism Sacred and Profane, Zaehner proposed the following views as represented in the Upanishads: (a) God creates the universe from His own substance and then enters into it Himself; His relation to the universe is likened to that of a spider to its web or a fire to the sparks that proceed from it: (b) God pervades the universe as salt pervades salt-water: (c) God and the universe are identical; and (d) God and the human soul are identical.⁴⁷⁾

It is quite true that the first view corresponds with what we have discussed in the preceding paragraph when we discerned Brāhman in terms of its nature as the "source" of the universe. The second view in the same wise corresponds with the discernment of Brāhman in terms of its nature as the "principle" of the universe. Brāhman is referred to there as either "food" or "breath" or something else, in whichever case He is immersed in everything and keeps the continuation of life going. The simile of salt pervading salt-water and keeping the water salty [Ch.U.6.13; BA.U.2.4.12 and 4.5.13; Māi.U.6.35 and 7.11]⁴⁸⁾ is just another way to show this. In

⁴⁷⁾ - MSP. pp.135-6

⁴⁸⁾ - Cf. HS. pp.111; 47; 75; 241; 244.

such a manner, Brāhman could never be specifically indicated as this thing or that, for He becomes one with everything. The distinction between the first view and the second can not, however, be so sharply shown as Zaehner would probably have hoped, for the idea of Self as the "finest essence" of the universe could mean both as "creator" or efficient cause and the dwelling "unmoved mover" which is immersed into and accordingly pervades the whole universe.

We are now going to discern the third and the fourth views, which deal not so much with the nature of Brāhman as with the state of Its or His - depending on the interpretation of the Upanishads - relationship both to the universe and to the soul. There are two notes necessarily being posed here. In the first place we have to admit time and again, also concerning these two preceding views, that strict classifications would never be found. Accordingly, the views on the nature of Brāhman or the Absolute in the Upanishads would never be separated from the state of Its or His relation to the world and to the soul. In this account - hence comes the second note - the Upanishads do not actually deal only with views as plain speculations but to some measure also with spiritual exercises or meditations, for it involves the participation of the human soul. In the fourth view this is obvious. In the third view this could be understood also when we learn later that Brāhman could mean

terminologies : pantheism, monism,
pantheistic monism
monistic pantheism.
have to be explained >

also the deepest self of man. In other words, then, we deal with systematic views on human experiences on the Absolute.⁴⁹ In the following discussion we will observe the two leading views on the Upanishadic systems, pantheism and monism.

4.1. Pantheism in the Upanishads

In the Brāhmanas we have seen how the sacrificial acts had led the Hindu people to the experience of the "cosmic consciousness", when the soul was felt as merging into the cosmos. Such an experience was intensified even more in the Upanishad. The same passage of the Śatapatha Brāhmana [10.6.3], which we have quoted in the previous chapter, was repeated in the Chāndogya Upanishad [3.14.1,3-4]. We will quote it once again here for our purpose.

"This whole universe is Brāhman. Let a man in all tranquillity revere it as tajjalan, - (as that from which all things are born, into which they dissolve and in which they breathe and move).

⁴⁹). Elsewhere Zaehner maintains that the Upanishads are governed by two distinct modes of thought, primitive speculation on the nature of the universe and its "ground", and yogic meditation in which magical correspondences between man and the universe, the microcosm and macrocosm, play a leading part. See MSP.p.117. This distinction of the modes of thought corresponds precisely with our present consideration. It is to be noted, however, that the more practical and technical instructions on yogic meditations would be worked out and treated only in the Upanishads of a very later date, like the Sannyasa Upanishad and Yoga Upanishad, both of which do not come into our discussion. See Farquhar, J.N., Ibidem, p.94.

He who consists of mind, whose body is the breath of life (prana), whose form is light, whose idea (sankalpa) is the real, whose self is space, through whom are all works, all desires, all scents, all tastes, who encompasses all this universe, who does not speak and has no care, -he is my Self within the heart, smaller than a grain of rice or a barley-corn, or a mustard-seed, or grain of millet, or the kernel of a grain of millet; this is my Self within my heart, greater than the earth, greater than the atmosphere, greater than the sky, greater than all these worlds".⁵⁰⁾

For Zaehner this passage is one among the most important in the Upanishads, for it depicts for the first time the idea of God, which passed beyond a purely material formulation. It can be interpreted both in a pantheistic or a monistic sense.⁵¹⁾ It is liable to the pantheistic interpretation following the first verse which clearly states "this whole universe is Brāhman". So it identifies Brāhman with the whole universe. This pantheistic statement is still affirmed by the following verse which refers to the parts of Brāhman which extends from the mind to the whole universe.

The pantheistic view in the Upanishads is never found wholly pure, because the conception of Brāhman is never distinctly formulated. In some places Brāhman is identified with the ground of the universe, elsewhere with the "Self" or Purusha, again with the "One" and so on. In the above verse Brāhman is also found as the Self that is hidden in the human

⁵⁰⁾ Cf. HS. pp.87-88

⁵¹⁾ AST. p.66

heart, "smaller than a grain of rice", yet "greater than all these worlds".

In the Brihadāranyaka Upanishad [2.5.14-15] for example, the pantheistic view identifies Brāhman, also as the "Self", with the All. Thus we can read such passages:

"The Self is the honey of all beings and all beings are honey for the self. That radiant, immortal Person who indwells the Self and that radiant, immortal Person who is the Self, -he is that very Self indeed: this is the Immortal, this Brāhman, this the All."

"This Self is indeed the Lord of all contingent beings, king of all beings. Just as the spokes of a wheel are together fixed on to the hub and felly, so are all contingent beings, all gods, all worlds, all vital breaths and all these selves together in this Self."⁵²⁾

Here the Self, immortal Person and the Lord of all, is seen as the ground and principle of the All, just like the hub of a wheel which unifies all the spokes. If the human soul could join himself with this "Self", he would share naturally the experiences of being the All too. Such experiences could be perceived from the following passages:

"This (Infinite) is below, it is above, it is to the west, to the east, to the south, to the north. Truly it is this whole universe.

Next the teaching concerning the ego
I am below, I am above, I am to the west, to the east, to the south, to the north. Truly I am this whole universe.

Next the teaching concerning the Self. The Self is below, the Self is above, the Self is to the west, to the east, to the south, to the north. Truly the Self is this whole universe.

⁵²⁾ Cf. HS.p.49

The man who sees and thinks and understands (vijñā-) in this way has pleasure in the Self, plays with the Self, lies with the Self and has his joy with the Self: he becomes an independent sovereign. In all the worlds (and in every state of being) freedom of movement is his. But (all) those who understand (reality) in any way that is different from this, are subjects of another sovereign: their states of being (loka) are perishable, and in all the worlds (and states of being) they have no freedom of movement." [Ch.U.7.25.1-2]

Here the human soul and the soul of the universe are identified. In so far as the human soul is involved in and identified with this - what Zaehner called - 'plenteousness of all',⁵³ he enjoys the happiness of being omnipresent, freedom of movement and transcends all opposition; and since the soul of the universe is immortal and without limit, the human soul shares also its immortality and transcendence to the measure of transcending also good and evil.⁵⁴

This state of pantheism shows quite clearly how the Upanishads still persisted in the Brāhmanic experiences of 'cosmic consciousness' when through the dismembering of the sacrificial horse they identified everything with everything else. Pantheism as a system should be considered as categorically beyond human experience, for it identifies God with everything else, Brāhman with the whole universe. So it

⁵³ - "...'he plenteousness of all'. Perhaps that is as good a translation as any of the Sanskrit word bhūman which we find in Chandogya Upanishad 7.23-5, a word derived from the root bhū - meaning 'to become' or less correctly 'to be' the same root from which the Greek 'physis' or 'physical nature' is derived..." CD.p.80.

⁵⁴ - See CD. p.80-82

is not concerned with the experiences of the human soul but with speculation on the experience of God. The Upanishads offered, though, a very peculiar view on pantheism, simply because between God and the human soul there is no clear demarcation. So even though the Upanishads offered pantheistic views, their pantheism was never fixed in pure and precise formulations.

4.2. Monism in the Upanishads

We have seen how the pantheistic view slips and merges into the monistic, if only by realizing the fact that the absolute Brāhman can mean the "Self", both of the universe and the human soul. We have also seen that the Chāndoqya Upanishad [3.14.1,13-14] which was derived from the Brāhmanic formulation, is still opened both to pantheistic and monistic interpretation. The monistic experience could be described as an experience in which the human soul identifies itself with the Absolute and shares its existence beyond space and time, even beyond good and evil. In this consideration, the universe is just an extension of his body.

In the Chāndoqya Upanishad [3.14], which we quoted above, the identification between God, the Absolute and the soul is beautifully expressed. The human soul, the finite meets Brāhman, the infinite, who encompasses all the universe in the human heart. In another passage, the Chāndoqya Upanishad

[8.1.1-6] depicts this encounter as finding the self and the real (objects of) desire. Whoever finds it dwells in the city of Brāhman and enjoys freedom of movement.

We have to stop a while here, though, to discern the point where the monistic view differs from the pantheistic. In his At Sundry Times Zaehner distinguished quite sharply monism from pantheism, for monism is developed from identification between the Absolute and the human soul, whereas pantheism between God and the world.⁵⁵ Now such a distinction never happened in reality, simply because there is no consistent idea of God or Brāhman. In his Hindu and Muslim Mysticism which was published two years later the distinction between the position of monism and pantheism was slightly changed. He states now that the monistic tendency sees the identification of the soul with God, considered as the "One" or the Soul of everything all, whereas the pantheistic sees the identification of the soul with the All in its diversity. The statement of Zaehner runs as follows.

"...The monist position distinguishes itself from the pantheistic in that it concedes reality only to the undifferentiated One, which, it is claimed, can be experienced in trance... Pantheism, on the other hand, identifies the human soul not only with the ground of the universe but with the universe in all its diversity."⁵⁶

⁵⁵ · AST.p.68

⁵⁶ · HMM.p.31

* In either case, though a view with regard to the relation between God/Brahman & the Universe is presupposed,

Obviously enough both views now were regarded as the experience of the soul. It would seem then that the monistic view describes the experience of the soul in its depth, interiority or inwardness, whereas the pantheistic in its breadth, exteriority.

So as in the case of pantheism, we can never state quite safely concerning monism in the Upanishads too, for Brāhman could mean also the world or the whole universe. Hence any statement on monism would slip again into pantheism. A pure monistic view could never be found in the Upanishads, except in the Māṇḍūkya, which we will discern later on. Most of the monistic views in the Upanishads could be classified as what Zaehner called "qualified monism".

"Descry This with your mind:
Herein there's no diversity at all.
Death beyond death is all the lot
Of him who sees in This what seems to be diverse.

Descry It in its Oneness,
Immeasurable, firm,
Transcending space, immaculate,
Unborn, abiding, great-
(This is) the Self !

What (we see) here is also there beyond;
What there, that too is here:
Death beyond death does he incur
Who sees in This what seems to be diverse!

Grasp This with your mind:
Herein there's no diversity at all.
Death beyond death is all the lot
Of him who sees in This what seems to be diverse.

These passages from the Brihadāranyaka Upanishad [4.4.19-20] show the state of "qualified monism" with much clarity. The

verses suggested that the multiplicity or diversity should be grasped in its unity, for this Oneness, even if it is unseen in everyday life, is more important and significant. Put in this context of reality, monism is not simply an identification of the human soul and Brāhman without any qualification. For ever since Brāhman is not only the soul of the universe but this whole universe with its diversity, the identification of Him implies also those two aspects of diversity and unity.⁵⁷⁾ With this step, again monism in the Upanishads merges into pantheism.

The Chāndogya Upanishad too does not offer a simple idea of identification between the Absolute and the soul. In the Chāndogya Upanishad [8.1.1-6], it is no more a plain state of identification, for there the finite identified itself with the infinite and hence gain "freedom of movement". Brāhman and the soul is described there as "unmoved moving mover", that swifter than thought. It should be considered revolutionary compared to the monism of the philosophical trend in later time.

"...As here on earth the worldly station that is won by work must perish, so too must the (heavenly) state won by merit perish in the next world. [All] those who go hence without having found the self and these real [objects of] desire, will have freedom of movement in every state of being."⁵⁸⁾

⁵⁷⁾ . CD. pp. 83-85.

⁵⁸⁾ . Cf. HS. p. 123

In such a state the reality is no more an "undifferentiated One" in which the human soul is identified with the "unknowable godhead" as the source of "All", than the "unity in diversity" or "diversity in unity", Zaehner referring to the terminology used by François de Sales. It is no more a one-ness than a unity of the All. Diversity in this sense is just the different way of looking at it, for instead of inside it looks outside. World and its diversity is just the reality when man looks outside of himself, while when he looks inside, he will see immortality. Creation, again, is just "an expansion of the One into what is outside itself".⁵⁹ Looking inside on the other hand will lead to the city of Brāhman [Ch.U.8.12.6], where the soul is liberated from what is gross, i.e. matter.

5. The Identity of Ātman and Brāhman

It is often stated that the contents of the Upanishads in brief is the identity of Ātman (Self) with Brāhman.⁶⁰ Yet such a plain statement without any explanation could often be confusing, for Ātman (Self) could simply refer to Brāhman.

⁵⁹ - CD.p.89.

⁶⁰ - Some modern authors were prompt to accept simply such claim. "The credo of the Upanishads is the well-known tat tvam asi which can be translated 'thou art that'." See Lemâitre, Solange, Hinduism, New York, p.26; "The main message of the Upanishads is the identity of the Ātman with the Brāhman." Sen, K.M., Hinduism, Middlesex, p.53. As to the meaning of the claim they were at variance.

Hence identity between Ātman (Self) and Brāhman would sound tautological. Otherwise, the statement could also mean simply the acknowledgment of the soul to its origin or source as Brāhman, which does not mean at all an identity as such. For ever since the whole universe as pluriformity came out from the One, as we have seen earlier, it follows quite naturally that the pluriformity tends to seek its original unity. But this is not an identity at all, for Brāhman is still considered as the source and consequently prior to everything else, the human soul included. He remains distinct from everything else like the spider from its web. This is the ontology of the Upanishads.

Many scholars tried to explain the difference between Ātman and Brāhman in such a way that they seem to show them as two different aspects of the same reality. Hence Ātman would be explained as the subjective aspect of the universe, which by its nature guides all the existence more to its depth, whereas Brāhman to its extension. // Again Ātman is the kernel which dwells in the innermost part of Being, whereas Brāhman is the magical power which sustains the whole Being.⁶¹⁾ Both are then complementary in constituting the

⁶¹⁾ "Soweit das auch hier noch überall herrschende Schwanken der Umrisse solche Unterscheidungen erlaubt, kann man vielleicht sagen, daß zu der aus Brahman und Selbst, also in gewissen Sinne, über Brahman und Selbst jetzt sich aufbauenden Gestalt des Allwesens das Brahman, seiner früheren Natur entsprechend, mehr die Richtung in die Weite mitbrachte, das Selbst mehr die Richtung in die Tiefe. Jenes hat objektiveres Wesen; dieses ist das Subjekt. Dort eine die

whole reality.// They are also complementary in such a way that Brāhman appears as the unknown that needs to be explained, whereas Ātman is the known through which Brāhman finds its explanation; Brāhman is the first principle in so far it is comprehended in the universe, Ātman in so far as it is known in the inner self of man.⁶²⁾ // Brāhman is considered then as the cosmical principle of the universe, Ātman as the psychical or Brāhman as the ultimate as discovered objectively and Ātman as the ultimate as discovered introspectively.⁶³⁾

If it is true that this is the content of the Upanishads, it is similarly true that this is the very doctrine of the Upanishads which has most often confused students who tried to understand it. The source of this confusion according to Zaehner is again due to the elusiveness of the word Brāhman and Ātman. Based on the great sayings (mahavakyuni) like "I am Brāhman" ["Aham brahmāsmi", BA.U.1.4.10], "You are that" ["Tat tvam asi", Ch.U.6.8-16], "This ātman is Brāhman" ["ayam ātmā Brahma", Mān.U.2], and "Consciousness is Brāhman"

Die durch alle Fernen übergewaltig, zauberhaft - mehr zauberhaft als königlich - regierende Kraft. Hier ein im Innersten des Daseins wohnender, eben dies Innersten seiender Wesenskern." Oldenberg, H., Die Lehre der Upanishaden und die Anfänge des Buddhismus, Göttingen, 1915, ss.55-6.

⁶²⁾ Deussen, Paul, The Philosophy of the Upanishads, (trans. by Rev. A.S. Geden), New York, 1966 (1906), p.38

⁶³⁾ Radhakrishnan, S and Moore, A. Ch. (ed.), Indian Philosophy, Princeton, 1957, p.38.

["prajñānam Brahma", Ait.U. 5.3],⁶⁴ which Sankara, the great philosopher of India, took as arguments for his doctrine of non-dualistic reality, Zaehner argued that the sayings have different contents and should, therefore, be differently interpreted.

The first saying, which belongs to the early Upanishads, must be placed in the context of the mentality of that period, which was close to the Brāhmanic mentality. It was a shift from the self consciousness as individuals to the consciousness of himself as the All, when the self merged into the whole universe. This is what Zaehner called the "nature mystic", in which the self (ātman) equated with Brāhman and could utter those magic words "I am Brāhman". The whole passage of the text runs as follows,

'In the beginning this (world) was Brāhman. It took cognizance of itself, "I am Brāhman". Therefore it became that All. Whosoever of the gods became aware of this, became that (Brāhman). So too in the case of seers, and so too in the case of men... This is now also. Whoso knows, "I am Brāhman", becomes this All. Not even the gods have the power to prevent him becoming thus, for such a one becomes their own self (or soul, ātman).'⁶⁵

This must be considered as progress, from the point of consciousness, because the individual consciousness entered into the superconsciousness of "the Real" [BA.U.5.4.1],

⁶⁴ · AST.p.77 cf. MSP.p.28. The last saying is, though, for Zaehner not relevant to the present discussion.

⁶⁵ · AST.p.53 cf. HS.p.37

"intelligence and bliss"[BA.U.3.9.28].⁶⁶) The individual self realizes himself as being Brāhman, the One and the All. He transcends space and time, birth and death and overcomes the duality of spirit and matter.⁶⁷)

This in Hume's opinion is the realistic conception of the ultimate unity. For Hume, the doctrine on the union between Ātman and Brāhman in the Upanishads shows the development from the earlier thought of merely correspondence between parts of bodily self and of the world, which was inherited from the cremation hymn of the Rig-Veda [10.16.3] to the real unity.⁶⁸) // The real unity was not, however, an easily understandable concept for how could the self and non-self possibly be identified? The sages then found that in reality there existed the duality between - what Hume called using kantian terminology - the noumenal and the phenomenal. The phenomenal world is the world of sensuous experiences, the many and diversified happenings, whereas the noumenal is the One, inexperiential and therefore indescribable. The Brāhman in the Upanishads was also proposed in two different forms, the formed and the unformed, the mortal and the immortal,

Cosmic
conscious-
ness?

monistic
conscious-
ness?

⁶⁶) - AST.p.54

⁶⁷) - CD.p.77

⁶⁸) - Hume, Ibidem, pp.23-32 (R.E. Hume, The Indian Principal Upanishads)

corresponding to the phenomenal and the noumenal world.⁶⁹⁾ But quoting the Chāndogya Upanishad [3.12.6], Hume stated that the unformed Brāhman, the immortal, was proved to be more significant, for in favor of it, considered as the undifferenced unity, the manifold world of sense was then regarded as illusory. This supreme Brāhman, the super-phenomenal, the pure unity was described in numerous passages [BA.U.2.5.19; Mai.U.6.17; BA.U.3.8.8; Ka.U.3.15; 6.8; Śv.U.6.9; 6.11] which could be resumed in negative definition as "not thus! not thus!" (neti neti) [BA.U.2.3.6; 3.9.26; 4.2.4].⁷⁰⁾

For Zaehner, the realistic conception of the ultimate unity might be somewhat embarrassing for it leads to accept the world of manifold as illusion. Such an account promoted by Sankara, the great monist philosopher, was becoming common in Indian thought but totally misleading. This is why Zaehner rejected the account with only one exception regarding the teaching of the Māndūkya Upanishad, which came a bit later. The ultimate unity in earlier Upanishads must be then interpreted differently. If the Upanishadic sages should have

⁶⁹⁾ Hume, Ibidem, p.35. We use the word Brāhman following Zaehner, instead of Brāhma as used by Hume. Regarding the common use of the term, Radhakrishnan also corrected Hume's. See Radhakrishnan S., and Charles A. Moore (ed.), Indian Philosophy, p.39.

⁷⁰⁾ Hume, Ibidem, p.39-40.

felt and seen this ultimate unity in himself it might be because of their primitive thinking,⁷¹⁾ but it does not mean at all that they would have considered the world as merely illusion.

The best way to shed light on this problem, according to Zaehner, is by comparing the teaching of the Upanishads with that of Aristotle. Aristotle in De Anima distinguished between the soul and existing things, the subject which perceives and understands and the object perceived and understood. Now in the act of perceiving and understanding the faculties of sense-perception and intellection in the soul meet and identify with their objects of perception and of intellection respectively, for they are potentially their objects. They are identical with - and here Aristotle introduced the term - the forms (eidea) of the objects.⁷²⁾

⁷¹⁾ Quoting Forrest Reid, in his Following Darkness, Zaehner wrote "...Forrest Reid writes: 'It was as if everything that had seemed external and around me were suddenly within me. The whole world seemed to be within me.' The qualifying 'as if' and 'seemed' he adds because, as a civilized Occidental, he knows that if he omitted them, he would be laughed out of court. Had he lived in the still semi-primitive environment of the Upanishads, he would have written: 'Everything that is external and around me is within me. This whole world is within me. (I am this all.)' He would have written so because this would have seemed to him to be the literal truth: there would have been no 'as if' about it." AST.pp.75-6. Cf. The same consideration on Soma in the Vedas, Hin. p.21 or on the identification in the Brahmanic sacrifice, HS.p.vii.

⁷²⁾ The explanation was derived by Zaehner from Aristotle, De Anima,iii,8,1-2 (431b). See AST.p.54-5.

Seen in this light, the identity of the self and the all could be more comprehensible. This must be the Upanishadic way to perceive reality which is more apt as a personal integration than to perceive it as an identity with the existing things which is in reality impossible.⁷³⁾ This is what is expressed repeatedly in the Chāndogya Upanishad and was considered as one of the great sayings by Sankara, "Thou art That" [Ch.U.6.9ff.]. → second

The third great saying, which is quoted from the Māndūkya Upanishad, should be treated quite specially, because as Zaehner insisted, it is the only text which takes the view that the phenomenal world is only illusory. To understand the content of the saying, "This ātman is Brāhman" [Mān.U.2], it is necessarily needed to understand its context, the Māndūkya Upanishad.

The doctrine of the Māndūkya Upanishad deals with the four states of consciousness, i.e. the waking state, the dream, the dreamless sleep and the state beyond the dreamless sleep. These states of consciousness were already hinted also in the Brihadāraṇyaka [4.3.9-33], the Chāndogya [8.10-12] and the Praśna [4.5-6] Upanishads, but clearly and systematically stated in the whole Māndūkya Upanishad. Following Zaehner, we will work out this theme of identity ātman and Brāhman, based on the passages of the Māndūkya Upanishad.

⁷³⁾ AST, pp.54-5 and 76-7.

The waking life according to this Upanishad corresponds to the gross matter in which reality consists of plurality. In the dream the self looks within himself and creates the subtle matter out of himself. The gross matter does not exist and plurality seems to fade away. Still there remains duality between the self and the others or a separation between the two. In the dreamless state of sleep, the self immerses into the depth of his soul and finds unification. The Upanishad figures this state as "a very mass of wisdom, composed of bliss, experiencing bliss, with thought as its mouth, wise" [Mān.U.5]. It is "the Lord of all, the omniscient, the Inner Controller, the source of all, the origin and the end of contingent beings" [Mān.U.6].⁷⁴⁾

Beyond those three states, the Māndūkya Upanishad still affirms the fourth state, the absolute Oneness, in which all qualification falls out for it is:

"Conscious (prajña) of neither within nor without, nor of both together, not a mass of wisdom (prajña), neither wise nor unwise, unseen, one with whom there is no commerce, impalpable, devoid of distinguishing mark, unthinkable, indescribable, its essence the firm conviction of the oneness of itself, bringing all development (prapañca) to an end, tranquil and mild, devoid of duality, such do they deem this fourth to be. That is the Self: that is what should be known," [Mān.U.7].⁷⁵⁾

⁷⁴⁾ - See CD.p.94 cf. HS.p.201

⁷⁵⁾ - HS.p.201

This is, in Zaehner's consideration, the Oneness beyond identity which can not be explained with words, for it is "unseen", "impalpable", "unthinkable" and "indescribable".⁷⁶⁾

In the Maitri Upanishad [7.11] this state beyond the dreamless sleep is identified with the three quarter hidden Brāhman, a theme which brings us back to the idea of the Purusha or Primal Man, which we met when we discerned on the late RigVeda. Now this theme appears again and is combined with the idea of the correspondence between macrocosmos and microcosmos.

"He who sees with the (waking) eye, and he who roves in dream,
He who (dreamless) sleeps, and he who transcends the dreamless-
These are the four states (of mortal man):
Of these the greatest is the fourth.
In the three (first) a quarter of Brāhman moves,

⁷⁶⁾ Lesimple in the introduction to his translation of the Māndūkya Upanishad explained that The Māndūkya Upanishad invented a new interpretation on the state of the ultimate reality from the syllable OM. In the Brihadāranyaka Upanishad, the syllable was interpreted as referring to only three states of being, which are vaiśvānara, taijasa, prajña. Vaiśvānara is common knowledge of common people about the gross things. This is derived from the letter A and is the first state of being. The second is taijasa or subtle knowledge, happening in dreams. This is derived from the letter U. The third, derived from the letter M, is prajña, which a global conscience, massive, indifferent, exempt from any distinction. This is the state of the dreamless sleep. Now what is absent in the Brihadāranyaka is the fourth state, beyond the syllable OM (=AUM), in which all determination and conscience fades away. This is the supreme Brāhman, about whom one could not but say neither, neither. Lesimple, Em. (trad. et pub.), Māndūkya Upanishad et Karika de Gaudapada, texte et traduction sous la direction de Louis Renou, Paris, 1944.

Three-quarters in the last."⁷⁷⁾

According to this verse, the three first states, that is the waking state, the dream and the dreamless sleep are identified with a quarter of Brāhman. This quarter of Brāhman in the Rig-Veda [10.90.2-3] is equated with the whole phenomenal world or the universe, which comprises all beings. In this consideration this quarter of Brāhman consists then of gross matters and subtle one and even "the Lord of all", the personal God of the phenomenal world himself. The fourth state is unprecedently though absolutely different, for it is beyond these all.

Viewed in this framework, Māndūkya Upanishad proves clearly to propose a pure monism, for it teaches the absolute Oneness beyond identity and does not permit any duality. It follows quite naturally also that the phenomenal world has to be considered as mere illusion, since the Reality is only one without a second. Such a position is unique in the whole Upanishads and seems revolutionary and comes to be the only reference to which one can say correctly and having sense, from literal point of view, that the Upanishad teaches the identity of Brāhman and Ātman, for this implies the possible experience of a soul identifying with "God".⁷⁸⁾

⁷⁷⁾ - CD.p.95. Cf. HS.p.245.

⁷⁸⁾ - Concerning the experience of the soul in the Māndūkya Upanishad Zaehner wrote: "...Thus, once the literal identification of microcosm and macrocosm is made, there is no alternative left except to identify the human soul with

This state beyond the dreamless sleep is the bliss of the Māṇḍūkya Upanishad. The "One" is not the "All" as it usually is in the earlier Upanishads, Zaehner remarked, because the "All" means plurality and this does not fit with the absolute One.⁷⁹ The One in the Māṇḍūkya Upanishad is beyond this opposition, it is beyond space and time. So it is in the Māṇḍūkya Upanishad that we perceive the experience of the Absolute which is totally different from the other experiences of the other Upanishads. Here we do not see any more trace of the experience of the "cosmic consciousness" of the Brāhmanas which allows the existence of plurality.

6. The Path to Theism

We have stated above that the Upanishads are furnished with so many doctrines, which are incoherent with each other. Hence to survey the important doctrines on the Absolute in the Upanishads, we need to hint here at the path of Theism. In the previous passages, we have made a note of the tendency to see the Absolute in personal terms. Of course that was a clear sign of theism. In fact the whole Upanishads, disregarding the incoherency of the doctrines, still shows the two distinct trends, one towards absolute monism which

God. 'I am Brahman', is now experienced as the literal truth; what is only an 'image of God' claims to be God." See AST.p.90.

⁷⁹ HS.p.xi

culminates in the Māṇḍūkya Upanishad, the other towards a transcendent though still immanent theism which reaches its clearest expression in the Śvetāśvatara Upanishad.⁸⁰ On the absolute monism in the Māṇḍūkya Upanishad, we have sufficiently elaborated. On the personal character of the Absolute in the Śvetāśvatara Upanishad, we have also made some points. It remains still to add some aspects of the theism of the Śvetāśvatara Upanishad, to give a clear contrast to the absolute monism of the Māṇḍūkya Upanishad.

In the Concordant Discord, Zaehner remarked that there are three important attributes of the Śvetāśvatara God that preeminently need to be noted. They are his absolute transcendence, his omnipotence and his wholly immanence. He is transcendent in so far he is 'the Eternal Self-subsistent: for than That there's nothing higher to be known'[1.12],⁸¹ 'witness, observer, absolute, alone, devoid of attributes'[6.11]. He is omnipotent in so far he is 'Maker of all, all-knowing, source of selves' [6.16] and he is immanent both in the imperishable individual souls or selves and in matter [2.16].⁸² By such eminent attributes, Zaehner remarked that Rudra-Siva, the Lord of the Śvetāśvatara Upanishad

⁸⁰ - Hin.pp.73-4.

⁸¹ - Numbers between brackets indicate the passage in the Śvetāśvatara Upanishad.

⁸² - CD.p.112

"is exalted over and above Brāhman understood as the totality of eternal being and temporal becoming - a transcendently immanent and immanently transcendent personal Absolute who 'encompasses' not only the world of appearance but also the world of eternal unchanging essence - He world of 'wisdom' (jñāna) as well as the world of 'action' (karma)".⁸³

In the Śvetāśvatara Upanishad, Zaehner considered that Brāhman, as the ground or source of the universe is inadequate to refer to the Absolute, for the Śvetāśvatara Upanishad prefers to place the Vedic Rudra-Śiva, now being starkly demythologized as God Śiva, above an impersonal Brāhman, which is still attached to the perceivable world. The quest for transcendency and immanency is desperately demanded in the Upanishads, but there is never a clear statement of it. Brāhman as the ultimate reality is to fill this blank. Such is the position of Brāhman as Radhakrishnan, for example, supposed to raise.⁸⁴ It is common for the Hindu thinkers to think of Brāhman also as the unmanifest, somewhat hidden and therefore unutterable. This is what they used to

⁸³. CD.p.116.

⁸⁴. "The Upaniṣad affirms that Brāhman on which all else depends, to which all existences aspires, Brāhman which is sufficient to itself, aspiring to no other, without any need, is the source of all other beings, the principle which unifies the world of the physicist, the biologist, the psychologist, the logician, the moralist and the artist. The hierarchy of all things and beings from soulless matter to the deity is the cosmos. Plato's world architect, Aristotle's world-mover belong to the cosmos. If there is ordered development, progressive evolution, it is because there is the divine principle at work in the universe." See Radhakrishnan, The Principal Upaniṣads, p.59.

call Brāhman in itself - we have mentioned it earlier - a conception which seems to cut the endless searching for the ultimate transcendency in the Upanishads. For Zaehner, the God Śiva of the Śvetāśvatara Upanishads occupied a still more meritorious privileged position than this impersonal Brāhman, because he would be claimed as ParamBrāhman (the highest Brāhman) and Paramātman (the highest Ātman) by his devotees some hundred years later together with the God Vishnu of the BhagavadGītā, both being the only God who 'encompasses' all things in time and eternity and the God in the human heart who is 'no larger than the fine point of an awl' [Śv,U.5.8].⁸⁵⁾

7. Conclusion

To close this chapter some conclusions could be drawn regarding the Supreme Being in the Upanishads. Following Zaehner, we could state that the Supreme Being, whether conceived of personally or impersonally, is called Brāhman, Ātman, or Purusha (Person).⁸⁶⁾ But since Ātman and Purusha are also used to mean the individual self, they become, as we have seen, the cause of difficulty in dealing with the systems or philosophical views of the Upanishads.

⁸⁵⁾ - CD. p.117

⁸⁶⁾ - AST.p.105 and HS.p.xii

Now Brāhman itself is a word that can not be easily translated into another language simply because there is no equivalent which can sufficiently bear the content of its meaning. In some passages, Brāhman could mean the principle or the ground of the universe, in some others the source or the beginning of it. In these terms, however, the Upanishads never stated distinctively and consistently whether Brāhman was purely spirit or comprising matter as well. To agree with Zaehner, in the earlier Upanishads there is no distinct difference between matter and spirit. Their concern was more on the identity of the infinitesimal and the infinite, of all that cannot be measured.⁸⁷⁾

This concern leads to the problem of the systems or philosophical views in the Upanishads. In so far as the human soul⁸⁸⁾ is involved, the Upanishads offer both the pantheistic and monistic views; it is pantheistic when the human soul is identified with Brāhman as the ground of the universe and the universe itself in all its diversity or

⁸⁷⁾ · CD.p.83

⁸⁸⁾ · It is to be noted that in his translation of the Hindu Scriptures, Zaehner distinguished clearly between ātman, which he translated as self, and buddhi which he translated as soul. It is the soul which is the highest faculty and ultimately responsible for whether a man continues to be reborn or is finally released, whereas the self is to be content with its role as onlooker. HS.p.xxi-ii. In the treatise the thing is not, however, so simple as merely in the translation. It is not rare that Zaehner took the soul for the self, for granted in dealing with the systems of the Upanishads.

plurality. It is monistic when the human soul is identified with or immersed into the One. Neither of the two systems, however, did the Upanishads hold consistently. The two systems always slipped into each other, because Brāhman as the ground of the universe could be the whole universe itself or the One.

There is no safe statement in the Upanishads, which can be held onto whether Brāhman is personal or impersonal. Both ideas are always present and culminate in the considerations on the state of the Ultimate Reality, whether as the impersonal One without a second, in the pure monistic view of the Māndūkya Upanishad, or as the personal God Śiva in the theistic view of the Śvetāśvatara Upanishad. In the pure monistic view the impersonal Brāhman is the only Reality, transcending the creator God of the dreamless sleep, "the Lord of all" in the phenomenal world. In the personal theistic view, too, the God Śiva transcends the identity of Ātman-Brāhman, which is an eternal mode of being. So this is not at all a transcendent God in the Platonic sense or immanent God in Aristotelian sense but comprising and at the same time beyond both meanings. Both views present the ultimate Reality in the opposite ways and they irreconcilably exclude each other.

CHAPTER IV : GOD IN THE BHAGAVAD-GITA

1. Introduction

The Bhagavad-Gītā is just a small portion in the huge bulk of the great epic of Mahābhārata, whose authorship was credited to Vyasa. It is only "one episode out of hundreds" in that colossal Epic of Mahābhārata, to use professor Zaehner's words. Small as it is, The Bhagavad-Gītā plays a very important role, not only in the epic itself, but in the whole sequence of the Hindu Scriptures. It was probably inserted gradually in the bulk of the Mahābhārata around the second century before Christ,¹⁾ but gained afterward a more prestigious position than the Mahābhārata that the Hindus practically count it later as śruti, separately from the Mahābhārata which remains as smṛti.²⁾ The reason could be that it contains sacred knowledge on the eternal truth. So some would rather claim the Bhagavad-Gītā as among the Upanishads, hence calling it Gītōpanishad, or like the Vedāntins, they raise the Gītā together with the Upanishads

¹⁾ See ZBG. p.7. There are, in fact, different opinions on this account. Farquhar noted that the modern scholars generally assume that in its present form, the Gītā can scarcely be earlier than the first or second century AD. Following Holtzmann, Hopkin and Keith, he put the date between the second stage of the formulation of the two epics and the rest of the didactic epic. Farquhar, Ibidem, p.86

²⁾ This is also the reason, why we shall dedicate one chapter on the Epics and the Purāṇas separately from this one.

and Brahma Sutras into what they called Prasthānatrayam (Scriptural Trinity) as the basis of their philosophy.³⁾

To understand this privilege that the Bhagavad-Gītā has among the Hindu Scriptures, Zaehner tried to analyze two possible reasons that are commonly propounded by scholars.⁴⁾ The first is that the Bhagavad-Gītā might gain its importance due to its didactic content, to which an immediate objection may follow, for there are a lot of didactic poems in the Mahābhārata outside the Bhagavad-Gītā; how could those other poems simply be ignored in comparison with that in the Bhagavad-Gītā? The second possible reason which is more popular, is the presence of Krishna. Krishna, for Vaishnava Hindus at least, represents the Supreme God, so his words and teachings should be very significant for them. But this reason too, does not seem very satisfying to Zaehner. In the first place because Krishna is such a problematic figure

³⁾ See Swami Chidbhavananda, The Bhagavad-Gita, Tamil Nadu, 1979, pp.28-31; Minor Robert, Modern Indian Interpreter of the Bhagavad-Gita, New York, 1986, p.2. This is just a hint, how they appreciated very much the Bhagavad-Gītā.

⁴⁾ There are many books on the Bhagavad-Gītā, which tend to consider it as spiritual guide of life; Dnyaneshwar Maharaj, Gita Explained, Bombay (1932) 1945; K.M. Munshi., Bhagavad Gita and Modern Life, Bombay, 1962; Maharishi Yogi, On The Bhagavad-Gita (a new translation and commentary ch.1-6), Middlesex, (1967) 1981; A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, Bhagavad-gītā as it is, New York, London, 1972; just to mention some of them. But strangely enough many of them, which praised and adored so much the contents that it bears, hardly give distinct reasons why the Bhagavad-Gītā merits for such privilege.

about whom scholars had not yet been in agreement and secondly because in Mahābhārata there is another part in which Krishna, after the war was over, imparted his doctrines again, but this part is very much disregarded. How could this part, Anugītā, which is imparted by the same important person not gain the same privilege as that of the Bhagavad-Gītā?⁵⁾

To these unsatisfactory answers, Zaehner could only resort to a hypotheses that the Bhagavad-Gītā gains its prestige because it proclaimed a new religion, which is entirely different from that of the Upanishads, for it offers no more metaphysical than mystical views, in which love and devotion play very significant roles. So this seems just a gradual step in the sequence of Hindu religions like the Brāhmanas from the Vedas and the Upanishads from the Brāhmanas. Hence the new religion, which would be called bhakti step out from the Upanishads. The Gītā contains "religious teachings that almost all men who have read it have recognized to be of

⁵⁾. Bhagavan Das, for example, is aware of the importance of the words of Krishna in the Anugītā, yet he himself hardly know the reason of the neglect while maintaining the importance of it equalizing to the Bhagavad-Gītā. "...And Krishna went on to deliver the Anu-gita, which is more systematic than the other, and very illuminating though regrettably neglected. And fortunately for humanity, though the memories of both Krishna and Arjuna were unreliable, Vyasa has somehow mysteriously managed to preserve both the first and the second Gita-s. Bhagavan Das, Krishna, a study in the Theory of Avataras, Madras, 1929, p.144

abiding value",⁶ Zaehner said. And these teachings, in Zaehner's opinion, would be, then, universal values that are open to all human beings.

2. The Context and the Philosophical Background

The Bhagavad-Gītā displays the dialogue between Krishna and Arjuna, just before the great war in Kurukhsetra between the brothers of two families of Pandavas and Kauravas, discendents of common grandfather. The Pandavas are the five brothers, sons of Pandu, among whom Arjuna is the third, whereas the Kuravas are the hundred brothers, sons of Dhritarashtra. The king Pandu died while his five sons were still very young, so states the Mahābhārata, that his kingdom was entrusted to the blind old brother Dhritarashtra up to the time when Pandu's sons would be able to reign. When the time came, Yudhishthira, the eldest brother was cheated in a game of dice and he had to deliver his right to reign for thirteen years, in which he and his brothers had to go into exile. After the thirteen years of exile were fulfilled, the

⁶ · CD.p.119 To Sri Aurobindo, the significance of the Gītā which is to be drawn out is not its metaphysical contents, but "that is of value to humanity and its future". He added, though, "Our object, then, in studying the Gita will not be a scholastic or academical scrutiny of its thought, nor to place its philosophy in the history of metaphysical speculation, nor shall we deal with it in the manner of the analytical dialectician..." Aurobindo, Sri, Essays on the Gita, Pondicherry (1922) 1974, pp.2-3. For Zaehner, such consequence need not necessarily follow.

Pandavas returned to receive their rights but the Kauravas ignored. Thence began the great war between them.

The dialogue set up from the wavering and hesitation of Arjuna to do his duty as ksatriya. His dilemma appears immediately whether to do his dharmā, i.e. to go to the battle, or not to do it, since his opponents were all his own kinsmen. Krishna did not simply give an affirmation or negation, or the dos and don'ts of morality, but he unveiled the whole mystery of God and human beings. The philosophy of * the Bhagavad-Gītā is concerned very much with the essence of the self, the liberation of it, up to the encounter of the self with God, the supreme Being himself. Very different from the preceding Scriptures, the Bhagavad-Gītā appears particularly rich and intricate, in the sense that we cannot simply draw out its view on God or the Absolute, unless we speak firstly of its views on the self and the Brāhman, for they are closely interwoven. In the sequence of those difficult and often tricky explanations, Zaehner saw the three components of thought which influenced the Bhagavad-Gītā.⁷⁾ They are the Buddhistic philosophy, mostly their doctrines on nirvāna and the concentration of self, the Sāṅkhya-Yoga system regarding the theory of puruṣa and prakṛti, spirit and matter and the liberation of the soul through yoga, and finally the views on a personal God from

⁷⁾ CD. p.121, HS. p.xvi cf. ZBG. pp.7-9.

the Śvetāśvatara Upanishad, which we have already seen in the preceding chapter.

Through a very accurate research verse by verse of the using of words and their precise notions, Zaehner could finely draw out some essential and proper views of the Gītā. It is true that the Gītā can not be viewed globally as a comprehensive work so as to grasp its proper messages. No wonder, a scholar like K.T. Telang found difficulty to understand the confusions or contradictories, that the Gītā preserved, with regard to the concepts like yoga, Brāhman, Ātman, Svabhāsa, bhakti etc.⁸⁾ To leave the Gītā in its richness of senses and notions of the conceptions, one has to remain accurate to see the relationship between different textures that backgrounded the constitution of the Gītā. So quite unlike the other scholars, who insisted the non-systematicity of the Gītā,⁹⁾ Zaehner tends to see the Gītā as a very genial work, which could handle the differences among several tendencies and bring together into its own framework.

⁸⁾ K.T. Telang, in his introduction to the translation of the Bhagavad-Gītā. See SBE. vol.VIII. pp.7-13.

⁹⁾ See for example, K.T. Telang, loc.cit. pp.7-10; Edgerton, Franklin, Bhagavad Gita, vol.II interpretation, Harvard, 1952, p.6

3. The Self and the Soul

The Gītā, according to Zaehner, can be divided into three parts. The first part that extends from the first chapter to the sixth, deals with the different ways in which the soul may win through to liberation. The seventh to the eleventh chapters deal with the nature of God, which end up with the grand theophany. The last chapters deal much with the love of God for man.¹⁰ As we have mentioned above, it is impossible to view God out of the Gītā's background without having to view at first the essence of human beings, for human self is in the Gītā's view a "minute part" of God. So to discern first about the self and the soul for the sake of having a proper conception of the Supreme God of the Bhagavad-Gītā is not only methodically recommended but also substantially indispensable. It is obvious that the Bhagavad-Gītā was organized in such a way that the treatise on God was preceded by the treatise on the human soul and its effort to discipline itself.¹¹

As we have said previously, the Bhagavad-Gītā tends to impart the mystical than metaphysical doctrines, in the sense

¹⁰. Hin. p.92

¹¹. Rāmānuja concludes, that the knowledge of the soul is a department of the knowledge of the Supreme. Since what Rāmānuja meant by the soul is the individual soul, in Zaehner term, this means that psychology - and not philosophy - is that which should precede theology as propedeutikon. See AST. p.121

*in the sense of
the knowledge of God*

that the relationship between the soul and God is very much emphasized. In other words God is not perceived as merely the exemplar of the soul, but as the supreme object of loving devotion.¹²⁾

3.1. The Difference of Terms

But if the conception of God should be viewed from his relationship with the human being, how must we observe this phenomenon? Is it the soul really or the self of man which takes initiative? These are two terms which have to be settled before we begin our main discussion. Many scholars did not pay serious attention to the difference between those two terms.¹³⁾ Zaehner himself did not consider it significant to speak differently about self and soul until his recent study on the Bhagavad-Gītā.

In his earlier works, that is before his commentary on The Bhagavad-Gītā (1969), the difference between soul (buddhi) and self (ātman) remained unobserved. Zaehner did not recognize the distinction that might exist between those two

¹²⁾ Hin. p.93

¹³⁾ This shows how Zaehner is faithful to his philological background and completely diverged from many interpreters who, propelled by their own interest risked the possible bias in their interpretations, for not caring the tricky nuances that the Gītā often put forward. "The greatest sinners in this respect are perhaps the Indian philosophical commentators on the great Hindu scriptures themselves, for almost without exception, they seek not so much to bring out the meaning of the text itself as to impose their own private opinion on to it." CD. p.10

terms, not even when he spoke about the spiritual effort and moral responsibility. This is obvious, for example, in his At Sundry Times (1958), Hindu and Muslim Mysticism (1960) and Mysticism, Sacred and Profane (1961). In At Sundry Times Zaehner translated brahma-yoga-yukt'ātmā as "the man whose self or soul is joined together by the joining of Brāhman", which in the psychology of Jung would be called "integrated" personality. In the later explanation, he added that the sages who practiced yoga to gain such an integration, realized that the soul or ātman is never the author of any action: action is the sphere of Nature.¹⁴⁾ In Hindu and Muslim Mysticism, in his treatment of the liberated soul in the Bhagavad-Gītā, Zaehner also equalized soul and ātman, for he stated that the identity with Brāhman "... is achieved primarily by the conquest of desire and anger, as well as of the delusion that the soul or ātman is in any sense an agent..."¹⁵⁾ This state of the identification with Brāhman or of becoming Brāhman is described in the fifth and sixth chapters of the Bhagavad-Gītā, as being achieved through an

¹⁴⁾ . AST. p.123

¹⁵⁾ . HMM. p.60

intense Yogic concentration and introspection, the mind being subjected to the ātman or immortal soul.¹⁶⁾

In this account Zaehner either confused the soul with the self or equalized both by translating ātman as soul instead of self. In both cases, it shows how Zaehner had not as yet recognized the proper meaning of the terms. Readers would be confused facing those small passages when they read later his commentary on the Bhagavad-Gītā, in which time and again Zaehner insists on the difference of the soul and the self. Is it soul or self which gains liberation?

According to Zaehner, the Bhagavad-Gītā believes that there is in the human being an agent that is responsible to his liberation. In his earlier works, Zaehner did not distinguish what this active faculty in the human being might be. Only after his later study on the Bhagavad-Gītā, as early as his commentary on that Scripture, was such a distinction taken seriously. The distinction obviously finds its real relevancy in the context of the human effort for liberation, for it is in the Bhagavad-Gītā that the meaning of liberation reaches its clear notion, mostly in the background of Bhuddhistic and Sāṃkhya-Yoga philosophy which stresses the way to liberation in more practical terms.

¹⁶⁾ Zaehner added, however, here the attribute of soul as immortal, something which would not necessarily be stated in later writings, for soul belongs to the category of contingent beings. HMM.p.62

In this new understanding on the Bhagavad-Gītā Zaehner introduced soul (buddhi) as an active and therefore responsible faculty of man, whereas self is merely an onlooker which is not to be responsible for the action. Buddhi was never sufficiently explained in his early treatises on the Bhagavad-Gītā and soul was simply identified with self. In his commentary on The Bhagavad-Gītā, he examined the texts with much accuracy, giving a commentary based on the original sources. Therein he seems to begin to be certain that there is a fundamental difference between soul (buddhi) and self (ātman).

3.2. The Nature of the Soul

It is soul which is the real actor of human life, as is clearly stated in this verse,

"The essence of the soul is will, and it is really single, but many-branched and infinite are the souls of men devoid of will." [2,41]¹⁷⁾

"On the strength of this passage", he said "I have taken the liberty of translating buddhi as 'soul'"¹⁸⁾ This he compared

¹⁷⁾. ZBG. p.142 cf. HS.p.258. From now on, unless otherwise is stated, numbers between brackets refer to the verses of the Bhagavad-Gītā.

¹⁸⁾. ZBG. p. 143

to the Christian tradition which regards the soul as the responsible and transitory element in man.¹⁹⁾

Zaehner traced further the characteristics of the soul in the Bhagavad-Gītā²⁰⁾ and he found that the soul unlike the self is not exempt from passions;

Sense, mind, and soul, they say, are the places where it lurks; through these it smothers wisdom, fooling the embodied (self) [3,40].²¹⁾

that the soul too, as part of material nature, is not freed from action in its very effort of liberation itself;

With body, mind, soul, and senses alone-and-isolated (from the self) do men engaged in spiritual exercise engage in action renouncing attachment for the cleansing of the self [5,11].²²⁾

and being subject too, to the three constituents of material Nature, it can finely be destroyed altogether;

From anger comes bewilderment, from bewilderment wandering of the mind, from wandering of the mind

¹⁹⁾ - See also the introduction of Zaehner in his Hindu Scriptures, HS. p.xxi.

Many are of the opinion that the Bhagavad-Gītā maintains a doctrine on a responsible agent in each human being but do not give enough categorial explanation as to what this active agent in human being. This is important for the most part regarding the moral implication of the Bhagavad-Gītā.

²⁰⁾ - ZBG. pp.22-23

²¹⁾ - ZBG. p.177 cf. HS. p.266 Here and in some other verses, we will be accustomed, it is shown that soul is grouped among the sense and mind as appertains to the material nature, so as to distinguish from the self.

²²⁾ - ZBG. p.207 cf. HS. p.272

destruction of the soul: once the soul is destroyed the man is lost [2,63].²³⁾

So even though in its hierarchy the soul is above the sense (indriyani) and the mind (manas), in essence it is not different from them in so far they all are subjects of passions, of actions, of the three constituents of material Nature.

The soul remains, though, as the subject which takes control over the integration of the whole personality. The soul too takes the responsibility of the fall or elevation of the personality and therefore becomes the most important faculty of the human being. The soul represents the whole personality and is the subject that transmigrates [6,43] and it is the only one amongst the human faculties that can grasp and comprehend the self in its timeless glory [6,20-21]. The soul controls the mind as the mind controls the senses [6,25-26] and by integration which is organized by his soul, a man becomes Brāhman and comes to God Himself [18,49-54].

3.3. The Nature of the Self

What then is the nature of the self? In the Bhagavad-Gītā, Zaehner observed, the self is considered as "the minute part" of Brāhman and therefore shares its immortality. Unlike the soul (buddhi), the self is not subject to the three constituents of Nature. Hence philosophically speaking there

²³⁾ ZBG. p.154 cf. HS. p.260

should be an essential difference between the self and the soul. The self as such is purely spiritual and completely detached from material elements. But different though they are, the self and the soul are not necessarily separated.

In order to have the proper perception on the relation of the soul to the self, we have to be aware of the fact that the Bhagavad-Gītā recognizes two different selves, the self-in-itself and the self as embodied in individuals or the "embodied self" (dehin). In light of this distinction between the individual self and the self-in-itself, the liberation is spoken of in the Bhagavad-Gītā mostly in its six first chapters. On the self-in-itself, the Bhagavad-Gītā says:

Never is it born nor dies; never did it come to be nor will it ever come to be again: unborn, eternal, everlasting is this (self), -primeval. It is not slain when the body is slain [2,20].²⁴⁾

This verse, which Zaehner believed is taken from the Katha Upanishad [2,18], states clearly on the immortality of the self-in-itself and is the reason for Krishna to impel Arjuna to go on fighting against his kinsmen. This verse can be contrasted to another one:

Just as in this body the embodied (self) must pass through childhood, youth, and old age, so too (at death) will it assume another body: in this a thoughtful man is not perplexed [2,13].²⁵⁾

²⁴⁾ - ZBG. p.132 cf. HS. p.256

²⁵⁾ - ZBG. p.125 cf. HS.p.255

In this verse Krishna says that the self takes on a new body at death. This is the reality of the reincarnation or the transmigration. This verse does not contradict the previous one, but shows a different point of view. For while the previous verse states the principal, this later verse views the self in its empirical fact, in which it is involved in the world process (samsāra) and associated with the individual's psycho-somatic mechanism. This is what the "embodied self" is. In this above consideration the difference between the two selves in Zaehner's view is not contradictory.

But somewhere else Zaehner called the two selves the spiritual and the carnal and between both of them exists a constant quarrel. Take, for example, this verse:

"Raise self by itself, let not the self droop down; for self's friend is self indeed, so too is self self's enemy" [6,5].²⁶⁾

Through proper qualification with regard to the difference between the two selves, the verse, in Zaehner's view, would more precisely be read as the effort of the spiritual self to overcome the carnal self. In Zaehner's version it goes like this:

"Let a man by his (spiritual) self (conjoined with soul) raise up his (carnal) self. Let him not allow the (carnal) self to sink down; for the (carnal) self is the friend of the (spiritual) self(-in it-itself), so too is the

²⁶⁾ ZBG. pp.220-1 cf. HS. p.274

(carnal) self the enemy of the (spiritual) self(-in-itself)."²⁷⁾

This carnal self in Zaehner's term is the combination of soul, mind, ego, and the senses - hence, again it is the self insofar as it is involved in the empirical life. But in such a condition the carnal self is in fact still ^{ambiguous} wayward, for it could be both friend or enemy of the spiritual self, which is the self-in-itself. But the conquest is finally apparent in the following verse:

"Self is the friend to the self of him whose self is by the self subdued; but for the man bereft of self, will act as an enemy indeed." [6,6].²⁸⁾

the self

For in this verse the carnal self could be the friend of the spiritual self only if it is subdued by the latter. This again in Zaehner's version goes as follows:

"The (carnal) self is the friend of the (spiritual) self(-in-itself) of him whose (carnal) self is subdued by the (spiritual) self (conjoined with the soul), but for the man bereft of (spiritual) self(-in-itself) the (carnal) self will act as an enemy indeed."²⁹⁾

The spiritual self or the self-in-itself never acts at all, being "friend" or "enemy" must be, therefore, applied to the carnal self, not to the spiritual one.

The Bhagavad-Gītā is well aware of the distinction between these two selves, but as Zaehner observed, these two selves

²⁷⁾ · ZBG. p. 221

²⁸⁾ · ZBG.p.221 cf. HS.p.274

²⁹⁾ · ZBG. p.221

are not separated, for in a "purified" state, the Bhagavad-Gītā avowed the higher self is "integrated" and not disassociated from the soul, the mind and the rest. This is obvious from this verse:

"Well-versed in spiritual exercise, his self made pure, his self and senses quelled, his self become the (very) self of every contingent being, though working still, he is not defiled" [5,7].³⁰

The higher and the lower selves, in this last consideration, appear likely as merely two different terms of the self to describe the human struggle for liberation. In the state of ecstasy, that is when the lower self is subdued, the self becomes the highest self (param'ātma samāhitah)[6,7] which can be equalized with God qua timeless or the eternal Brāhman.³¹

In this consideration the self-in-itself or the spiritual self, that is the highest self in ecstasy is no agent. Morally speaking, it is innocent. Even though it becomes Brāhman, this event does not result in the self's action but by the initiative of the soul. This appears somewhat surprising, but Zaehner is accurate, for quoting Katha

³⁰. ZBG. p.204 cf. HS. p.271 with a slight difference

³¹. Param'ātma samāhitah means normally the "highest Self", that is God qua timeless, eternal Brāhman; in such a case it is equated with the "highest Lord"[13,22] or "the highest Person or Spirit"[15,17]. In term of the opposition between the two selves, Zaehner suggests that param'ātma samāhitah should be legitimately taken as individual self-in-itself, that is liberated or purified individual self. ZBG. p.222

Upanishad [3,3-4], he maintains that such an idea is not foreign to the Hindu. In these verses, which compare a human being with a chariot, the true self is not the agent but the owner of it. It is the soul who is the true agent.³²⁾ Nevertheless the self remains as the center, the principle of unity of man, although it is not active as such, it draws the whole personality the way a magnet draws to itself any piece of iron.³³⁾

4. Brāhman in terms of the Three Prominent Influences of the philosophical Backgrounds of the Bhagavad-Gītā

In the Upanishads, as we have already seen, the systems of Pantheism and Monism are both accepted, the Absolute Brāhman could be considered both as the All, following the tradition drawn from the Brāhmanas or as the One, which doctrine gains its clear insistence in the Māndūkya Upanishad. We have already seen the tendency to Monotheism as well of the Iśa and Śvetāśvatara Upanishads, in which Brāhman, the totality of all is superseded by God, who is another. Eventhough the Upanishads gain the prestige as the predecessor of the Bhagavad-Gītā and hence left the great part of influences, yet the Gītā developed indipendently the notion of Brāhman. The Gītā recognizes Brāhman too, but the notion that we get

³²⁾ . CD.p.123

³³⁾ . ZBG. p.11

here is different from that of the Upanishads for in the Bhagavad-Gītā, the idea of Brāhman is derived from different notions of the Absolutes found in the three different sources, Sāṃkhya-Yoga doctrine, Buddhism and the Upanishadic theism. Moreover the supremacy of Krishna in the Gītā is so obvious and insistent that it cannot help to treat Brāhman only to subdue it to Krishna. So we will not treat Brāhman except in terms of its submission to Krishna as our discussion proceeds.

4.1. Brāhman in terms of the Samkhya-Yoga Influence in the Bhagavad-Gītā

To some extent, the Bhagavad-Gītā was influenced by Sāṃkhya doctrines. This is the original Sāṃkhya, which had also put its marks in the late Upanishads, like the Praśna, Maitri, and Svetasvatara.³⁴⁾ According to the tradition, the system found its classical formulation in the Samkhya Sutras, being ascribed to Kapila. About the date of this sutras there is a great controversy, we will still see it when we come to the philosophical section. It is to be borne in mind first of all, that Brāhman is not recognized in the Sāṃkhya system or in the Yoga doctrine. What we try here is, therefore, to place the Gītā's Brāhman in terms of Samkhya-Yoga influence.

³⁴⁾ Hin. p.67; cf. Farquhar, Ibidem, pp.92-3; Dasgupta, S., A History of Indian Philosophy, Vol.I, Delhi, (1922) 1975, p.211.

4.1.1. The Sāmkhya-Yoga system

The basic tenet of Sāmkhya is dualistic, for it drew a clear distinction between spirit and matter.³⁵ There are two orders of reality, in which one is immutable, unchanging, beyond space and time, whereas the other is in a perpetual state of flux, without beginning and without end. Spirit in Sāmkhya system is puruṣa (person), which are in reality innumerable spiritual monades; whereas matter falls into twenty four categories, the first of these is prakṛti (nature) which emanates into mahat or buddhi (consciousness, intelligence), or the second category. This again emanates into aḥamkara (ego principle), the third category. This aḥamkara in its turn emanates into sixteen categories. They are manas (mind), the five sensory organs, the five motor organs and the five subtle elements corresponding to the five sensory organs. From the five subtle elements proceed the five gross elements.

But more fundamental than the structure of material Nature, Zaehner said, are the three guṇas (strands) which play an enormous part in the Bhagavad-Gītā [17,7-28; 18,17-40]. They are called sattva, rajas and tamas, translated by

³⁵). The scheme of Sāmkhya system is well displayed by Zaehner in Hin. p.67-9 and ZBG. p.140. The distinction between spirit and matter is quite new in this period, because the Upanishads were more concerned to the difference between the microcosm and macrocosm. See CD.p.83 cf. Edgerton, Franklin, Bhagavad Gītā, vol.II, (interpretation), Harvard, 1952, p.38.

Zaehner as goodness, passion and darkness. These three gunas or the constituents of matter³⁶ in the Sāṃkhya system bind the puruṣa, which is taken in the Bhagavad-Gītā as the 'embodied self'. It is in terms of the liberation of these 'embodied selves' that the Bhagavad-Gītā also turns its attention to the Yoga teaching which the Gītā very much adheres into chapter two.³⁷ Sāṃkhya and Yoga became in fact

³⁶. In his Hinduism they are translated as goodness, energy and dullness, following the technical contexts, which are usually taken; Hin. p.69. In his Concordant Discord they are purity, energy and lethargy; CD. p.124. Here in his commentary to the Bhagavad-Gītā, Zaehner seems to invent a new apprehension according to the proper meaning of those words ZBG.p.141.

³⁷. Yoga has many different meanings in the Bhagavad-Gītā, depending on the contexts. Many commentators risked the loss of the rich nuances which the Gītā holds not by their wrong interpretations, but by too strait interpretations which pigeonhole the meaning of yoga only to their interests. We don't want to linger on yoga, which would have to take a great deal of treatment, but just to detain the summary made by Zaehner in his introduction to the Bhagavad-Gītā. The meaning of yoga, when it is first used, is 'integration of the personality for which buddhi, the soul, is the responsible agent. It entails complete detachment from all outside interest [2,48]'. Hence comes an acute discussion on whether yoga should imply an active effort or a passive indifference to all. This problem seems to emerge quite naturally from and to be appropriate to the position of Arjuna when he had to decide whether he had to slain his brothers or not. But Yoga has both sides of nuances, Zaehner remarks, for it means "sameness-and-indifference" [2,48] and "skill in (performing) works" [2,50] and both are not excluding but complementing each other. So 'man must engage in works but with a spirit of "sameness and indifference".' In another wise it can be stated that yoga is both the process of training the character in the one great virtue of detachment and the result of that training. See ZBG. pp.24-5. Just in the chapter 2 itself, we can categorize the different meanings of Yoga, which come from the root meaning of 'yoking' (yuj-) or from the derive meaning 'preparation, activity'. Zaehner classifies the meanings as follows: (i)

two complementary contributions to the Bhagavad-Gītā, each according to its department, Sāṁkhya worked on "theory", Yoga on "practice", for these are precisely what they mean. In their own apprehension, Sāṁkhya contributes the theory which regards the reality of the spiritual monades as imprisoned by matter. Yoga in its part furnishes the technique to achieve the liberation of the self, spiritual monad, from the bond of matter. The theistic Gītā, however, did not simply take over this apprehension, for it states:

"There must be a difference between theory and practice, so say the simple-minded, not the wise. Apply yourself to only one whole-heartedly and win the fruit of both"[5,4].³⁸⁾

According to Zaehner, the Bhagavad-Gītā did not separate Sāṁkhya and Yoga as two departments corresponding to two human faculties. For in this verse, while maintaining Yoga as 'practice', i.e. connected with action, Sāṁkhya, put in the contexts of the preceding and the following verses, would appear to be identified with 'renunciation'. And this is apt to the whole atmosphere of the teachings of work and renunciation in the Bhagavad-Gītā.³⁹⁾

practice as opposed to theory [2,39]; (ii) spiritual exercise [2,39]; (iii) control and/or integration [2,39.48-50]; (iv) sameness-and-indifference [2,48-defined]; and (v) skill in performing works [2,50-defined]. Amongst of these meanings, the basic meaning of yoga in the Bhagavad-Gītā is, according to Zaehner, 'spiritual exercise'. Idem p.148.

³⁸⁾. ZBG. p.202 cf. HS. p.271.

³⁹⁾. ZBG. pp.202-3.

With the background of Sāṃkhya doctrines, we can understand how the Bhagavad-Gītā recognizes the distinction between spirit and matter, not as two independent realities but as two different entities of one reality under the sway of a personal God, Krishna. In the above passages, we have spoken about the self and the soul. In order to see the contrast between them we now have to look at material Nature.

4.1.2. The Material Nature in the Bhagavad-Gītā

We have discussed a lot on the concepts of 'self' and 'soul' in the Bhagavad-Gītā. Now, material Nature is the counterpart of the selves which in the Sāṃkhya theory would be purushas. In the Bhagavad-Gītā the concept of material Nature went through considerable modification. There are many verses where the Bhagavad-Gītā examines thoroughly the characters of material Nature. Following Zaehner, we mention some important ones. Nature is the source of all change in this passing world, and takes initiative in all motions, the Bhagavad-Gītā asserts.

"Nor agency nor worldly works, does (the body's) lord engender, Nor yet the bond that work to fruit conjoins; It is Nature that initiates the action" [5,14].⁴⁰

⁴⁰ ZBG. p.208 cf. HS. p.272.

Nature is seen by the Bhagavad-Gītā in its full activity, like a flux that (under Krishna's control) throws up individuals only to destroy them and reabsorbs them.⁴¹⁾

"(A world of) moving and unmoving things, Material Nature brings to birth, while I look on and supervise: This is the cause and this the means, by which the world revolves" [9,10].⁴²⁾

In contrast to the self (purusha), which remains inactive, nature (prakṛti) is shown as that, which plays an active role,

"Nature it is which in every way does works (and acts); No agent is the self: who sees it thus, he sees indeed" [13,20].⁴³⁾

Now concerning the human beings or microcosms, nothing is differently stated, for nature has power over them just the same:

"Not for a moment can a man stand still and do no work; for every man is powerless and forced to work by the constituents born of Nature"[3,5].⁴⁴⁾

It is nature or, more precisely, the constituents of it which trammel everything of the human part. In the previous part we have seen how the soul and its subordinates, mind and senses, too, are caught under the influence of these constituents of nature. Some verses [14,5-19; 17,1-22; 18,7-39] give some

⁴¹⁾ . ZBG.p.13.

⁴²⁾ . ZBG. p.277 cf. HS. p.286.

⁴³⁾ . ZBG. p.348 cf. HS. p.306.

⁴⁴⁾ . ZBG. p.163 cf. HS. p.262.

thorough examination in explaining how the three constituents of nature, goodness, passion and dullness work. But at the verses [14,5-9], their salient characteristics, which imply the subjugation of the states of man, are well shown.

"Goodness causes (a man) to cling to joy, Passion to works; but Darkness, stifling wisdom, attaches to feckleness" [14,9].⁴⁵⁾

The souls subjugated could be imposed by certain characters and execute certain activities under the dictates of the kind and intensity of the constituents.

4.1.3. Brāhman as Māyā

Always in terms of Sāṃkhya system, the discourse on Brāhman in the Bhagavad-Gītā can be conveniently placed in the context of the activity of matter or material Nature. This consideration opens to a further discussion, for whereas the original Sāṃkhya very much lingered on the division of material Nature into categories, the Gītā sees the material Nature in its whole conglomerate as Brāhman. We have seen above the characteristics of the material Nature which powerfully deludes the human souls. Such a potential power in the Bhagavad-Gītā is recognized as māyā. Māyā is, in fact, a concept which had gone through many elaborations since the

⁴⁵⁾ ZBG. p.354 cf. HS. p.307.

Vedas on.⁴⁶⁾ In the Vedas māyā simply means 'uncanny power', 'magic' or 'deceit' that beguiles man - we are reminded of the characteristics of the Vedic devas like Varuna and Indra in our previous chapter - whereas in the Upanishads, māyā used in a cosmological sense could only be found in one place [Sv.U.4.10], in which it equalizes material Nature.⁴⁷⁾

In the Bhagavad-Gītā, Zaehner takes the word māyā sometimes as 'creative power' or 'creative energy' [4,6; 7,14; 7,24-5], something which is close to the idea of 'womb', naturally as the origin of creation, and sometimes as 'uncanny power' [7,14-5], but with a different notion from that in the Rig-Veda. Used in instrumental case (māyāya), māyā shows the notion that it is real power, yet under the control of God, -who uses it -, and is therefore 'divine' even though it distracts man's attention from Him.

"Doers of evil, deluded, base, put not their trust in Me; their wisdom swept away by (this) uncanny power, they cleave to a devilish mode of existence." [7,15].⁴⁸⁾

⁴⁶⁾ In A Dictionary of Hinduism of Margaret and James Stutley, it is explained that 'māyā' was developing from a word originally of limited significance in the Rig-Veda into an important Hindu and Buddhist metaphysical term. Margaret and James Stutley, Op.cit., London, (1977) 1985 p.188-9.

⁴⁷⁾ ZBG. p.183. → all text p.

⁴⁸⁾ ZBG. p.249 cf. HS. p.280.

Yet Zaehner adds that māyā may be seen as 'devilish' too, that is when not seen as dependent on God but as something that stands between the individual self and God.⁴⁹⁾

Hence māyā deludes man and conceals his own self and God, the supreme Self, from him. In these following verses, for example, māyā is like a snare that conceals the higher state of Krishna from the fools.

"Fools think of Me as one unmanifest (before) who has reached (the stage of) manifestation; they know nothing of my higher state, the Changeless, All-Highest."

"Since (my) creative power and the way I use it conceal Me, I am not revealed to all; this world, deluded, knows Me not, - (Me) the Unborn and Changeless." [7,24-5].⁵⁰⁾

This reasoning becomes the very argument to defend the incarnation of Krishna against unbelievers.

4.1.4. Brāhman as The Womb of Krishna

Material Nature is referred to in the Gītā as the lower Nature of Krishna. And hence the Sāṅkhya element becomes definitely exposed as the content of the Gītā. Yet it is no more Sāṅkhya as such, but that which has been submitted to the Gītā purpose. Let us see these three following verses:

"Eightfold divided is my Nature, -thus: earth, water, fire and air, space, mind, and also soul, -and the ego."

⁴⁹⁾ - ZBG. p.278.

⁵⁰⁾ - ZBG. p.253 cf. HS. p.281.

"This is the lower: but other than this I have a higher Nature; this too must you know. (And this is Nature) developed into life by which this world is kept in being."

"To all beings these (two Natures) are (as) a womb; be very sure of this. Of the whole universe the origin and the dissolution too am I" [7,4-6].⁵¹⁾

From these verses, it is interesting to notice Zaehner's commentary on jīva-bhūtam, which he translates as '(Nature) developed into life'. In his interpretation, he agrees with Ramanuja who compared the higher and the lower nature with conscious and unconscious matter. Conscious matter is this 'nature developed into life', which keeps the whole universe in being. According to Zaehner, the above verses must be read in connection with a previous verse,

"Exalted are the senses, or so they say; higher than the senses is the mind; yet higher than the mind the soul: what is beyond the soul is he." [3,42].⁵²⁾

"He" (sah) in this verse, which is considered as self (ātman) of a man, is exalted beyond the senses, the mind and the soul itself. This idea seems based on Ka.U.6,7-8

"Higher than the senses is the mind
Higher than mind the soul (sattva)
Higher than soul, the self, the 'great'
Higher than (this) 'great' the Unmanifest."⁵³⁾

The above verses, however, are not concerned with an individual man (microcosms) any more than the universe

⁵¹⁾ ZBG. p. 245-6 cf. HS. p.279.

⁵²⁾ ZBG. p.177 cf. HS. p.266.

⁵³⁾ HS. p.181.

(macrocosm). Thus 'nature developed into life' must mean the totality of conscious matter as opposed to the 'self' of this verse.⁵⁴⁾ So just like the unconscious matter which corresponds to the senses, the mind and the soul, the conscious matter corresponds to the self.⁵⁵⁾

In a simple scheme we can describe both cosmos, each being constituted of two levels of aggregates:

<u>Microcosm</u>	<u>Macrocosm</u>
self	nature developed into life
-----	-----
soul, mind, senses etc.	unconscious nature
-----	-----

This is quite different from the Sāṃkhya system, in which consciousness is not recognized as an attribute to nature but to self. It seems here, that Zaehner tried to see the Sāṃkhya influence in the perspective of the Upanishads, in which the distinction between macrocosm and microcosm is more outstanding than between spirit and matter.

Back to the last verse above, it is stated that both Natures - the lower and the higher - are the source of everything else. It means they are Brāhman in so far as material and formal, but not comprising efficient cause since

⁵⁴⁾ ZBG. p.45.

⁵⁵⁾ Somewhere else Zaehner compare this higher Nature of Krishna, the Nature 'developed into life, with Teilhard de Chardin's "biosphere", the world of conscious beings which are composites of spirit and matter - the individual human selves 'bound' in the material world. ZBG. p.14.

above them stands Krishna. Or in the Gītā expression, they are the womb in which Krishna plants his seed as is also clearly shown in the following verse:⁵⁶

"The great Brāhman is to Me a womb, in it I plant the seed: From this derives the origin of all contingent beings." [14,3].⁵⁷

In this verse the Bhagavad-Gītā explains the origin of all. The male and female principle, which can be perceived from this verse, is obviously derived from the Sāṅkhya system, in which a constant opposition is being stabilized between purusha and prakṛti, spirit and matter. In Samkhya's system purusha and prakṛti are two orders of reality, but in this verse and mostly in the next one [14,4], the opposition is overcome; Krishna is both He who plants the seed (with respect to the womb), as is shown in the above verses, and

⁵⁶ On his commentary to the verse 3,15 concerning the meaning of Brāhman which is born from the Imperishable (aksara), he stated that the word Brāhman can also mean the Veda or material Nature, besides the Absolute. "If, however, Brāhman means 'material Nature' as it certainly does in [14,3], then the 'Imperishable' must be the imperishable source of all things which we encounter for the first time in BA.U.3,8.8 and which we will encounter often again in the Gītā starting at 8,3 where it is roundly identified with Brāhman. ZBG.p.167. Here there are two notions of Brāhman, one as the Imperishable, source of everything which get its strong use in the Upanishads, we shall be discussing it later, and second, Brāhman as material Nature, womb of Krishna, also the source of everything but under Krishna's control.

⁵⁷ ZBG. p.352 cf. HS. p.307. Many modern translators take the compound brāhma-yoni as 'source of Brāhman', but in this context, Zaehner insisted that 'Brāhma as a womb' is more appropriate, because it follows dadhāmy, i.e. "I plant".

the seed itself i.e. as origin (irrespective to the womb), as is shown in some other verses [7,10; 9,18; 10,39]. Moreover the womb is part of Him as well. This is also the main difference between Sāṃkhya and the Bhagavad-Gītā, for the Sāṃkhya system poses dualism, whereas the Bhagavad-Gītā recognizes only Krishna as the supreme from whom both individual selves and material Nature emerge.⁵⁸⁾

The idea of Brāhman as a womb, which God himself approaches and from which the universe emerges, is not unfamiliar in the Upanishads [see p.e. Mu.U.3,1,3; Mai.U.6,18; Sv.U 4,11; 5,4]. The Gītā by considering material Nature as the womb,⁵⁹⁾ tries to overmaster the Samkhya doctrines through the Upanishads.

4.1.5. The difference between the Bhagavad-Gītā and the Samkhya system in terms of the relationship between the human self and the Absolute.

Now, we are to resume the difference between the Bhagavad-Gītā and the Sāṃkhya system in terms of the relationship

⁵⁸⁾ ZBG.p.141.

⁵⁹⁾ The only indication that Zaehner propounds regarding this view is verse [14,3] in which Brāhman is claimed by Krishna as his womb; Yet this is more than enough, because in many verses [7,6; 9,10; 13,16 etc.] Krishna's womb, out of which originates everything, is the material Nature itself; material Nature not simply in the sense of the unconscious one but both the conscious and unconscious, as we analyzed above, so both as the higher and the lower natures. This would answer Telang's objection to the notion of Brāhman as matter, in his introduction to his translation of the Bhagavad-Gītā, SBE.vol.VII.p.107.

between the human part and of the Absolute. The distinction between the spirit and the material Nature, which is derived from the Sāṃkhya system is adapted into the Gītā framework. In the Sāṃkhya system, both of them are considered as two orders of reality, commonly called as self (purusha) and non-self (prakṛti).⁶⁰ In the Sāṃkhya system, however, there is no single Spirit as in the Bhagavad-Gītā Brāhman, following the line of the Upanishads, but many spirits or purushas, which are entangled in material Nature. The Sāṃkhya doctrine did not provide the concept of a single spiritual Absolut. So the way to see the mark of the Absolute of the Sāṃkhya system, is then through viewing it from the part of material Nature or prakṛti as we have tried to do, since in the real world, at least, the prakṛti also seems to dominate the purushas.

In the Gītā the system goes along very neatly, for even though spirit and matter, or in Zaehner's view the self and the material Nature, are recognized, yet both are subjected to Krishna. So the liberation in Sāṃkhya system too - here it adheres to the Yoga practice - by separating the spirit from the material Nature and from any other spirit, which called "isolation" (kaivalyam), could not be executed in the

⁶⁰. See Hill, Douglas P., The Bhagavadgita, Oxford (1928) 1953, p.36 cf. Edgerton, Ibidem, p.39.

perspective of the Gītā for the spirit or self is not independent:

"In the world of living things a (minute) part of Me, eternal (still), becomes a living (self), drawing to itself the five senses and the mind, which have their roots in Nature." [15,7].⁶¹⁾

Liberation can not be attained through 'isolation' from material entities, let alone from God, but by becoming Brāhman, a Buddhistic conception which will become our later topic, and from this, to realize the unity of all things in oneself and then in God.

"Once thou hast known this, wilt thou never again be perplexed (as now thou art): by (knowing) this thou will behold (all) beings in (thy)self, - yes, everyone of them, - and then in Me." [4,35].⁶²⁾

From this point it is clear that "isolation", if it means drawing oneself from the entanglement of material Nature, does not seem totally wrong, but still very far from the Gītā ideal of perfectness. It will not even reach the Absolute, the Brāhman.

4.2. Brāhman in terms of the Buddhistic Influence in the Bhagavad-Gītā

There are a number of verses in the Bhagavad-Gītā, Zaehner said, in which the influence of Buddhistic philosophy could

⁶¹⁾ - ZBG.p.364 Cf. HS.p.310.

⁶²⁾ - ZBG. p.196 Cf. HS. p.270.

be clearly detected.⁶³⁾ In a sense the Buddhistic purpose is similar to that of Sāṃkhya-Yoga in that both of them are looking for liberation from this ever changing world; the Sāṃkhya teaches through Yoga how to liberate the self from the bond of the three constituents of the material Nature. But Buddhism goes further, for liberation is no isolation of the self from material Nature any more than suppression of all desires or even extinction of the self altogether into nothingness, since the self is the source of all desires.

4.2.1. The Problem of the Extinction of the Self

According to Buddha, the world we live in is a phenomenal existence which has no real substance. The Buddhism liked to characterize the world as impermanent, sorrowful and void of self and the basic attitude they put toward the world is disgust,⁶⁴⁾ just like the experience acquired by the Buddha when he saw for the first time sick people, becoming old and dying. The only possible way to make sense out of our life is to detach oneself from this phenomenal world. The most

⁶³⁾ The Buddha lived between the middle of the sixth century and the middle of the fifth century B.C. and so by the time when the Bhagavad-Gītā began to be written, his teachings had been spread out in India, thanks specially to a great Buddhist reign Asoka. Charles Eliot, Hinduism and Buddhism, vol.I, London (1921) 1962, pp.xix-xxiii and p.132.

⁶⁴⁾ ZBG. p.158 ; ZBG. p.229.

outstanding verse which still shows clearly the Buddhist spirit according to Zaehner is this.

"The man who puts away all desires and roams around from longing freed, who does not think, 'This I am', or 'This is mine', draws near to peace." [2,71].⁶⁵⁾

The suppression of desire as the way leading to peace, in this verse, as Zaehner sees it, is typically Buddhist. The total suppression, which is the extinction of the self, is what in the Pali canon is called ahamkāra-mamamkāra, the denying of the existence of "I" or what is "mine" in this world, for all that you call "I" or "mine" in this world is simply illusory.⁶⁶⁾

The development of Buddha doctrines was, however, very complicated and dilemmatic. Buddha himself in the beginning did not want to promulgate his teachings, for he knew he would be misunderstood. It was only because of his compassion for humankind and his desire to help them that he would finally define his teachings. But this too he did with much caution.

In the Bhagavad-Gītā, however, there are parts in which the Buddhist influence does not so much show the pessimistic view on life.⁶⁷⁾ Zaehner saw, for example, unlike the Sāṃkhya

⁶⁵⁾ ZBG. p.157 cf. HS. p.261.

⁶⁶⁾ ZBG. p.158.

⁶⁷⁾ The Buddha himself and the earlier Buddhism did not held such a pessimistic view, though, about the life and the world. He criticised, for example, extremes of either self-indulgence or self-mortification; Eliot, Ibidem, p.185. Eliot

influence, the Buddhist induced not so much to detach oneself from the world in the sense of "isolation", than in the sense of "self integration". The most prototypal verse in this account is this:

" And when he draws in on every side his senses from their proper objects as a tortoise (might draw in) its limbs, -firmstablished is the wisdom of such man." [2,58].⁶⁸⁾

This, in Zaehner's consideration, means that the self does not separate itself from material Nature -ego, mind, senses, and the rest, but absorbs them into ^{it} the self. This leads one into the state of total indifference. In the Bhagavad-Gītā such nuances can be found in the second, fifth and sixth chapters.

This result, in terms of experience, is, though, somewhat similar to the Sāṃkhya, for in another verse, the Bhagavad-Gītā showed the Buddhistic experience of liberation as follows:

"This he should know is what meant by 'spiritual exercise'- the unlinking of the link with suffering-and-pain. This is the spiritual exercise that must be brought about with (firm) resolve and mind all undismayed" [6,23].⁶⁹⁾

defends the early Buddhism from the bias of common assumptions which regard Buddhism in negative view. Life in Buddhist view is not something trifling or unimportant, to be lived anyhow, but as an opportunity of inestimable value. "Human life is happiness, only like every form of existence it is not satisfying or permanent." Ibidem. p.203.

⁶⁸⁾ - ZBG. p.151 cf. HS. p.260.

⁶⁹⁾ - ZBG. p.229 Cf. HS. p.276.

'The unlinking of the link' is purely Buddhist and it supposes the conception of the phenomenal world marked by transcience, suffering and insubstantiality. The situation of bondage is described as having contact with this kind of world. The liberation quite naturally means the unlinking of this link of sense to object of sense which is the real cause of bondage. Is it not any more than an isolation?

4.2.2. The Nirvāna which is Brāhman too

But the doctrine of the detachment from the world by way of self extinction is not completely clear, for it implies a paradox. For who or what then is the agent of that activity? But since Buddhism negates everything substantial, such a question would not make any sense. From the point of view of the "liberated soul", which has been liberated from individual self experiences, such a question does not have any meaning. Wisdom and enlightenment, which one gets when and after he achieves the liberation or nirvāna, as the Buddhists used to call it, is such a peak experience. It is no more an experience on which it is still possible to discuss with reason the way metaphysics does, but beyond it.⁷⁰ Nirvāna is a state of being which is unconditioned by

⁷⁰. All buddhist are aware of this paradox. In an article L.M. Joshi, quoting Dhammapada, stated that the approach of Buddhism results in the elimination of metaphysics. He said that metaphysics important though it is and "rich in piling up negations upon negations so far as any conceptualized verbal expression of the Ultimate Truth is concerned, definitely condemns and rejects both the extreme

time, space, causation; it is the liberation from sāmsāra, and from the self sense too; the end of the process of transmigration.

The concept of nirvāna, however, is welcomed by the Bhagavad-Gītā as is shown in some verses but like the Sāṃkhya doctrine on material Nature, the Buddhist nirvāna, too, was adapted into the theistic framework of the Bhagavad-Gītā. Through the Bhagavad-Gītā the Buddhistic concept of nirvāna had entered into the Hindu perspective. So in the Bhagavad-Gītā we can find nirvāna which is equated with Brāhman:

"This is the fixed, still state (sthitī) of Brāhman; he who wins through to this is never more perplexed. Standing therein at the time of death to the Nirvāna that is Brāhman too he goes !" [2,72].⁷¹⁾

This is the state of liberation, when the spiritual athlete gains the integration of self, the "fixed, still state of Brāhman". Nirvāna is an experience of changeless and timeless abiding eternity or the 'higher' mode of being that Krishna

theories of eternalism (sasvatavāda) and annihilationalism (ucchedavāda). The Buddha, and following Him, the Mahayana philosophers, consistently affirmed the reality of Nirvāna as the final goal of religious endeavour; but when people wanted to figure out Nirvāna in terms of concepts and words, they insisted on the transcendental and ineffable nature of Nirvāna, and declared all philosophical opinions and intellectual argument for and against any theory of Nirvāna as products of obsessed minds enveloped by a dense mass of illusion." L.M. Joshi, "Nirvāna According to Buddhist Scriptures", in Thomas Mampura (ed.), Religious Experience, its Unity and Diversity, Bangalore, 1981, p.35

⁷¹⁾ ZBG. p.158 Cf. HS. p.261.

claims as his.⁷²⁾ Nirvāna is to be understood as a total liberation in the sense of the cessation of phenomenal existence, the extinction of becoming, craving, and pain. "It is the peace, Zaehner said, of eternity which can only be won by detachment from (virāga), disgust at (niḥbidā), and the bringing to an end of (nirodha) phenomenal existence, by the tranquillizing (upasaṃā) of the senses, wisdom (abhiññā), and enlightenment (sambodhi)".⁷³⁾

The becoming Brāhman, or Brāhma-bhuta is typically Buddhist invention in the Bhagavad-Gītā. In the classical Upanishads, the word as such is not found, except twice in Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upanishad [4.4.25] and Muṇḍaka Upanishad [3.2.9] in the form of brāhma bhavati and seems to be a later addition. The important thing we need to notice is, however, that brāhma-bhuta is taken here in the Buddhist sense, to enter a form of existence which is unconditioned by space, time and causation, in short the state of nirvāna.⁷⁴⁾

4.2.3. The Touch of Brāhman

The Buddhist idea of nirvāna, insofar as an eternal peace, does not in fact conform with the Brāhman of the Hindu

⁷²⁾ CD. p. 125

⁷³⁾ Zaehner quoted from the Dīgha Nikāya 189 and the Majjhima Nikāya 485 asserting that such formula was common throughout the Pāli canon. ZBG. p.159.

⁷⁴⁾ ZBG. pp.214-5.

religion, which is generally conceived as active and creative. To enter nirvāna, which is Brāhman too, in Zaehner's view is then no more Buddhist than a compromise of the two opposite ideas of static and active Brāhman. In this consideration the Gītā nirvāna transcends the opposition between activity and passivity.

Becoming Brāhman, however, is not the final term of spiritual perfection of the Bhagavad-Gītā. The Buddhist nirvāna, which is essentially negative, is not rejected but submitted to another goal. Nevertheless nirvāna remains an indispensable step, a "conditio sine qua non", in order to reach the final goal, the encounter with God the Supreme.⁷⁵ In the verse [6,28] the Gītā expresses the joy of the integrated self as the "touch" of Brāhman (brahma-samparsam). To the meaning of that word, Radhakrishnan in his commentary on the Bhagavad-Gītā, simply explained as an experiential contact with the Eternal, beyond reasoning. This is to be the base of a true religion.⁷⁶ But for Zaehner, this could not pass from his observation, for it appears as something foreign to Buddhist spirit and completely new in the Bhagavad-Gītā. The immediate question that arises would be how the integrated self, which has become Brāhman, can

⁷⁵. Cf. CD. p.121.

⁷⁶. S. Radhakrishnan, The Bhagavadgita, with an Introductory Essay, Sanskrit Text, english translation and Notes, London (1948) 1973, p.203.

still attain the "touch" of Brāhman? There must contain in this later Brāhman a peculiar notion different from the prior one. Brāhman is hinted at here not only as a state of perfection but as an agent, whose "touches" give an infinite joy.⁷⁷⁾

This is just a hint of how the Buddhistic Brāhman is converted to the Gītā. The close comparison, Zaehner remarked, is to Brāhman of the Chāndogya Upanishad [3,14], i.e. Brāhman no more as a material and formal cause but as "inner most self within the heart", the inner Controller. The integrated man, or "the athlete of the spirit" as Zaehner prefers to put, in such a state would see the self in all beings and all beings in the self.

"With self integrated by spiritual exercise (now) he sees the self in all beings standing, all beings in the self: the same in everything he sees."^{[6,29].⁷⁸⁾}

In such an account, the "fixed, still state of Brāhman" can be considered as a preparatory condition to the encounter with God.

At the end of chapter five we find a great deal of explanation about the wise man who has gained the nirvāna. He is said "to see the selfsame thing in a Brāhman wise" [5,18], "to have overcome (the process of) emanation (and decay), for their minds are stilled in that-which-is-ever-the

⁷⁷⁾ · ZBG. p.231.

⁷⁸⁾ · ZBG. p.232 Cf. HS. p.277.

same..."[5,19], not to rejoice while enjoying some pleasant thing nor to shrink when the unpleasant comes his way [5,20].⁷⁹ These all are re-emphasizing the concept of "man of steady wisdom" of chapter two, which gains his goal through constant Yoga or spiritual exercise.

4.2.4. The Difference between The Bhagavad-Gītā and Buddhist doctrine in terms of the relationship between the human self and the Absolute.

In general the Bhagavad-Gītā differs from Buddhism, as we have seen, first of all in their view on the world, for whereas for the Buddhist the world is relatively disgusting, for the Gītā it remains good insofar as the human self remains independent of it. The world is not bad in itself nor without any value, because the world too as part of material Nature belongs to Krishna. Moreover to be devilish or divine is not to be applied to the world but to the human soul. But then follows the second difference, for in Buddhism either the soul or the self has never been defined, it is often maintained that they denied the existence of the soul or the self altogether.⁸⁰ Quite contrary to this, the Gītā

⁷⁹ On this account the derivatives of the root sthā (stand) is being used repeatedly, for example, in sthitam manah (the mind stilled), brahmani sthitah (in Brahman stilled they stand), sthira-buddhir (steadfast-and-still his soul). ZBG. p.210-211.

⁸⁰ Zaehner would say that the Buddhist did not so much deny the self-in-itself than the empirical self of the everyday life. Since Buddhism explicitly denies every substantiality, Zaehner could only explain that this deny

considered the "self-in-itself" as "minute part" of God and is therefore timeless and spaceless. Another difference, surprisingly enough, is that, even though the Buddhist denies the existence of the self, liberation in their view is the fruit of the effort on the part of man. In the earlier part, where Buddhistic background is so strong, the Gītā often used the word ātmanā (instrumental case of ātman), which would mean "by your own efforts" in the practice of Yoga.⁸¹ The Bhagavad-Gītā accepts the role of human part in his effort to liberation, Zaehner does not deny, for this includes in the meaning of Yoga, when he considers it as "spiritual exercise". But in the late chapters, such a nuance very much recedes until it disappears altogether when Krishna shows himself as the divine God who loves.

Unlike the Buddhist liberation, the nirvāna, which is "void" of all content, when the human self has detached from all that is human, the Bhagavad-Gītā offers the "fulfillment" of love, which is attachment to Krishna, the Supreme. Hence the grace of Him win over every human endeavours.⁸²

would be only toward what the psychology calls "empirical ego". Buddhism in its deep awareness should presume the existence of "innermost self". AST. p.96.

⁸¹. ZBG. p.327.

⁸². CD. p.148.

4.3. Brāhman in terms of the Upanishadic Influence in the Bhagavad-Gītā

It is the Upanishadic influence that takes the greatest part of the constitution of the Gītā. In the Gītā we can find concepts of sacrifice, māyā, womb - the latter two we have been discussing above - the imperishable, the unmanifest and the highest Brāhman, which all can be traced back to the Upanishads. We will not repeat the theme of our preceding chapter on Brāhman of the Upanishads, but only elucidate some few points in which the Gītā Brāhman finds its relevancy to that of the Upanishads. So in this part will be discoursed only some of those concepts above and their modifications in the Gītā. In our last consideration it will be demonstrated that the theistic Upanishads predominated the other Upanishads in their influence on the Gītā.

4.3.1. Brāhman in terms of Sacrifice

The concept of 'becoming Brāhman' (Brāhma-bhuta), which is taken by the Gītā in the Buddhist sense, as we have seen, would seem contrary to the common tone of Hinduism, from the Vedas to the Upanishads all along which regards Brāhman mostly as an active term. The Gītā, while accepting the Buddhist influence, which has much stress on the passive and impassible aspect of the Absolute, still retains vigorously the Upanishadic elements, which contributes the active and

sometime even violent aspect of the Absolute. Take for example this verse:

"The offering is Brāhman, Brāhman the (sacrificial) ghee offered by Brāhman in Brāhman's fire: who sinks himself in this (sacrificial) act which is Brāhman, to Brāhman must he thereby go." [4,24].⁸³⁾

This verse, Zaehner suggests, is aptly read in reference to a previous verse,

"From Brāhman work arises, know this, and Brāhman is born from the Imperishable; therefore is Brāhman, penetrating everywhere, forever based on sacrifice." [3,15].⁸⁴⁾

In the first verse, Brāhman is considered as the sacrifice and everything to do with it. This reminds us of the Purusha of the Rig-Veda [10.90], whose sacrifice became the origin of all creation. This same action is applied to Brāhman of the Bhagavad-Gītā, too, and just like Purusha "therefore is Brāhman, penetrating everywhere". But the Gītā Brāhman is like the Upanishads' who is also the fire, which displays the most active role in consuming the sacrifice. Otherwise he is mentioned as the mouth in front of which all the sacrifices are spread out [4,32].⁸⁵⁾

⁸³⁾ . ZBG. p.191 Cf. HS. p.269 with a slight difference of translation.

⁸⁴⁾ . ZBG. p.167 Cf. HS. p.263.

⁸⁵⁾ . ZBG. pp. 191; 195-197; 215.

4.3.2. Brāhman the Imperishable

In the Upanishads the Absolute is recognized as Brāhman, Ātman or Purusha, Zaehner said. It is Ātman insofar the Absolute is recognized as the inmost essence of Being, Purusha insofar it is the source of all, the primeval person who envelops the whole universe. Brāhman, however, is the most common use amongst the three. The nature of Brāhman and how it is to be interpreted in the Upanishadic view, we have been discussing at length in our previous chapter. Here we would just reassert the concept of Brāhman but in the framework of the theistic Bhagavad-Gītā.

In the Brihadāranyaka Upanishad [3,7,3-23] Brāhman is said to be the material cause of the universe and its "Inner Controller", to tell of its supremacy over everything that exists and being their source as well. He is the absolute, the eternal ground from which the universe proceeds. In other verses of the same Upanishad [3,8,8-9] Brāhman is called the "Imperishable" which is characterized as:

"It is not coarse nor fine; not short nor long; not red (like fire) nor adhesive (like water). It casts no shadow, is not darkness. It is not wind nor is it space. It is not attached to anything. It is not taste or smell; it is not eye nor ear; it is not voice or mind; it is not light (tejas) or life (prana); it has no face or measure; it has no 'within', no 'without'. Nothing does it consume nor is it consumed by anyone at all." [BA.U. 3,8,8].⁸⁵⁾

⁸⁵⁾ HS. p.56.

This is the Supreme Being, the ineffable, which Zaehner could only compare to the western philosophical treatise with the God of Anselm, which he described in his Proslogion as "id quo maius cogitari nequit", that than which nothing greater can be conceived, i.e God in every sense of the word.⁸⁷⁾

In the Upanishads the "Imperishable" is generally contrasted to the "perishable", which is the whole material Nature and all contingent beings. The "Imperishable" and the "perishable" are described as "Brāhman without parts" and "Brāhman with parts". But in the Mundaka and the Śvetāśvatara Upanishad the "Imperishable" Brāhman is attenuated for in the Mundaka Upanishad It is subjected to Puruṣa (person), whereas in the Svetasvatara to Rudra-Siva.⁸⁸⁾

In the Gītā the clearest exposition of the "Imperishable" is offered in the sequence of these verses:

"For a thousand ages lasts (one) day of Brāhma, and for a thousand ages (one such) night: this knowing, men will know (what is meant by) day and night."

"At the day's dawning all things manifest spring forth from the Unmanifest; and then at nightfall they dissolve (again) in that same thing called 'Unmanifest'."

"Yes, this whole host of beings comes ever anew to be; at fall of night it dissolves away all helpless; at dawn of day it rises up again."

"But beyond that there is (yet) another mode of being, - beyond Unmanifest (another) Unmanifest (masc.),

⁸⁷⁾ · ZBG. p.258.

⁸⁸⁾ · ZBG.p.258.

primeval: this is he who does not fall to ruin when all contingent beings are destroyed."

"Unmanifest (is he), surnamed 'Imperishable': this, men say, is the highest way and, this once won, there is no more returning: this is my highest home" [8,17-21].⁸⁹

What is being told in this sequence is how all things come into being and dissolve again into nothing. This is the process of evolution and devolution of the whole world, from the night of Brāhman, through the day and back again to the night of Brāhman. The Unmanifest (āvyakta) neuter in gender, is the origin and the end of all these things. It is, in Zaehner's interpretation, the 'primal matter' (pradhana) or 'undifferentiated primal Nature' of the Sāṃkhya system. But beyond this is another Unmanifest, male in gender. This is the "Unmanifest beyond Unmanifest" which is surnamed "Imperishable". And this "Imperishable" is recognized as "the highest way" and "Krishna's highest home". To put the difference between the Upanishadic system and the Gītā on the Imperishable in comparison, we propound this scheme:

<u>The Upanishadic System:</u>	<u>The Bhagavad-Gītā:</u>
Person or Rudra-Siva	Krishna = the Highest Person
Imperishable = <u>Brāhman</u>	Imperishable = Unmanifest beyond Unmanifest (masc.) = the "highest Way" = "Krishna's highest home"
Perishable	Unmanifest (<u>āvyakta</u>) = <u>pradhana</u>

⁸⁹ - ZBG. p.266-8 Cf. HS. p.284.

In this sequence the Gītā, however, seems to leave the reader in a state of ambiguity to understand the terms it uses; the "Unmanifest beyond Unmanifest", the "Imperishable", the "highest Way", or Krishna's "highest home". The question that could arise is whether these terms refer to the liberated self (or rather the aggregate of liberated selves) - a question that could arise naturally from a Buddhistic background -, or to the supreme God himself and therefore merits for worship, since in verse [10,13] Krishna is identified to (all) highest home; here the highest home is claimed only as his own.⁹⁰⁾

But in the next verse, in which the highest Person is explicitly mentioned, the Gītā settles the ambiguity.

"But that highest Person is to be won by love-and-worship directed to none other. In Him do all beings subsist; by Him this universe is spun" [8,22].⁹¹⁾

Here the word "but" at the beginning of the verse, as Zaehner observed, opens the possibility of reading the verse as wholly separated from the preceding verses. The composer might have combined two different sources. The content tends, however, to put the highest Person (and none other) in the supremacy of all and the question as to whether the "Imperishable" is considered as the aggregate of liberated

⁹⁰⁾ - ZBG. p.295

⁹¹⁾ - ZBG.p.269 Cf. HS.p.285.

souls or identified with Krishna himself becomes insignificant.⁹²⁾

4.3.3. The Highest Brāhman

So far we have learned about Brāhman both in the active term, in the context of the Sāṃkhya system and the passive term of the Buddhist doctrine. They have contributed to the Gītā both aspects of the Brāhman, but to a great extent these two aspects became also the source of the dilemmatic pattern of the perfectness in the Gītā's view. There arises the question as to whether a wise man is to be active, by doing his dharma in the society or whether he is to be passive, ascetic, by doing meditation and reflection of his life.⁹³⁾

In the first chapters of the Gītā this dilemma is very much analyzed and the Gītā refers to "the state of Brāhman" [2,72] as a state of perfection, beyond becoming and therefore beyond all action. But the Gītā insisted very often

⁹²⁾ ZBG. p.270-1.

⁹³⁾ The dilemma, which Arjuna faced, is whether he is to do his kshatrya dharma, which in this case to slain his kinsmen, or not to do it. This becomes the main theme, too, of the problem of yoga. See footnote no.37. In addition to his explanation to yoga, Zaehner distinguish between naiṣkarmyam [3,4] and akarman [3,8]. It is not just not to do his works or to do nothing at all (akarman), which leads to the way of perfection, but while doing his work he should be free from (the bond of) it (naiṣkarmyam). Zaehner criticized the wrong translations of naiṣkarmyam simply as "actionless" (Edgerton) or "worklessness" (Hume). In this use of the word, he saw the deep influence of Buddhism in the Bhagavad-Gītā. ZBG. p.163.

that one has to do his best to perform Yoga, while the meaning of Yoga itself has not completely been explained. This is the dilemma of Arjuna, but also of many Hindus as is clearly seen from the divergences of interpretations on this matter.⁹⁴⁾

In the Buddhist doctrine, no Supreme Being is being advocated. For the Buddhist liberation has nothing to do with a Supreme Being, but a realization of the nirvāna. This is a mystical experience, so to say, rather than a metaphysical recognition of the reality of the Supreme. But equating the nirvāna with Brāhman the Bhagavad-Gītā has been striving to combine the Buddhist doctrine with the Upanishadic. The Buddhistic Brāhman is the liberated soul, or the aggregate of the liberated souls, a new perfect and ineffable condition of liberation which can be gained with human effort. In its struggle to put an agreement between these ideas, it seems that the Bhagavad-Gītā puts forward the idea of the "Highest Brāhman".

"(And now) shall I tell thee that which should be known: Once a man knows it, he attains to immortality. All-Highest Brāhman is It called - beginningless - Call it not

⁹⁴⁾ Recent commentators are in opinion, that the Gītā teaches man to work but to renounce its fruits, it means that one has to do one's duty, but without interest with respect to its fruits. Sri Aurobindo precised, however, that the Gītā puts the concern in the spiritual perspective and obviates every interpretations that tends to the social concern or of the kind. So it would have nothing to do with the question of to work or not to work, but simply to follow God's path. Sri Aurobindo, Essays on the Gita, Pondicherry (1922) 1974, p.28.

'Being', (call it) not 'Not-Being'." [13,12].⁹⁵⁾

With regard to the use of the word Brāhman, it is always difficult to define properly. Here too, the Gītā did not hurry to give the exact notion of the Highest Brāhman, since, according to Zaehner, the verse is again left deliberately by the Gītā composer open to the theological bias of the reader, "only to make his own position unequivocally clear at the end of the following chapter".⁹⁶⁾

In a previous verse [8,3], however, Zaehner observed, the Gītā identified clearly the highest Brāhman with the Imperishable.

"The Imperishable is the highest Brāhman; it is called 'inherent nature' in so far as it appertains to (an individual) self, - as the creative force known as 'works' which gives rise to the (separate) natures of contingent beings." [8,3].⁹⁷⁾

This would be likely applied also to many other verses; the highest Brāhman here means the Imperishable seen as indwelling in the perishable.⁹⁸⁾ But in the sequence of

⁹⁵⁾ - ZBG. p.337 Cf. HS. p.304.

⁹⁶⁾ . anādimat param, 'highest (Brāhman)... beginningless' which is read variably as anādi mat-param, which Sankara forced to interpret from the whole context as 'Brāhman is beginningless, and I, Krishna, am its highest power (śakti). Rāmānuja on the contrary interpreted it, also grammatically forced, as 'Brāhman is the beginningless, dependent on Me.' In neither case is Zaehner agree. ZBG. p.339.

⁹⁷⁾ - ZBG. p.258 Cf. HS. 282.

⁹⁸⁾ . ZBG. p.314.

verses [13,12-17], the "highest Brāhman" is identified particularly with Krishna himself, the supreme God. In this passage Brāhman receives attributes which elsewhere in the Gītā fall to Krishna, only that he is not revered as "what Is and what is not and what surpasses both" as that of verse [11,37], but as neither "what 'Is (Being)' nor as 'what is not (Not-Being)".⁹⁹

"(And now) I will tell you that which should be known: once a man knows it, he attains to immortality. The highest Brāhman It is called, -beginningless, -It is not Being nor is It Not-Being." [13,12].¹⁰⁰

So in its position, the "Highest Brāhman" seems to enjoy the same state as Krishna's highest Home, in which ^{he} they enjoys now the identification with Krishna himself, now only his own. But since Krishna accept also even the sincere worshippers of other gods [7,21; 9,23; 12,3-4], why should He disapprove by the worship to the "Higest Brāhman", as His own? the distinction between Krishna and His own becomes less important.

4.3.4. The difference between the Bhagavad-Gītā and the Upanishadic Doctrine in terms of the relationship between the self and the Absolut

In the Mundaka and Śvetāśvatara Upanishads, the God in every sense of the word, is not the absolute, for beyond him a personal God Rudra-Śiva is recognized. The Gītā, according

⁹⁹. ZBG. p.37 and p.314.

¹⁰⁰. ZBG. p.337 cf. HS. p.304.

to Zaehner, continues and reaffirms this line of view, when it exalts Krishna not only above the "Imperishable" but also comprising both the "perishable" and "Imperishable" altogether.

"Since I transcend the perishable, and am more exalted than the Imperishable itself, so am I extolled in common as in Vedic speech as 'the Person (All-) Sublime.'" [15,18].¹⁰¹⁾

Of course the existence of the "perishable" itself in contrast to the "Imperishable" in those above Upanishads' view would look somewhat like a limitation of the "Imperishable".

In many verses it is shown with much evidence that the supreme in the Bhagavad-Gītā is a personal God. The Gītā, aware of the richness of the notion of the Absolute, however, is not content with a simplification. It works out the notions of purusha and prakṛti of the Sāṃkhya system, the nirvāna of the Buddhist and the Brāhman of the Upanishads, and tried out in very tricky discourses the combination of those notions, to lead them finally to its own claim of the superiority of Krishna. The Gītā often leaves its verses open to other possible interpretations only to peel off slowly the proper intention of the writer which becomes obvious when the dialogue of Arjuna and Krishna ends and the Supreme God

¹⁰¹⁾. ZBG.p.368 Cf. HS. p.311.

reveals himself. The position of the Gītā becomes openly revealed by the end of chapter fourteen, when Krishna states:

"For I am the base supporting Brāhman, -immortal (Brāhman) which knows no change, - (supporting) too the eternal law of righteousness and absolute beatitude." [14,27].¹⁰²⁾

Such an obvious verse is not able to be interpreted otherwise and it ends practically all the ambiguity which may have arisen before. Following the common line of Hindu description of God, now it can be stated also that Krishna is both Brāhman and transcends it. He is both the Imperishable and beyond it, both the womb and the planter, the nirvāna and the base of it.

Despite of the Gītā's toleration or even encouragement for the worshippers of gods other than Krishna, it becomes increasingly insistent in the latter half of the Gītā that worship and love should though be destined only to Krishna.

"But those who cast off all their works on Me, solely intend on Me, and meditate on Me in spiritual exercise, leaving no room for others, (and so really) do Me honour." [12,6].¹⁰³⁾

So even though the Gītā continues the theistic line of the Mundaka and the Śvetāśvatara Upanishad, its problematization is more complex and richer for it includes some different traditions of thinking, while its position is more stabilized. In the Upanishads the nature of the Absolute

¹⁰²⁾. ZBG.p.358 Cf. HS.p.309.

¹⁰³⁾. ZBG. p.327 Cf. HS. p.301.

remains problematic, for they hesitated between embracing Brāhman now as Being, then as non-Being, Personal and non-Personal, with attributes and without attributes. The theistic tendency of the Mundaka and the Śvetāśvatara Upanishads was just a trial to put the problematic to an end. With the coming of the Bhagavad-Gītā, the solution became definite for the Gītā did not merely linger on the metaphysical astonishment to the Śvetāśvatara God, Rudra-Śiva, as the exemplar of the soul, but goes quite explicitly beyond it by propagating the supremacy of God of love and promoting worship to him alone. In the Upanishads, Zaehner insists, the Absolut or Brāhman is never wholly distinct from matter nor essentially different from the transcendental self of man. But in the theistic systems the Absolute is at the same time the highest Brāhman.¹⁰⁴ This is not to say only that He remains impersonal, like Brāhman, while gaining the utmost attribute, but that He is in his essence, cannot be described in words. To put it in Zaehner's own words in the Concordant Discord, "this God, Krishna, not only transcends transcendence but is also a God of love. But like any God who claims to be more than merely the sum total of existence he has a terrible as well as an 'auspicious' aspect".¹⁰⁵ This does make very much difference, of course.

¹⁰⁴. Cf. CD. p.157.

¹⁰⁵. CD. p.143.

5. Krishna in the Bhagavad-Gītā

The dramatis personae of the Bhagavad-Gītā are Krishna and Arjuna, they represent the divine teacher and the human disciple.¹⁰⁶⁾ The setting is Kuruksetre, the battle field of Kuru, which is in fact Dharmaksetre, the field of justice, which in Radhakrishnan commentary would mean the human heart where the battle between justice and injustice takes place. In the preceding discourses we have been talking about the nature of the human disciple, that is insofar as he is an embodied self which tries to find its liberation. But who is this divine teacher, who diffuses his teachings in the Bhagavad-Gītā and what is his significance for the human race?

5.1. Between Myth and History

It remains in the controversy whether Krishna was a mythical figure or an individual ever living in the history of India. Indian scholars like Aurobindo and Radhakrishnan are apt to maintain that it does not so much matter for the Hindus whether Krishna is a historical individual or not. * More important is his teaching and his bringing forth of his perfect and divine life in the universe and the soul of

¹⁰⁶⁾ Aurobindo, Sri., Essays on the Gita, Pondicherry (1922) 1974, chapter 2 and 3 pp.9-26.

man.¹⁰⁷ For Aurobindo it would seem a waste of time to linger on the historicity of Krishna for it hardly has any religious importance.¹⁰⁸ Radhakrishnan in his commentary on the Bhagavad-Gītā added though, even if this would seem a bit unsound, that the life of Krishna could be traced in history to Hinduism. The western zeal, in the name of scientific research, to denude the religious faith at the cost of considering it as merely historical fact brings the religious philosophy of the Hindus into confusion and makes them disconcert in their belief.

The study of the figure of Krishna is though, more interesting to the western observers than to the Indians. Douglas P. Hill made a comparison from the studies and researches of Barth, Keith, Raychaudhuri, Bhandarkar, Grierson, Winternitz, Garbe and Hopkins, but insisted that a definite conclusion could not be achieved. Finally Hill made out a reconstruction which relied on the existing documents, of how Krishna Vasudeva, who was primarily a sage of the Vṛṣṇi clan or Satvata, developed slowly into a demigod and cult object of the common people, until finally he achieved the position as the supreme God of the Bhagavad-Gītā, not without controversy naturally, especially between the two

¹⁰⁷. Radhakrishnan, S., The Bhagavadgita, with an introductory Essay, Sanskrit Text, English Translation and Notes; London, 1948, p.28.

¹⁰⁸. Aurobindo, Sri., Ibidem, p. 12.

prominent castes, the Brāhmanas and the Kshatryas. This is not a problem of one or two days of course but a long process that took up several centuries.¹⁰⁹⁾

Such a controversy is not the interest of Zaehner for he was in agreement with Aurobindo, that for the Hindus very much more important are what Krishna taught rather than what Krishna is. For Zaehner, the existence of Krishna in the history of Hindu religion, this dramatis personae, is however very significant for he brought a new era, completely new as never before. No wonder the rising of a new religion, bhakti, could not be detached from this new phenomenon, which is the presence of Krishna in the Bhagavad-Gītā. This new era, in Zaehner's view, was the return of mythological trends in the Hindu religion, which would be increasing even more in the life of bhakti.

5.2. Krishna as God incarnated

Krishna in popular Hinduism is considered as the eighth incarnation of God. This belief finds its affirmation also in the Bhagavad-Gītā. There are some verses in the Bhagavad-Gītā which indicate this doctrine of incarnation; but most of these verses do not use the word avatāra, which is the well-known term for incarnation, but any of these: janman (birth),

¹⁰⁹⁾. The whole explanation of Hill can be seen in his introduction of the Bhagavad-Gītā. Hill, W. Douglas P., Ibidem, pp.6-17.

sambhava (come into being), srjana (creation), adhiṣṭhāya (I consort with).¹¹⁰⁾

The more complicated and controversial term, avatāra was developed only later and taught by the schools of Vedānta. Most of the interpretations refer to the sudden appearance of the four verses for the first time in chapter four of the Bhagavad-Gītā, concerning Krishna's incarnation. In these verses Krishna, in an answer to Arjuna's hesitation, hearing that Krishna, who was born later than Vivasvat, could teach him the changeless mode of life, declared that He is God incarnated.

"Many a birth have I passed through, and (many a birth) have you: I know them all but you do not" [4,5].¹¹¹⁾

In the doctrine of incarnation, Zaehner saw how the influence of Sāṃkhya still works, that is in a dualistic view of spirit and matter, which is transferred in the Bhagavad-Gītā into the concept of consortium between Krishna and Nature.

"Unborn am I, changeless is my Self, of (all) contingent beings I am the Lord! Yet by my creative

¹¹⁰⁾ Further explanations of these concepts are found in Father Dhavamony's work, Classical Hinduism, pp.85-6.

¹¹¹⁾ ZBG.p.182 Cf. HS.p.267. This verse states of course the incarnation of Krishna. But it is to be strictly distinguished, father Dhavamony reminds, from "reincarnation" which is only apt for men. As the following verse indicates, Krishna as God is unborn and changeless. Dhavamony, Ibidem, p.88.

energy I consort with Nature -which is mine- and come to be (in time)." [4,6].¹¹²⁾

Zaehner seems to make a comparison between the incarnation of Krishna ("come to be in time") with the emerging process of all contingent being of the later chapter [14,3], in which it is stated Krishna plants the seed in Brāhman, which is to Him a womb. But like in the process of the birth of contingent beings, here too Krishna does not only play the role of male agent, but transcends it

We have learned how Brāhman as a womb is being the part of Krishna. Here too Nature must be considered as the part of Krishna and hence again, Krishna goes beyond the Sāṅkhya system. For Nature in fact works under the impulse of Krishna, the Lord.¹¹³⁾ Incarnation in this view should mean, Krishna, as the Lord, who is unborn and changeless, came to be in time. As to whether Krishna's incarnation is real or merely docetic, Zaehner sees that the Gītā gives no hint.

How the incarnation is to be explained, Krishna himself answers in a clear affirmation, as clear as the text shows: "by my creative energy I consort with Nature". The plain fact which Krishna would declare through this proclamation would be that He is born in time like other contingent beings, while He remains the Lord of everything else. Now, by "my

¹¹²⁾. ZBG. p.182 Cf. HS. p.267.

¹¹³⁾. ZBG. p.182-3.

creative energy" (atma-māyā), we have learned, the Gītā sees it as the power of Krishna through Nature.¹¹⁴ In previous passages we have seen how material Nature works through its three constituents and precisely the power of these tricks deludes man so that they could not see this Lordship [7,13] and the reality of the incarnation [7,24]. Those who do not accept Krishna's incarnation, that is his coming into being, while he still remains above everything, are considered as fools, having no faith, deluded by māyā. For them God's incarnation is a snare that conceals his 'higher state', the 'Changeless, All-Highest'.¹¹⁵

5.3. God's Manifestation (Ch XI B6.)

Among the chapters in the Bhagavad-Gītā, we cannot, I think, ignore the eleventh chapter, which is the high point of the second part, according to Zaehner's division, in which Krishna revealed his real nature to Arjuna. This chapter is also important in terms of the whole sequence of the Hindu Scriptures, for here is the encounter of man and God, the supreme Being proved decisive. Something which is never expected before.

¹¹⁴. "This is what the word means: it is material Nature and one's translation of the word will depend on what view one takes of material Nature," ZBG. p.183.

¹¹⁵. ZBG. p.278.

To show up the central problem, let us see the content of the whole chapter viewed by Zaehner. The chapter consists of fifty five verses. The first to the fourth verses show Arjuna's desire to see Krishna's Universal Form; the fifth to the eighth verses tell how Krishna gives Arjuna a Celestial Eye, with which he can witness Krishna's Transfiguration, this being the contents of the ninth to thirty first verses; the following verses, the thirty two to thirty fifth describe the revelation of Krishna as Time, and this is followed by Arjuna's Hymn of Praise, in the thirty sixth to forty ninth verses. The chapter is closed with Krishna assuming his human form again in the last verses.

In his transfiguration, Krishna, the incarnation of Vishnu the great Lord of Yoga, reveals to Arjuna "his highest form" [11,9]. This form is described as a figure which at the same time is bewildering and delighting, "tremendum et fascinosum" in Rudolf Otto's term. Arjuna is gaping and utters words:

"You are the Imperishable, (you) wisdom's highest goal;
You of this universe the last prop-and-resting-place,
You the changeless, (you) the guardian of eternal law,
You the primeval Person; (at last) I understand."
[11,18].¹¹⁶⁾

Of these attributes we have known something when we spoke about the "imperishable". Only here paramam (highest) should qualify not only veditavyam (wisdom's goal) but also aksaram

¹¹⁶⁾ ZBG. p.307 cf. HS.p.296.

(the Imperishable). Here is mentioned, too, the role of Kṛishna as the guardian of eternal law, something that we should attribute as the goal of Krishna's incarnation. But never less interesting than to figure out Krishna's characters is the reaction of Arjuna, the human part of the encounter.

"Ablaze with many coloured (flames) You touch the sky,
Your mouths wide open, (gaping) your eyes distended,
blazing: so do I see You and my inmost self is shaken:
I cannot bear it, I find no peace, O Vishnu!"
[11,24].¹¹⁷⁾

Here is stated Arjuna's commotion, "my inmost self is shaken". This is a kind of particularly deep human experience, that, as Zaehner indicated, does not concern merely the "ātman" but the "antarātma". Zaehner does not agree with Śankara nor Ramanuja who both took the "inmost self" as "mind". For Zaehner, "inmost" self cannot be but the individual "self-in-itself", which is at the same time Brāhman. And this is quite particular in the Bhagavad-Gītā that "this self - the true self of liberated man - is nevertheless capable of being absorbed in God [6,47] or of being terrified by his awful power".¹¹⁸⁾ It shows that even though the centre of the human being, this inmost self identical with God, this identity is only insofar it depends

¹¹⁷⁾. ZBG. p.308-9 cf. HS. p.297.

¹¹⁸⁾. ZBG. p.309.

on Him.¹¹⁹⁾ Thereby Zaehner seems to show that the liberated self in the framework of the Gītā, could not be totally identified with the supreme and to some measure still maintains his own individuality.¹²⁰⁾

Confronted by the transfiguration of Krishna, we see how Arjuna with his "inmost self shaken" finally asks what Krishna would do. Krishna's doctrines never shook him until then and "nothing in Krishna's teaching had prepared him for this".

"Tell me, who are you, your form so cruel? Homage to You. You best of gods, have mercy! Fain would I know you as You are in the beginning, for what you are set on doing I do not understand." [11,31].¹²¹⁾

In the previous verse Arjuna avowed that he began to understand who Krishna was, i.e. the highest Imperishable, the primeval Person. But here, he is totally confused and avowed that he does not understand what Krishna will do.

5.4. God of Love and Devotion

It has been mentioned above that the peculiarity of the Bhagavad-Gītā is that even though it is not ^{historically} counted amongst the Śruti, it gains nevertheless its position as being one ^{simply because it is not part of the Veda}

¹¹⁹⁾. CD. p.145.

¹²⁰⁾. This is the point, I think, when Zaehner elsewhere distinguished between unio mystica and unitas mystica. In terms of identity between human self and the Absolute the unitas mystica is the only possible one. CD. p.443.

¹²¹⁾. ZBG. p.311 cf. HS. p.297.

amongst the dearest Scriptures of the Hindus. And this due to its role in promoting the new religion Bhakti. In the Bhagavad-Gītā we can find many verses referring to bhakti.

In general, bhakti means love. Yet in all the forty three cases in which the derivatives of bhaj - the root of bhakti - is being used, no notion of secular love, sexual or asexual could be found. This is something strikingly surprising, for sex symbolism is a commonplace in other Hindu bhakti texts.¹²²⁾ They can mean different kinds of love or worship of God in different kinds of people: the afflicted (ārto), the knowledge-seeker (jijñāsur), wealth-seeker (arthārthi) or possessor of knowledge (jñāni) or even the love of God himself toward his devotees, but not a single case refers to secular love. All are referring to the relation between Krishna and his devotees, God and man and vice versa. The idea of bhakti in the Gītā is introduced for the first time, according to Zaehner, in this verse:

"In whatsoever way (devoted) men approach Me, in that same way do I return their love. (Whatever their occupation and) wherever they may be, men follow in my footsteps." [4,11].¹²³⁾

In Zaehner's view, by contemplating God's activity one knows God as agent, by assimilating Him one participates in his

¹²²⁾. M.Dhavamony, Love of God according to Śaiva Siddhānta, Oxford, 1971. pp.38-44. Zaehner was much indebted to this book concerning the apprehension on bhakti.

¹²³⁾. ZBG. p.185 Cf. HS. p.267.

mode of being. This can be learned in the two proceeding verses. What his mode of being is, at present is as yet not defined, it is only later when one gains his love, i.e the goal of his effort, that he will understand this mode of being, the timeless Being, the nirvāna.¹²⁴⁾

In another verse, bhakti is to mean love and devotion, out of which comes the possibility - or better yet - the capability of knowing God as the eternal source of all things.

"But great-souled men take up their stand in a nature that is divine; and so with minds intent on naught but (Me), they love-and-worship Me, knowing (Me to be) the beginning of (all) contingent beings, as Him who passes not away." [9,13].¹²⁵⁾

Knowledge of God is here to be dependent on love and not vice versa, hence it seems like a contradiction to the above statement. But this is not what the Gītā intends, for according to Zaehner, what is stated above is love of God as the end, which is in fact the gift of God, whereas here we discern with the love of men, the human effort. They are totally different things. The same thing is stated in verse [15,19], when it declares that by love a man comes to know God as the "Person (all-)Sublime" who is "more exalted than the Imperishable (Brāhman) Itself". This corresponds again to another verse [18,55] in which Krishna says: "By love-and-

¹²⁴⁾ . ZBG. p.185.

¹²⁵⁾ . ZBG. p.279 Cf. HS. p.287.

loyalty (a man) comes to know Me as I really am, how great I am and who; and once he knows Me as I am, he enters (Me) forthwith."¹²⁶⁾

3) Zaehner well understands, though, that the human effort is indispensable to gain the knowledge of God, as he really is, i.e. as the Supreme and to win his love. But this effort does not consist of learning to know him, i.e. in terms of the intellect, but of loving him or, in Zaehner's apprehension to the Gītā, in "communing with Him in love's devotion", which is the term of spiritual exercises, or the yogic practices. In such a consideration love could not be simplified as merely human emotion. We can probably resolve somewhat this problem through Zaehner's explanation of another verse.

"In all contingent beings the same am I; none do I hate and none do I fondly love; but those who commune with Me in love's devotion (abide) in Me, and I in them." [9,29].¹²⁷⁾

In this verse Krishna gives the model of love to be followed by his devotees. It is a kind of "indifferent" love which goes aptly with the attitude of an athlete of the spirit, a yogic student. For Krishna, the teacher of this love, himself is "no respecter of persons" and regards all alike as he is "devoid of imperfection and ever the same"[5,19]. This is the perfect love, the love of "man of steady wisdom", the perfect

¹²⁶⁾ . ZBG. p.136.

¹²⁷⁾ . ZBG. p.284 cf. HS. p.288.

God as Lover of men is to be added

Dialog Between God and man in the Bh.G.

→ the first time in Hinduism¹⁹¹.

yogin. This is the kind of man whom Krishna loves [12,13-19]. Such a kind of love, even if it arises from the human effort, could be considered as "divine", because it is based primarily on Krishna, the divine Lord, the God of love.

Like in other cases concerning its doctrines, Hinduism does not provide a watertight concept of bhakti. Once again we have to understand the confusion of those who are accustomed to Greek philosophy facing a paradox. Paradox, however, is a common phenomena in religions. Hinduism is no exception. The "indifferent" love is an example. To proceed a bit further to understand the paradox of the love of God of the Gītā, Zaehner adds that this "indifferent" love is not enough. This is still on the level of Buddhistic nirvāna, when love is purified from all attachment. It should be stated that this kind of love is an indispensable condition, yet it is not the goal. In the Gītā the goal remains the love of Krishna, hence Krishna says in the Bhagavad-Gītā, "those who commune with Me in love's devotion (abide) in Me, and I in them"[9,29].¹²⁸⁾ and though Krishna too has compassion on this "impermanent and joyless" world like Buddha, yet He frankly offers an alternative of "nirvāna, that is Brāhman too", which is an infinite joy through communing with Krishna in love [9,33] and drawing nigh to him [10,10]. This is the reason why at the beginning of our chapter we stated that in

¹²⁸⁾. ZBG. p.285.

Zaehner's view, the Bhagavad-Gītā tends more to mystical doctrines than to metaphysical. The doctrines of divine love, which remain controversial in Hinduism, give more space to the popular bhaktis in later time.

6. Conclusion

By way of conclusion we will review some important points of this chapter.

1. The theology of the Bhagavad-Gītā presumes, according to Zaehner, at least three different backgrounds which *have give* strong influence. The first is the Sāṃkhya-Yoga system which contributes to the analysis of the differentiation between the self and material nature. But unlike the Sāṃkhya-Yoga system, the Gītā does not accept the dual realities of spirit and matter, since both are submitted to God, the cause and overseer of all. So unlike the Sāṃkhya-Yoga system, in the Gītā the self is not to free itself from the bond of nature in the sense of "isolation" but to integrate itself, and by spiritual exercises - a term which Zaehner held for "yoga" - gains the love of Krishna.

In the same manner the Buddhistic doctrine on the insignificance of this world of transience, suffering and insubstantiality was adhered to by the Gītā. Nirvāna, which is the perfect state of the soul, when it has purified itself through self detachment and self-negation was adhered to also in the Gītā but with much modification. The Buddhistic

nirvāna, which is passionless and void is equated with the Gītā's Brāhman so as to submit to Krishna's love.

The third background of the Gītā is the Upanishads, mostly the Śvetāśvatara. The theistic tendency of this last Upanishad is very much closer to the Gītā, in which a personal God is exalted above the impersonal Brāhman. Of course, the Gītā is much richer in describing the nature of this personal God, Krishna and with much caution reasserts the notion of the Upanishadic Brāhman adhering to the views of the Sāṃkhya-Yoga and the Buddhism. This is not a simple exposition, as always in Hinduism, concerning the notion of Brāhman.

2. From these three backgrounds, we can recall the doctrine on the supreme Lord, Krishna both in terms of his relation to the human self and in terms of his own divine right. As we have seen the personal supreme God, Krishna in the Bhagavad-Gītā is proposed in such a manner that He could not be approached except through His relation to the human self. He could only be known through love and devotion, we have learned, and it takes almost entirely six first chapters to explain this preparatory human effort to know God. As such we learn the supreme God of the Gītā is not a God of philosophers, or a metaphysical God, let alone a God in the deistic sense, who does not care about human life, but a personal God of love.

3. Yet Krishna is also the supreme Lord both comprising and at the same time beyond every possible conceived absolute. He is beyond purushas and prakṛti of the Sāṁkhya-Yoga system, beyond material Nature or primal matter and yet they are parts of Him, they are the womb of Him into which He plants His seed of everything. He is beyond the perishable and the Imperishable and in Him opposition is overcome. He is beyond nirvāna, which is Brāhman too.



CHAPTER V : GOD IN THE EPICS AND THE PURANAS

1. Introduction

Before we conclude our treatise on the concepts of God in the scriptures of Hinduism, we will try to give a brief exposé of the concept of God of the Epics and the Purānas. Historically, the Epics were written before the Purānas. The Bhagavad-Gītā which is inserted in the Mahābhārata, one of the two Epics, should be also considered as work of later date, but according to Hindu belief the Bhagavad-Gītā has gained its prestigious rank as śruti and therefore is to be treated separately, as we have properly done. There are reasons for treating the Epics and the Purānas, together in one chapter. ¹⁾ First of all they both rank together as smṛti but in contrast to the other literature of the smṛti, Zaehner seems to find many treatises on God in these two types of literature. ²⁾ The two types of literature also share an interest in common people and their doctrines are mostly centered in the Trimurti, the three Gods of Brāhma, Śiva and Vishnu. So both Epics and Purānas in the Hindu religion constituted the bulk of the non Vedic Scripture known as smṛti, and they became the chief sources of information concerning the popular forms of Hinduism.¹⁾

The two great Epics of this period are the Mahābhārata, which we have just mentioned and the Rāmāyana, much smaller

¹⁾ Hin.p.126-7.

than the Mahābhārata but no less beautiful. Both Epics present the ideal of Hindu life, for women and men, the social positions of different castes, their customs and morality, both in the family life and social life. In short, they deal with a wide range of living religion, philosophy, politics and morality. But in the whole course of the stories that they contain, they represent the God Vishnu in his many incarnations, such as Krishna of the Bhagavad-Gītā, or as Rāma in the Rāmāyana. In the Mahābhārata, the God Śiva is represented as well. Somewhat different from the Epics are the Puranas,²⁾ for they tend to deal with more religious topics than the Epics,³⁾ taking usually one of the names of main gods as their titles. There are some eighteen such works which are called Puranas.⁴⁾

²⁾ "The word purāna means ancient, but as a name in literature it signifies not an ancient book but an ancient subject, Archaica". Farquhar, Ibid. p.137. The roots of the Purānic literature are, therefore, very early, but most of the material is late. There remains also an acute controversy on whether this new literature, which is specifically from Vedic, was developed from Dravidian elements, in contrast to the "classical" religion which is supposedly of Aryan origin, even though mutual influences were not to be excluded. Cf. Renou, L., Religions of Ancient India, London, 1953, p.47.

³⁾ "...If the Epic was intended for the edification of princes, the Puranas seem to be specifically religious texts; they claim to be divinely inspired, promulgated by Visnu, by Śiva or Brahman..." Renou, L., Ibidem, London, 1953, p.49.

⁴⁾ The commonly known as Purānas are Brāhma (1), Padma (2), Vishnu (3), Śiva (4), Bhagavata (5), Nāradiyā (6), Mārkandeya (7), Agni (8), Bhavishya (9), Brahmavaivarta (10), Linga (11), Varāha (12), Skanda (13), Vāmana (14), Kūrma (15), Matsya (16), Garuda (17), Brahmānda (18). Scholars usually added to this line Harivamsa which forms the

As we have stated in the preceding chapter, the Bhagavad-Gītā had gained the honor of legitimizing the new religion of Bhakti. With the Epics and the Purānas, this new religion showed its increase in the whole continent and marked a new era in the history of Hindu religion. The Epics and the Purānas, due to their specific forms, very foreign to the Vedic Scriptures, become the "great store houses", as Zaehner would call them, of devotional Hinduism and marked the end of the "classical" period, in which Sanskrit remained the language of holy writ.⁵⁾ It is to the Epics, but even more to the Purānas that the increase of the sects was indebted, for they liked to link themselves and their doctrines to any of those books. This does not mean, however, that, sectarianism began only in the period of the Purānas for, as Renou says,⁶⁾ the sects may be older than the literary evidence shows. Yet it shows plainly that the Purānas have effected this immense growth of the sects.

2. The General Characteristics of the Epics and the Purānas

The Epics, Zaehner asserts, present the deities in a strong mythological nuance. This is not surprising, since the

conclusion of the Mahābhārata and also Vāyu Purāna, hence they constitute in reality twenty Puranas. See Farquhar, Ibidem, p.139.

⁵⁾ · Hin.p.12.

⁶⁾ · Renou, L., Ibidem, p.46.

Epics are of different style in classification from the earlier literature. The wisdom of life is no longer presented in philosophical doctrines but recited in folkloric stories and poems. This renders the Epics more familiar to simple people, many of whom are bhakti devotees. But the Mahābhārata, Zaehner believes, still belongs to a stage of Hinduism when it was not yet affected by Buddhism, in which hunting and drinking is a matter of common life and to get drunk or making war is quite natural. "There is nothing dearer than life," the Mahābhārata repeatedly affirms.⁷⁾ Such a background, we will see, gives a quite particular frame for the representation of God. In this respect, even though the Bhagavad-Gītā forms part of the Mahābhārata, yet many agree that it is totally different, both in style and in content, to the extent that some believe that it was inserted several centuries later into the bulk.

As for the Purānas, still less is mentioned by Zaehner in his works. The obvious reason is the lack of intrinsic interest as compared to the Mahābhārata or even to the śruti literature. We can therefore only present a very general view of the God of the Purānas, as we are never really informed of Zaehner's views on particular works of the Purānas. In Zaehner's account the Purānas carried out the "remythologization" in Hinduism, which had been started in

⁷⁾ CD. p.154 and Hin. p.63.

the Bhagavad-Gītā. As we mentioned earlier, Zaehner assumes that the Upanishads had undertaken the "demythologization" of the Vedic deities and that the Bhagavad-Gītā had somewhat "re-mythologized" them. The Purānas revived mythological stories of gods and men of the Vedic era even more strongly to counteract the absolute dryness of Upanishadic era when they began introducing abstract concepts and metaphysics, "for living religion demands myth of some sort" as Zaehner put it.⁸⁾

Brahma . . .

3. Śiva and Vishnu in the Epics and in the Puranas.

Even though the Purānas present many deities in their myths, their theistic tendency is evident, because above all other deities they reserved the highest position only to either Śiva or Vishnu; they claimed for these two gods the title of Parabrahman and Paramātman, the "highest Brāhman" and the "highest Self".⁹⁾ Similarly in the two Epics, the Mahābhārata and the Rāmāyana, the gods, though they are believed to exist, are very much lower than Vishnu and Śiva.¹⁰⁾ This particular characteristic distinguishes strictly between the myths of the Epics and the Puranics, on the one hand, and that of the Vedic Scriptures on the other.

⁸⁾ CD. pp. 155-6.

⁹⁾ CD. p. 117.

¹⁰⁾ Hin. p. 142.

* Here we find
monotheistic myths
more substantial than
those of Vedic
polytheistic

Epics / Puranas

There are in fact, three names of God which are commonly accepted in their common belief of this period: Brāhma, Śiva and Vishnu, and all three compose the so-called Trimurti.¹¹ Brāhma was believed as God the Creator, Vishnu as the Sustainer or Protector, and Śiva as the Destroyer of the world. Brāhma is, however, the least to merit worship from the Hindus, and he later sank into oblivion.¹² Zaehner sees that this god is never given the title as that applied to Śiva or Vishnu.

3.1. Śiva

With regard to Śiva, the Epics and the Purānas give the more-or-less similar figure. In brief we can describe Śiva in

¹¹. The Purānas are often categorized by the proper god of their worship. Hence the Brahmā, Brāhmanda, Brahmāvaivarta, Mārkandeya, Bhavishya and the Vaman Purānas are dedicated to Brāhma, the Vishnu, Bhāgavata, Naradiya, Garuda, Padma and the Vārāha Purānas to Vishnu and the Śiva, Linga, Skanda, Agni, Matsya and the Kūrma Purānas to Shiva; See, for example, Wilkins, W.J., Hindu Mythology, Vedic and Purānic, Calcutta, 1882, p.78. Yet Farquhar sees that preeminently there were five representative gods of the sects as some Purānas and also contemporary literature showed. Those gods are: Vishnu, Śiva, Brahmā, Durgā and Sūrya. See Farquhar, Ibidem, p.140.

¹². O'Malley, for example, argues that the reason was probably because Brahmā, after executing his function as creator, as the Hindus believed, needed no more contact with the world. Quite understandably, few temples dedicated to Brāhma are found in India. See, O'Malley, L.S.S., Popular Hinduism, the Religion of the Masses, Cambridge, 1935, p.4; For W.Crooke the decadence of Brāhma is mainly caused by his closer association to the philosophers rather than to the common people. ERE, vol.VI, 1913, p.700.

Characteristics of Śiva

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- 1) both literatures as a terrible God, destroyer, the source of calamities in our world. He is a jealous God and wrathful, intolerant of the worship of other gods, to see it in an Old Testament comparison, as Zaehner would often do. Śiva is also presented as wearing a necklace of skulls and having serpents as his hair. This is what first strikes one who learns the character of Śiva in the Epics and the Purānas. It is not surprising that in the Epics, when Śiva appears, the incarnation of Vishnu invariably takes second place.¹³⁾ Śiva is nevertheless also a gracious God, the source of goodness, an ascetic who performs perpetual austerities. In the Purānas he remains chaste, though he is known to be the one who always consorted with his wife Parvati. In this way of seeing him, then, he appears as the meeting of opposites. In him, every opposition meets and resolves into unity; he is the symbol of male and female at the same time, eternal rest and ceaseless activity, ithyphallic yet perpetually chaste. // In the Śvetāśvatara Upanishad, the preeminent God of Rudra-Śiva transcends the perishable and imperishable, but in the great Epics, such a characteristic is replaced. Śiva no longer transcends but rather unites opposites in one center. This is typical of the later literatures.¹⁴⁾

¹³⁾ - Hin. p.84.

¹⁴⁾ - Hin. p.82; CCWR.pp.42-3.

In addition to his character as the center of the opposites, Śiva is also known as natarāja, "the Lord of the dance". In his dances he represents the world process of creation and destruction. In the dance of creation, he dances with enthusiastic joy and by its rhythm he pushes the primordial energy into power and life. In another dance - the Tāndava dance - he dances like a drunkard or a madman, destroying the whole creation and turning everything upside down.

3.2. Vishnu

As for Vishnu, things went quite differently, for Vishnu has never been described as terrible. In the Purānas, he is God of love and passion. The Bhagavad-Gītā has initiated the "remythologization" when it presents Krishna as the incarnate God. But the Purānas go further, for they present Krishna no longer a teacher who imparts his wisdom on Yoga to Arjuna, but as a lover of his devotees. The Bhāgavata Purāna, for example, presents Krishna both as God-man, and as a handsome young cowherd, who plays with and entices the cowherd girls. The Gītā presents the bhakti as love which is still rigorously controlled and God's love goes out preeminently to the man who has brought his body and senses under rigorous control. The Purānas, on the contrary, present the "ecstatic" love of the devotee in contrast to "enstatic", self

sufficient love, as Zaehner likes to put it.¹⁵⁾ The Alvars, the Vishnuite sages that claimed to have intuitive knowledge of God, went so far as to use even sexual imagery or symbolism to show the realization of love between God and man. This is not to say that there was no excess, but in general the Hindu attitude towards sexual union in this context is to be considered as something essentially holy, Zaehner said.¹⁶⁾ Such a representation of Vishnu was very widespread in south India.

According to the Bhagavad-Gītā [4,8] and the popular belief, Vishnu is the God who from time to time comes into the world in order to rehabilitate it. // In the popular belief he comes in the form of different creatures such as fish, boar, man-lion or dwarf, and human beings as well. // In the two Epics, the Mahabharata and the Ramayana, Vishnu is presented and incarnated most prominently in the figures of Krishna and Rama respectively. // Yet according to Zaehner there is a difference in character, because Rāma in the Rāmāyana presents the perfect devotion to duty and obedience, parallel

there are other avatars

¹⁵⁾ Following Louis Gardet and Mircea Eliade, on many occasions Zaehner stresses two different kinds of trance, "enstatic" and "ecstatic". By the "en-static" Zaehner means the feeling of absolute oneness which induces to a kind of trance characterized not by ardent passion, like in the "ec-static", but on the contrary, by the total indifference. ; See CD. pp.303, 313; AST.p.92; HMM.pp.78, 152.

¹⁶⁾ CCWR.p.41. And yet, Śiva, too, is worshipped as lingam (phallus) and yoni (the female organ). See Hin.p.85.

to Yudhishtira in the Mahābhārata whose passion for righteousness and truth is so impressive, in contrast to Krishna's indifference to the calamities caused by wars, so that he would appear as a morally rather ambivalent God.¹⁷⁾ God in the Rāmāyana as presented in the figure of Rāma¹⁸⁾ is a model for Hindu morality: loyal, patient in adversity, obedient to higher authority, chastiser of evil powers, ideal husband, son and brother.¹⁹⁾

Krishna in the Mahābhārata is, however, more interesting even though he has a more complex character. Throughout the analysis of the struggle of Yudhishtira in facing the dilemma of dharmā, i.e. between the Kshatriya dharmā as taught by Krishna, the Lord, and the inner dharmā which inflames one's life, Zaehner sees Krishna, God of the Mahābhārata as indifferent and careless to the human fate. Dharma, which in this context takes part in allotting human fate, is the result of one's own karma or works of the previous life, so that as

¹⁷⁾ Hin.p.164.

¹⁸⁾ This may be the reason, why in later literature and Hindu movements "Rām"(Rāmā) is also a dear name for calling God. In Adhyatma-Rāmāyana, Rāmā means simply God; Hin.p.92 Even Kabir, a prominent Muslim, who retained a strict monotheism, used this word for God. "...This would seem to indicate that the deification of Rāmā had already gone so far that his name had become a synonym for 'God'." Hin.pp.139-140

¹⁹⁾ See also CCWR.p.39.

a matter of fact he need not think how to fulfil it. Moreover he is just a puppet in God's hand.

"It is not man who is the doer of good and evil works, for man is not independent. He is made to act like a wooden puppet. Some are motivated by God, others by chance, and yet others by the works they have performed in former (lives)" [MBh, 5.158.14-16].²⁰

This is the image of God of the Mahābhārata. Krishna, who is dear to the Pandava, in the context of this Epics, can not be but a God of this kind. It makes Yudhishtira, the king of dharma (Righteousness), even, more in an acute agony, to find himself, like Arjuna, to have to obey the dharma that this God taught, because it did not seem to suit with the dharma that he perceived in his inmost heart.

This Krishna of the Mahābhārata seems obviously quite in opposition to that of the Purānas, as we have seen above, yet he could be neither identified with Krishna of the Bhagavad-Gītā. In the Mahābhārata, the most secret doctrine of Krishna on love which is beyond this traditional dharma is not revealed at all. And this is the point where the Bhagavad-Gītā very much diverges from the Mahābhārata. Krishna of the

²⁰. Cited by Zaehner in Hin. p.106.

Mahābhārata is a God according to the traditional concepts taught by the Brahmans.²¹⁾

Throughout the development of the bhakti religion, there seemed to be a tension between these two gods, Śiva and Vishnu. In the Mahabharata Śiva and Vishnu were fused into a single figure as Hari-hara, but this does not seem to release the tension totally. Even when traditional Hindu religion believed in the Trimurti, in which both Vishnu and Śiva took part in addition to Brahmā, composing a "One God in three forms", the popular religion remained and preferred to worship predominantly either Vishnu or Siva.²²⁾

²¹⁾ In the Bhagavad-Gītā [18.66] Krishna said, "Give up the things of dharma, turn to me only as thy refuge. I will deliver thee from all evil. Have no care"; this is considered by Zaehner as the turning point that makes the Bhagavad-Gītā totally different from the traditional teachings on dharma. See Hin. pp.64-5.

²²⁾ Hin. p.86.

absolute monistic sense. This last sense is afforded only by the Māṇḍūkya Upanishad and would be elaborated upon by the school of Śankara.

1) The theistic tendency, the searching for the One, the Supreme, who is wholly different from the self and with whom total identification is excluded, can be traced back ultimately to the Śvetāśvatara Upanishad. The Śvetāśvatara God appeared more obviously and more rigourously transcendent and personal than the kathenotheistic God or God of the late Vedas in the figure of Rudra-Śiva. But he is also God in a more metaphysical sense, far above sacrificial worship.

→ With the Bhagavad-Gītā, the whole thing goes completely different, with the appearance of Krishna. Krishna himself was, in fact, not presented in the Bhagavad-Gītā suddenly as the Supreme, for as we have observed, the verses compiled from some different backgrounds were developed only with laborious movements toward their own goal, the presentation of him as God of love. Of course, love of God in the Bhagavad-Gītā is something revolutionary in the Hindu tradition. And this would only be proved in a very vivid way with the growth of a new religion in Hinduism, the religion of bhakti. No wonder, in one among many Puranic works, the pre-eminent literature for the bhaktas, the Bhagavad-Gītā was praised as the milk, i.e. the quintessence, which Krishna the

shepherd had milked from the cowherd, the Upanishads, as many devotees would contently cite it time and again.¹⁾

In the whole sequence of our observation, Brāhman is never conceived of as God, as we commonly understand him. The word became popular by the time of the Brāhmanas and got its reputation and powerful effects in the Upanishads. But Brāhman is a word, elusive in notion, being used by different authorities, of different schools, in different periods of time to show different meanings. In the Upanishads, Brāhman is commonly known as "the ground", "the principle", "the origin" or "the source" of the universe. It is the "finest essence" of everything that hides deep in the inmost self, pervading everything, but it could be also the sum total of existence or the Absolute beyond this world, the imperishable. But in whatever sense, Brāhman is in the Śvetāśvatara Upanishad subdued by the personal God of Rudra-Śiva, and such is even more evident in the Bhagavad-Gītā, when Krishna appears as the supreme God of Love. In this last consideration, Brāhman was considered sometimes as Nirvāna, the state of liberated souls unconditioned by the world, as

¹⁾ P.e. "In einem puranischen Preisgesang auf die Größe der Bhagavadgita heißt es: Die Upanishaden (in ihren Urgestalten) sind wie eine Herde von Kühen. Bhagavan Krishna, Gott selbst, ist der Melker. Die Milch der upanishadischen Weisheit, welche diese Kühe aus ihren Eutern strömen lassen, wenn Gott selbst sie melkt, ist die Bhagavadgita". Walther Eidlitz, Der Glaube und Die Heiligen Schriften der Inder, Freiburg im Breisgau, 1957, p.187.

māyā, the divine power in his creation, and the womb of Krishna into which he plants his seeds or as Krishna's way, home or abode.

In such an account, we can agree with what Zaehner would see in regard to the development of the concept of the Absolute in the Hindu tradition. God, the Absolute, would seem likely to appear as a figure coming out of the Hindu consciousness, firstly as a vague Being or Not-Being, depending on how they conceived it, which only after very long period of time became a more or less clear idea as a principle of the world until finally it found the definite concept of a personal God. In Zaehner's view, as is presented most clearly in his Concordant Discord, the development would be, then, from polytheistic pantheism / to monism and from monism / to theism as the higher form of religious life.²⁾ But a clear cut demarcation as nowhere in Hinduism was ever found. In the Vedas and the Brāhmanas, pantheism was more dominant, when the self is identified with the All, and this All in its diversity was accepted as the Absolute; this is to say in other words that there is no clear distinction between God, man and the Universe.³⁾ This pantheism merged into monism of the early Upanishads, when the principle of microcosm was identified with the principle of macrocosm. But

²⁾ · CD.p.10 Cf. HMM.p.11.

³⁾ · CD.p.10.

monism of this kind is indeed of such a particular kind, that it cannot be defined properly, for in spite of its unity, it includes diversity. Somewhere Zaehner calls it "qualified monism".⁴ To distinguish between monism and pantheism in this early period, to call the two kinds of speculative tendency, whether the Absolute is to be identified with the self or with the world with its diversity,⁵ then, seems to be merely for the sake of practical qualification, since in reality there never exists pure monism and pure pantheism, but the mixture of two.

This blending of different speculations developed with some variations until the end of the Upanishads when the two convergences appeared between absolute monism of the Māndūkya Upanishad and the monotheism of the Śvetāśvatara Upanishad.⁶ If the Bhagavad-Gītā and the Purānas are to be considered as the last steps in the series of the Hindu Scriptures in the religious tradition, their monotheism should be, then, considered as the final termination of this sequence. But since Krishna in both literatures, in spite of his elevation beyond perishable and imperishable, could never be purely

⁴ · CD.p.84.

⁵ · AST.p.68.

⁶ · Somewhere else, Zaehner even comes to terms that "in the Upanishads monism, pantheism, and monotheism coexist: they are not regarded as being mutually incompatible." CD.p.88.

defined as a creator, simply because he did not create the world out of nothing,⁷⁾ the monotheism of the Bhagavad-Gītā and the Puranas, too, should be, then, considered not as pure monotheism but as a still pantheistic monotheism.⁸⁾

⁷⁾ AST.pp.128-9.

⁸⁾ With a qualification as "the watershed between the pantheistic monism of the Upanishads and the still pantheistic theism of post-Vedic Hinduism" (CD.p.153), the Bhagavad-Gītā is of course different in some characteristics from the Purānas, yet its theism would be the still pantheistic of the post-Vedic Hinduism, nonetheless.

PART TWO

GOD IN THE HINDU PHILOSOPHICAL SYSTEMS



Introduction

Philosophical systems in India indicate a divergence of doctrines on the essence of life, the meaning of soul and self, definitions of the Absolute, the deepest reality of our existence, and the ways to reach that ultimate reality. If by philosophy we mean "love of wisdom", as it used to be understood, though in reality is the "wisdom" itself in the form of ideas, doctrines and theories, generally speaking Indian philosophy would not be different from that of Western, for such wisdom is also found in India. This is what Professor Radhakrishnan believes. Yet they have different characteristics, as he pointed out at least seven particular characteristics of the Indian philosophy.¹⁾ To this Professor Zaehner would have no objection except to one category, in which Radhakrishnan states that the introspective approach should be conducive to idealism, especially monistic idealism. To Zaehner, this is not necessarily so, for monism is only one variant amongst many Indian philosophies, though it might have gained the great part of followers over the

¹⁾ (1) The concentration upon the spiritual; (2) the belief in the intimate relationship of philosophy and life; (3) the introspective attitude and the introspective approach to reality; (4) idealistic of character, more specifically monistic idealism; (5) intuition as predominant to reason with respect to the knowledge of the ultimate; (6) the acceptance of authority and (7) the over-all synthetic tradition as essential to the spirit and method of Indian philosophy. See Radhakrishnan, S. and Moore, Ch.A., A Source Book in Indian Philosophy, Princeton, (1954) 1973, pp.xxii-xxvii.

years. Moreover idealism could not be said to be the common tendency, if by idealism is meant that reality is ultimately spiritual in character as Radhakrishnan wrote.

In Zaehner's view the differentiation between spirit and matter in Hindu philosophy is overcome by the differentiation between microcosm and macrocosm, between the tiny essence in the inmost of the heart and that of the whole universe. But in the system extremely dualist like Sāṃkhya, for example, the concurrence between spirit and matter, too, becomes insignificant, for they are left as two independently separate realities, which exclude each other. In a theistic system, on the other hand, no supremacy was mentioned either of the spirit or matter, for God the supreme overcomes both and is beyond both realities.

Yet it is true that all Hindu philosophies, unlike the Western, recognize certain authorities. Such is more evident in case of what we call orthodox philosophies, because even in their diversity of views, they all claim to be loyal to the same sources, the holy Scriptures, the śruti. As to what the Scriptures tell them and what the implications should be, that is something else. The philosophers could have different interests and therefore come to different conclusions. In those categories we recognize the six philosophical schools

in India, which are generally known in couples: Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika, Sāṃkhya and Yoga, Mīmāṃsā and Vedānta.²⁾

We will not discuss all of these, but only three of them. This is not without reason, but will only be evident from the explanations that follow. First of all, the three philosophical schools that are categorically chosen, are Sāṃkhya, Yoga dan Vedānta. As such they will not be discussed one after another, but following Zaehner's observation, Sāṃkhya-Yoga will be categorized as one, whereas of the Vedānta there will be discussed only the two distinct and most important branches, the Kevala Advaita Vedānta of Śankara and the Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta of Ramanuja. Hence we will expound three distinct views in three different chapters respectively. These three have clear and distinct positions, from the philosophical point of view - as Zaehner would see them - that are representative of the doctrines on God or the Absolute, both in terms of his relationship with Nature and the human soul.

Among the three philosophical positions of which Zaehner often spoke in his works, the Sāṃkhya and Yoga are

²⁾ Each school has its own sūtra as the basic reading for its doctrines, hence Nyāya knows Gautama's sūtra, Vaiśeṣika Kanada's, Sāṃkhya Kapila's, Yoga Patañjali's, Mīmāṃsā or Purva Mīmāṃsā Jaimini's and Vedānta or Uttara Mīmāṃsā Badarayana's sūtra. These authors were not the founders or originators of the systems but only their compilers or formulators. Radhakrishnan, S., Indian Philosophy, vol.II, London-New York, (1927) 1930, pp.19-20; 23.

practically considered in one term, as many scholars would also maintain, for the two schools complement each other so that they produce practically one and the same attitude. This the Bhagavad-Gītā [5,4] hinted, when it stated that only the simple-minded view the Sāṃkhya and Yoga as two things.³⁾ In Western terms Sāṃkhya would be considered probably as a cosmology, whereas Yoga psychology, Zaehner said, but if we view them in the Hindu categories, as we have stated above, the Sāṃkhya-Yoga could be accepted as one coherent philosophical view with logical consequences and implications,⁴⁾ for Sāṃkhya and Yoga are just two different meanings, theory and practice, of one and the same philosophy.

The Vedānta on the other hand, even though commonly acknowledged as one school, actually has many different branches or different interpretations. Vedānta itself means the end of the Vedas. By it the Vedāntists or the philosophers of the Vedānta would claim themselves as the most loyal to the Vedas. They claim also to be the truest interpreters of the Vedas. They saw the whole doctrine of the Vedas in the light of the Upanishads. Besides Śankara and Rāmānuja, the two names we have mentioned earlier and which will be our next central issues, there were other Vedantist

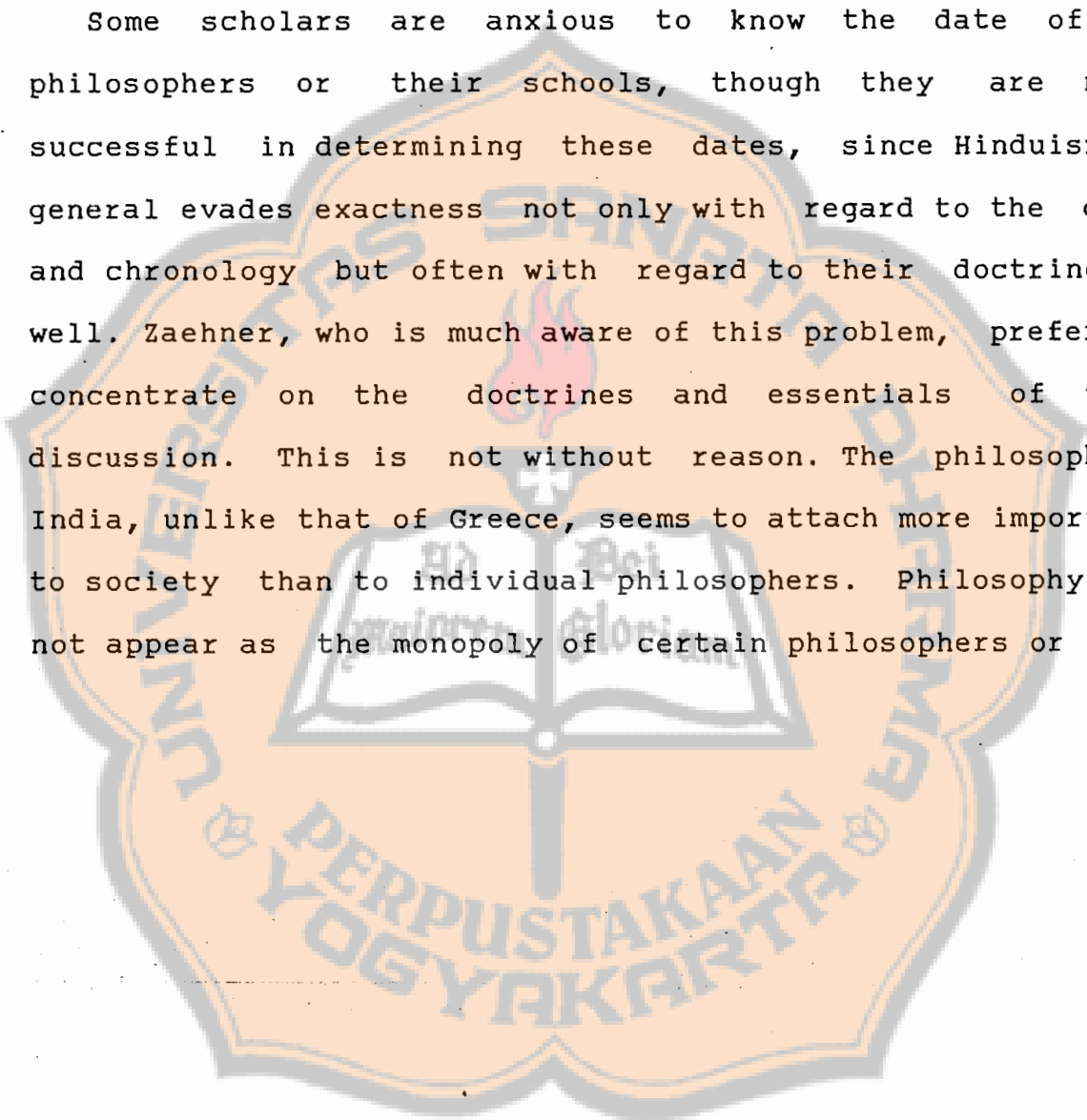
³⁾ · ZBG.p.202.

⁴⁾ · AST.p.42

philosophers like Madhva, Nimbārka and Vallabhā, with their respective systems: Dvaita, Bhedābheda and Suddhadvaita.

But since the central question is, in fact, whether the Absolute and the self have any difference, Zaehner, decided to concentrate his attention only on the two distinct positions, one, that of Śankara, whose school is called Advaita, the other, that of Rāmānuja, whose school is Viśiṣṭādvaita. Śankara denied any difference between the Absolute and the self, since reality is One without a second and his philosophy is pure monism, whereas Rāmānuja contended that God and self are relative terms - like whole and part - but not identical.

Some scholars are anxious to know the date of the philosophers or their schools, though they are never successful in determining these dates, since Hinduism in general evades exactness not only with regard to the dates and chronology but often with regard to their doctrines as well. Zaehner, who is much aware of this problem, prefers to concentrate on the doctrines and essentials of their discussion. This is not without reason. The philosophy of India, unlike that of Greece, seems to attach more importance to society than to individual philosophers. Philosophy does not appear as the monopoly of certain philosophers or of a



certain era.⁵⁾ Therefore in this second part, the historical aspect would not be very much regarded very highly. Moreover, our main concern now is not the historical progression of the idea of God in the systems of those schools, but rather the comparison of the essentials of their doctrines. In such an account, individuals and dates do not play a very important role.

⁵⁾ As an example, Max Müller tried hard to search for some facts to afford his idea that Śankara was a pupil of Govinda, himself the pupil of Gaudapada. But he found the commentary of Gaudapada had been translated in China even before 582 AD, whereas Śankara used to be accepted as beginning his mission only around 788 AD. How should this long distance be bridged? For this he resorted to the opinion of Telang, who in Indian Antiquary, xiii, 95 placed Śankara in 590 AD and the opinion of Fleet in Indian Antiquary, Jan., 1887, who stated that Śankara was once hospitalized by king Vrishadeva from Nepal. The king was governing between 630-655. See, Max Müller, ibid. p.208-9. Radhakrishnan, without any reasonable facts to base the difference of dates, stated simply that Gaudapada, the teacher of Govinda, the teacher of Śankara, was probably not the same person of Gaudapada who wrote the commentary to the Sāṃkhya sutras of Išvara Krishna. See Radhakrishnan, Indian Philosophy, vol.II, New York, p.255. From either assumption we can not draw any conclusion.

CHAPTER I: GOD IN THE SAMKHYA-YOGA SYSTEM

1. Introduction

Sāṁkhya-Yoga, as we have seen, is a combination of two schools (darśanas) of philosophy amongst the six Indian schools of philosophy. Though historically Sāṁkhya and Yoga schools developed from different origins, in the course of time they had so great an affinity that professor Dasgupta came to say that they became two different modifications of one common system of ideas.¹⁾ The relation between the two we have been discussing for some length, when we spoke of the philosophical background of the Bhagavad-Gītā. Our subject now is the Sāṁkhya-Yoga as commonly known in the classical period, when philosophical schools began to spread over India. The basic tenets remain principally similar to what we have expounded earlier.

The doctrines of Sāṁkhya can be traced back through the Upanishads and the Bhagavad-Gītā but its origin can still be drawn back to the time of Brāhmanas.²⁾ In general we can say

¹⁾ Dasgupta, Surendranath, Yoga as Philosophy and Religion, London (1924), 1978.p.ix. Cf. ZBG.p.139; CD.p.97.

²⁾ Eliade gave his most decisive argument on this account. He said, "Very probably the origin of the system ought to be sought in the analysis of the constituent elements of human experience with a view to distinguishing between those that leave man when he dies and those that are 'immortal' in the sense that they accompany the soul in its destiny beyond the grave. Such an analysis was already to be found in the Satapatha Brāhmana (X,1,3,4), which divided the human being into three 'immortal' parts and three mortal parts. In other words, the 'origins' of Sāṁkhya are linked to a problem of mystic nature: what survives of man after death?

that Sāṃkhya doctrines flourished in the pre-Buddhistic era, but the exact date of Sāṃkhya literature is, like any other Indian literature, highly controversial. Traditionally, Kapila is considered the founder of the school, but his sutra has not been handed down to our time,³ nor that of Asuri and Pañcasikha, to whom Kapila had succeeded in his doctrines.⁴

Another treatise is Sāṃkhya-Karikas of Isvara-Krishna, which tradition puts as being of the first century before Christ, but modern commentators doubt the date.⁵ To this karikas we know some commentaries such as those of Gaudapada,

What constitutes the veritable Self, the immortal element in the human being?" Eliade, M., Patañjali and Yoga, New York, (1962) 1976, p.17.

³. In A Dictionary of Hinduism, by Margaret and James Stutley, referring to Radhakrishnan and Moore, in Sourcebook in Indian Philosophy, the date of Kapila should be put at seventh century B.C. See Margaret and James, Opcit., London, Melbourne and Henley, (1977) 1985, p.142.

⁴. This situation has drawn Max Müller to conclude that what they now recognized as Kapila's sūtras are, in fact, only the last arrangement of certain portions of the original Sāṃkhya sūtras preserved here and there and have been remodelled from time to time or merely recension of the old sūtras of the oral tradition; in such a consideration he drew the date much later, about fourteenth or even sixteenth century after Christ; See Max Müller, The Six Systems of Indian Philosophy, New Delhi, 1986, pp.206-7.

⁵. Eliade put it as a work of later than the fifth century after Christ; Patañjali and Yoga, New York (1962) 1976, p.16. Max Müller put it of the sixth century; The Six Systems, p.208. Mookerjee, S. put it between the first and the fourth century; See Mookerjee, Satkari., "The Samkhya-Yoga" in Radhakrishnan, S.(ed.), History of Philosophy Eastern and Western, vol.One, London, 1952, p.242.

Sāṃkhya-tattva-kaumudī of Vācaspati Misra, Sāṃkhya-pravacana Sūtra of Aniruddha, and commentaries of Vijnanabhikṣu, but only the first two are still preserved to this day. These two are generally considered the most important references to the Sāṃkhya school, since for the most part, they represent the doctrine of the Sāṃkhya quite to some extent. Their date remains controversial.⁶⁾

As for Yoga, Zaehner with Eliade and many others traced it back to the earliest times, as early as the time preceding the Aryan invasion of India, for among the discoveries at Mohenjo Daro, he said, there were figurines of a deity sitting in the Yoga position of meditation, reminiscent of later statues of Śiva as the great ascetic.⁷⁾ The literature of Yoga is, however, still less known. This is understandable, for it is concerned more with practices than philosophical views. The most well known of the works is Patañjali's Yoga-sūtras, which is considered the earliest

⁶⁾ Max Müller suspects the antiquity both of Kapila's sūtras and Išvara Krishna's karikas. Both are shown as works of quite recent times. Max Müller ventures instead to draw our attention to a work which has for a long time been disregarded, the Tattva-Samāsa, but contains the main doctrines of the old Sāṃkhya. See Max Müller, The Six Systems, p.206-214.

⁷⁾ "...The existence of Yoga as a technique is therefore indisputably very ancient" AST.p.38. In this R.C. Zaehner is of the same opinion as Chanda and Eliade, as quoted by Margaret and James Stutley in A Dictionary of Hinduism, p.349-350.

systematic treatise on Yoga. It flourished during the second century before Christ.⁹⁾

Margaret and James Stutley maintained that Patañjali was author of Books I-III only of the Yogasutras. As to the last Book (IV), they remarked, following Jacobi and Keith, the work was added in the fifth century by an anonymous brahmana and attributed it to Patanjali.⁹⁾ Farquhar, considering the system that these sutras bear, believes that they appear later than the Epics or the Upanishads. Moreover they mention and criticize Vijñānāvada, a Buddhist figure of the fourth century after Christ. From this Farquhar suggests that the Yogasutras might have been written as works out of charm from the success of the Sāṃkhya karika. Hence the Yogasutras should be considered as works later than the Sāṃkhya karika.¹⁰⁾ In any case, many scholars are in agreement that there is an evident contrast between the two works, for while

⁹⁾ See A Dictionary of Hinduism, p.224. India is the country where religious efforts to gain spiritual liberation are so penetrated and incorporated in culture and social life that Yoga in its progress could mean any techniques and methods of "meditation" or "concentration" in respect to this goal, from the most rudimentary to the most complex. From this generic term of yoga, Patañjali's yoga is to be isolated, for it presents the particular amongst the six Indian schools of philosophy.

⁹⁾ A Dictionary of Hinduism, p.224.

¹⁰⁾ Farquhar, J.N., An Outline of the Religious Literature of India, Oxford, 1920, p.132.

the Sāmkhya karika is originally atheistic, the Yogasutras are theistic.

2. God and the World

Patañjali's Yogasutras, Zaehner said, define true existential knowledge as viveka-jñāna, or "the science of difference", which made an absolute distinction between the relative world of time and space, on the one side, and the absolute world in which time, space, matter and causation have no meaning, on the other side.¹¹ This conforms aptly with the dualistic system in the Sāmkhya philosophy, in which it acknowledges only two ultimate realities of the whole existence, unreconcilably different to each other, purusha and prakṛti, generally known as self and non-self, spirit and matter. Hence both the Yoga and the Sāmkhya doctrines adhere radical dualism.

In the Sāmkhya doctrine, however, ontological dualism is emphasized by its distinction between purusha and prakṛti, spirit and matter or the self and non-self. In terms of prakṛti, we speak of evolution as the emanation of the first category into other twenty-three categories. We need not repeat this here, as it has no importance for our present analysis. It is enough to reassert that the whole conglomerate of nature comes from the first source which the

¹¹. HMM. p.10.

Sāṃkhya recognizes as Prakṛti, the first category. Prakṛti is not an evolute but evolvent, for everything is evolved from it, though it does not itself originate from anything else. Both this first category, the source and the whole conglomerate that comes out of it are called prakṛti.

Puruṣa, on the other side, is the world of individual souls or selves, like distinct monads,¹² totally different from, but in some way enmeshed with and ensnared in Prakṛti. There is no further explanation as to how the prakṛti evolves in time from the first to the last categories and how the puruṣas came to be entangled in the prakṛti, which would imply a theory of evolution and what in India is commonly known as sāṃsāra. There is no concept of God or any absolute agent who initiated all this. It is only explained that in the dualistic Sāṃkhya system, puruṣas or the human souls by nature are immortal and ever changeless, but in reality they are found in the state of being chained by the three strands (gunas) of the prakṛti. They are sattva, rajas and tamas, of

¹². It has always to be born in mind that Zaehner's works, on which we base our analysis of his arguments on Sāṃkhya-Yoga philosophy, like Mysticism, Sacred and Profane (1957), At Sundry Times (1958), Hindu and Muslim Mysticism (1960), all were prior to his Commentary to The Bhagavad-Gītā (1969), so that the difference between "self" and "soul", which we have elaborated in the previous chapter, is out of our account here. Moreover, unlike the Gītā, the Sāṃkhya-Yoga system does not use ātman and buddhi as the terms for human faculty but puruṣa. So we feel quite free to use "self" or "soul" to describe the human part in dealing with God or Nature. Sometimes Zaehner even use "monads" in the same sense.

which the Sāmkhya-Karika explains that sattva is the quality of purity and tranquillity, rajas is the active principle, activity and energy and tamas is apathy, darkness and stupidity. We already saw these when we talked about the influence of the Sāmkhya in the Bhagavad-Gītā. The Karika explains, hence, that the function of the first guna is to illuminate, the second to activate, and the third to constrict.¹³⁾

But if the reason for the entanglement of the purusha by the prakṛti is not clarified, its liberation from the latter is placed as the deepest aim of their philosophy. To begin with, the relationship between human souls (purusha) and Nature (prakṛti) in the Sāmkhya-karika is described as an audience in front of a performance of a dancer,

"As a dancer, after showing herself to the audience, leaves off dancing, so does Nature reveal herself to the soul, and then disappear. Though she is possessed of qualities and he (the soul) possess none, by manifold means she helps him on though he helps her not at all; she achieves his goal for him, though achieving nothing for herself. Nothing is more generous than Nature, or so I think. Content that she has been seen by the soul, she never again exposes herself to him." (Sāmkhya-Karika, 59-61).¹⁴⁾

In this simile, Nature or prakṛti as the dancer is described, helping the soul, purusha, to rid himself from her, to

¹³⁾ With regard to the characteristics of these three gunas, there is no an exact agreement, for the earliest sources differ considerably among themselves; MSP. p.107. cf. MSP.p.98.

¹⁴⁾ Cited by Zaehner in MSP.pp.98-9 and p.135; CD.p.99.

withdraw his senses entirely from her, emptying himself of all content.¹⁵⁾ The simile appears quite unusual to bear the content of liberation, for to our appreciation a dancer would be more apt as enticer than as liberator, but this is the way the yoga sees liberation, for in their terms the soul is bewitched by the body, which in its turn is an occasion for liberation.

It seems quite evident that there is no point in questioning the relationship between God and World, because the concept of God, as we usually use the terms, is not found in the Sāṃkhya philosophy. But if we have to find any concept of God of some sort, then the Sāṃkhya should resort to the Yoga view, in which such a kind of God could be described as a particular purusha. This purusha is not, however, the Purusha in the Upanishadic or Brahmanic sense, who by his self-immolation created the world, for in the Yoga framework purusha has nothing to do with the origin of the world or the prakṛti. The God of the Yoga system, if we may say so, is wholly similar to the other individual purushas, and different only in respect to his exemption from Nature. In his nature he is not affected unless by the quality of sattva, the essence of which is light and pure wisdom. In brief, in Sāṃkhya terms, the existence of God has no meaning,

¹⁵⁾ . MSP.p.135; OSG.p.144.

whereas in Yoga God has never been a creator but just one amongst the uncreated purushas.

So it is in the terms of the relationship between purushas and prakṛti or human souls and Nature, or more exactly their dissociation from one another, if anywhere, that God's existence has any meaning. For in their effort to release themselves from the entanglement of the Nature do the human souls turn to him and through devotion to him as one of the steps toward the self-realization gain the liberation.

3. God and the Self

In the perspective of Sāṅkhya-Yoga philosophy, then, God and other purushas form one set of reality, in contrast to prakṛti, as the other reality. But as "a" purusha, God is the perfect one, unblemished by Nature, forever unaffected by change, all goodness, and free from all defilement, whereas other purushas or human souls are innumerable and entangled in matter. Of course God, as a special purusha, and human souls, as the other purushas, they are included in one and the same genus or reality. Hence there is one defect of God that Zaehner could show, for as long as any merely human soul or purusha remains in bondage to Nature, God of the Yoga could not but be defiled by proxy, since they are one reality.¹⁶⁾

¹⁶⁾. MSP. p.98.

It seems necessary to recall here the notion of purusha, very often simply identified and translated as person. In the psychology of Jung - which Zaehner is keen on comparing with the Sāṃkhya-Yoga doctrine¹⁷⁾ - person has connotations of the whole process of integration of a man; a person should be then an integrated man. The purusha of the Sāṃkhya-Yoga doctrine is closer to modern psychology than that of the Upanishads, thanks to its more anthropological approach.¹⁸⁾ Yet unlike many of those who believe to see the similarity of the purusha and the person in the psychology of Jung,¹⁹⁾ Zaehner takes the opposite position that the concept of person is contrary to that of purusha of the Sāṃkhya-Yoga. For precisely this consideration, the philosophy of Sāṃkhya-Yoga should be singled out. The concept of purusha, in Zaehner's view, instead of showing the effort of self integration, shows the effort of renouncing all the qualities that merit to be applied to a person. Purusha is, then, a naked nucleus without a single quality of the reality of a

¹⁷⁾ AST. p.47.

¹⁸⁾ See for example a recent work of Drs. J. Marvin Spiegelman and Arwind U. Vasavada, Hinduism and Jungian Psychology, Falcon Press, Phoenix, Arizona, 1987, as fruits of a long research on this matter.

¹⁹⁾ See also John B. Chethimattam, Pattern in Hindu Thought, London, Dublin, Melbourne, 1971, pp.76-90, on chapter IX "Psychology and Personality", in which he identifies purusha with self-hood, internal unity, hence integration.

soul, bereft of any particular attribute of individuality, isolated, alone. This is what is conceived as the goal of the liberation of soul in the context of the Sāṅkhya-Yoga doctrine.

The purushas' goal is to deliver themselves from Nature, by way of isolation (kaivalyam), in order to gain the same condition as that of God, as the Book of Genesis put it "you will be like God"(Gen.3,5), as Zaehner likes to compare it. This final goal is described in the Yogasutras as the "companionless loneliness of self-illumination", that is the experience of one's own soul as a pure light, utterly independent, autarchic, deathless because beyond time, eternal, and alone. To this goal the Yoga furnishes the philosophy with the technique which consists of eight stages: of which the first two represent the ethical preparation and the last six the contemplative askesis. In the ethical preparation, the soul first of all trains the negative virtues, such like abstention from injury, from theft, from sexual activity and so on. In the second place it pursues the more positive virtues, such as purity, contentment, and rigid austerity.²⁰⁾ To these goals bodily discipline and a study of scripture are very important. The bodily discipline or asceticism help in bringing the body under control in order to gain the perfection of the bodily senses, whereas the

²⁰⁾ Hin.p.71.

study of scripture, i.e. the repetition of spells or sacred formula (svādhyāya) leads to the cognition (samprayoga) of God.²¹⁾

The devotion to the Lord which results the perfection of concentration (samādhi) is proper to Yoga. This meditation on the Lord (iśvara-pranidhana)²²⁾ does not lead, however, to union with him, "but to become what the Lord always is, an eternal monad wholly independent of matter",²³⁾ for it is the total isolation, the perfect condition of God, which they want to attain as the ultimate goal (paramāgati). In this effort, the "soul" (purusha) has to separate itself from its "ego" (ahaṁkāra), since the latter pertains to the category of prakṛti.²⁴⁾

It remains now to ask whether the human self attains its goal by one's own efforts or thanks to the God's grace. In other words, what is the nature of the relationship between this God or this aloof Lord of the Yogasūtras with the human self? This question calls for a brief explanation, since the

²¹⁾. Zaehner referred to the Yogasūtras 2,43-45; HMM.p.36.

²²⁾. According to Dasgupta, there are two senses of Iśvara pranidhana: a) in the first book it is love and devotion to God or worshipful state towards Iśvara; b) in the second book, it is abnegation of all desires of the fruits of action to Iśvara. Dasgupta, S., Yoga as Philosophy and Religion, London (1924), 1978, p.161.

²³⁾. HMM.p.10 Cf. Hin.p.71.

²⁴⁾. AST.p.42.

answer depends on whether the Sāṃkhya-Yoga philosophy as a unity should be considered theistic or atheistic. It has been stated, that the Yogasutras expound the figure of God of some sort, which is in reality only a particular purusha. The Sāṃkhya theory on the other hand, was originally atheistic.²⁵⁾ Viewed from this later standpoint, the liberation of souls from the entanglement of Nature is wholly by individual effort. This seems to be the general atmosphere of Sāṃkhya-Yoga philosophy, when it states that Yoga, liberation of one's soul, is a severe discipline too difficult for the average man.²⁶⁾

Zaehner, in his Hindu and Muslim Mysticism, however, explains that God has indeed a certain role in helping human souls to liberation, but very discreet, for in Yogasutras, the goal is neither to approach God nor to unite with him, but to realize oneself in the absolute uniqueness of one's own eternity. Hence, God is merely an object of contemplation. We have mentioned above the three stages of the Yogic technique in order to achieve liberation. In this consideration, meditation on God is just another step,

²⁵⁾ . MSP. p.125; 126; See also Max Müller, The Six Systems, p.216. But at pp.284-5, he qualified what could be the atheism of Kapila. He did not deny the existence of divine realities, but stated simply that there are no logical proofs to establish that existence. Hence he would be more properly considered agnostic rather than atheistic.

²⁶⁾ . HMM.p.12.

although more advanced than the repetition of spells, yet it remains as a "means" in the course of achieving a "goal".²⁷⁾

The aim of the soul in the Sāṃkhya-Yoga system is, as we have seen, complete isolation firstly from Nature or prakṛti, that is, the whole world of space and time, and secondly, from God, the particular puruṣa, the exemplar of the soul itself. This implies quite naturally an isolation also from the fellow human souls. Both Nature and other puruṣas may still exist, but no longer have meaning. Thereby, as Zaehner understands the position of Sāṃkhya-Yoga, "the soul has no experience of anything whatever except its immortal spirit".²⁸⁾

4. The Nature of God of the Sāṃkhya-Yoga

We have now to define the proper nature of God in the Sāṃkhya-Yoga philosophy. We have seen above that God of the Sāṃkhya-Yoga is not God the creator, for he is not the cause of anything, since the existence of everything in this world seems to be taken for granted. He is but a special Puruṣa, aloof and alone, as we have repeatedly mentioned.

It has been stated above, that the concept of puruṣa in the Sāṃkhya-Yoga philosophy as the term to describe the personal self is not quite correct. Puruṣa means literally

²⁷⁾. HMM.p.35.

²⁸⁾. AST.p.93.

"person", yet the idea that it contains does not refer to the "integration" that a person, at least in the perspective of the modern psychology, should have. By integration is usually meant that the self draws his senses and all their objects to himself. This is not, unfortunately, the case of the sāṃkhya-Yoga God, for as a purusha of this system, instead of drawing the senses and their objects to himself, to constitute a "person", he even dissociates himself from them in his perfectness of solitude.

Hence, he is not the sort of the Purusha of the Upanishads, who is the supreme God, always the material as well as the efficient cause of the universe.²⁹ In exact contrast to this, the God of the sāṃkhya is neither the material nor the efficient cause.

In a certain sense, this God would appear to be even inferior to the ordinary liberated purusha, Zaehner observes. If liberation means the total isolation of the soul in its eternal essence, as the sutras teach, God of the sāṃkhya, being the only purusha unaffected by the world, but always associated with the quality of sattva which makes him permanently aware of the world, in his omniscience and pure wisdom, is to be considered merely a stepping-stone on the way to liberation.³⁰ Moreover, as Zaehner draws a further

²⁹ . AST.p.89.

³⁰ . HMM.p.35.

implication from it, he would never be wholly freed from defilement by proxy, insofar any human soul is still in bondage of the prakṛti, since all responsibilities seem to weigh on him. Hence, he seems inferior even to the liberated souls.

The sutras, however, mention at least two names for God, which are to be considered now. One is īṣṭadevatā, which means "the deity of one's choice", the other is īśvara which means simply "Lord". With the īṣṭadevatā, Zaehner explains in his Mysticism Sacred and Profane, the modern exponents of the Yogasutras would like to introduce the importance of God merely "to fulfil no function except to provide a fixed point of meditation". He may be anyone or anything at all, who or which can be discarded once the soul gains its liberation.³¹⁾ In such an account, the modern interpreters would seem to incline towards atheism. In his later work, Hindu and Muslim Mysticism, Zaehner corrected this view, stating that God does indeed help the soul towards isolation, for he is not only some "deity of one's choice" but God, as defined in the first chapter of the Sutras, i.e. God with proper characteristics, we have mentioned above.

Concerning īśvara, Zaehner said that it is not God as we generally understand him and any comparison would be

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³¹⁾ - MSP.p.127.

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misleading. Citing an aphorism of the Yoga-sutras, Zaehner states,

"The Lord (Iśvara) is a special type of soul (puruṣa) which is untouched by care, works, the fruits of works, or desire. In him the seed of omniscience is perfect. He is the guru even of the ancients since he is not limited by time" [YS.1,24-26].³²⁾

This we have learned above. And this is the very characteristic that makes the God of the Sāṃkhya-Yoga appear so particular in Hinduism. This does not look like God at all, but is little more than the one pure soul. Here Iśvara is considered as guru, instructor. He is therefore involved in action of some kind, yet as the text shows, he remains totally unaffected by his action and indifferent to its results. This is how Iśvara helps souls still enmeshed in Nature. No love is mentioned at all in this relationship, yet the yogins believe the help is effected. This led Zaehner to compare the function of this God as the Deus ex Machina which is invented to help the souls in the sequence of liberation.³³⁾

What is, then, the difference between iṣṭa-devatā and Iśvara? According to the theology of the Yogasūtras, only one God is accepted. In his Hindu and Muslim Mysticism, Zaehner definitely concludes that Iśvara seems to prevail over iṣṭa-

³²⁾ Cited by Zaehner in HMM.p.34 Cf. MSP.p.127 and Hin. p.71.

³³⁾ MSP.p.127.

devatā. The latter might be considered "god" in secondary importance, like the means to the goal, as we have stated earlier, as the mental counterpart of that muttered spell, that will be surpassed once the goal is gained. Isvara on the other hand, is the Lord who leads directly to samadhi, because he is the eternal exemplar of the perfect and isolated soul.³⁴⁾ In practice, however, the difference does not really seem to exist.

5. Conclusion

The dualistic Sāṃkhya philosophy in its original form seems to tend to atheism. Onto this, the somewhat theistic Yoga was grafted to furnish the treatise with a practical guide for the liberation of the souls. "It is the technique whereby it is possible to separate the eternal soul from all its mortal trappings," Zaehner said, "it is not concern with God, for there is no God in the Sāṃkhya system..."³⁵⁾ Patañjali's Yogasutras introduce "the Lord", Isvara, but this is not God, in the full sense of the word, i.e. as creator and sustainer of the universe, but merely a particular soul (purusha) amongst any others, having particular characters and a particular function, as the object of meditation.³⁶⁾

³⁴⁾ . HMM.p.36.

³⁵⁾ . AST.p.41.

³⁶⁾ . AST.p.41.

In fact, Sāṃkhya-Yoga is not interested primarily in the nature of God, but in the nature and immortality of the human soul, for this God loses his significance once the soul is liberated. God is only revered before liberation and not after. In most forms of mysticism a discovery of immortality of soul plays an important part, and such is applicable to the Sāṃkhya-Yoga as well. This is what is to be their final goal.³⁷⁾

Like the Buddhist, the Sāṃkhya-Yoga philosophy induces people to escape from the world of impermanence into a changeless mode of being, that is to say, to bring the soul into the peak of its mystical experiences beyond space and time. But unlike the Buddhist, the Sāṃkhya offers such an experience on a metaphysical basis. Kaivalyam (isolation) is the term they use to describe this state, which would, in reality, be an obliteration of all differentiation between subject and object. In the Yoga system proper the state of absolute isolation would be naturally preceded by the stage of omniscience, when the soul's experience is 'being the All'. This is, at least in Zaehner's view, what is shown in the early Upanishads, for in the context of their thought, to know something in its entirety means to be it.³⁸⁾

³⁷⁾ . AST.p.43.

³⁸⁾ . HMM.p.33.

To sum up Sāṃkhya-Yoga philosophy, it admits no God in the sense of the Absolute One or the Supreme One. The system is purely dualistic, in which purusha and prakṛti are considered two realities. There is a God of some sort, who is different from human souls in general in two respects; 1) he is from all eternity unaffected by matter (prakṛti) and so is forever beyond space and time; 2) being omniscient he remains eternally aware of the phenomenal world, though without thereby being in any way affected or diminished by it. Thanks to these characteristics, he is to be the effective object of contemplation for the liberation of human souls.

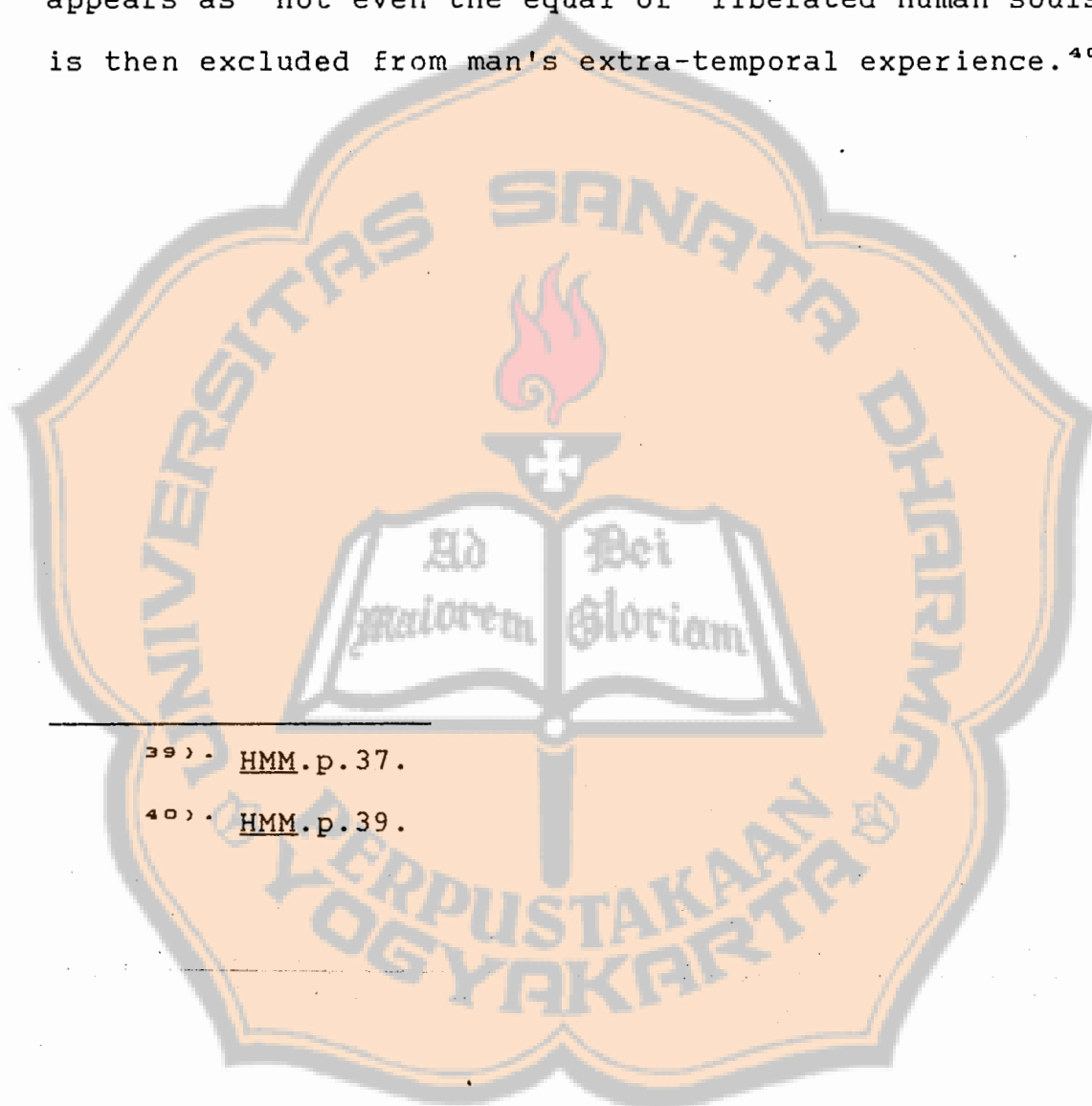
If God, like the liberated human soul, were completely isolated in his own essence, he would not even be a possible object of contemplation, nor would he be able in any way to assist the soul out of bondage. Such a consideration would lead one to think, according to Zaehner, that God is somewhat "inferior" to the liberated souls, who are wholly isolated even from their awareness to God himself. For Patañjali, however, this would be outside his consideration, for he was rather interested in God's being the divine "archetype" of the soul, by contemplation of whom the soul can itself become what it always is, immortal. He is from all eternity unaffected by matter, and only in this respect is he "superior" to the human soul. In the perspective of Sāṃkhya-Yoga philosophy, then, the aim of the soul is neither

deification, to become God, nor participation in the divine essence, to be with God, but rather imitation, to be like God.³⁹

Zaehner's criticism of Sāṃkhya-Yoga philosophy could be defined as follows. In his view Sāṃkhya-Yoga would appear to be inconsistent; on the one hand, they put God as the divine "archetype", the exemplar to be modelled, the instructor in respect to human effort in the perfection of soul, but on the other hand, he ceases to be relevant once liberation has been achieved. Moreover devotion to God is only to be practised before liberation, not after; it is merely a "means", unique though it is, to the "goal". After the liberation, God appears as not even the equal of liberated human souls. God is then excluded from man's extra-temporal experience.⁴⁰

³⁹ . HMM.p.37.

⁴⁰ . HMM.p.39.



CHAPTER II: GOD IN THE KEVALA ADVAITA VEDANTA SYSTEM1. Introduction

The philosophy of Vedānta, as we have explained earlier, developed in different versions, the most famous of which is the School of Śankara, which gains a wide range of followers, even until to this day. Their view is strictly monistic or non-dualistic. Hence comes the name Kevala Advaita Vedānta or usually simply called Advaita Vedānta. As to the basic literature, the Vedāntist referred in addition to the Upanishads, the Bhagavad-Gītā and Badarayana's Brāhma-sūtras; the three are considered one unity known as Prasthānatrayam. But since the sūtras, like any other Indian sūtras of early days, could not easily be found, the advaita Vedāntist claimed Śankara's commentaries as representing most of its truth. In fact, his followers refer not only to his commentary on the Badarayana's Brāhmasūtras, but to his commentaries on the Upanishads and to the Bhagavad-Gītā as well.

There is no agreement among the scholars as to when Śankara lived and taught. Everyone seems to have his own estimation.¹⁾ He learned Buddhism in his early age and, as

¹⁾. According to Telang, Śankara flourished about the middle or the end of the sixth century AD; R.G. Bhandarkar proposes AD 680 as the date of his birth; Max Müller and prof. Macdonell put him between AD.788 - AD.820 and prof. Keith put him in the first quarter of the ninth century. Radhakrishnan, S. Indian Philosophy, vol.II, London, (1927) 1930, p.447.

some would believe, he had been influenced somewhat by Buddhist doctrines.²⁾ Some would also say that he converted many Buddhist monks in frequent discussions and was the cause of the expulsion of the Buddhism from India.³⁾ At an early age, he wrote and taught his philosophy, founded his school and convents in different places in India. His writings, besides the commentaries we have mentioned above, are widely dispersed. His ability to put the teachings of the Upanishads and the Bhagavad-Gītā into one comprehensive system to his own satisfaction is undeniable. Śankara gained the reputation of reformer and unifier of Hinduism split by the differences of sects, criticizing both the heterodox and the superfluosness of rites.⁴⁾ His name has become the prime reference for the Advaita Vedānta philosophy we are about to analyze.

²⁾ See for example Stutley, Margaret, Hinduism, the Eternal Law, Northamptonshire, 1985, p.63 in which she wrote that it was Mahayana Buddhism, especially in its doctrine of sunyavada which stresses the relativity and impermanency, and hence emptiness of every concept that Śankara was due to.

³⁾ See for example Dwivedi, Gautam N., "Advent of Śankara in the Central Himalaya", in Journal of the Oriental Institute, vol.29, n.1-2, 1979, pp.55-8. He said that although many of the legends and superflous stories that linked the life of Śankara with the expulsion of the Buddhists from India cannot be believed, it is, however, true that Śankara is to be associated with that event.

⁴⁾ Gonda. J., Les Religions de l'Inde, II, l'Hindouisme Récent, trad. par L.Jospin, Paris, 1965, pp.106-7.

Badarayana, the author of the Brāhma-sutras, was a figure quite obscure, unknown, except as the author of the sutras. Tradition sometimes moved him as far back as contemporaneous with or even preceding Vyasa, the author of the Mahābhārata, and sometimes identified both as the same person, but there is no proof for this. Max Müller tried to settle the date, referring to the Bhagavad-Gītā [13,4], in which he believed that Brāhma-sutras was mentioned by Krishna as being a "definite and argumentative" work by which Krishna had been celebrated.⁵⁾ The verse is controversial, though. Zaehner is ready, however, to show that "aphoristic verses concerning Brāhman" (brahma-sūtra-padais') of that verse would only prove that collections of aphorisms concerning the nature of Brāhman were already in circulation, at the time the Gītā was being written, just like the ideas of Sāṃkhya and Yoga, as we have said earlier when speaking about the philosophical background of the Bhagavad-Gītā. It does not at all prove that the Brāhma-sutras in their present form had been existing.⁶⁾ If this is so, the origins of the school of Vedānta can not rely on any literature pre Gītā.

⁵⁾ Max Müller, The Six Systems, p.111.

⁶⁾ ZBG.p.335.

2. God and the World

The Advaita Vedānta does not concern itself much with the problem of creation, since in its belief there exists only one reality without a second. So if any knowledge should provoke a belief of this kind, it should be considered theology, in which God is considered somewhat as the "object" of our intellectual capacity.⁷⁾

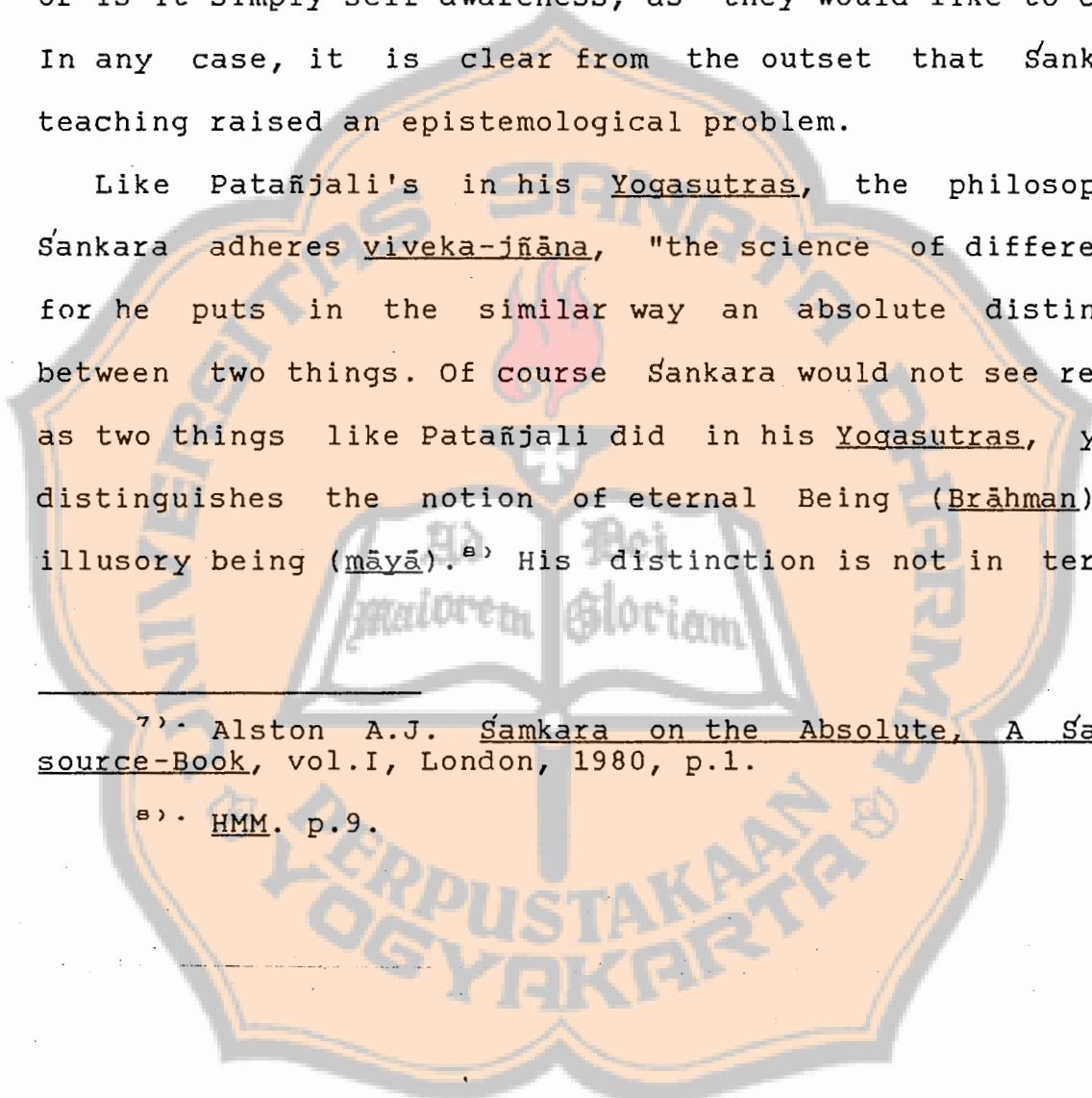
From the philosophical point of view of the Advaita system, there is no such thing as creation. Hence theology is subordinated to philosophy, for theology according to Śankara has God as its object. If this is so, what is philosophy? Is it knowledge having a different object from that of theology or is it simply self awareness, as they would like to claim? In any case, it is clear from the outset that Śankara's teaching raised an epistemological problem.

Like Patañjali's in his Yogasutras, the philosophy of Śankara adheres viveka-jñāna, "the science of difference", for he puts in the similar way an absolute distinction between two things. Of course Śankara would not see reality as two things like Patañjali did in his Yogasutras, yet he distinguishes the notion of eternal Being (Brāhman) and illusory being (māyā).^{e)} His distinction is not in terms of

⁷⁾ Alston A.J. Śankara on the Absolute, A Śankara source-Book, vol.I, London, 1980, p.1.

^{e)} HMM. p.9.

theology
philosophy



reality, but in terms of awareness or knowledge. This, we still discern a bit later. Śankara, also, in Zaehner's view, has the same final goal, i.e. the "companionless loneliness of self-illumination", the experience of one's own soul as pure light, utterly independent, autarchic, deathless, but with some differences regarding their way of attaining.⁹⁾

Of course the Advaita Vedānta would reject such an interpretation, claiming that for the liberated soul knowledge has no meaning at all, since it has overcome the discrepancy between subject and object. To have knowledge means nothing more than that one recognizes himself as the only reality. As to other knowledge, the knowledge of simple people that distinguishes reality into two, the Advaita Vedānta does not claim to be false or to have no meaning. Such a knowledge is true but only relatively, for it takes into account only the relative side of reality. In other words, the world is accepted but as an object of a relative knowledge. This is what they call māyā.

So in the Advaita Vedānta, the relative world is not prakṛti as in the Sāṃkhya system, but māyā. We have to bear in mind, however, that māyā here has a very different sense from that in the Bhagavad-Gītā which, as Zaehner observed it, was reinterpreted from the Sāṃkhya's prakṛti, i.e. material Nature. Māyā in the Advaita Vedānta, in the perspective of

⁹⁾ . HMM.p.10.

this relative knowledge, is much closer to the Buddhistic sense, which is illusion or unreal existence. This world in Śankara's view is merely phenomenal and therefore relative in essence. It is unsubstantial, the way the Buddhists view it, and if anybody should see it as substantial, it is because of his ignorance (avidyā). The difference between Śankara and the Buddhists lays only on the fact that Śankara furnished his position with a metaphysical discourses, where as the Buddhists simply ignore it, since for them any metaphysical explanation has no sense.

Actually the issue is not so simple. Many of Śankara's followers had tried hard to explain the world as māyā. Śankara himself used the word illusory (mithyā) to characterize the reality of this world in his famous phrase, which is the quintessence of his philosophy "The Absolute Spirit is the reality; the world of appearance is illusory; the so-called individual soul is the Absolute itself, and no other" (brahma satyam jagan mithyā; jivo brahmaiva nā' parah). In this, māyā is to be interpreted as the principle that makes for the phenomenal appearance of the world. But this has significance only from the relative (vyāvahārika) standpoint and not from the standpoint of the Absolute (pāramārthika).¹⁰⁾ In a brief scheme we can define that māyā

¹⁰⁾ Mahadevan, T.M.P., The Insights of Advaita, Mysore, 1970, p.19 ss.

Sankara
is real from the point of view of ordinary man. It is unreal from the point of view of the Absolute and it is neither real nor unreal from the point of view of the metaphysicians.

with Buddhists
But how is the word "illusory" to be understood? In contrast to the Buddhists, the meaning of "illusory" in Śankara's philosophy does not include the annihilation of the world, but merely relativizes it. What Śankara meant by illusory is not so clear. Śankara followers put themselves in the place of metaphysicians, so some would have it explained as neither real nor unreal. The world is illusory, for it can not be characterized as real nor as unreal, but different from both.¹¹⁾ Some others in contrast to this, would have it explained as both real and unreal.¹²⁾ But whatever explanation they take, they would accept, finally, that the world is indeterminable (anirvacanūja). Hence, explanation could still be extended with regard to their views on this

¹¹⁾ See for example Srinivasa Chari, S.M., Advaita and Viśiṣṭādvaita, a study based on Vedānta Desikā's Satadūsanī, with a foreword by Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, London, 1961, p.101 in which he wrote "...The term mithyā is understood in the sense of that which is neither real nor unreal but different from both. That is, the universe is illusory in the sense that it cannot be characterised either as real or unreal. Real is that which is not sublated at any time. But the universe is sublated by the Brāhman-knowledge, and therefore, it is not real. Nor is it unreal because what is unreal is never cognised while the universe is cognised. It cannot be both real and unreal because of contradiction. It is, therefore, something different from the real as well as the unreal."

¹²⁾ Mahadevan, T.M.P. Ibidem., pp.27-28.

puzzling world, but for Zaehner these are all mere "verbal quibbles",¹³⁾ because in its practical implication they amount to proving that the world is illusion.

And what is the other world or, in this perspective, more properly stated: how is the "real reality"¹⁴⁾ to be explained? Is it God or Self? The question misses the point, for it does not seem to be as important to know it as to be it, the One the Absolute.

3. God or the Self ?

To know what the "really real" is, that is, the Absolute beyond space and time, is not a matter of ordinary knowledge but self realization, for according to the Advaita Vedāntist reality is only one, without a second. Consequently to know that reality, in terms of this philosophy, means nothing else than to become it. Such a ratiocination can not be easily comprehended, and so like the Buddhist, Vedāntist philosophy raises also hermeneutical problems. It is not our place now to discuss this problem. It is enough, however, for the moment just to describe the relation between the self and God.

¹³⁾ Hin. pp.75-6.

¹⁴⁾ Max Müller presents still another distinction of qualifications as "phenomenally real" and "really real". The Six Systems, p.150.

Empirically speaking, the non-dualist Vedānta, Zaehner affirmed, does not deny the existence of self as different from God. In the state of peak experience called samadhi, however, when one reached moksha or mukti, he would be in the state of consciousness of the immortal and eternal self and he would see everything as One. This is an experience of absolute oneness from which all multiplicity is excluded.¹⁵⁾ Such a mystical experience, which is the realization of the absolute unity of being, Zaehner said, is the highest possible condition beyond which it is ontologically impossible to go.¹⁶⁾

In a simple sketch, Zaehner shows how the reality of the Absolute Brāhman is always one and the same, irrespective of whether the soul has gained its liberation or not. For man still in bondage, creation, omnipotence, omniscience etc. are all attributes of God. Let this be called māyā(a). On the other hand, he sees that dependence, limited knowledge and limited power are his own attributes. This is māyā(b). God according this man is Brāhman + māyā(a), whereas man is Brāhman + māyā(b). But from the absolute point of view, that is, the view of the liberated self, māyā does not exist and

¹⁵⁾ . AST.p.93-4.

¹⁶⁾ . HMM.p.38.

therefore man and God must be identical with Brāhman himself.¹⁷⁾

In this account the non-dualists would appear to diverge both from the Sāṃkhya-Yoga and the Brāhmanic mysticism based on the doctrine of Sandilya-vidyā.¹⁸⁾ It diverges from the Sāṃkhya-Yoga, for even though the liberated soul in the Sāṃkhya-Yoga disregards God, the perfect Purusha, when he has gained his own liberation, it does not necessarily deny his existence as such, whereas the liberation in non-dualist Vedānta implies a total denial of God, since the previous knowledge of God was considered illusory and unreal.

This non-dualist position diverges also from Brāhmanism, eventhough it could be considered a natural development from it in search of the Absolute, in which case the Sāṃkhya could not be.¹⁹⁾ It diverges from the doctrine of identification of Sandilya-vidyā, in denying Brāhman as the ground of the world and individual souls, for unlike the doctrine of Sandilya-vidyā which explains moksa as "realizing" the identity between the essence of the soul and Brāhman, which is the

¹⁷⁾ - Hin. p.77.

¹⁸⁾ - See footnote n.10 of the Chapter.I of the part One, p.66.

¹⁹⁾ - In Zaehner's view, Sāṃkhya philosophy did not search for the Absolute like the Brāhmanas, because Sāṃkhya, apart from Yoga, in its nature was somewhat atheistic. Max Müller also holds that the Sāṃkhya was hostile to priesthood during the Brāhmanic time and that some scholars had maintained its appeal to the Vedas was only an afterthought. Max Müller, The Six Systems, pp.218-19.

ground of the world and individual souls, the Advaita Vedānta sees it as "self-realization", which means the soul becomes Brāhman, the Absolute, in its full sense of the word. It is in reality Brāhman, the Absolute Itself.²⁰⁾

For the non-dualist, then, identity between the self and Brāhman as such can not be considered the last stage, in the progression of the soul from this world of duality towards ultimate reality which is indivisible.²¹⁾ Such a view is a misstatement, firstly, because the world of duality itself is illusive, and secondly, because such an identity implies two preliminary realities that in the due time will constitute the union. According to Śankara, then, there could be no stage at all, since it has nothing to do with the progression of the soul or any kindred idea, but with a change to a wholly different consciousness. Release of transmigratory existence can not be gained through worship or any other efforts. It is a matter of "knowledge", a radical change from "ignorance" (avidyā) to truth.

"Adorn yourself with rags for the road, make your path the renunciation of good and evil. (Say), 'I am not, nor you, nor yet this world': then for what should you grieve? Worship Govinda, worship Govinda, worship Govinda, deluded man...

"Though you perform pilgrimages to the Ganges, keep your vows and give alms, all this without 'knowledge' (is worthless); and no release can be

²⁰⁾. MSP. p.164.

²¹⁾. HMM. p.13.

obtained in a hundred births. Worship Govinda, etc."[Śankara's "Hymn of Renunciation"].²²⁾

Hence the non-dualist position regarding the relation between the self and the Absolute, is not an unio mystica, as Zaehner likes to distinguish it, but an unitas mystica.²³⁾

4. The Nature of God

The philosophy of Śankara was known as absolute monism, because he considered the Absolute the One without a second. It is not a monad, neither an unblemished Purusha among other purushas, nor the Lord (Iśvara). "The One" of the absolute monism is "the One" without a second, Zaehner says, which means existing absolutely, excluding any other existence. It follows that the Lord and any other existences, perishable or imperishable, which are considered as proceeding from him are the result of cosmic "illusion" or "ignorance".²⁴⁾ Śankara depreciates those who distinguish their own souls and Brāhman.

"the entire realm of duality including the object and the act of devotion is illusory, and the attributeless, non-dual Ātman alone is Reality. The word "upanasrita" in the text, meaning the one betaking himself to

²²⁾. Cited by Zaehner from Swāmi Nikhilānanda, Self-Knowledge, Madras, Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1947, pp.287-97 in MSP.p.178-179.

²³⁾. CCWR.pp.26-8; CD. p.443; MSP. p.128; 156 "For the 'released' Vedāntin sage such words as the unio mystica are literally meaningless; for how can there be union when there is only One?"

²⁴⁾. HMM.p.38.

devotion, signifies him who has recourse to devotional exercises as means to the attainment of liberation and who further thinks that he is a devotee and Brahman is his object of worship. This Jiva or the embodied being further thinks that through devotional practices he, at present related to the evolved Brahman (Personal God), would attain to the ultimate Brahman after the dissolution of the body... Such a Jiva, that is, the aspirant betaking itself to devotion, inasmuch as it knows only partial aspect of Brahman, is called of narrow or poor intellect by those who regard Brahman as eternal and unchanging." [Sankara's commentary to Gaudapada's Karika, 3.1.].²⁵⁾

Now, Brāhman is the name derived from the Upanishads to indicate this One reality. Sankara, following the Upanishads, holds that there are two kinds of Brāhman, depending again on how one looks at reality, the sagunam (with qualities) for those who look him as Creator and sustainer of the World, and the nirgunam (without qualities) for the true monist. In the true monist framework, the sagunam Brāhman is the Brāhman of the people still in "ignorance", whereas the nirgunam is the real Brāhman about which we cannot predicate anything.²⁶⁾ Another way of distinguishing Brāhman, Zaehner observes, is between para-brāhman (supreme Brāhman) and apara-brāhman (lower Brāhman). They might be compared to what Meister Eckhart, a Western mystic, would like to distinguish between the conception of God and that of the godhead, the latter being the condition or the circle where God exists. But such a comparison would seem superfluous in this case, for if

²⁵⁾ - Cited by Zaehner in MSP.p.169.

²⁶⁾ - Max Müller, The Six Systems, p.156-7.

*1- reduced glass state
the whole of the
circumstances
which should
be as simple
as possible
circumstances*

Para-brāhman could be considered at all like the Godhead of Eckhart, would not there arise a following question as to the existence of what is other than the Godhead?²⁷⁾ For Śankara, Para-brāhman is simply Brāhman in its fullest sense, as Zaehner puts it, the wholly undifferentiated and inactive Brāhman, in whose framework no God could ever exist.²⁸⁾ As to Apara-brāhman, he is only an agent through whose ignorance or self-deception the illusory world is created.

God could exist, but only from the relative point of view, i.e. he is seen to be the first evolute from the One, but even so he is still to be regarded as subordinate to the wholly undifferentiated and inactive Brāhman. In this, Zaehner remarks, Śankara faithfully follows the Māndūkya Upanishad and interprets all other Upanishadic texts in this framework.²⁹⁾ It is in this sense, too, that God, the creator, or the personal God of the bhakti was interpreted by him.³⁰⁾

5. Conclusion

It is clear from our treatise that the Advaita Vedānta's view is opposite to that of Sāṅkhya-Yoga, in adhering an

²⁷⁾ - MSP.p.182.

²⁸⁾ - HMM.p.78.

²⁹⁾ - HMM.p.78.

³⁰⁾ - CCWR.p.37.

absolute monistic view. Unlike the Sāṃkhya-Yoga, this non-dualist Vedānta views reality as One without a second. This amounts consequently to avow that the Absolute is my soul or my soul is the Absolute, since there is no more than one real existence. It follows that the world outside myself or any other human souls, if believed to exist at all, are merely illusions in the full sense of the word, that is, at the deepest reality they do not exist. They have phenomenal existence as conceived by our consciousness, which would disappear once liberation is achieved. We do not discern, however, in this treatment how such a liberation, or "self-realization", could be accomplished. The Advaita Vedānta, too, has certain descriptions of the way of liberation, but it is not our place here to be concerned about that.³¹⁾

Nevertheless, Zaehner believes that if the Advaita Vedānta should be stripped of its philosophical background, it would reach precisely the same conclusion as the Sāṃkhya isolation, so far as experience is concerned. For to mean the leap from avidyā to vidyā or from living the phenomenal world, māyā, or

³¹⁾. According to A. Danielou, some Hindu philosophers viewed the six schools of philosophy as follows: the Mīmāṃsā is consortial with the Vedānta, like the Yoga and the Sāṃkhya system, but in different level, for the former pair is metaphysical, whereas the later cosmological. The other pair, the Vaisheshika and Nyāya, are in the level experiential. But such an arrangement would seem like symplification, since in the system of Vedānta you can find some different versions uncompatible to each other, whereas to the other systems this does not occur. Danielou, A., Ibidem, 1960, p.23.

illusion into living the real One, experientially speaking is like the leap from living in the world enmeshed in the prakṛti into the world of pure and isolated puruṣa. In practice they amount to be the same thing.³²⁾

Sankara is said to distinguish between two kinds of knowledges. This distinction would correspond to the two kinds of ways of viewing the reality which, citing M. Frithjof Schuon's distinction, Zaehner acknowledges as a higher "metaphysical" and a lower "religious" knowledge. This in Sankara's philosophy would be the "higher" and the "lower" knowledge of Brāhman. The first is alone absolutely true, while the later is only relatively so, in its proper time and place.³³⁾ With this view as a standard, Sankara and his followers were to evaluate other philosophies relative to his.³⁴⁾

From this point of view, the advanced monist according to Zaehner could accept any other philosophy, but regarding it as "lower" in nature. Sankara followers tolerate the

³²⁾ . MSP.p.134-5.

³³⁾ . "...lower knowledge is not illusory or deceptive, but is only relative. If not, Sankara's elaborate and even passionate discussion of the lower knowledge will border on the grotesque..." Radhakrishnan, S., Indian Philosophy, II, London, (1927), 1930, p.519. This affirmation of prof. Radhakrishnan affords even more evidently prof. Zaehner's observation on the dualistic view of Sankara with regard to the knowledge.

³⁴⁾ . MSP.p.30.

1. philosophy
2. worship God
3. Brahmanic mysticism
4. theistic mysticism
etc.

practices both of ²⁾worshipping gods and of ²⁾the pan-en-henic mysticism of the early Upanishads, for these are able to produce the unifying experience, in which the soul realizes itself as identical with the principle of the universe. Such an experience, though, is of an inferior intensity, since they still realize the plurality of the world.³⁵⁾ They can be considered as recognizing only the saguna Brāhman, the Brāhman with qualities, yet the nirguna Brāhman is the only truth.³⁶⁾ In this consideration, the non-dualist Vedānta is by nature hostile also to ³⁾the theist, for the later is considered illusory, in which duality is still implied.³⁷⁾

For Śankara, the right knowledge is that the Absolute is one without a second and this is the only reality. It is only a question of realizing this, Zaehner observes. After the

³⁵⁾ - MSP.p.180.

³⁶⁾ - According to Yoshitsugu Sawai, there are even two kinds of faiths in the Śankaran Vedānta, that of a samnyāsin and that of a lay smārta. The former is a faith to parabrāhman (the highest brāhman), the later is a faith to the Mother Goddess Sri Sāradā, the other deities of the pañcāyatana, and the jaḡadguru, all of whom are the objects of worship by pilgrims to Sringeri. From Śankara's philosophical viewpoint, the transcendent to which a samnyāsin responds is nirguna-brāhman, whereas that to which a lay smārta responds is saguna-brāhman. But what is interesting is that both in Śankara's philosophical viewpoint are identified with knowledge, jñāna and vidyā respectively and from this two kinds of emancipation (moksa) are recognized, for ascetics and lay people respectively. Yoshitsugu Sawai, "The Nature of Faith in the Śankaran Vedānta Tradition", in NVMEN, XXXIV fasc.1, June, 1987, pp.37-8.

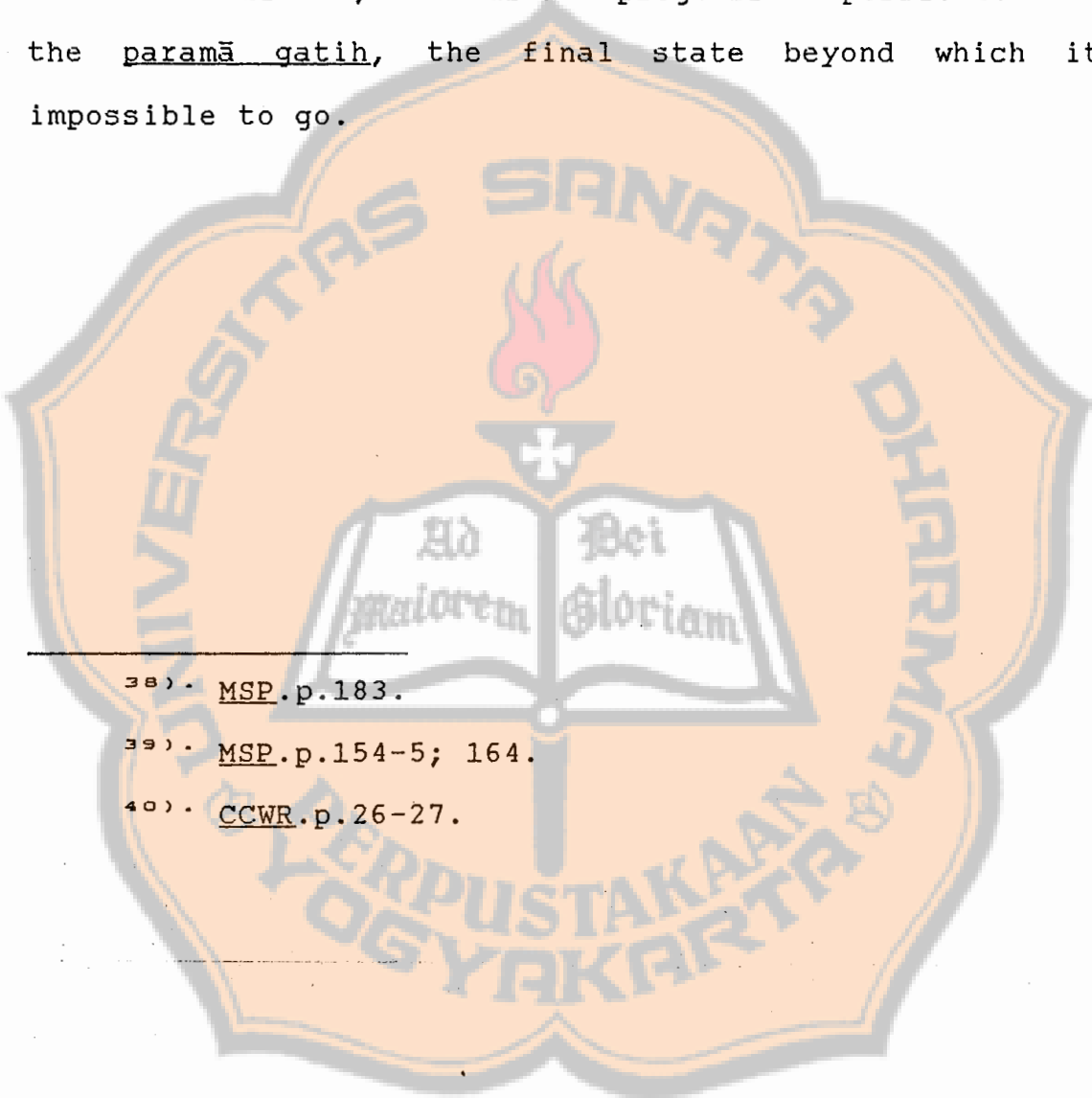
³⁷⁾ - MSP.p.187.ff.

false and illusory knowledge can be disposed of by the practice of Yoga, the soul achieves its complete self-realization and finds absolute peace and rest.³⁸⁾ The position of the "liberated soul" in the non dualist Vedānta of Śankara as such is the same as that of the Māṇḍūkya Upanishad, when consciousness reaches the utmost of its depth i.e. the state of deep dreamless sleep. This is the state of release, moksha or mukti.³⁹⁾ According to the Māṇḍūkya Upanishad [7], this mystical experience is described as realizing oneself as Brāhman, in which sense devotion to God has no meaning at all. Everything other than Brāhman, including God himself, is "mere appearance".⁴⁰⁾ If this goal has been achieved, no further progress is possible. This is the paramā gatih, the final state beyond which it is impossible to go.

³⁸⁾ . MSP.p.183.

³⁹⁾ . MSP.p.154-5; 164.

⁴⁰⁾ . CCWR.p.26-27.



CHAPTER III: GOD IN THE VISISTADVAITA VEDANTA SYSTEM1. Introduction

The exponent of the Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta commonly acknowledged is Rāmānuja, who lived five centuries later than Śankara. Though historically he was considered the founder of this school, he claimed his doctrines as based on still older ones, prior to his own teachings. He believed that he followed the "ancient teachers", the pūrvācāryas. Tradition has it that he was counted as one of the succession of the Vaiṣṇavite theologians, of whom his immediate predecessor is Yāmunācārya.¹⁾

His commentary on the Brāhma-sūtras, he said, was based on what they used to call Bodhāyana-vṛtti, which antedates Śankara and represented quite naturally a closer and faithful interpretation of Badarayana's sūtras.²⁾ His commentary on the Bhagavad-Gītā was comparable to that of Śankara, for like Śankara, Rāmānuja too, was able to put the whole commentary into a systematic coherent doctrine of his own. But he drew conclusions which are totally different from his and this

¹⁾ - According to the Dictionary of Hinduism of Margaret and James Stutley, the doctrine of Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta was firstly introduced by the Vaishnava writer Yāmunācārya, only later was expounded by Rāmānuja. Op.cit.p.336.

²⁾ - Max Müller, The Six Systems, p.109.

puts Rāmānuja and his school in divergence from Śankara's. The writings of Rāmānuja are also great in number.³⁾

Rāmānuja was a faithful Vaishnavite, as devoted to religion as Śankara. But unlike Śankara, Rāmānuja was a fervent bhakti follower, who believed that love and belief in a personal God played a very important role in religion. For this reason he is classified also as a theistic Vedantist. He remains, however, a true Vedāntist no less than Śankara. Father Dhavamony put it properly when he stated that "the most striking feature of Rāmānuja's teaching is its attempt to unite the personal theism with the theology of the

³⁾. Sampatkumaran, in his introduction to the translation of Rāmānuja's The Gītābhāshya, listed the following works of him: (i) Vedārtha-sangraha, a concise statement of the philosophical doctrines of the Vedas, with special reference to important passages in the Upanishads; (ii) Vedānta-sāra, a very brief commentary on the Vedānta-sūtras; (iii) Vedānta-dīpa ("lamp of the Vedānta"), a longer commentary but still brief, on the Vedānta-Sūtras; (iv) Sribhāshya ("the beautiful commentary), a fairly comprehensive commentary on the Vedānta-Sūtras which systematically refutes all schools of thought, heterodox as well as orthodox, other than Viśiṣṭādvaita, and forms the locus classicus on this particular branch of Vedānta: (v) Saranāgati-gādyā, a prayer in poetic prose, based on unbounded faith in the Lord's grace and describing complete surrender to His will; (vi) Srirānga-gādyā, another prayer in poetic prose, describing the famous shrine at Srirānga and the gracious presence of the Lord there as an icon; (vii) Sri-vaikunta-gādyā, yet another prose poem, describing the glories of Heaven and the beautitude of salvation; (viii) Gītā-bhāshya, a commentary on the Bhagavad-gītā and (ix) Nityā, a manual of everyday worship and devotion. Rāmānuja, The Gītābhāshya, translated into English by M.R. Sampatkumaram M.A., Madras, (1897) 1977.p.ix.

Absolute",⁴ for he was indeed a theist and a vedantist at the same time.

Hence his reputation should be considered in two respects; as a devoted bhakta and a philosopher. In prof. Zaehner's terms, Rāmānuja was the one who had done so much to make bhakti philosophically respectable, by giving it a philosophical basis to base on its practices.⁵ Or to use Macnicol words, "devotion was now, as it had not hitherto been, definitely linked with reflection, and the combination gave it a new dignity".⁶

His school was commonly known as Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta, which Zaehner understands as "non-duality in difference"⁷ or "modified non-dualism".⁸ The meaning of this term is what will be considered now.

2. God in terms of creation

To begin, Rāmānuja divides reality into three categories: the objective world, the spiritual world of eternal beings, and God. Such a division diverges quite clearly both from the

⁴ · Dhavamony, M., "Rāmānuja as interpreter of the hindu Scripture", in the Studia Missionalia, vol.37, 1988, p.166.

⁵ · Hin. p.98.

⁶ · Macnicol, N., Indian Theism, London, 1915, p.107.

⁷ · Hin. p.100.

⁸ · ZBG. p.3.

dualistic Sāṃkhya-Yoga and the monistic Advaita Vedānta. We will see the concept of God according to Rāmānuja, firstly in terms of creation, then in terms of liberation of the human soul. This will be followed by the discussion on the nature of God.

For Rāmānuja, both the objective world and eternal beings fall in the category of creation, though it is not to be understood in Christian or Moslem terms, in which God, the Creator, created this world out of nothing. Creation in Hindu terms is emanation from eternity. This objective world or nature evolves in time and with its three strands ensnares the human souls, just like what the Sāṃkhya doctrine was teaching. In this way Rāmānuja reinterpreted the Sāṃkhya ontology of the Bhagavad-Gītā and adopted it in his Vedāntin terminology. The whole objective universe and the sum total of eternal beings, in which the human souls are included, is what he called Brāhman. In this, Brāhman is naturally considered lower than God. Rāmānuja called it as "the body of the Lord".⁹⁾

The concept of Brāhman as "the body of the Lord" raises some controversy. Some believe that this implies that Rāmānuja adhered to pantheism, which identifies God with everything. This, however, is not what Rāmānuja actually intended. Zaehner showed it by way of Rāmānuja's

⁹⁾ - AST.p.126.

interpretation of the Bhagavad-Gītā. As we have observed earlier, Brāhman is to be distinguished from the Supreme Lord, Krishna. It is not to say that they are separate as two different agents, but that Brāhman is just "the highest home" for Krishna, or "the womb" of Krishna, i.e. his body.

To put it more clearly, Zaehner draws the distinction between "God is all", which is that of Pantheism and "God in all", or Pan-en-theism, which is the position of Rāmānuja. God is not identical with Brāhman, but the author of Brāhman, which is the sum total of eternal substances, Zaehner said about Rāmānuja's theology.¹⁰ The concept of creation, however, raises problems of evolution and the existence of evil, since Rāmānuja believed that God, as creator, is devoid of all evil and is not responsible for the karma of souls. We limit ourselves to what Rāmānuja stated, as Zaehner observed, that God planted potentialities in embodied souls in preeternity, so that they were free to develop as they wish. In such a way nature works through its three strands in

¹⁰. HMM.p.15 In the same line, Richard Desmet calls the position of Rāmānuja as Panentheism, in contrast to the position of Pantheism. In Pantheism God is identified with all, whereas in Panentheism God is transcendent and immanent at the same time. It is to consider accordingly the meaning of Viśistādvaita of Rāmānuja's school not as "differentiated non-dualism" but "non-dualism of the differenced Brāhman", he said. Richard Desmet, "Rāmānuja, Pantheist or Panentheist?" in Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, vol.58-59, 1977-1978, pp.433-465.

accordance with karma of souls, but only God is the real agent

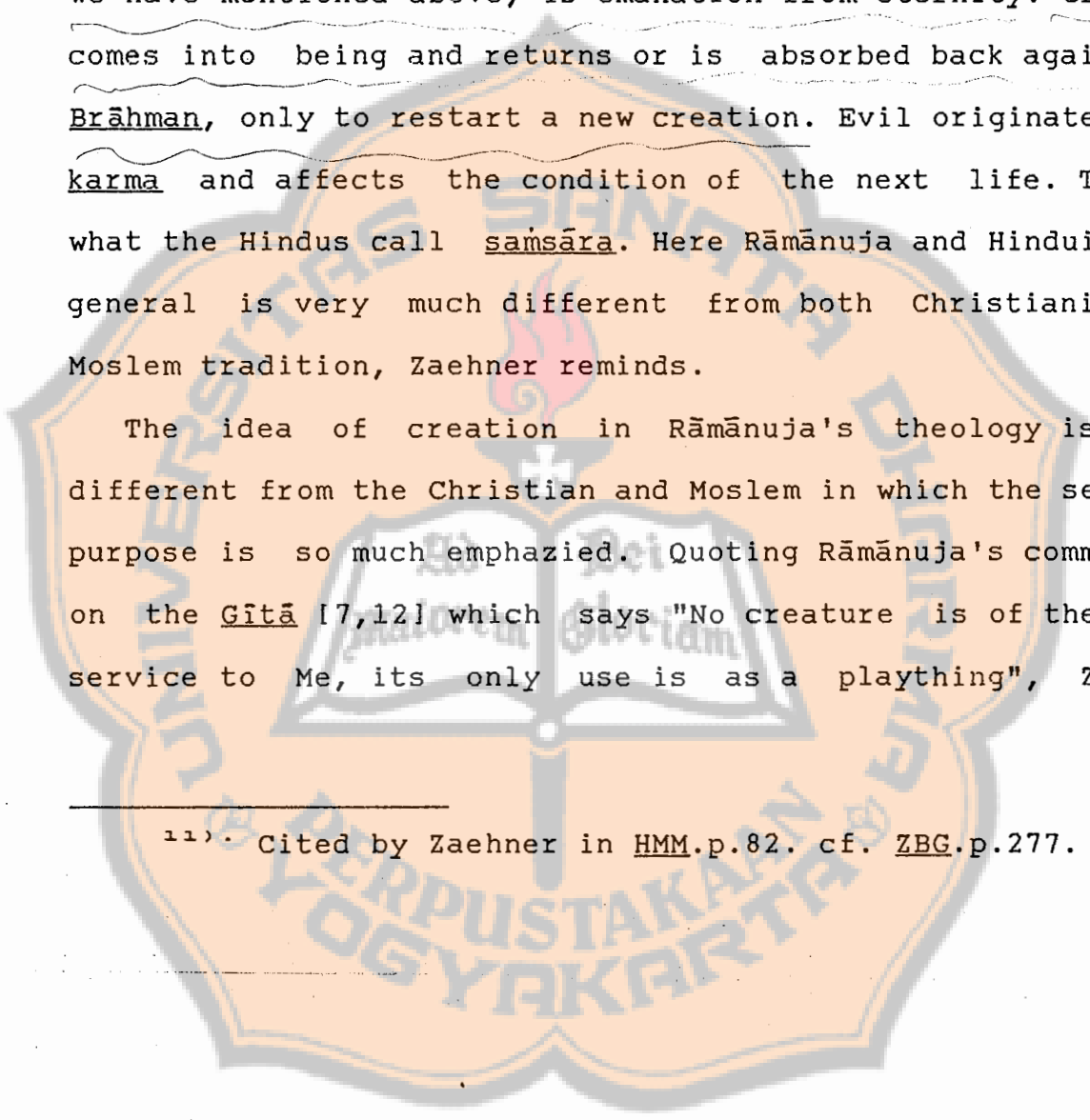
"Nature, which depends on me (Krishna) is in accordance with the karma of souls; I, whose will is (always) true, survey it as an overseer, (but it is) Nature which produces the world of moving and unmoving creature. The world is kept going by reason of my supervision of it in conformity with the karma of souls. My lordly power... consists in my sovereignty, my willing what is real, and my freedom from cruelty and all defects whatsoever." [Rāmānuja's commentary on the Bhagavad-Gītā 9.10].¹¹⁾

Up to this point, the explanations seem quite smooth and reasonable, for karma, which expresses the freedom of the human soul, is shown as in conformity with the will of God and not contradictory to it. Creation in Hindu conception, as we have mentioned above, is emanation from eternity. Creation comes into being and returns or is absorbed back again into Brāhman, only to restart a new creation. Evil originates from karma and affects the condition of the next life. This is what the Hindus call samsāra. Here Rāmānuja and Hinduism in general is very much different from both Christianity and Moslem tradition, Zaehner reminds.

The idea of creation in Rāmānuja's theology is also different from the Christian and Moslem in which the sense of purpose is so much emphasized. Quoting Rāmānuja's commentary on the Gītā [7,12] which says "No creature is of the least service to Me, its only use is as a plaything", Zaehner

¹¹⁾ Cited by Zaehner in HMM.p.82. cf. ZBG.p.277.

Handwritten notes:
 karma
 traditional view
 Bh. G. 8, 17 - 21 see p. 169-70 in God's hand
 evolution & derivation of the world into Brahman



stated that creation came out so naturally. It does not mean that creation is without purpose, for all the Hindu philosophy and effort for liberation would, then, have no sense. It only says that the power of God is so eminent that creation comes out from him so spontaneously.¹²⁾ Hence Rāmānuja's theology is also different from the Christian in respect to God as creator, for Rāmānuja, following the tradition of Hindu Scriptures, never arrived at the idea of God as wholly distinct from the universe.¹³⁾

3. God and the liberation of the Soul

Rāmānuja, like Sāṃkhya, accepts the existence of an unlimited number of individual souls. In this consideration, they held similar assumptions. Souls are immortal, and exist as spiritual substance which is unaffected by change. This, in Rāmānuja's view, is due to the fact that they participate with God in essence, that is, being outside time and space. But as long as the souls inhabit bodies, Rāmānuja explained, such a nature of souls is not revealed.¹⁴⁾

¹²⁾ "Know too that (all) states of being...they are in Me". [BG.7,12]. To Rāmānuja this means, "...as being my body." The relation of God and all states of being is compared like self and its bodies. The self makes use of bodies. So God depends on nothing and all beings is being used as a sport (līlā). ZBG.p.249.

¹³⁾ HMM.p.21.

¹⁴⁾ HMM. p.80.

What is the relationship between body and soul? According to Rāmānuja, the connection between body and soul is not unreal or illusory, but is such that it works by māyā, God's mode of operation. Māyā, in Rāmānuja's interpretation, is to be distinguished both from the sāṃkhya doctrine, which identified it with matter, and from Śankara's, who interpreted it as illusion. This, as we have argued, amounts to meaning non reality, so far as experience is concerned. The Māyā of Rāmānuja's school, according to Zaehner, is the power of God that makes the soul bound to the body; it can be the cause of its attachment to the body, but also of its liberation. This is why in terms of the process of creation, in which God does not draw any benefit for himself, Rāmānuja called māyā the wisdom (jñāna) and will (sankalpa) of God.¹⁵⁾

Liberation, then, does not consist of reajustment or correction of one's illusive knowledge in order to shift it into the true one, but a true realization of self, which in Rāmānuja's interpretation, would be the soul's finding its own true nature, which is eternal. God is in no way accessible by the souls for He is inexhaustible. From the other hand, Zaehner maintains, this is not a merging into Brāhman, as the pantheism of the Upanishads would seem to assert, since Brāhman in Rāmānuja's view, as he understood in

¹⁵⁾ - HMM. p.83.

his interpretation to the Bhagavad-Gītā, is merely the "soul-thing" [BG.5,19 ātma-vastu] or "category of existence which characterizes the soul" (ātmattatva).¹⁶⁾

Again Zaehner states that one's soul is in no way identical with All, for it has by nature only the same "form" as all ensouled things. "There is identity of spiritual essence but diversity of persons", Zaehner said, applying Christian terminology.¹⁷⁾

That Brāhman is not God as such, as many have misunderstood Rāmānuja, we have already affirmed. More over, in Rāmānuja's view it is also not the world-soul, but rather the state of being as opposed to becoming. Hence, liberation, in this perspective, can mean the transition of souls from the "abode" where the conscious and unconscious are still mixed together, into the "highest abode" of God, which is Brāhman, all pure consciousness and timeless bliss.¹⁸⁾ In this, Brāhman merits the honor of being God's abode, and the liberated soul deserves the "vision or direct experience of the soul" (ātma darśana), that makes itself aware of its own timeless substance. This Zaehner said remarking on Rāmānuja's commentaries on the Bhagavad-Gītā [2,53 and 60]. To become

¹⁶⁾. HMM.p.79.

¹⁷⁾. HMM. p.80.

¹⁸⁾. Rāmānuja was well aware of the significance of consciousness in term of liberation of soul. See again Zaehner's hint on this in our previous chapter IV, pp.150-151

Brāhman, according to Rāmānuja, means to realize the immortality of one's soul.¹⁹ God himself remains the originator of eternal being as well as the world of becoming. He is Lord of the spiritual as well as the material world.²⁰

In this context it is worthwhile considering for a moment what Rāmānuja meant by some other passages in his commentary on the Bhagavad-Gītā.²¹ According to Rāmānuja, liberation would grant some particular characteristics like, for example, the capability of "seeing all things in one's self" [BG.4,35]. By this he wants to realize the identity between one's self and other beings when they are divested of all material adjuncts (prakṛti). This is not a pantheistic solution, as Zaehner observes, for one's soul is not said to comprise all creation, but to have one form-consciousness. This is to be understood in accordance with what is said in other verses, such as that Brāhman is the same in all creatures [BG.5,19] or that the soul is omnipresent [BG.2,24].

Elsewhere it is stated that the liberated soul is "seeing all things in one's soul and one's soul in all

¹⁹ - HMM.pp.80-81.

²⁰ - HMM.pp.15-6.

²¹ - Rāmānuja, like all the ancient commentators, treats the the Bhagavad-Gītā as a united whole. So unlike modern commentators he did not consider that contradictions should be found in it. See HMM.p.56.

things" [BG.6,29]. In the same way, this is not to be seen as pantheistic, for it is not that one's soul is identical with the All, but that one sees the soul as having the same "form" as all ensouled things. It is identity but only of spiritual essence, or of substance (tatsāmyāt); between them there should remain individuality thanks to material elements.²²⁾

Before advancing his views on the nature of God, one point is to be noted because it is quite particular and a clear token of the theism of the Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedāntist. It is that liberation in Rāmānuja's philosophy can only be achieved by God's grace. In this the Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedāntist radically diverges both from the Sāṃkhya-Yoga and Advaita Vedānta followers. God in this sense does not remain a mere object of contemplation, but the greatest agent of liberation through his saving touch.²³⁾ For this reason Rāmānuja considers that the liberation of pure monism through one's own effort, though possible, is not comparable to the liberation by God Himself, for their liberation is not complete. Rāmānuja said,

"The consciousness of a man whose mind is not fixed on God, and who, in subduing the senses, relies entirely on his own efforts, cannot succeed even if his mind is directed exclusively to the ātman." [Rāmānuja's commentary to the Bhagavad-Gītā 2,66].²⁴⁾

²²⁾ . HMM.p.80.

²³⁾ . HMM.p.82-83.

²⁴⁾ . Cited by Zaehner in HMM.p.151.

If anybody thinks that his spiritual development comes from his own resources, this, Rāmānuja maintained, must be considered as the result of God's grace in former lives.²⁵⁾ God is never passive and disinterested in regard to his devotees. The teaching on grace has unfortunately given rise to a controversy about the human role in the process of liberation, and it has split the followers of Rāmānuja into two different schools, the "Tengalai" and "Vadagalai". The former maintains the predominance of grace over the human will, the latter just the opposite.²⁶⁾

If we understand Krishna of the Bhagavad-Gītā as God, as Rāmānuja surely did, we must believe that Rāmānuja's interpretation of the Bhagavad-Gītā constituted the whole theistic atmosphere of his doctrines. He was in fact the first to bring this theistic aspect of the Bhagavad-Gītā into relief.²⁷⁾

4. The Nature of God

We can sum up the notion of God in Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta system as God in every sense of the world. He is the Lord of all created or contingent being, comprising both the spiritual and the material, the eternal and the temporal. In

²⁵⁾ HMM. p.82.

²⁶⁾ Macnicol, M., Ibidem., pp.110-111.

²⁷⁾ Hin. p.98.

terms of the Bhagavad-Gītā, he is God of both the imperishable and the perishable, which together constitute "the body of God".

But he is also God, the creator of all, who generates all, being the source of everything that ever existed, both the contingent and the eternal beings. But as creator, God of the Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta, like any other God of the Hindu tradition, is the efficient cause, as well as material. And it is not without any significance when it is stated that human souls are identical in essence with God, for between them there is no clear separation which makes them radically distinct.²⁸⁾

In this, the Viśiṣṭādvaita system faces its own difficulty in defining the relationship between God and man. Both extreme monism and extreme dualism in some way can explain their position regarding the relationship between God and human soul, which is surprisingly not a relationship at all, for in the latter, God is totally detached from the liberated soul, whereas in the former, God and the liberated soul are totally identical. But precisely in terms of this relationship between God and man or the human self, the Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta poses its particular standpoint.

The two distinct characteristics of God are as Lord and as Creator. On the one hand, he is God beyond the imperishable

²⁸⁾ - HMM.pp.21-2.

and the perishable; on the other hand, he is Creator, or more properly originator of all. This position is peculiar to the theistic system of Rāmānuja, because God and the soul are at the same time identical and distinct. In Rāmānuja's view, human souls are united with God as accidents or modes in God's substance, or properly speaking, human souls participate in the substance of God, for they are originated from him. And in this framework, the dialogue between God and man finds meaning. On the other hand, they are distinct from God simply because they are only his creatures and hence absolutely dependent on him. Being merely as a tiny part of him, they are also devoid of God's characteristics "par excellence" such as his omnipotence, his capacity of creating, his eternal detachment from matter, his impassivity and so on.

The concept of God in the first six chapters of the Bhagavad-Gītā is scarcely spoken of in relation to liberation except as an object of contemplation; he is to be contemplated as the Supreme Being. As such God of the first six chapters of the Bhagavad-Gītā is quite similar to Iśvara in the Yogasūtras. But this is not the God of the rest of the Bhagavad-Gītā of Rāmānuja's Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta. Yet in the Bhagavad-Gītā itself, as we have observed, liberation alone is not the final goal. Rāmānuja was correct when he interpreted the final goal in the Bhagavad-Gītā, as well as

in his own philosophy, to be the encounter with God, the Supreme Being.²⁹⁾

5. Conclusion

Śankara and Patañjali claimed that ātmabodha is the last stage in the attainment of the liberation of soul, each in his own interpretation. According to Śankara, ātmabodha is knowledge (jñāna) by which the self becomes the One absolute existence without a second, respectively Patañjali in his Yoga system considered that "knowledge of the self" could be gained through repetition of refrain, by which one concentrates his mind and becomes alone, leaving all thoughts behind.

For Śankara and Patañjali, worship of God and doing good works were considered spiritually immature, much inferior to their "knowledge of the self".³⁰⁾ For Rāmānuja, this is reversed, for "knowledge of the self", far from being man's highest goal, is only a prelude to bhakti, loving devotion to the Lord.³¹⁾ This is what marks definitely the theistic system of Rāmānuja, for it is not the affirmation of self but its "denial" which makes the way to encounter God.

²⁹⁾ . HMM. pp.61-3.

³⁰⁾ . MSP.p.179.

³¹⁾ . HMM.p.71.

Brāhman
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 Iśvara of the Yogasūtras, viewed in the Bhagavad-Gītā context, is more suited to the concept of God in chapters V and VI, that is God, who is just a little more than an object of meditation. He is not even higher than Brāhman, who in the Upanishads is described as eternal, who creates, sustains and reabsorbs the universe; he is only the eternally released soul.³²⁾ In the theistic mysticism of Rāmānuja, God advances farther in the direction of the personal form of chapter IX of the Bhagavad-Gītā. The problem is that in the Hindu context, Zaehner affirms, we never find a clear distinction between God and creature. There is no idea of "creatio ex nihilo", and this background prevents us from understanding Rāmānuja as a full theist.

The monists considered Brāhman as the absolute One, of which personal God or Lord is merely the first illusory manifestation. For the theist, on the other hand, Brāhman is nothing but the ideal and eternal world, in contrast to the world of coming to be and passing away, but inferior to the personal God.³³⁾ The relationship between God and Brāhman in the Bhagavad-Gītā is not explained consistently, we have observed, yet Rāmānuja's commentary, despite his

³²⁾ - HMM.p.71.

³³⁾ - AST.p.107.

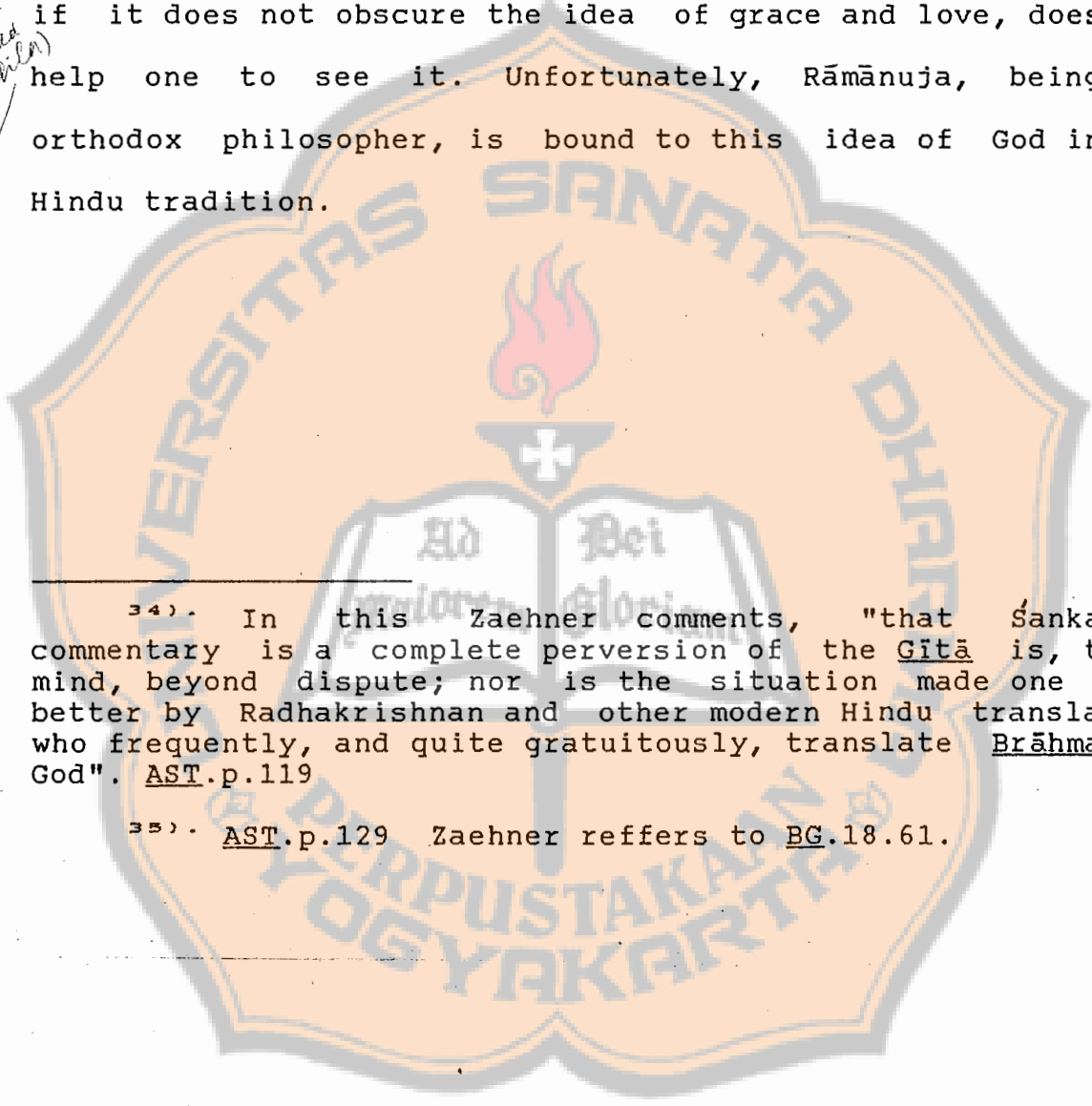
simplification of the relationship between ātman and Brāhman, is substantially true to the Gita's line of thought.³⁴⁾

One weakness in the theology of Ramanuja, according to Zaehner, is his lack of consideration with regard to the purpose of creation, for in Zaehner's state of mind, Rāmānuja's theology would imply that man is simply the object of the divine will. In Zaehner words, "man is hurled into the 'wheel of Brāhman', a blindly operating mechanism from which he must at all costs escape". And yet it is God who keeps this mechanism going since He is obliged to do so by His own Nature (svabhava).³⁵⁾ In the Hindu tradition, God cannot help repetitively emanating and absorbing universes. Such an idea, if it does not obscure the idea of grace and love, does not help one to see it. Unfortunately, Rāmānuja, being an orthodox philosopher, is bound to this idea of God in the Hindu tradition.

³⁴⁾ In this Zaehner comments, "that Śankara's commentary is a complete perversion of the Gītā is, to my mind, beyond dispute; nor is the situation made one whit better by Radhakrishnan and other modern Hindu translators who frequently, and quite gratuitously, translate Brāhman as God". AST.p.119

³⁵⁾ AST.p.129 Zaehner refers to BG.18.61.

fill.
p.266
does not mean
of creation is
purpose
not want it is
purposeful
but want it
does not
declare
what specified
though it
is specified
how (= idea)
naturally



CHAPTER IV : THE THREE PHILOSOPHICAL SYSTEMS COMPARED1. Introduction

By way of comparison between the three philosophical systems that we have just discussed, we shall try a critical analysis. Unlike the first part which concerns the God of the Scriptures, here the concept of God will be analysed in quite different way disregarding the historical aspect of the concepts. Our task now is to compare them in terms of problematics of the mystical experiences that correlate with those philosophies in order to pose some questions concerning the Absolute. This is one among many of the particularities of the approach to the religious phenomenon in comparison to that of the science of Nature, in which experiences do not take any part.

Aldous Huxley in his The Doors of Perception states that "religion is not much something to be professed as something to be experienced; and such experience, in its higher forms, is usually called mystical experience".¹⁾ This is true in some way but it is even truer with regard to the Hindu religion, in which mysticism plays an important role. Yet it is to be borne in mind that not all mystical experiences are always religious, as many would believe. Zaehner is very aware that religious experience could not be simplified as any experience with exstatic characteristics, for there are

¹⁾ Cited by Zaehner in MSP. p.2.

many of such kinds of experiences which are wholly profane, the most outstanding of them are those produced by using psychedelic drugs. These experiences are not religious and can not at all be classified with religious research.²⁾ Moreover, Zaehner believes that mysticism is not limited only to the "ecstatic" characterisation, for there is also mysticism in which the mystics experience what Zaehner characterizes as "enstatic", that is "the soul contemplating itself in its essence". And it is such a mysticism that we will have to deal with more in our following analysis.

2. The Three Positions of the Mystical Experiences

There are three distinct positions in the Hindu philosophical systems with regard to their mystical experiences with which Zaehner has his major concern: dualism, monism and theism. These positions are represented

²⁾ In his Mysticism, Sacred and Profane Zaehner criticises Huxley who in The Doors of Perception insisted that all mysticisms were the same. Zaehner had made researches concerning the experiences of some prominent modern mystics like Richard Jefferies, Proust, Rimbaud, which showed that their experiences were natural but not necessarily religious. Hence he criticises similarly Gerald Bullett who in The English Mystics (London, 1950), confused those two categorically different mystical phenomena. See MSP. p.33. In addition to this, he himself made an experiment by excuting for himself some mescaline, and proved that drugs or any stuff of the kindred could affect some certain mystical experiences but, of course, not at all religious.

by the Sāṃkhya-Yoga, Advaita Vedānta and Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta.³⁾

Briefly we will repeat that Yoga philosophy teaches the existence of "God" of some sort as "one" among the innumerable purushas. He could be considered "primus inter pares". His particularity, Zaehner remarks, is in that he could be an object even of meditation for human souls, who as purushas try to gain liberation. Sometimes this "God" is called Iśvara, the Lord, and as such he is the supreme "guru" who teaches how to arrive at liberation through their detachment from prakṛti, the material world. Liberation is to gain the condition of isolation, aloofness, detachment from everything else like the condition in which "God" himself exists (kaivalyam). In the Sāṃkhya-Yoga school, however, this teaching is combined with the dualistic philosophy of the Sāṃkhya.

The Advaita Vedānta or Kevala Advaita Vedānta considers the Absolute as "the One" without a second. This is the only reality to be considered the Absolute, the supreme reality, that is the only "really real". There is of course a "God", creator and sustainer but only from the empirical point of

³⁾ As we explained earlier, this is not to deny the existence of some other different philosophical schools or systems in India, but in Zaehner's opinion, these three positions of the Sāṃkhya-Yoga, the Advaita and Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta are prominent with regard to their views on the relationship between the soul and the Absolute or, in Zaehner's terms, their mystical experiences.

view; the point of view of ordinary man who has not yet attained the final liberation. If the liberated human soul considers its own reality as divine which means being the Absolute Himself, it does so happen simply as the consequence of his total awareness that reality is one and there is no other. Therefore his soul and the Absolute, in the sense of the supreme reality, are just the same. Liberation means nothing else than "self realization".

Different from this the Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta adheres to God as the Supreme, timeless, immaterial, but he is also God in the full personal sense of the word. He is the source and the sustainer of the world, hence an active agent, omniscient and omnipotent. The full liberation of souls would mean, in this system, their union with God, after gaining of their self integration, which is the precondition needed. It is typical of the Viśiṣṭādvaita system that love and grace of God play an indispensable role. It is true that all three positions can be considered mysticism, but it is only in the third position that love comes onto the stage in the final realization.

3. The Systems Compared

Here we shall analyse the three philosophical positions by way of comparing them. As we have mentioned earlier, according to Zaehner the Advaita Vedānta shows similar

experience with that of the Sāṃkhya-Yoga, though in metaphysical terms they maintain different assumptions. Comparison between the two systems would then be very interesting to analyse. More interesting is, however, comparison between the Advaita Vedānta and the Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta. Although both belong to the Vedānta, they maintain some very different assumptions on God and the Absolute such that they show more opposition than compromise. How is such an opposition to be explained? The comparison between them, too, will be our main concern. Hence we will have to compare the two systems of the Sāṃkhya-Yoga and the Advaita Vedānta, on the one hand, and those of the Advaita and the Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta, on the other. At the end of this part we shall still have to pick up some conclusive points of our analysis.

3.1. Sāṃkhya-Yoga and Vedānta

First of all the Sāṃkhya-Yoga diverges from the Vedānta with regard to the Scriptures that they accept. Although both schools claim to be orthodox, which means that they admit the traditional Vedic Scriptures, their proper positions are as yet to be specified, for there is controversy on this matter. Some scholars, like Farquhar, even believed that the origin of Sāṃkhya was not Vedic, and therefore its admittance of the

Scriptures is merely a matter of formality.⁴ Similarly Max Müller stated that although the Sāṃkhya declared for the authority of the Vedas, and never openly rejected it like Buddha, yet whether it really carried out the spirit of the Vedas was to be considered as another question.⁵ As to the Vedāntists, their position on the Vedas seems to be more established when they explicitly specify the three most important Scriptures: the Upanishads, the Bhagavad-Gītā and the Brāhmasūtras which together they call Prasthanatrayam. Hence they claim insistently that they themselves are the most loyal to the Vedas. The very name of their school, Vedānta, the "end of the Veda" itself would hint to their spirit of fidelity to the Scriptures.⁶

From the metaphysical point of view, the Vedānta, and here we single out the Advaita Vedānta, is very much different from the Sāṃkhya-Yoga; as systems, they stand just at two opposing poles, Zaehner said, as monism and dualism. So on a metaphysical level they would never meet each other. Their concepts on moksha, liberation of soul, based on their

⁴ Farquhar, Ibidem, p.131.

⁵ Max Muller, The Six Systems, p.217.

⁶ Vedānta, "End of the Veda", i.e. the complete knowledge of the Veda. It is not an appendage to any particular portion of the Veda as were the Brāhmanas, but a re-interpretation of its basic truths in the light of Upanishadic, revelation. Margaret and James Stutley, A Dictionary of Hinduism, p.329.

fundamental positions, accordingly would be very different. For the Advaita Vedānta which does not avow but one reality, moksha would simply mean "to realize one's own identity with the ultimate ground of the universe and that all else, including the creator God himself, was no more than appearance or illusion".⁷⁾ There is no question of union either with the creator God or the Brāhman, for in the last consideration, reality is one, not two. The second would be merely illusion. For the Sāṃkhya-Yoga liberation would mean that the soul or the self detaches itself from prakṛti (non-self) and reaches "its own ontological centre"⁸⁾ or "realization of the utter simplicity of one's own soul". Here, too, there is no question of union with God or of love for him", Zaehner observes.⁹⁾

In his Mysticism Sacred and Profane Zaehner compares the Sāṃkhya-Yoga mysticism mostly with what he calls pan-en-henic mysticism, a term we have mentioned earlier when we spoke of the Brāhmanas. Although the characteristics of Sāṃkhya-Yoga

7) • CCWR. p.26.

8) • Idem.

9) • See CCWR. pp.26-28. By "unio mystica", we have observed earlier, Zaehner characterizes the Christian mysticism in which personal encounter between the soul and God possibly takes place. Zaehner often uses this term especially when he has to make a strong contrast to the non-theistic mysticism. Just for some more examples see R.C. Zaehner, "Mysticism without Love" in Religious Studies, 10 Sept. 1974, p.259 or "Can Mysticism be Christian?" in New Blackfriars, 46 oct.1964, p.2.

p-65
67

mysticism which is totally introvert, excluding all manic experiences, is at variance with the extrovertness of the pan-en-henic mysticism, yet they both share in one same defect: the privation of integrity. In the case of the Sāmkhya-Yoga, according to Zaehner, the disintegration is effected through the detachment of the self from everything, whereas in the case of the pan-en-henic mysticism, it is through the fusion of the self into Cosmos. In both cases the soul claims to attain the "absolute", though the fact is just in the opposite, for instead of making any progression, the soul even submits to the state of what Jung calls "collective unconsciousness" in the case of pan-en-henic mysticism¹⁰ or retracts to the state of "unborn" soul, a reversion to a state of primal innocence, or to use Freud's terminology, it is the state of the primal innocence, the undifferentiated state of the embryo in the womb.¹¹

Now, we can start to analyse the similarities between the Sāmkhya-Yoga and the Advaita Vedānta. If liberation in the Advaita Vedānta is "to realize one's own identity with the ultimate ground of the universe", which in the last consideration means nothing else than realizing itself to be the ground of the universe itself, then, such an experience of soul, Zaehner remarks in Hinduism, is an experience of

¹⁰. MSP. pp.106 ff.

¹¹. MSP. pp.129 ff.

immortality. Immortality in Sankara's doctrine, following the interpretation of the Māndūkya Upanishad, means not the prolongation of human life in time but an ~~unconditioned~~ and absolutely static ^{condition} ~~condition~~, knowing nothing of time and space, that is the state of dreamless sleep. It is a condition without any activity, yet in full consciousness, or more properly, in "pure" consciousness (cit), as Zaehner puts it, and pure bliss (ananda) too.¹²⁾ What, then, if this experience of immortality of the soul is not similar to the experience of moksha in the Sāṃkhya-Yoga system, when the soul after it has been detached totally from the bounds of matter and arrives at "its own ontological centre"? It is an experience of immortality, the timelessness of the soul, when it wholly submerges in its own aloneness, isolated, aloof. Hence in the level of religious experience the Sāṃkhya-Yoga and the Advaita Vedānta mysticism are wholly similar. The only difference is perhaps that the "eternal" of the Advaita is not simply the eternal essence of one single soul as it is in the Sāṃkhya-Yoga, but of Absolute Being.¹³⁾

¹²⁾. Hin.p.74. In this the "dreamless sleep" of the Māndūkya Upanishad is, of course, to be considered as "pure" consciousness in the sense that it has no object at all or rather the distinction of subject and object does not exist. Hence dualism is overcome and the self is not conditioned by anything else.

¹³⁾. Hin.p.75.

This difference, however, does not make any more sense than when mysticism deals - not with concepts - but with experience of aloneness. This is valid similarly to their different views concerning God. For Śankara and the Advaitins, God exists only as an illusory modification of the Absolute, which is "really real", whereas for the Sāṃkhya-Yoga "God" exists as one of the perfect purushas.

To sum up the similarities between the Sāṃkhya Yoga and the Advaita Vedānta, we can show what Zaehner in his Hindu and Muslim Mysticism clearly states,¹⁴ firstly the two systems agree in that liberation would mean "the isolation of the eternal from the contingent, and that this is an experience of undifferentiable oneness". Secondly they agree that "there is such thing as the Lord", at least from the empirical point of view. We have observed that Śankara, too, accepted and tolerated the devotions to any God but regarded them as secondary compared to the true knowledge. Finally the two systems are similar in that "contemplation of this Lord is an effective method of bringing about one-pointed concentration of mind, the goal of which in each case is the experience of absolute oneness", but after the goal is reached the God or Lord vanished away.

¹⁴ . HMM. p.38.

3.2. Visistadvaita and Kevala Advaita Vedanta

Even though they are branches of one and the same school, the school of Vedānta, yet the Kevala and the Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta show more differences than similarities, even up to opposing each other, in terms of metaphysical views and their implications. Their similarities seem to be merely a matter of secondary importance. For many years the Advaita Vedānta had shown to the Western mind its predominance over other Indian philosophies and it came to be believed as the only representation of Indian truth. It is no wonder, that many Western thinkers in past centuries confused Hinduism with monism and misunderstandingly interpreted māyā as merely "world as illusion" as taught by Śankara.¹⁵⁾

Many recent studies specially those which compared the philosophy of Śankara and that of Rāmānuja, opened the Western mind to the fact that in India there is more than monistic philosophy, that "illusionism" is just one view among many others and that theism, too, was not excluded.¹⁶⁾

¹⁵⁾. No less than Teilhard de Chardin, as Zaehner observes, confused Hinduism with Śankara's views when he, in the perspective of his views on evolution criticized strongly the idea of "illusionism and the world-denying austerity". ER. p.23

¹⁶⁾. One among the important works in the comparison between Rāmānuja and Śankara philosophy with regard to their views on the Absolute is Lacombe's L'Absolu selon le Vedānta (Paris, 1937). Others are comparing both philosophers in different aspects; p.e. Srinivasa Chari, S.M., Advaita and Viśiṣṭādvaita, London, 1961; Bharatan Kumarappa, The Hindu Conception of the Deity, as culminating in Rāmānuja, London, 1934; René Guénon, Man and His Becoming according to the

Monism and Theism are in fact two different trends that have always been present in Indian philosophy and only took more definite forms in the Upanishads.¹⁷⁷ Śankara and Rāmānuja are, then, just two exponents to expose these two different trends to common view and to establish their way to their comprehensive philosophies, for while Śankara set out from the monism of the Māṇḍūkya Upanishad, Rāmānuja could be considered as following the line of the theistic Upanishads which culminates in the Śvetāśvatara Upanishad and in the Bhagavad-Gītā.

Interesting and significant is the divergence of their views regarding the relation between God and Brāhman, in the perspective of the absoluteness. For Śankara, to whom reality is One, only Brāhman exists as the Absolute. Here we repeat time and again that God, the creator, exists only "relatively real", that is from the ordinary people's point of view, for from the absolute point of view God is just an illusion. So ontologically speaking, Brāhman is the Absolute One without a

Vedānta, London, 1928.

¹⁷⁷. The monistic trend is shown in "great utterances" of the Upanishads, which according to Śankara all are expressing the absolute identity of the soul with the Absolute: "That art thou" [Ch.U, 6.9 ff.]; "This Atman is Brahman" [Mān.U.2.]; "I am Brahman" [BA.U, 1.4.10.] and "Consciousness is Brahman" [Ait.U, 5.3.] The theistic trend is explicitly shown as assigning the highest place to Purusha, the "Person", as being superior to the Brahman-Atman in the macrocosmos [Ka.U, 3.10-11; Mun.U, 2.1.2; Śv.U, 3.7-8] and inwardly immanent than it in the microcosm [Kat.U, 4.12; Mun.U, 2.1.9; Śv.U, 3.13]. See Hin.p.74.

second, excluding any other existence. For Rāmānuja, on the contrary, it is not Brāhman but God who is the Absolute, for he is the Creator of the universe, omnipotent and omniscient and therefore also above and beyond it. Yet he also includes the whole universe as his body and this is what he called Brāhman. When we say the whole universe, what we mean here is the all possible existences, conscious and unconscious, spirits and matter as well. God is also working in the universe, in the same way the soul is working in the body, for he is also the "inner controler", in the deepest depth of the soul. So Brāhman is inferior to the personal God, for his existence is possible only in terms of the existence of God himself. Brāhman is real, for he is created by God, but his reality is relative. In brief the main difference between Śankara and Rāmānuja, in the perspective of the Absolute, lies in that for the first the concept of the Absolute excludes any other existence, whereas for the second it includes other existences.

Their opposition can be clearly observed also from their interpretations of the Bhagavad-Gītā. Since both of them wrote commentaries on this scripture, it is worthwhile to show some comparison of their comments, in order to see how they both tried to use the texts of the Bhagavad-Gītā to

fortify their own views.¹⁸⁾ Let us look at some of these comparisons which we find in Zaehner's commentary to the Bhagavad-Gītā.

On explaining the meaning of māyā, for example, in the Bhagavad-Gītā [4,6], it is stated that Krishna in order to be born in this world, consorts with Nature by atma-māyāya. The whole verse need not be repeated here, as it has already been cited in an earlier chapter. Zaehner translates atma-māyāya as "by my creative energy". For Sankara, who is a monist, māyā is immediately understood as "appearance", meaning empirically real, but from the Absolute point of view is illusion, whereas for Ramanuja, māyā in this context shows the "divine wisdom (jñāna) and will (saṅkalpa)".¹⁹⁾ It goes without saying that Sankara would be disposed to understand Krishna's incarnation as Docetic, unreal, whereas Rāmānuja believed it as real.²⁰⁾

¹⁸⁾ For references, I use The Bhagavad Gita, with the commentary of Sri Sankaracharya, translated from the original Sanskrit into English by Alladi Mahadeva Sastry, Madras, 1977 (1897) and The Gitabhashya of Rāmānuja, translated into English by M.R. Sampatkumaran M.A., Madras, 1969. For the sake of convenience, SBG and RBG are being used as abbreviation for the first and second references respectively.

¹⁹⁾ ZBG. pp.183-4 ; Sankara writes "...I appear to be born and embodied, through my own Māyā, but not in reality, unlike others." SBG.p.121. Whereas Rāmānuja writes, "...I am born by My own free will" RBG.p.115.

²⁰⁾ ZBG. p.182.

Hence also on the concept of liberation in the first six chapters of the Bhagavad-Gītā, in which the verses deal a lot with yoga or spiritual exercises in execution of this liberation, both Śankara and Rāmānuja have their own positions. In the Bhagavad-Gītā [4,35], for example, it is stated that liberation enables one to "behold (all) beings in (your) self". This idea is very close, according to Zaehner with another verse [5,7] in which it is stated that liberation means that "...his self become the (very) self of every contingent being...". This in Śankara's opinion comes to mean simply that the liberated soul is "in oneness of Self", whereas for Rāmānuja who accepts the plurality of selves, this is to be interpreted as integration, in which the liberated souls "share the one 'form' of wisdom"²¹ for according to him "all selves have one 'form' (akara) i.e. 'wisdom'."²² In such a manner, Rāmānuja maintained that integration would not as yet be considered the complete liberation since the encounter with God is the only fulfilment.

²¹ - ZBG. p.196; On the state of liberation in the verse [5,7] Śankara comments, "...He, ...whose Inner Consciousness, the Self, has formed the Self of all beings from Brahma down to a clump of grass..." SBG. P.164; Whereas Rāmānuja comments, "...His self has become the self of all embodied beings:..." RBG. p.146.

²² - ZBG. p.205.

In another verse of the Bhagavad-Gītā [5,15], Śankara found an argument with which to attack the followers of bhakti by placing vibhuh, translated by Zaehner as "(that) all-pervading lord", in the perspective of "the Absolute". The whole verse runs as follows.

"He takes not on the good and evil works of anyone at all, - (that) all-pervading lord. By ignorance is wisdom overspread; thereby are creatures fooled."²³⁾

Zaehner himself admits that here Rāmānuja, by placing vibhuh in the perspective of the "individual self", gives a more proper sense, for in this case it is the liberated soul which is to be shown, that is the soul which has formed the integration in itself, hence, in the condition of being "all-pervading" since that self has "become the (very) self of every contingent being", added Zaehner referring back to the verse [5,7]. In this perspective, the liberated soul according to Rāmānuja, "does not receive or reject the good or evil deeds performed by people he respects such as his son simply because they are related to him".²⁴⁾

²³⁾ Cf HS.p.272. In his commentary to this verse, Śankara writes as follows:
 - (question) : with what object then is done by devotees any meritorious act, - an act of worship, sacrifice, or charity, the offering of an oblation into the fire, or the like ?
 - (answer) : The Lord says in reply; Discriminative knowledge is enveloped by ignorance. Mortal creatures in samsāra are deluded and think, "I act, I cause to act, I shall enjoy, I cause to enjoy," and so on. SBC.p.169.

²⁴⁾ ZBG. p.209; cf. RBG.p.152 Rāmānuja puts vibhuh as "the master of self".

Again in verse [6,7], Śankara in interpreting the word param'ātmā samāhitah, translated by Zaehner as "the highest self...rapt in ecstasy", posed the notion of this self in the perspective of "the Absolute". The whole verse runs as follows.

"The higher self or the self-subdued, quietened, is rapt in ecstasy, - in cold as in heat, in pleasure as in pain, likewise in honour and disgrace."²⁵⁾

Hence in his comments Śankara wrote "the Supreme Self is present without mediation (saksat) as self", whereas Rāmānuja preferred to separate param from ātmā (ātmā param samāhitah) so that the verse would give notion more in the perspective of the "individual self", hence he understood the words as "the self is supremely concentrated".²⁶⁾

More interesting is their comparison of the two verses [9,4-5]. In the first verse, it is stated "In me subsist all beings...", in the second verse on the contrary is stated "contingent beings do not subsist in Me...". According to Zaehner the position of Rāmānuja proves its consistency, for

²⁵⁾ Cf. HS.p.275.

²⁶⁾ ZBG. p.222 ; Śankara comments, "...when a man has subdued the aggregate of the body and the senses, when his mind (antah-karana) is tranquil, when he has renounced all actions, then the Supreme Self actually becomes his own Self." SBG.p.188. Rāmānuja on the contrary comments, "...It is the individual soul (pratyagātman) which is here called the supreme soul (paramātman), because only it (i.e. the individual soul) is required by the context, and because even in regard to it there is the state of being the supreme soul relatively to earlier states successively..." RBG. p.169

the two statements are only showing the two aspects of Krishna, active and passive, as God who executes his will and providence in the one hand, and as God as pure Being who is unblemished by the contingency of all beings on the other.²⁷⁾ "My Self sustains (all) beings, It does not subsist in them" states the Bhagavad-Gītā further. Śankara seemed to find difficulty in settling his position, since the "Absolute One" has nothing to do with creation and contingent beings. So it is quite natural that he resorted immediately to his familiar distinction of views by stating that in the later statements Krishna used the "popular terminology".²⁸⁾

These would be enough for illustrations on the difference between Śankara and Rāmānuja. Now, the Monism of Śankara, as we have observed earlier, implied in practice a dualism with regard to the way of viewing the reality, for it separates its follower into two classes, that of ordinary people and that of liberated soul.²⁹⁾ Such an implication, of course,

²⁷⁾ See RBG.p.249-50.

²⁸⁾ ZBG. p.275 ; Cf. "...Separating (from the Real Self) the aggregate of the physical and other material environments, and regarding that aggregate as the 'I', the Lord speaks of the Self as 'My Self', - so far following only the popular conception; not certainly that He believes, as the masses ignorantly believe, that the Ātman, the Self, is distinct from Himself..." SBG. p.242.

²⁹⁾ This is what very much reproached by A.R. Wadia, who in his Presidential Address to the "Sixth Session of the Indian Philosophical Congress" held at Dacca on the 20th December 1930, said, "...It is significant that in the classification of the three Vedantic Schools,... Advaitism, in spite of its theoretical monism, in practice is rooted in

can not be expected from Rāmānuja since he did not interpret "liberation" as a matter of knowledge or consciousness but as a true encounter with a personal God. For Rāmānuja the existence of the world need not necessarily deny the integrity of God, for it is God's own body. The world is not another different existence but simply a part of his own existence qualitatively. Hence the meaning of the name of his school Viśiṣṭādvaita, "non-duality in difference" or "modified non-dualism".

If in practice the mystical experience of the Advaita Vedānta is similar to that of the Sāṃkhya-Yoga, it follows that the experience of absolute oneness in the Advaita Vedānta, too, is nothing more than a retraction of the self in its own essence. It is again an experience of aloofness, of complete isolation in itself, in which any diversity is excluded. In such a condition the soul may find a real peace but a false one, for it is not peace in God but in itself. Such an experience is attainable by natural force but it

dualism. Its whole ethic centres round the distinction between the paramarthika and the vyavaharika. The former is real, the latter only phenomenal. The former implies an annihilation of all distinctions and is attained through the knowledge of the identity of the Ātman and the Brāhman. In theory this knowledge is open to all, in practice it is the privilege of those who through endless births have so developed themselves that moksha through gyanam is theirs by birthright. This is how Varnashrama is sought to be justified. Let us see its implications. It makes not merely the social organization, but also philosophy itself aristocratic, because philosophy becomes esoteric, it is the possession of a few..." (p.6)

excludes morality, Zaehner said, for even evil man can manage to find it.³⁰⁾

³⁰⁾ Zaehner is fully agree with Ruysbroeck, who in his Spiritual Espousals, maintained two different states of tranquillity. The one is tranquillity in the sense of being content in the self - it does not make any difference whether the spell is with capital S or not, the other is tranquillity in the sense of finding the rest in God. The latter is, however, the right one. See MSP.p.170-74.

CONCLUSION

There are some points we have to take note of at the end of this second part as our conclusion. First of all by choosing the three philosophical systems Zaehner does not mean to disregard any other system that exist in Indian philosophy, let alone to deny them, but to show that in terms of mystical experiences, they present the three distinct and main trends. They are the Sāṃkhya-Yoga, the Advaita and Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta which correspond respectively with dualism, monism and theism. Although metaphisically each claims to have particular views different from and excluding the others, in practice, that is, observed from the point of view of mystical experiences, they could show some similarities. As such their positions raise some problematics that have to be analysed. But Zaehner is here making a revolution in approach, for instead of making an analysis of their views on the Absolute and the implications of it in their mystical experiences, he makes an analysis of their similarities and differences of their mystical experiences on which to base his critical evaluation to their views on the Absolute.

Zaehner's analysis on the experience of moksha in the Sāṃkhya-Yoga dan Advaita Vedānta systems proves that in reality both systems show the same or similar phenomena. Their experience on moksha, or liberation, is described as

"realization of self", that is to say the experience of the soul or the self in its timeless or eternal condition. When the soul submerges itself into its own essence, it does not reach but its own absoluteness which in their view is the goal beyond which all further spiritual experience is impossible (paramāgatih). This is the 'undifferentiable unit of myself without form or content', said Zaehner citing Martin Buber.² Some implications follow.

a) The soul experiences what is beyond ordinary life, either in the state of the "absolute reality" or in that of the "isolated one", that it can be described as being elevated to the level of a timeless and spaceless condition. This experience in Zaehner's view is no other than affirmation of the self with the consequence of denying God as the Absolute, whether explicitly as in the Advaita Vedānta or implicitly as in the Sāṃkhya-Yoga, although in practice they amount to the same thing. The true God is then excluded from man's extra-temporal experience.

b) Their experience of absoluteness, though, does not comprise the whole capacity of God in the full sense of the word, who is omniscient and omnipotent, creator of the world, but only in one aspect. For them the absolute Self or Soul experiences the "pure consciousness", which is surprisingly not "consciousness" at all, for it is either the

². HMM.p.39.

between
God and
Self

Consciousness
life - death

"consciousness" of dreamless sleep of the Māṇḍūkya Upanishad or the aloofness of the isolated soul, for whom any possible diversity is excluded. Hence it is an experience of immortality not in the sense of "life-in-death" but "death-in-life", impersonal, passionless, passivity.²⁾ We have observed that such an experience of liberation, instead of showing progression of soul it turns toward another direction, for it reverts to the state of primal innocence, the undifferentiated consciousness of an embryo, a total regression to the origin of life.

Now we come to another step, to view the above experience in the perspective of Rāmānuja's mysticism in the Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta. In Rāmānuja's doctrine God is the highest Lord in the full sense of the word, that is in both aspects of his full activity in creating this world, sustaining them and his full detachment from them in a pure and unblemished state. For Rāmānuja the world with its diversity is real and souls created by God are many.

Liberation in its first stage means "the soul finds its own true nature" and in this sense it can be considered

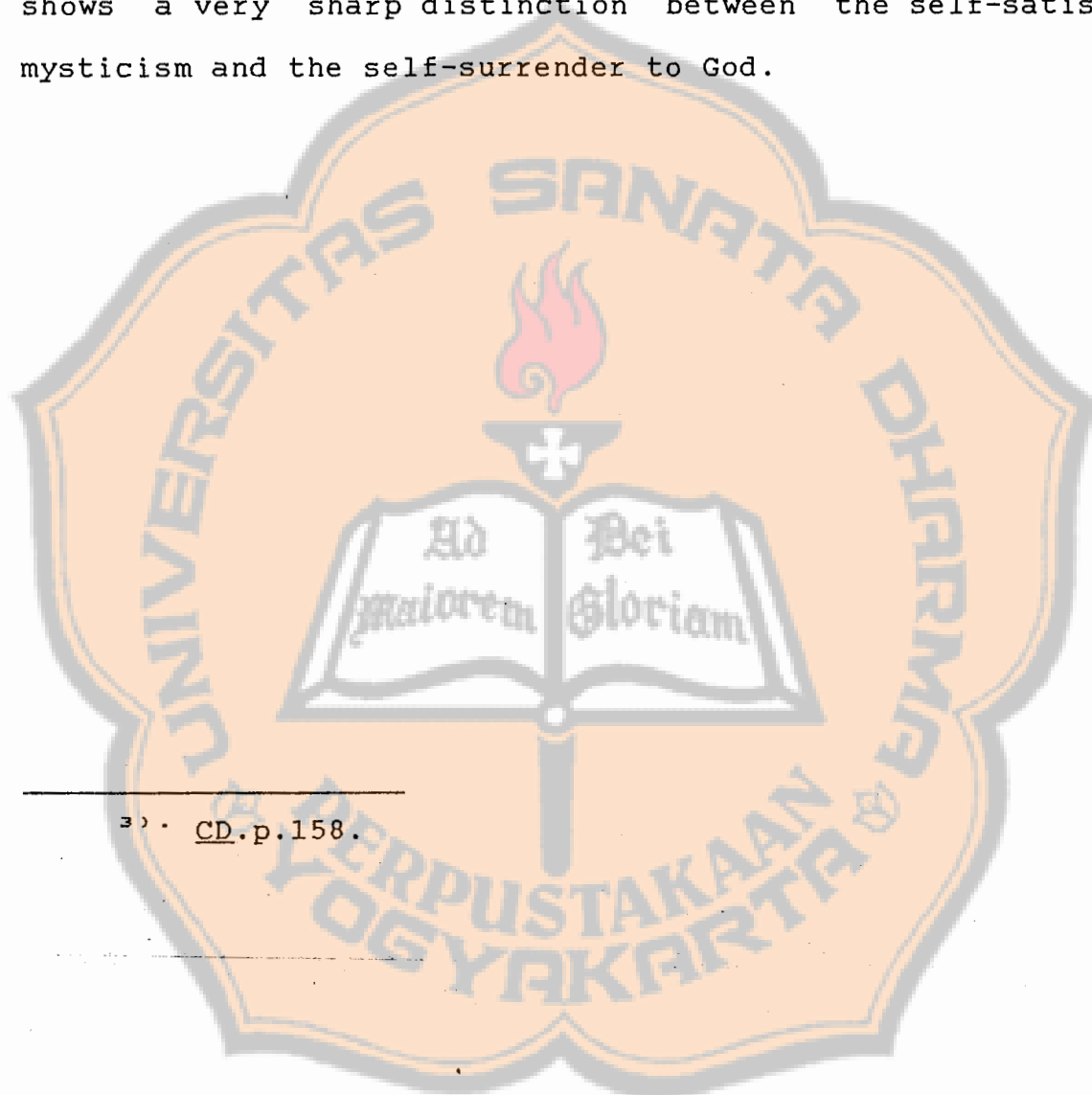
²⁾ Zaehner is very keen to see the contrast between the two different aspects of absoluteness and demonstrate it in the dialogue between Prajapati and Indra. To the description of Prajapati when asked about Brāhman, which is the dreamless sleep, Indra said "Such a man has no present knowledge of himself (ātman) [so that he could say] "This I am", nor for that matter [he has knowledge of] things around him. He becomes as one annihilated. I see nothing enjoyable in that." [Ch.U, 8.11]. See Hin.pp.74-5 and CD.pp.90-91.

similar to both mystical experiences above, for here, too, the soul experiences the timelessness of its essence. There is, however, a particular difference, because in Rāmānuja's view the soul neither isolates itself from all, nor denies the existence of all in its diversity, but integrates all into itself. In positive terms it can be described as a transation of the soul from one abode in which conscious and unconscious being are still mixed, into the "highest abode", that of pure consciousness, Brāhman of the Bhagavad-Gītā. In this state of pure consciousness, the soul gains ātma darśana and can "see all things in one's self" [BG.4,5] or "see all things in one's soul and one's soul in all things" [BG.6,29].

This stage is not yet the goal but only precondition to encounter God, for as Rāmānuja commented on the Bhagavad-Gītā, Zaehner observes, such is comparable only with the "God" of the first six chapters of that book. In such a consideration, the "God" of the Sāṃkhya-Yoga system, the Ívara, the Brāhman of Śankara and any other nominations would simply fall under this category. The "God" of the second part of the Bhagavad-Gītā, who revealed himself in Krishna, in contrast to this includes all other gods and is beyond them, for he is God of love and devotion. There is a passage in Concordant Discord, where Zaehner cites Rāmānuja's comments on the last verse of the sixth chapter of Bhagavad-Gītā, on the characters of his God.

"His divine form is the depository of all radiance, loveliness, fragrance, delicacy, beauty, and youth - desirable, congruous, uniform, unthinkable, divine, marvellous, eternal, indefectible, perfect. His essence and nature are not to be limited by word or thought. He is an ocean of boundless compassion, moral excellence, tenderness, generosity, and sovereignty, the refuge of the whole world without distinction of persons. The one ocean of tenderness to all who resort to him, he takes away the sorrows of his devotees"[Rāmānuja on Bhagavad-Gītā 6,47].³⁾

In front of this God of love, the human soul is not to affirm its own self but to surrender, for according to Rāmānuja God is the source of souls. Surrender would mean nothing but orienting itself to the source from which it has gained its own substance. Such an attitude is exactly opposing that of the Sāṃkhya-Yoga and the Advaita Vedānta, and of course, shows a very sharp distinction between the self-satisfied mysticism and the self-surrender to God.



³⁾ CD.p.158.

PART THREE

CRITICAL ANALYSIS AND EVALUATIONS



Introduction

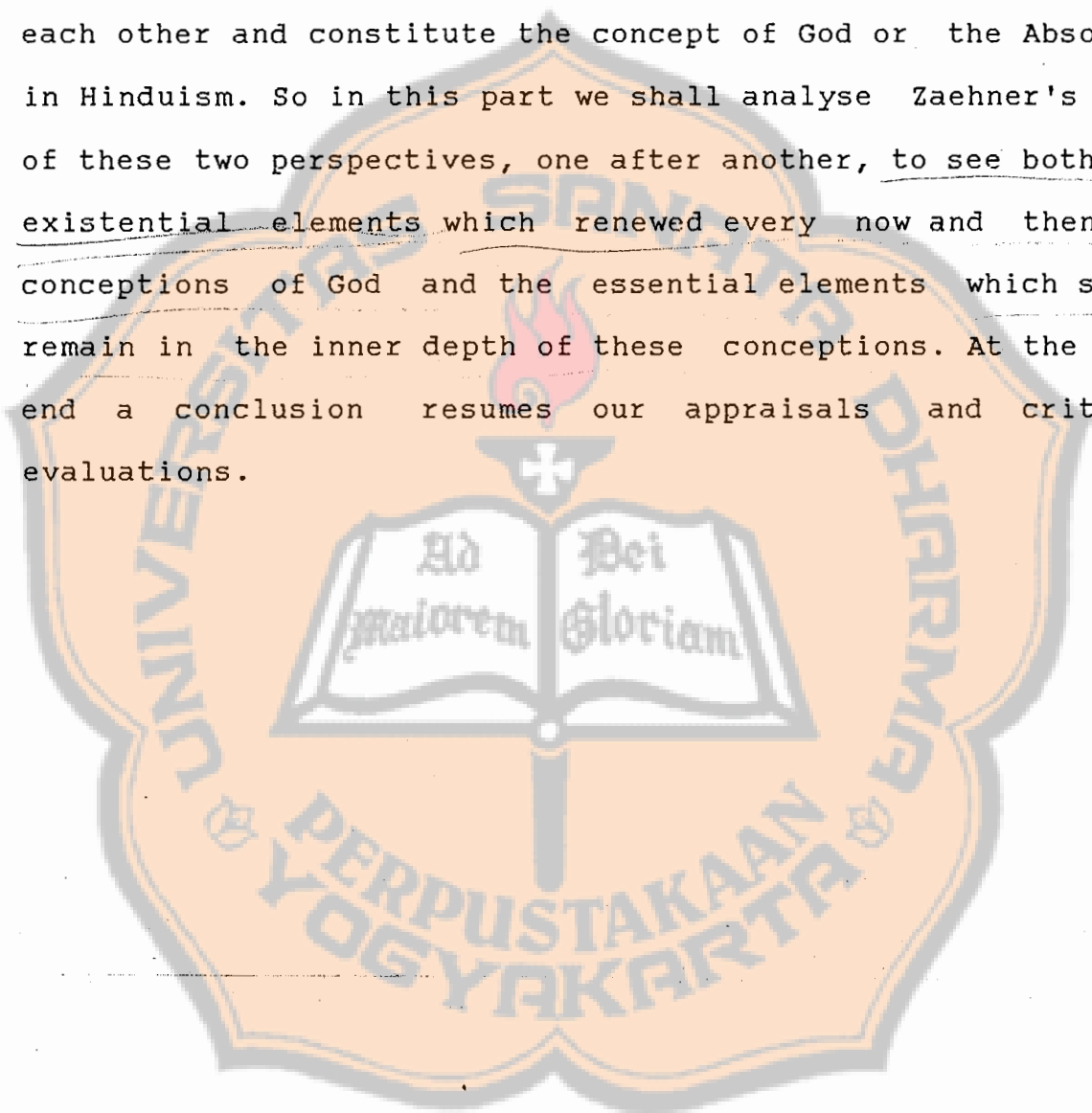
In this last part we shall analyse Zaehner's views on God in Hinduism, which we have explained so far throughout the chapters of the two earlier parts of our treatise. In so doing we shall have to give our appraisals and critical evaluations as well. We have showed earlier, how the conception of God or the Absolute in Hinduism can be studied in two different ways; one by presenting the conceptions of God or the Absolute that develops throughout the formulations of the Scriptures according to the different periods, the other by sticking to the analysis in the discussions on God or the Absolute of the three prominent philosophical schools, more or less disregarding their historical aspects. Hence we can characterize these two approaches as historically phenomenological and systematically philosophical. Although they follow two different ways in approaching God in Hinduism, they contribute to one and the same belief that is Hinduism.

In rather the same manner, we shall put Zaehner's view on God in Hinduism and our evaluations, in this last analysis, in two different perspectives. In the first chapter of our analysis, his views on God in Hinduism is put in the perspective of religious evolution. This would suit the historical context of our observations. In any given religion, which claims to be living one, the development of

concept of God is not
essential.

conceptions as the token of their beliefs is a matter of importance. This would also include the conceptions of God. In the following chapter, in contrast to the first, Zaehner's views on God in Hinduism is put in the perspective of religious constancy. Again in any given religion, certain doctrines are to be retained, in order to maintain the originality or the orthodoxy of that religion. These doctrines are considered as the formulations that reveal the eternal truth and therefore cannot change.

Our analysis of these two perspectives is based on Zaehner's two different views of God, that of religious traditions and that of philosophical systems which complement each other and constitute the concept of God or the Absolute in Hinduism. So in this part we shall analyse Zaehner's view of these two perspectives, one after another, to see both the existential elements which renewed every now and then the conceptions of God and the essential elements which still remain in the inner depth of these conceptions. At the very end a conclusion resumes our appraisals and critical evaluations.



CHAPTER I : GOD IN HINDUISM IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF RELIGIOUS DEVELOPMENT

1. Introduction

This chapter deals with the first perspective from which to analyse Zaehner's views on "God" in Hinduism in the context of religious tradition. Hinduism as any living culture has taken form over a long period of time and like any other culture the growth of Hinduism in its first steps raises many problems. It is not our concern now to answer such questions regarding, for example, the origin of this culture or how it was formulated and defined for the first time as Hinduism. Yet we can easily notice that Hindu religion (or religions) take(s) part in the long expanded growth of this culture, with laborious formation of its Scriptures. Religion is a part of the growth of the culture. Viewed in this perspective, our perception of "God" in Hinduism becomes very meaningful.

In Hinduism, the perception of "God" is to be considered quite particular, for there is an inner dynamic which characterises the growth of religion to the point of permitting radical transformations every now and then. This dynamic, as we observed from Zaehner's views, could be defined as: 1). The alternation between mythical and philosophical characteristics of "God" throughout the growth of Hindu Scriptures or, in Zaehner's own expression, the alternation between "demythologization" and

"remythologisation" of "God"; 2). The growth of "God" as is indicated by the shifts of his names in the Scriptures; 3) Finally Zaehner is convinced that there is a progression towards a typical Hindu monotheism which finds its clearest formulation in the Bhagavad-Gītā. These three phenomena will be analysed one after another in the following passages.

2. Demythologisation - Remythologisation

To begin with, it is worthwhile, when dealing with the significance of myth in Hinduism to recall for a moment Zaehner's particularity in his approach to the phenomenon of religion. In many of his works, we can distinctly notice his attempts to avoid mere objective exposition. Hence also in the subject of myths of "God". Unfortunately except on the six specifically mentioned gods of the Vedas observed in Chapter I of the first part of our work, we scarcely have any observation of Zaehner on the myths of "God". Zaehner has obviously no interest in studies of myths as such, although he has a great esteem for religious myths as we shall explain below. He remarks that "God" in Hinduism grew out of an alternation of mythological and metaphysical characteristics. Without denying the fact that metaphysics plays an important role in the growth of Hinduism, Zaehner insists that myths are never eliminated from its beliefs. Myths, too, are an element no less important than philosophy for a growing

religion; such are what he also sees in Hinduism. We shall proceed with his treatment of this subject.

2.1. The Problematics of Myth

Ever since the advent of science in the seventeenth century, myths have been rejected as works of superstition, primitive, illogical and unscientific. The presumptuous scientism of former centuries received strong reactions from many scholars of the studies of religion since the early part of this century. Sir Frazer was among the first scholars who reacted against critics who depreciated religion with regard to science. In his grandiose work on magic and religion, The Golden Bough, he showed the scientific tendency is not a recent phenomenon or a token of modernity, so to speak; it was present in the primitive mind as well. Magic, Frazer remarks, is not an element of primitive religion but a pseudo science in the primitive life, for the magicians believed that certain performances with certain spells caused inevitably certain effects, without the need for the intervention of any supernatural or spiritual agency; there is an affinity between knowing certain laws and mastering them for certain purposes as in science.¹⁾ This small hint on

¹⁾ J.G. Frazer, The Golden Bough, abridged edition, (1922) 1987, p.49. Frazer, however, reminds us that magic, although it has affinity with science, "...is a false science for the primitive magician knows magic only its practical side; he never analyses the mental processes on which his practice is based, never reflects on the abstract principles

magic induces us to study myth which, from the point of view of those same scientists of former centuries, is the fruit of primitive minds. Myth was no less controversial than magic among the scholars in the beginning of our century.

Susanne Langer, who was interested in the study of the growth of the primitive human mind, sees myth as the effort through mental acts to liberate oneself from symptomatic unconscious activity. In myth Langer saw the manifestation of the craving for life and of the fear of death. But already the primitive myths are to be distinguished from mere fairy tales, for according to her, though both are based on the same experiences, yet they function diversely, for myth, in contrast to fairy tale, does not try to escape from daily frustration, but to sustain the life itself.²⁾ If it is so, myth could be accordingly germinal both to science and religion, for the substratum of the human mentality in myth is not yet specified.

Researches on myths and primitive life, which in their development concern the study of religion in general, tend to open towards two different approaches: one puts the stress on the historicity of any given religion, the other, on the contrary, on its essentiality. But phenomenology of religion,

involved in his actions." *Op.cit*, p.11.

²⁾ - Susan K. Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, (1942), 1957, p.175.

a new discipline that has grown since the beginning of this century has opened our eyes to the richness of symbolism in the myths of the early religions, Hinduism included. Phenomenology of Religion corrects the bias of the presumptuous scientism of former centuries which tends to depreciate the so-called "primitive" religions. Scientism has gone too far from their competency by viewing the "primitive" phenomena with its modern but uncritical categories, and as such its ratiocination is anachronistic and deceptional.

The new approach would be that "primitive" phenomena be analysed empathically according to the context of primitive mentality. Hence they have their own prime categories. So, according to Eliade, for example, one among the proponents of this discipline, myth does not deal with the reality of our everyday life of ordinary time but with that of the "sacred time". Myth narrates the story of the beginning of reality itself, either as a whole (Cosmos) or as fragments (an island, a species of plant, a particular kind of human behaviour, an institution, etc), through the deeds of Supernatural Beings. It becomes, accordingly, exemplary.³⁾ But of its characteristics, myth remains considered as both "true" for it concerns realities, and "sacred" for it concerns the Supernatural.

³⁾ Eliade, M., Myth and Reality, New York, 1963, pp.5-6.

Zaehner, however, is not so interested in myths as such. In his *Hinduism* he analyses very discreetly the six mentioned gods of the Vedas. This seems to be the consequence of his position from the outset, when he states that he will only present the "fine essence that he considers to be the changeless ground from which the proliferating jungle that seems to be Hinduism grows".⁴ There are obvious differences in approach on myths between that of the phenomenologists, for example, Mircea Eliade, and the orientalists like J. Gonda, Oldenberg and others, who dedicated themselves much to the study of myth. The phenomenologists work on the field of religious meaning and significance, whereas the orientalists on the field of historical development. The position of Zaehner himself with regard to this study seems to comprise both; but we will have to define it later in our evaluation at the end of our analysis. For the moment, we leave behind the problem of myth in order to see how Zaehner proceeds.

2.2. The purport of Demythologization

"In the West, since Bultmann, demythologisation has been all the rage", Zaehner said.⁵ Bultmann in many of his works launched the idea which then became well known as "demythologisation". His idea, to some extent, shares the

⁴ · Hin. p.3

⁵ · CD.p.116.

interests of many scholars who work in the study of religious phenomena of primitive peoples. But different from the phenomenologists and the orientalists, his is another discipline. Bultmann's concern is not so much for the reality of the myths themselves, as for their message for modern people. What he tries to do is to relate old messages to the modern mind. He does not offer an analysis of the ancient myths but a "hermeneutics", which by peeling off the mythical elements, so to speak, one can find the kernel of the story, of which the message should remain real. Bultmann's competence is biblical theology and with "demythologisation" he intends to open a new path in interpreting the Scriptures which are works of pre-scientism and therefore not free from mythological bias. In his view, demythologisation is a hermeneutical process which questions statements or mythological texts in their real sense.⁶⁾ In other words, the problem of "demythologisation" is the problem of communication between two very different cultures or backgrounds in which religious messages play a part. Is such

⁶⁾ Bultmann said, "Par démythologisation j'entends un procédé herméneutique qui interroge les énonces ou les textes mythologiques sur leur sens réel..." But he added, "...Il est donc présupposé que le mythe parle d'une réalité, mais de manière inadéquate. Est également présupposé une compréhension déterminée de la réalité." Bultmann, R., Foi et Compréhension, éschatologie et démythologisation (trad. par Andre Malet), Paris, 1969 (1960), p.384. Would the phenomenologist add that "parle ...de manière inadéquate"? This can still be argued; anyhow, Bultmann is not a phenomenologist as such.

communication possible? Is there any real content on the basis of those myths which can be comprehended? If it is possible, how is this to be presented in modern concepts?'' We are not in a position to answer Bultmann's problem here, but we only want to show the problem of myths from his viewpoint, since Zaehner himself was also interested in it. It is quite puzzling at first glance that Zaehner who has no interest in old myths of Hindu devas, for the sake of the "essentials", does not share in Bultmann's enthusiasm in "demythologizing" texts. Zaehner's position seems to be very tricky on this particular subject and he would rather be at ease with the Hindu attitude which avoids "either\or" and prefer correspondence, analogy and interconnexion.^{a)}

* His position could be defined as seeing myths in terms of their dynamics, or in another words, myths in his view only have importance in terms of their evolvement throughout the development of a religion, such as seen in Hinduism. This seems wholly in accord with his reluctance for a simple etymological approach to the subject of Hindu gods. Hence, it is not so surprising that although he himself did not put considerable study on myths of the single devas, he could easily claim that religions always need myths of some sort.^{a)}

⁷⁾ · Idem, p.105.

^{a)} · Hin.p.18.

^{a)} · CD.pp.155-6.

Zaehner is very much aware, for example, that although according to the phenomenologists the essence of myths in the Greek world are similar to that in the Hindu, yet with regard to their role, they are quite different. Greek and India are in two different contexts for myths. The Greek myths disappeared when metaphysics, the "logos", was born, whereas in India myths were integrated in the canonical Scriptures and became the standard for philosophical orthodoxy. Such is what Zaehner insisted mostly in his Our Savage God, when he compared the religious phenomena of those two different backgrounds.¹⁰⁾ This would mean that in the Greek myths, the integration of natural powers did not arrive at the personalisation of a "God", but to metaphysical abstraction. Hence pre-Socratic works never attained the status of Holy Scriptures.¹¹⁾

2.3. Remythologisation

What Zaehner rejected in "demythologisation" is the radical wiping out of the mythical elements from a given religion, insisting that myths are indispensable for living religions. Evidently such a criticism would not be attributed to Bultmann, for he speaks in terms of his contemporaries. By

¹⁰⁾ See mostly chapter 2, "The Ghost of Heraclitus", chapter 3, "The Phantom of Parmenides" and chapter 4, "The Perils of Plato".

¹¹⁾ HMM.p.36

Bultman and Zaehner agree on demythologization?

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"demythologisation" Bultmann would not simply mean denying the importance of "myth", for such would be a great misunderstanding, confusing his thoughts with former scientists for whom myths remained simply expressions of "primitive" people. And yet Zaehner himself remarked that "demythologisation" also evolved in India in certain periods. The Upanishads are obviously the fruits of such events, for compared to the previous works, Upanishads bear more substance in their concept of Brāhman, comparable in the West only to the concept of God of the Pseudo-Dionysius or Nicolas de Cusa.¹²⁾ In this sense, the conceptions of the Absolute in the late Vedas would have already been the beginning of "demythologisation", for they began to invent concepts more abstract than before. This is already a step toward the more definitive philosophy of the Upanishads. But, as Zaehner believed, it is certain that Hinduism did not offer only "demythologisation", because certain periods showed the rise of "remythologisation". But if "demythologisation" is, as

¹²⁾ - CD.p.117; Pseudo-Dionysius and Nicholas of Cusa are both dear to Zaehner and very often cited by him. Pseudo-Dionysius was a mystic who lived c.500 century A.D. He is known only from his works The Celestial Hierarchy, The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy, The Divine Names and Mystical Theology and becomes exemplary in showing the hiddenness and therefore unconceivableness of God; For Zaehner's reference to him see CD.pp.3; 141; 157; 276; 305. Similarly Nicholas of Cusa, philosopher and cardinal of the Roman Church in the fifteenth century liked to see God, in his work Docta Ignorantia, in undescrivable terms; See CD.pp. 79; 131; 163; 203; 215; 385.

Zaehner seems to mean, the step forward toward the philosophical mind, i.e. toward "Logos", Zaehner's idea of "remythologisation" in Hinduism is not simply the return of "Mythos", for this would mean a step backward. There is a return of mythical elements in the conception of "God", but there is also a step forward. Alternation between these two events is what characterizes the growth of God in Hinduism. So the history of "God" or gods in Hinduism can be described as evolving between these two waves. Generally speaking, it started from myths of individual polytheistic gods to a sophisticated abstract but more substantial concept of Brāhman through certain intermediate forms of "creators" like Prajāpati, Viśvakarman and Purusha of the late Vedas and the Brāhmanas. This is followed by the personalisation of god Rudra-Śiva in the end of the Upanishads and the more definitive personal god Vishnu who incarnates himself in Krishna. The continuation of this process, we have already seen, is the "remythologisation with a vengeance" as Zaehner expresses it, of the Epic and the Purānas¹³ with the rise of the personal god, whether Vishnu or Śiva. In this last progression "myth" seems to be meant as "super Logos", in the sense that this personal God, whether Śiva or Vishnu, is beyond but comprises the imperishable Brāhman. In this account we need to notice Zaehner's distinction between "God"

¹³. CD. p.117.

in devotional literature and that in the Indian theology, such as Śiva in the Saiva Siddhanta in the South India, for it is this second case, I think, that Zaehner would consider seriously the term "re-mythologisation".¹⁴ Their new "myths" transcend the substance of the impersonal Absolute. It is not a case of simply returning to the previous "myth"; rather while still insisting on the mythical element there also grows a totally new dimension. "Demythologisation" in India does not stop the progress of "mythologisation", but they form two sides of a dialectic. In this, the two elements of religion, belief in god and knowledge of him, devotion and insight, by extension "bhakti yoga" and "jñāna yoga" alternate one after another.

As such "demythologisation" and "re-mythologisation" need not necessarily characterise the changing period of Hinduism, for already in the mythological gods of the Vedas itself, some attempts at "demythologisation" had already taken place. The clearest case regards the myth of Indra. According to Zaehner, among the three interpretations of the myth of Indra, one could be considered as somewhat "historical". In this interpretation, Indra who gained the epithet "Vṛtrahan", slayer of Vṛtra, was simply a warrior-god of the Aryans. In

¹⁴ Zaehner basing his analysis of this sect on the work of Father Dhavamony, comes to appreciate it as the "crowning achievement" of Indian spirituality, because it seems to be quite free from the pervasive pantheism which characterises the Upanishads in general. See CD.p.164.

smashing the fortresses of Vṛtra and releasing waters and cattle, this interpretation has it that Indra simply destroyed the mountains, which were the fortresses of the enemies of the Aryans, and released the rivers of the Indus valley. The cattle that were released also were real cattle.¹⁵ There is no clear indication of mythical phenomenon in this story. This would be a rather revolutionary interpretation but, on the other hand, Zaehner seems to lack the proofs needed to raise his interpretation into the level of evidence.

Zaehner himself never defined "myth", but were we to define it in the context of his thoughts, we could say that, first of all, he characterised "myth" as an event that happened not only in terms of sacred time, i.e. in "illo tempore" or immemorial time, but also in terms of ^{sacred} space, i.e. on a "cosmic scale" not determined by a certain place such as at a particular point of "history". This we could derived mainly from his interpretation of the Vedic conception of creation. In "myths", space and time are out of the question. In his conviction of the alternations between "demythologisation" and "remythologisation" that evolved in Hinduism, Zaehner would say that the problematic of "myth" is not concerned simply with "how" primitive men formulated their first ideas of reality, but with the "what" of the

¹⁵. Hin.p.23.

the substance
being

reality itself, which is the thoroughgoing subject of their preoccupation. This is consistent with his views on the growth of "God" in Hinduism, which cannot be simplified as the problematic of conceptualisation of characteristics of the natural power in names, but the whole concern of belief and living with true gods. This is what he would mean by the searching for God in Hinduism.

3. The Growth of God

We will proceed with this analysis in three steps; the relationship between God's name and its significance, the growth of God as indicated by the inventions of new names, which reaches its peak in the concept of Brāhman.

3.1. God's name and its significance

It can not be denied that a name is very significant in the context of religion. But gods' names are the result of a long process. Agreeing with van der Leeuw, the pace-maker of phenomenology of religion, we can say that, in the context of religion, names originally did not refer to persons or individuals, but were only creations of forms for Power and Will. Only later did gods as individuals and their myths come out of these names. The importance of forming power and will into names is, according to him, to enable man to deal with these deities, to live with them, come to understanding and -

through magic - even to dominate them.¹⁶⁾ It is then more for a practical reason than for a philosophical one and does not seem too far from the mentality of "do ut des" principle, in the sense that to gain something from this deity, a certain action should be performed with respect to his name disregarding the individuals.¹⁷⁾ For Max Müller, too, in Hinduism devatas (deities) primarily refer not to gods as such but either to things or to persons that the Hindus would worship in their hymns.¹⁸⁾ Only later when devas came to be

¹⁶⁾ G. van der Leeuw, Religion in Essence and Manifestation, (translated by J.E. Turner), New Jersey, 1986, pp.147-158.

¹⁷⁾ Such a common attitude in the early Vedic religion was manifested obviously from their daily practices, mostly in relation with their domestic rites; J.Gonda, Les Religions de l'Inde, vol.I, Paris, 1962, p.130.

¹⁸⁾ "Consultons les Védas: tous les hymnes sont adresses, d'après les anciens théologiens indiens, à certain devatâs. Ce mot répond pour le sens et pour la racine au mot divinité; mais dans les hymnes mêmes il ne paraît jamais dans ce sens. Le concept abstrait de divinité n'était pas encore formé. Les vieux commentateurs Hindous eux-mêmes nous disent que par devatâ ils entendent simplement la chose ou la personne à qui l'hymne s'adresse, l'objet de l'hymne, tandis qu'ils appellent Rishi ou voyant le sujet de l'homme, celui qui s'adresse à cette chose ou à cette personne..." Max Müller, Origin et Développement de la Religion, p.180 ff. This we can connect to what Müller states in his criticism of De Brosses who in his Du Culte des Dieux fétiches generalised all primitive religions, except the Jews, as fétiches. According to him, De Brosses did not distinguish between "physiolatrie", "zoolatrie" and "fétichisme" properly so-called. For Müller "fétiches" are not necessarily primitive and in the case of India, devatâs. Though they do not refer to gods in the beginning, they are not necessarily "fétiches", for they do not refer to concrete things. Idem, p.91.

used in the Vedas was the devata able to indicate divinity, as a generalisation for gods. Hence it was power that that name conveyed and which gave it its first significance. The substance of the name was added or created only later.

Therefore, names or characterisations came earlier than the deities themselves. A phenomenologist like Van der Leeuw also goes obviously in this direction when he states that "the name at first borne by the divinity is just as general and collective as is the divinity itself; it is not yet a proper name, but merely adjectival".¹⁹⁾ In relation to power and will, Leeuw added, "the name assigns to power and will a definite and some settled content, and is therefore by no means any abstraction." But Leeuw's views clearly diverge from Max Müller, in that the latter applied to his naturalist theory, narrowing the nature of "gods" and excluding them from any reference other than natural phenomena, whereas powers and nature, in the context of Leeuw's reasoning, could be correlative but do not seem to be necessarily coextensive. In the context of naturalist theory, even if they are not tangible, as Müller would like to characterise them, "Gods" are concrete and observable for they deal with natural powers. J.Gonda, too, in one of his works analyses the relationship that exists between the divine names and power.

¹⁹⁾ G. van der Leeuw, Ibidem, translated by J.E. Turner, New Jersey, 1986, p.148.

Yet he does not so much refer to the power that those names convey as to the power that could be gained from them.²⁰. In one case or the other, we perceive here the significance of divine names in Hinduism with respect to power.

Zaehner is quite clear when he states that all theories are legitimate and valuable to the measure of their own field, but they would not give a perfect picture of "Gods", unless they were combined. This is not so much astounding. For Zaehner it is not a matter of choosing either\or but of constituting for an integral view, e.g. philological, sociological, ethnological, sociological, and phenomenological.

Next, he furthers the analysis as such, by choosing from the earlier Vedas six gods out of the thirty-three which were mentioned by Yajnavalkya in the Brihadāranyaka Upanishad [3,9,2], who were traditionally believed to be the numbers of existant gods. These six important gods had been discerned in Chapter One of the first part of our work. Zaehner lists them in couples: Agni-Soma, Varuna-Indra, and Rudra-Vishnu.

²⁰. Gonda among others states, "...For a right understanding of the names of divine powers in connection with the belief in the ability and readiness of these powers to help man in some special or other are often supposed to act in accordance with the meaning of the names by which they are chiefly characterized.." See J. Gonda, Notes on Names and the Name of God in Ancient India, Amsterdam, London, 1970, p.20 ff.

To some among the many gods of the Vedas, the naturalist theory can likely be applied. Agni is a god with significance that can be derived directly from the characters of its name, fire, the most important of which, in the religious context, is consuming the sacrifice. Hence Agni corresponds aptly with Soma, the name indicating a certain plant which produces the material for sacrifice. Both gods are close to nature.

To some gods the etymological approach is complementary to the naturalist theory. Varuna falls into this category, for Varuna can be traced from the root "vri", which means to cover. Varuna is the sky god who, like the sky itself, envelops or covers the whole universe and because the stars are his eyes, he is, by extension, a god who controls and watches the world. He is the guardian of the law or rta. As to the name of Indra, it could come from the word "indha" which means "kindler". Indeed Indra, as Zaehner had also observed, as god of the warriors in contrast to Varuna, god of the Brāhman class,²¹⁾ is a "kindler". Here etymological approach can be at work, but it becomes evident that this approach falls short of covering all the characteristics of Indra, the most popular god and with very many descriptions

²¹⁾ Hin. p.24.

in the Vedas.²²⁾ Rudra etymologically comes from the root "rud" which means red. Oldenberg, who observes quite considerably the characteristics of this god, remarks that this color in the Vedas is very much related to death and all the terrible things.²³⁾ Such is the image of Rudra.

With Vishnu, the things become more difficult. As Zaehner observed, Vishnu was very little whorshiped during the Vedic times. We do not have even enough traces regarding the etymological source of his name. Oldenberg does not clasiffy him among the natural gods, for he does not represent any natural phenomenon. With Vishnu it is only his actions that we can observe, for he is said to pass over the three worlds.²⁴⁾ But already in the late Vedas it is evident that an etymological approach is no longer applicable to the ever-growing God. Names such as Purusha, Viśvakarman, Prajāpati, do not refer any longer to the individual natural powers but to the essence of those powers, the central and unitary potency, above the single powers. There grows a certain

²²⁾ Stuttley, Margaret and James., A Dictionary of Hinduism, p.116. The Stuttleys, however, mention that this approach is philologically wrong, though psychologically right.

²³⁾ "...die rote Farbe hangt mit Tod und allem Schrecklichen zusammen: rot sind die Kleider des zum Tode Verurteilen; aus roten Blumen besteht der Totenkranz; rote Geratschaften werden bei todlichem Zauber verwandt...." H. Oldenberg, Die Religion des Veda, p. 216-7.

²⁴⁾ See, Oldenberg, H., Die Religion des Veda, Berlin, p.228.

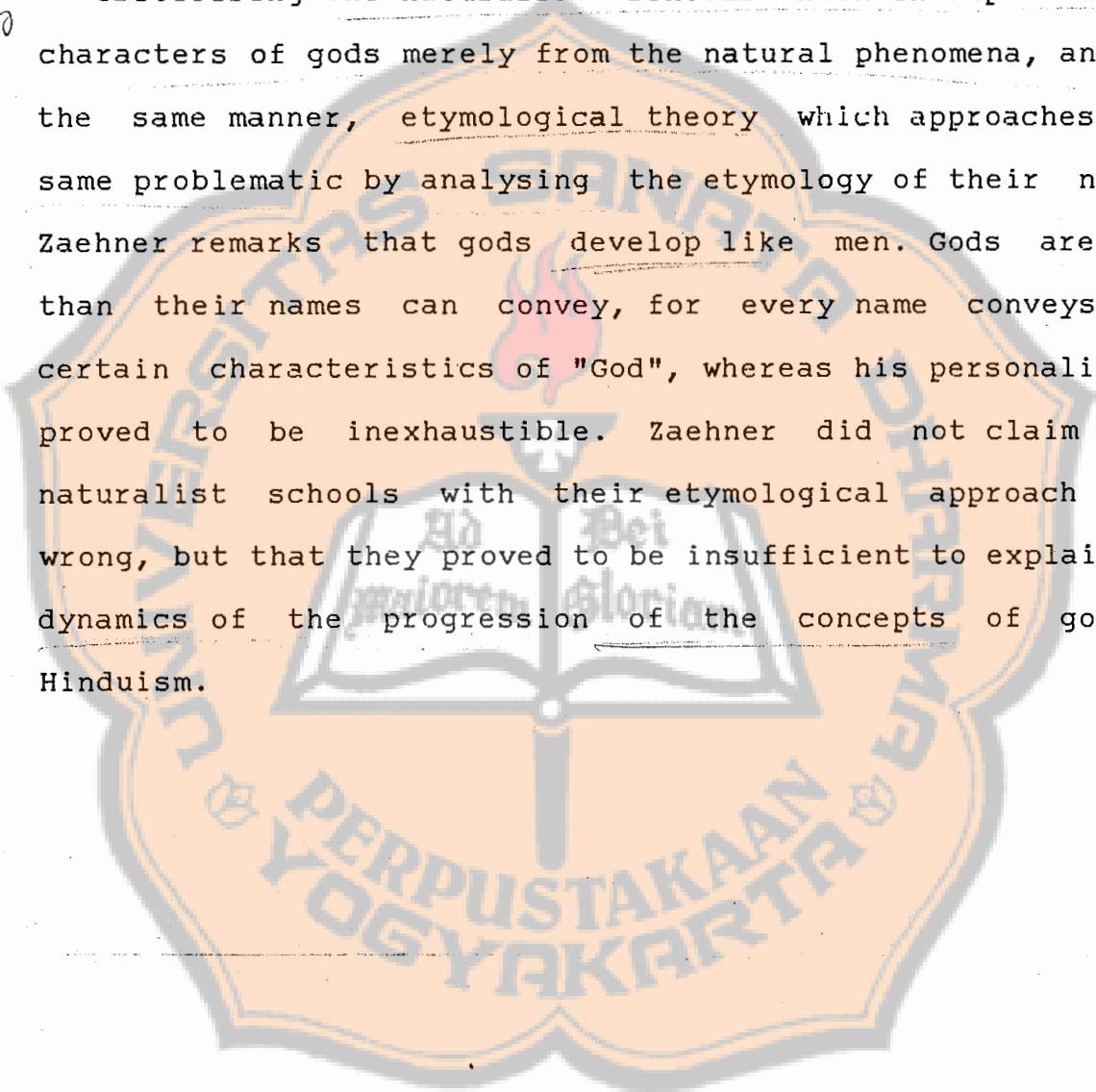
character which transcends the others. Here begins the abstraction.

In this, I think that Zaehner would see that the early Vedic religion starts from giving emphasis to the different functions indicated by the different characteristics of polytheistic gods, which is germinal (or potential) to the growth either of the impersonal unitarian principle or of a personal god. From this we see that Zaehner's concern lay mostly in the dynamic of the growth of gods by the shift of their names.

3.2. Inventions of new Names of God

Criticising the naturalist schools which interpreted the characters of gods merely from the natural phenomena, and, in the same manner, etymological theory which approaches the same problematic by analysing the etymology of their names, Zaehner remarks that gods develop like men. Gods are more than their names can convey, for every name conveys only certain characteristics of "God", whereas his personality is proved to be inexhaustible. Zaehner did not claim that naturalist schools with their etymological approach were wrong, but that they proved to be insufficient to explain the dynamics of the progression of the concepts of god in Hinduism.

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In his theory, Max Müller stated that Vedic gods were worshipped one after another alternately; this is what he called Henotheism or Kathenotheism. Yet the development of Vedic gods is more than this, for with the shift from one Scripture to another the relevance of any god's name is such, that some given names disappeared completely and other new names were invented. This is no more than and does not necessarily go counter to the theory of Kathenotheism for it deals no longer with mere single gods in one part of the Vedic period (i.e. Samhitās), in which Müller's theory seems to place itself, but with the growth of God in the whole Vedic period. In terms of the long progression of the Scriptures, Zaehner is obviously convinced that new inventions of gods' names do not retain the same beliefs; these were not merely new interpretations of the same reality. There is a radical change in renaming the natural potencies and it is true that Hinduism offered a wholly new "God" every time the shift took place from one Scripture to another: from the single names of gods or devas (Agni, Soma, Indra, Varuna, Vishnu, Śiva, for example) of the earlier Vedas to the abstract cosmic names of the late Vedas (Viśvakarman, Prajāpati, Purusha); from those varieties of names of gods in the later Vedas to the dominant single name (Brāhman) of the Brāhmanas and Upanishads or to the personal figure (Rudra-Śiva) of the Śvetāśvatara Upanishad, and from

this to the "God of love" (Krishna) of the Bhagavad-Gītā and the popular gods (Brahmā, Śiva, Viṣṇu) of the Epics and the Purānas. Such radical changes are made possible in Hinduism, I think, for two reasons which are interdependent. In the first place it is because Zaehner is very much convinced that "God" in Hinduism as such is not enclosed in the essential dogmas.²⁵⁾ So the Hindus have very much freedom to conceive their "God" without the risk of being expelled from the bosom of orthodoxy itself. Secondly, unlike Judaism or any originally Semitic religion, Hinduism has a very particular concept of revelation. Revelation in Hinduism is never conceived of as an action that was executed from above by a certain transcendent agent, through one (or more) certain person(s) as transmitter(s) in certain times, but rather the action itself which had already been working and taking place since the beginning of time and throughout tradition.²⁶⁾ It

²⁵⁾ "...but unlike Judaism, ...Hinduism is quite free from any dogmatic affirmations concerning the nature of God, and the core of religion is never felt to depend on the existence or non-existence of God, or on whether there is one God or many; for it is perfectly possible to be a good Hindu whether one's personal views incline towards monism, monotheism, polytheism, or even atheism. This is not what ultimately matters." Hin. p.2

²⁶⁾ The clearest way to see the characteristics of Hindu revelation is by contrasting it to revelation in Islam, for both could represent respectively the distinction, made by Zaehner, of the two great families of religions, mystical and prophetic. Father Ary Roest Crollius who took inspiration from Zaehner's insight on this distinction, elaborates the meaning of word in the experience of revelation in the Scriptures of both religions. In terms of the function of the word in the Hindu religion, he characterises Hindu revelation

is, therefore, a matter of whether man experiences it, rather than whether a certain "God" concedes it. This stress on human experience which occupied the whole tenor of Hinduism convinces Zaehner that to anyone who has been privileged with such experiences, the Scriptures would be more a "confirmation" of what they have already experienced, rather than a "revelation", in the sense of something unveiled that had been previously hidden.²⁷⁾ Thus in the strict sense of the term, there is no revelation in Hinduism. From the fact that Hinduism is very keen on the God's immanence, "illumination", that is the discovery from within one's self, in many cases would seem be more appropriate than "revelation".

3.3. Magic and the Depersonalization of God ?

The growth of gods toward a more unitarian transcendent principle is characterized also by the development of the

as "...the experience of a divine Presence which is inherent to the word as its transcendental reality. The word here rests in itself, and its movement is only a return to the origin..." Ary Roest Crollius, The Word in the Experience of Revelation in Qur'an and Hindu Scriptures, Documenta Missionalia n.8, Roma, 1974, p.242.

²⁷⁾ - AST.p.170. Moreover Vedas, as we have learned, are more aptly understood as that which was heard than that which was seen. "...Le mot Veda signifie savoir. C'est un savoir que l'on acquiert par l'oreille, non par les yeux. Au lieu de: 'Il est écrit' (comme en d'autre documents religieux), les textes portent: 'il est oui.' C'est 'un oui-dire sacre'." Felicien, Challaye, Les Philosophes de l'Inde, Paris, 1956, p.10.

power that might be gained from these gods. We have observed that in the Atharva Veda, magic is common thing. The other Vedas, too, are not wholly exempted from magical tendency. We learned from Zaehner, for example, that in the Rig-Veda the fabrication of a certain drink in the Soma cult was considered due to the interference of god Soma himself in the whole process.²⁸⁾ This effected a real potency to the drink. This magical tone grew stronger throughout the development of their conception of "God". Earlier it was stated that the Brāhmanic cults exalted all sacrifices into one great sacrifice that gave an overwhelming effect not only to each person but to the whole of society, even to the whole universe. This is what happened with the aśvamedha, the horse sacrifice based on the Purusha-sūkta.

Hence, the more abstractly and inclusively the gods are conceived, the more overwhelming were the magical effects that could result from their cult. Brāhmanism is, of course, the peak of this magical tendency in terms of cult, for according to their cult, it is the power of creation which was executed through the sacrifice. This tendency, in fact, had been anticipated by some inventions of new abstract names in the late Vedas, such as Prajāpati ("Lord of Creatures"), Viśvakarman (the "All-maker") and Purusha (the "Primal Man"), which in the five important hymns indicate no longer merely a

²⁸⁾ Hin. p.21

single natural phenomenon, but the essence of nature itself. Among these hymns, the Purusha-sūkta is the most prominent and introduced the idea of the horse sacrifice in Brāhmanism. The horse sacrifices were to be carried out by slaughtering a horse, the significance of which is not only "symbolic" of the dismembering Purusha, but also "magical". This means that, by the horse sacrifice, the priest actually shared in the dismembering of the Purusha which had the magical effect of re-creating or renewing the whole of the universe. The essence of magic in this sense is that by "knowing of this process he becomes it."²⁹

Zaehner saw clearly in this line the development of the relation between name and power. In the Upanishads, time and again we find Zaehner's insistence on the pre-eminence of Brāhman as the term for the Absolute.³⁰ But Brāhman is not a proper "name" in a rather personal sense of Viśvakarman or Purusha of the late Vedas. With the invention of Brāhman there grew a very delicate problem concerning the meaning of this term. There was one strong tendency to the depersonalization of the absolute power which implied in the religious life. Magic ended by the time of Brāhmanas and

²⁹ - CD. p.68

³⁰ - In terms of elevation of some impersonal forces, Zaehner said: "...it is largely a matter of chance that brāhman won the day rather than 'breath' or 'food' both of which are repeatedly extolled as the 'highest' in the earlier Upanishads." Hin.p.46.

culminated in terms of cult, only to begin again in the Upanishads in more sophisticated terms. Already in Brāhmanism the Brāhman priests gained a prominent position in society precisely because they were privileged to know the sacred name "Brāhman". In the Upanishads this is still to be developed.

In the beginning of the Upanishads, Brāhman is not the only term, for there are others like Ātman and Purusha. In the early Upanishads the three were used interchangeably and could mean either the essence of the human soul or the ground of the whole universe.³¹⁾ But through the development of the Upanishads, Brāhman became definitely a term that described the Absolute, both the source and the ground of the whole universe. Ātman remains as the essence of the human soul. With the Māndūkya Upanishad, of which the most important doctrine is identification of Ātman with Brāhman, Zaehner saw the greatest identification of all, when the essence of the human soul identifies itself with the ground of the universe. The way to such an identification had been long paved by the Brāhmanas and the Upanishads.³²⁾ This is not, however, the

³¹⁾ - Hin. p. 49-50 "...Brāhman - Ātman - Purusha: these three terms came to mean the same two things at the end of the period covered by the Brāhmanas and at the beginning of the Upanishadic era: all three can mean either the essence of the human soul, which, because it has its being outside time, is immortal, or the changeless ground of the universe which is at the same time the source of all change..."

³²⁾ - Hin. p. 213 } "In the two earliest Upanishads, the Por. U. & Ch. U., this close connexion is particularly apparent, and it is very clear from these treatises that the final Upanishadic identification of the human soul (Ātman) with the Absolute (Brāhman) develops out of the purely magical identifications of details of the sacrifice with the Absolute in the Brāhmanas." *Handwritten note:* vent upan →

*Identification in the Up. between
Atman & Brahman is mystical
not magical*

whole of Hinduism, not even the whole of the Upanishads, as some might erroneously think.

What does Zaehner really mean with "magic"? Indeed Hinduism is "permeated through and through with magic", Zaehner once remarks, "and it is, quite naturally, this magical element that has attracted the attention of the psychologists."³³ But as to what he really meant by "magic", like in the case of "myth", Zaehner never defines it categorically. This is one among the difficulties to understand Zaehner's treatment, for he often uses common terms or words but gives a rather particular meaning. By "magic", he seems to mean any act of identifying of the self with God or the Absolute in many different levels. Sometimes he uses the term "sympathetic magic"³⁴ which reminds us immediately to Frazer's conception. As such Zaehner would use the term not in the context of the "Law of Contact" but the "Law of Similarity".³⁵ Such is Zaehner's view with regard to the Brāhmanic texts and by inference the monistic Upanishads; for he states clearly that the monism of the Upanishads must

³³ · MSP. pp.129-130.

³⁴ · See MSP. p.136

³⁵ · Sir Frazer distinguished the "Sympathetic Magic" into two different types; one is "Homoeopathic Magic" which operates according to the "Law of Similarity", the other is "Contagious Magic" which operates according to the "Law of Contact". In the first case, Frazer said, "the magician infers that he can produce any effect he desires merely by imitating it". The Golden Bough, pp.11 ff.

be seen against the background of this passion for identifications in the Brāhmanas.³⁶⁾ One thing is, however, sure that Zaehner in treating Hinduism remains in the domain of religious experience, for he added, "...there is, however, much more to Hinduism than this: it is not merely a system of magic: it is a religion and as such it has religious as well as psychological values."³⁷⁾ And by religion he considers clearly something dealing with "a changeless, eternal, Being Who sustains and indwells both the universe and the human soul".³⁸⁾ Hence unlike sir Frazer, Zaehner considers "magic" not necessarily irreligious in character.

4. Towards Monotheism

We have observed above the process of depersonalisation from single gods to Brāhman accompanied by the development of the significance of magic. As we mentioned earlier, this is just one trend of Hinduism, beside which there developed many other trends, e.g. the theistic. In Zaehner's views, theism could take different forms like polytheism and katenotheism in the Vedas, pantheism in the Brāhmanas or the early

³⁶⁾ See HS.p.viii "...These identifications, endlessly repeated and endlessly varied, though they seem grotesque to us, are nevertheless the background against which the pantheistic monism of the Upanishads must be seen."

³⁷⁾ MSP.p.130.

³⁸⁾ Idem.

Upanishads,³⁹ and specified monotheism which takes its definitive shape in the Bhagavad-Gitā. But the development of monotheism is very particular in comparison with the other theisms. We shall analyse this theistic trend which characterises also the growth of Hinduism.

4.1. The Notion of One in the Vedas

Max Müller, in his theory of "God" in the early Vedas, proposed what he called Kathenotheism - one God in every time - to refute the arguments both of the polytheism and the monotheism of the Vedas. One passage of the Vedas which raised much controversy in respect to the disposition of the Vedas is the verse in the RigVeda [1.164.46.]. We mentioned it in the first chapter of our treatise. We shall speak of it again, as it is significant to our analysis. The text runs as follows:

"They call it Indra, Mitra, Varuna, or Fire; or again it is the celestial bird Garutma. What is but one the wise call by manifold names."⁴⁰

Many are too ready to hold that this is a clear token of the monotheistic tendency of ancient Hinduism, but Zaehner, not

³⁹. Cf. AST.p.32.

⁴⁰. . See p.e. Hin. pp.19 and 39; AST. p.29; CD. p.62. Yet in none of his treatments of the passage did Zaehner refer to monotheism or to monism.

*His view is to
see context
(more explicit)
that is why it is contrasted
to monism (i.e. as
a false terminal
proposition)* balle. p. 207

seeing even a slight indication of this, refutes such an interpretation. Other scholars also refuted the interpretation, but venture to go the other way around and state that it is an indication of monism. For Zaehner the difference between monotheism and monism is immense; for him, they are poles apart. Those who claimed that the passage is an indication of monism argue with Dandekar that "ekam sad vipra bahudha vadanti" (one that the wise call by manyfold names), far from showing the idea of the process of the creation of the universe, in which the one generates the many, shows even more convincingly the opposite idea of the process of reducing the many into one.⁴¹ In the words of Stutley, it could be stated that "there is only One Principle or Absolute, the sexless, attributeless Real, the Unity containing the world and its myriads of creatures."⁴² In Zaehner's view, both the monotheistic and the monistic interpretations of this passage is an oversimplification, because the existence of a personal "God" is not clearly manifested here.

In the perspective of monism, argues Prof. MacNicol, the idea that each deva is only one "form" of the nameless One, might still be tolerated, but with much distaste. In the

⁴¹ S.N. Dandekar, "God in Hindu Thought", in Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, vol.48-49, 1968, p.440.

⁴² M. Stutley, Hinduism, Northamptonshire, 1985, p.14.

perspective of monotheism of Rāmānuja, however, in which only one God with certain attributes and not another is accepted, such identifying of many devas with the one God would not be tolerable.⁴³⁾ In other words, monotheism is not merely a matter of calling the One different names, but adhering "only" to one personal God. Hence Monotheism is not Kathenotheism.

According to Zaehner, the passage is obscure. It does not express clearly what it means. The Vedas could most likely be germinal to both monism and monotheism, which would become definite only in later period. For Zaehner, the passage does not indicate any clear-cut tendency. The passage could give a subtle hint of the shift of an idea from the importance of individual names to one common characteristic, that is, cosmic power. Zaehner remarks that this cosmic power would be retained throughout the history of the Hindu Scriptures, whether this be called rta, vrata, dharman or dhaman.⁴⁴⁾ Elsewhere he says that the passage is rather insidious but does not seem compatible with the fact that certain gods retain characteristics so distinctive that it would appear immodest to transfer these characteristics to other deities.⁴⁵⁾ It would seem proper, then, to state that the

⁴³⁾ MacNicol, N., Indian Theism, London, 1915, p.102.

⁴⁴⁾ AST.p.31.

⁴⁵⁾ Hin. p.19.

religion of the Vedas is principally polytheistic but often slipped into henotheism. There was as yet no definitive notion as to the absolute one in the Vedas, for one can see the seeds of different systems: pantheism, monism or monotheism.

4.2. The Quest for Monotheism

In a sense, it is true, as many would hold, that Hindu religions developed sporadically and from different sources. Hinduism is no single religion but many religions that grow together. Many are in agreement that the Aryans invaded India in the second millenium before Christ and that their religion then encountered the beliefs of the indigenous people and formed what is now Hinduism. The two basic elements of Hinduism, therefore, can be traced back to these two origins: the Aryans and the Dravidians.⁴⁶⁾ Hinduism could be considered a pot in which different religions grow all together.

⁴⁶⁾ Some, like Pratima Bowes, would classify the origins of Hindu people in three groups rather than two; in addition to the Aryans and the Dravidians, she proposed as the third the aborigines or the tribal peoples "who are said to be of the same racial stock as the Australian aborigines..." Pratiwa Bowes, The Hindu Religious Tradition, a Philosophical Approach, London, 1977, p.3. It is more important, however, to classify which of the elements of Hinduism could be derived from those origins. In this there are not as yet any serious studies.

Even though Hinduism, as a culture or a conglomerate of cultures, should be considered from the time when the Aryans and Dravidians met, yet it is only through the formulations of their ideas that we can learn in terms of philosophy; this means that, beginning from the time when the Vedas were definitely constituted, some centuries after the invasion of the Aryan people, one can see the whole evolution of the conceptions of "God" in Hinduism. Above we have analysed the growing tendency from different single gods into a single absolute power. How did the development of monotheism proceed?

In the myths of the devas, Zaehner sees the competition between Indra and Varuna occupying the sovereignty among the gods. Originally Varuna is older and higher in rank than Indra, for he was counted among the Adityas; he was in fact Aditya "par excellence" and the principal of Asuras. In the Vedas, however, Indra came to replace him as the great God. In this descent of Varuna and the ascent of Indra, Zaehner sees a parallelism in the descent of Chronus, and the ascent of Zeus in Greek mythology.⁴⁷ In Greek mythology this event might be very significant, but not so in the Hindu, for no sooner had Indra held the sovereignty than he was replaced in his turn by the prominence of the sacrifice in the period of Brāhmanas.

⁴⁷. Hin. p. 36.

To show, however, that this event could pave the way to monotheism, Zaehner notes the parallelism that exists between Varuna and Rudra, on the one hand, and Indra and Vishnu, on the other, both with regard to their characteristics, for the latter of these two pairs would be significant for the consideration of monotheism at a later time. In Varuna and Rudra, Zaehner sees similarities in their dreadfulness and, at the same time, their compassion towards man. In this Zaehner would see the characteristics of Śiva in later period in whom opposites meet. In the same manner, Zaehner sees similarities between Indra and Vishnu in their heroism. Vishnu of the Vedas does not as yet reveal Vishnu of the later time, for there are too few hymns about him. By these parallelisms, we can already understand dim traces of the two gods.

Zaehner draws a further parallelism between Rudra of the Vedas and that of the śvetāśvatara Upanishad. In both cases Śiva is just an "epithet" for Rudra, but again in both cases we can already perceive the characteristics of the later Śiva. In the Atharva-Veda, Rudra has already the title of paśupati, the "lord of cattle", a title which is dearest to the Śiva's devotees of later times, for they considered themselves the flock of which Śiva is the Lord. Zaehner also draws attention to the parallelism between these Rudras with

the ithyphallic Yogin of the Harappā seals,⁴⁸ god of the aborigines before the invasion of the Aryans. In the Harappā seals one can find the figure of a Yogin surrounded by some animals, a strong hint obviously to this title of paśupati. Hence he could see the strong affinity between Rudra and the ithyphallic god of the Harappā seals, the most ancient period of the Dravidian culture that could be reached until now. This conservation of the Dravidian element of the conception of "God" in the Scriptures, which captures the teachings of Hinduism, could be seen in this account as a long process of development of the conception of Śiva, a development meriting to be named as tending towards monotheism in the later time.

The Rudra-Śiva of the Śvetāśvatara Upanishad is obviously traceable to the Rudra of the Vedas. In the Vedas, Rudra has little popularity; there are few hymns dedicated to him. But in one of the Brāhmana texts, according to Oldenberg, the mythology has it that Rudra was created from an accumulation of various dreadful characters of gods which were raised against Prajāpati. This latter had to be castigated for his misconduct, but none of the devas was bold enough to face him alone.⁴⁹ These same dreadful elements would be pertinent also to the later Śiva of the Epics and the Purāṇas. The Vedic Rudra was, however, different from that of the

⁴⁸ · Hin.p.34 and 84.

⁴⁹ · Oldenberg, H., Ibidem, pp.216-7.

Śvetāśvatara Upanishad, for the latter was more prominent than the former.

As to the latter Śiva of the Epics and the Purāṇas, his uncanny, paradoxical, and fascinating figure is a combination of the terrible "lord of cattle" (Paśupati) who dwells in mountain and forest and the ithyphallic Yogin of the Harrapā seals. In the Śvetāśvatara Upanishad, Rudra-Śiva had already gained a more prominent place than the Vedic Rudra, but the later Śiva is more elevated than this Rudra-Śiva, for in Rudra the opposites meet but are not yet reconciled, whereas in Śiva all opposites were to meet only to be reconciled and transcended.

With regard to the later Vishnu, Zaehner sees also his affinity to the Vedic Indra and Vishnu. The paralellism in heroism between Indra and Vishnu we have mentioned above. In the Vedas Vishnu shared the unpopularity of Rudra. Hymns to Vishnu were even less than those to Rudra. The only significant hymn that we can find from the Vedas in respect to him is RV.1.154⁶⁴, in which he is said to stride the three worlds. MacDonell views Vishnu as having originally been a sun god; this he explained through those three steps which he identifies with the three positions of the sun: sunrise, zenith, and sunset.⁵⁰ This view is refuted by Keith and

⁵⁰ MacDonell, A History of Sanskrit Literature, London, 1900, p. 80.

Oldenberg. Keith, referring to the Vedas and the Brāhmanas themselves, holds that such a view would be contrary to the reference in the Vedas concerning the nature of the highest place, where Vishnu dwells.⁵¹⁾ Oldenberg adds that if such a view be of any consequence, the night should be also considered one of these positions⁵²⁾. From this point it is obvious that the naturalist theory fails to work in the myth of Vishnu. Oldenberg is convinced that Vishnu's significance lies no more in representing natural phenomena, like the other gods, than his own heroic actions. In this view, Vedic Vishnu shows himself to be an anticipation of the Vishnu of later period, whereas Indra prefigures Vishnu's incarnation which would take a definitive shape in Krishna of the Bhagavad-Gītā.⁵³⁾ In the Bhagavad-Gītā, Krishna's heroism

⁵¹⁾. "...There can be little doubt as to what the three steps are: the later Saṃhitās, the Brāhmanas and Cakapuni, a predecessor of Yaska, agree in equating them with the three divisions of the universe, and the alternative view of Aurnavabha that they correspond with the rising sun, the zenith, and the setting is in flat contradiction with the references of the Vedas to the nature of the highest place." Keith, A. Berriedale, The Religion and Philosophy of the Veda and Upanishads, (first half Harvard Oriental series vo.31), Harvard, 1925, p.108

⁵²⁾. "...Andere erklären Visnu für einen Sonnengott. Die drei Schritte sollen Aufgang, höchsten Stand, Untergang der Sonne bedeuten. Gewisz ist es nicht unmöglich, dass Verdunklungen und Verschiebungen in der Tat ein ursprünglich solarisches Wesen zum vedischen Viṣṇu gewandelt haben: für wahrscheinlich kann ich es nicht halten." Oldenberg, H., Ibidem., p.232

⁵³⁾. Hin.p.35.

transcends the impersonal Brāhman, both in the Upanishadic and the Buddhist sense.

In this treatment we follow Zaehner's observation on the theistic trend in Hinduism. It proceeded from polytheism through the henotheism of the Vedas to reach the more definite monotheism of the last Upanishads and the Bhagavad-Gītā. But whereas the affinities between the ithyphallic god of the Harappā seals, the Rudra of the Vedas and the Śvetāśvatara Upanishad and Śiva of the Purāṇas are quite clear, those between the Vedic Vishnu and the Purāṇic, and between the Vedic Indra and Krishna of the Bhagavad-Gītā are obscure. There are only suggestions of similarity.



CHAPTER II : GOD IN HINDUISM IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF RELIGIOUS CONSTANCY

1. Introduction

In this chapter, our concern is to analyse Zaehner's view on God in Hinduism from the perspective of the religious constancy. In every living religion one can find dogmas or settled doctrines which, among other elements, constitute its truth and therefore can never change. Among these dogmas are usually found the doctrines on God. But in the case of Hinduism there are no dogmas "in stricte sensu", let alone on God. It is true that Hinduism admits some basic elements considered eternally true and as normative for orthodoxy, such as Scriptures and the inner law of dharma. But Scriptures are not dogmas and dharma is not God and therefore they lie out of our account.

What we shall attempt to do in this chapter is to discern the characteristics of God or the Absolute in Hinduism from the perspective of religious constancy. We have observed in the preceding chapter how the idea of God grew throughout the growth of the scriptures. It remains to see, not the individuality, but the substance when the concepts of God or the Absolute in Hinduism are to be discerned. These are the elements which remained stable even though the individuality of God was continuously growing. In our present analysis, they take form as the basic characteristics that God or the Absolute should have as the qualification to merit such a

settled nomination. To those characteristics we shall give our evaluation. Those characteristics which are inherently related to the common attributes of the Absolute like source, origin, ground, or principle of the universe, transcendence or immanence to the the human souls, etc. /qualify axiologically the concepts of God in Hinduism. Since our concern is on these ~~the~~ characteristics, "names" which in principle are something attached to historical perspective, such as Indra, Varuna, Purusha, Isvara, Krishna etc. become irrelevant.

In the case of Hinduism, knowledge of God or the Absolute and his attributes, unlike the Western metaphysic, is quite particular and we need to begin with an analysis of the characteristics of this knowledge. We observe that mysticism is the main subject when Zaehner speaks of Hindu philosophy and, as we have shown in the second part, knowledge of God or\and his attributes can only be derived from philosophies which are based on the mystical experiences. Only after delineating a certain notion of knowledge about God or the Absolute in mysticism can we proceed with the discussion on the two basic notions of the qualifies of God or the Absolute: totality and pre-eminence.

It is true that God in Hinduism is sometimes said to be ineffable and therefore his attributes can not be categorically described. He is nirguna, without

qualification, "neti...neti.." as the Upanishads put it. But such a criticism could be liable only to the knowledge which is typically speculative which claims to define God as He is in Himself. Speaking about God's qualities in mystical terms is more suited to the insights and global views of Hinduism than to discursive thinking. Moreover, Zaehner's approach is not metaphysical but mystical comparative in which speaking of God at the level of human experiences is not without meaning. It is not the concept of God as such, as the former philosophers like to qualify, but rather of God as was experienced in the Hindu mysticisms.

2. Mysticism or Metaphysic ?

In the Greek philosophy the notion of totality is more attached to the metaphysic which is to view the whole of reality as one coherent, systematic and methodic system. There are three elements usually functioning in such a system; God, Nature and human self or soul. In India, however, the notion of totality is searched and discovered through and through by jñāna. But jñāna is not an exclusively mental activity. Its concern is a total liberation from the empirical or phenomenal life, and as such it corresponds to mysticism of which spiritual experiences are of main importance. Given that insight into the totality is to be

gained through such a method, the Indians were not content with metaphysic.

Mysticism, like myth and practically all other religious subjects had for a long time met with suspicion, and was often considered as something dealing with cults, theosophy, abstract ideas of the supernatural.¹⁾ It is unintelligible and therefore exempt from any serious study. Controversies seem to occur more acutely in studies on mysticism than in any other area of religion. Recent studies attempt to appreciate mysticism as a phenomenon of religious experience, but approaches remain divided into two: one from the religious standpoint, the other from, as its proponents would claim, the objectively or purely scientific. This difference of standpoint is closely related to the position of their defenders; whether they themselves were religious believers or unbelievers. In their controversies, however, the two stand points often criticise each other in their extreme forms as dogmatism and scientism. They would be agree, however, in one thing that mysticism is more than merely an indication of uncontrollable feeling. It has even a noetic dimension, as William James characterises it, and could be,

¹⁾ R.M. Jones distinguishes two affiliated German words which have totally different meanings: Mystizismus, which stands for the cult of the supernatural, for theosophical pursuits, for a spiritualistic exploration of psychical research and Mystik, which stands for immediate experience of a divine-human intercourse and relationship. ERE.vol.IX, p.83

therefore, considered as having a certain knowledge, naturally very different from the metaphysical.²⁾ The knowledge derived from the mystical experience is not a system, but a global insight into the totality.

It is not in terms of metaphysics but of mysticism that we could understand Zaehner's view on God in Hinduism and bring it into our critical analysis. As such, we cannot speak about God's existence except in the context of human experience. Yet mysticism in its narrow and exact historical significance is a doctrine of union with the Absolute, said R.M. Jones and as such it follows that a certain metaphysical conception of God is to be implied.³⁾ The particularity of mysticism in Hinduism is that it is not only one religious element among others, but it seems to be the essence of the religion itself. "I have said that Indian religious thinking is mystical through and through,..." Zaehner affirmed.⁴⁾ Such a characteristic of religious thinking in Hinduism is in accord with what scholars commonly hold that philosophy in India is

²⁾ William James indicates four characteristics in mysticism: ineffability, noetic quality, transience and passivity. On the noetic quality James said, "...although so similar to states of feeling, mystical states seem to those who experience them to be also of knowledge. They are states of insight into depths of truth unplumbed by the discursive intellect..." The Varieties of Religious Experience, Harvard, 1985 (1902), p.367.

³⁾ R.M. Jones, "Mysticism" in ERE, vol.IX.p.84

⁴⁾ HMM.p.5.

definition of mysticism in various works.

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concentrated upon spirituality, related intimately to life, introspective and predominantly intuitive. It is not very surprising, then, that in Hinduism mysticism and metaphysics merge with each other, and it is not without reason that MacNicol warns against the danger of mysticism becoming merely metaphysics.⁵⁾ His warning reminds us with much clarity of the criticism launched by Zaehner himself against the medieval Indian philosophers, who with their "pigeon-holed" logic tried to arrange the whole Upanishadic data into a metaphysical system.⁶⁾

What is, then, mysticism for Zaehner? As in the case of myth, Zaehner does not offer any working definition of mysticism, but in one of his works, he gives a very large description of mysticism as "the realization of a union or a unity with or in (or of) something that is enormously, if not infinitely, greater than the empirical self".⁷⁾ If this description is to cover all the experiences of union or unity, and if every mysticism refers to the experience of human self with, in, or of other than this self, it would seem that all types of mysticism fall into one of two categories: one, mysticism concerning God, the other is mysticism concerning "other than God". Elsewhere, Zaehner

⁵⁾ MacNicol, "Hindu Mysticism" in ERE. vol.IX.p.115.

⁶⁾ CD. p.10.

⁷⁾ HMM.p.5 cf. AST.p.171.

himself expresses his preoccupation: "mysticism is the realization of unity; and unless you have a clear idea of what that unity is, you are liable to unite with the most improbable entities".⁸⁾

Put categorically, the problem is one of defining what is this "God" or this "other than God". In the perspective of Christian mysticism, this distinction would characterise the difference between religious and profane or, if we agree with some who would maintain it, pseudo-religious mysticism. However, in the Hindu perspective, in which the concept of God is not the most essential for religion, as we have mentioned, such a distinction would make no sense. On this account, Frits Staal, in one of his works, criticises Zaehner's view on mysticism as preventing an honest and impartial description of different points of view by introducing a classification that reflects Zaehner's own faith.⁹⁾ Similarly, Ninian Smart criticises Zaehner for invalidly imposing Christian theological, philosophical and moral judgments upon non-Christian traditions, "in casu"

⁸⁾ Quoted by Harvey D. Egan, in What are they saying about Mysticism ?, New York, 1982, p.38. In another hint, Harvey D. Egan said that mysticism involves self-emptying in order to be filled. "It matters greatly with what the mystic allows herself to be filled", he said. Harvey D.Egan, Op.cit, p.8.

⁹⁾ Frits Staal, Introduzione allo studio del Misticismo, orientale e occidentale, (trans. by Aldo Giuliani from Exploring Mysticism, 1975), Roma, 1976, pp.74-6.

Hinduism, by interpreting their experience by means of extrinsic criteria.¹⁰⁾

Hence the conception of God or the Absolute in Hinduism should be related exclusively to forms of religious mysticism in contrast to the profane. Many Hindu treatises on God or the Absolute are, however, different from the Western, or more precisely Christian mystical treatises, for in the Hindu treatises God or the Absolute with whom the human soul unites itself had been somewhat generalized and abstracted. In Zaehner's words, the Hindu texts are not actually works of direct experiences, but treatises on the possibilities of mystical experiences and promises of their fruits.¹¹⁾ The Bhagavad-Gītā is one of the clearest examples of this.¹²⁾ It is outside our concern, however, to examine the many mystical

¹⁰⁾ Harvey D.Egan, Ibidem, p.37.

¹¹⁾ Zaehner says: "...When we come to discuss Indian mysticism, we will no longer be speaking entirely in terms of recorded experiences. The Hindu mystical classics are not autobiographical and are not the record of actual experiences undergone by given individuals. They are either mystico-magical tracts like the early Upanishads, or the exposition of mystical doctrines in verse like the later Upanishads and the Bhagavad-Gītā...."MSP.p.130.

¹²⁾ "The Gita, however, only points to the possibility: it is not a mystical treatise in the sense that the Cloud of Unknowing, for example, or the Living Flame of Love, of St. John of the Cross are. The Gita - and indeed almost all the devotional writing of India - speaks of love and the possibility of union; it does not actually describe the dealings of God with the human soul in the language of lived experiences as the Christian mystics do. The Gita offers the promise, not yet the fulfilment". AST.p.179.

treatises of the popular worship in the medievale period,* which some Indian scholars would undoubtedly claim as direct fruits of real experiences. At any rate, it seems clear that Zaehner's observation is confined only to the classical works and does not cover his research into the area of medieval mysticism. Elsewhere he seems only to reassert MacNicol's warning against the danger of reducing mysticism to metaphysics.

To have a proper idea of the forms of Hindu mysticism, we need only to resort to Zaehner's comparative analysis on different types of mysticism, since he never treats Hindu mysticism exclusively. In At Sundry Times (1958), for example, where he compares the two great traditions of the prophetic and mystical religions, he classifies mystics into four: (1) the Samkhya-Yogin type; (2) the nature mystic or pan-en-henic; (3) the theistic mystic and (4) the genuine monist.¹³⁾ It is obvious from the beginning that all the four are applicable to Hindu religions. Yet mysticism, he remarks later, is not exclusively Indian, for Muslims, too, have their mysticism. But in Hindu and Muslim Mysticism (1960), which he dedicated to a comparison between the mysticism of the two religions, he maintain that Muslim mysticism was mainly the result of Indian influence. In treating Hindu religions, however, he discovers that the four types of

¹³⁾. AST.p.172.

mysticism can be reduced into three, considering the mysticism of pure isolation as identical with the monistic at the level of experience. They are simply two different philosophies of one and the same mystical phenomenon. Hence, we actually have only three different mysticisms in Hinduism, which Zaehner then classifies as: (i) the pan-en-henic, now identified with pantheistic, in which the human personality seems to comprise all existence, the 'I am this all' of the Brāhmanas and the early Upanishads, (ii) the realization of undifferentiated unity, however philosophically interpreted; and (iii) the loving dialogue with God which results in transforming union.¹⁴⁾

How would we see this in the context of Hinduism? The pan-en-henic, Zaehner said, is typical of Brāhmanic and early Upanishadic mysticisms, the characteristics of which are found to be similar to those of the nature mystics like Aldous Huxley, Arthur Rimbaud, Richard Jeffries, John Cusance and others. Zaehner maintains that a difference remains, however, in their motivations, for whereas Brāhmanic

¹⁴⁾ See HMM.p.19. In his earlier work Mysticism Sacred and Profane (1957), however, he reserves theistic mysticism to the Christian. "...These three types seem to emerge clearly enough, - the pan-en-henic, the isolation of the 'self', and the return of the 'self' to God....Christians believe that beyond this there is a fourth stage called the Beatific Vision when matter in the shape of the body will share in the general deification, when 'corruptible will put on incorruptible' and the whole man will be transformed in God, and God will be 'all in all'". MSP. p.168

mysticism was an active search for the Absolute, the others were either accidental experiences or, by use of drugs and mescaline, an attempt to find an exstatic state, but not in God or in the peace of prayer. In this, Zaehner distinguishes the religious from the profane. Zaehner's second classification, the realisation of undifferentiated unity, is typical of the Sāṃkhya-Yoga and Advaita Vedānta mystical experiences. Their philosophies are somewhat different, for in the first, unity is gained through the detachment of the uncreated soul or spirit from all that is other than itself, whereas in the second, through the absorption of the uncreated spirit into the ground of one's own soul, both the individual personality and the whole objective world are seen to be entirely obliterated.

3) → The mysticism of dialogue with a personal God in Hinduism found its form in the Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta. From the three different types of mysticism, we can derive three different types of characteristics of God or the Absolute. We shall elaborate this argument in the following passages.

3. The Notion of Totality

Totality is, I think, a qualification applicable to God or the Absolute which is mostly remarkable in the phenomenon of mystical experiences. We shall follow Zaehner's observations on the structure of Hindu mystical experiences out of which

to derive the concepts of God or the Absolute and to analyse his characteristics in terms of the notion of totality. Since Zaehner classifies the Hindu mysticisms into three distinct groups, we shall proceed with our analysis also in three steps: (1) The notion of totality in terms of Nature, (in which we shall analyse the pantheistic and the pan-en-henistic mysticism in order to derive a certain type of characteristic of God or the Absolute;)(2) The notion of totality in terms of human souls, (in which we shall analyse the mysticism of the Sāṃkhya-Yoga and the Advaita Vedānta, in order to derive therefrom a different characteristic of God or the Absolute) and (3) The notion of totality of God both in terms of Nature and human souls (or the analysis of the monotheistic mysticism, out of which to derive again certain characteristics of God.

3.1. The notion of totality in terms of Nature

In the system of Pantheism or Pan-en-henism, the human soul experiences the immensity of all and merges itself into it; its "ego" blurs in identifying with the "ego" of all so that it can say "I am this all". Literary pantheism means "All is God", whereas pan-en-henism means "All in one". Metaphysically, this would indicate two different systems, but like in the case of Sāṃkhya-Yoga and the Advaita Vedānta, Zaehner does not take note of their metaphysical differences.

As a system, pantheism identifies God or the Absolute with

the All in its diversity. Pan-en-henism could similarly be considered a system, although the term is less known than Pantheism, Pan-en-henism, in Zaehner's view, differs from Henotheism, by which Max Müller likes to characterise the Vedic religion. Pan-en-henism is more appropriate to mysticism rather than to worship, because on the one hand the figure of any god, to whom any worship would be addressed, had been completely surpassed and, on the other hand, the consciousness of human immortality began to rise to the surface. Moreover, Pan-en-henism would not exclude the One, whether a new God or any other principle, from the pluriformities of reality, but rather include them as its own extension.¹⁵ To use R.M. Bucke's term, which Zaehner likes to quote, Pan-en-henism is characterised by "cosmic consciousness", by which new perspectives are opened. Hence Pan-en-henism indicates more a system of perception than of ritual.

It becomes evident, then, that by disregarding Pantheism and Pan-en-henism as two different systems Zaehner's concern is not metaphysical knowledge but mystical experience, for in experience the human soul is committed and gets in touch with God or the Absolute itself. One is no longer merely an

¹⁵. By preferring to use panenhenism to pantheism, Zaehner wants actually to avoid the prejudgment of the issue, avoiding the Greek word for god (theos) in the definition. CWH.p.21.

observer, but is oriented to the identification itself. He experiences himself the totality of this universe in its all diversity and loses his own "ego".

* Generally speaking Pantheism can be found in all periods of Indian history of religions, but it especially characterised the development of Brāhmanism and the early Upanishads. Zaehner is convinced of this. In Brāhmanism, he remarks, the horse sacrifice is a ritual celebration to execute a mystical experience of the kind in which the human soul is to be identified with the victim in order to share the overwhelming experience of merging in all. This is also confirmed by the fact that this sacrifice no longer operated on the principle of "do ut des" of god-worship, but had already become an intricate system which could be associated with magic. In the early Upanishads, Zaehner does not see any more ~~strong~~ strong tendency towards sacrificial rites, yet a similar mystical experience remains evident in a quite different formulation, for the sages of the early Upanishads distinguished between the most infinitesimal in the human soul and the infinite of the universe. In the early Upanishads, it was not yet their main concern to distinguish the ground of the universe from the whole universe in all its diversity, spirit from matter. Hence, totality was conceived as a unity of and with all types of diversity. Both in Brāhmanism and the early Upanishads, the human soul was

always conceived of as involved in this unity of diversity, the totality of all reality.

In this type of mystical context, God or the Absolute tends to be understood in terms of his presence in the whole extension of the material world. The richness and variety in the world was very much appreciated because it presents the inexhaustible totality of the Absolute himself. Pantheism is not concerned so much with the distinction between the material and the spiritual, as with the distinction between the most infinitesimal and the infinite, as Zaehner asserts. What is more interesting is the fact that both in the Brāhmanas and in the early Upanishads, reality was viewed according to people's simplest experiences, those of the senses. It is no wonder, then, that naturalist views such that of Max Müller, are ready to be applied to the characteristics of God in the Hinduism of this period. In such an account, one could be mistakenly conclude that God in a pantheistic system was simply identified as the sum total of the whole material world.

In the early Upanishads, according to Zaehner, matter is admitted in their philosophical system. Yet it is not in the sense of the atomism of Demokritos or "prima materia" in Aristotle which needed to be attributed to "forma" in order to constitute a reality. In the Upanishads, matter (pranidhana) is an active substance that evolves and

generates in itself. Very often it is expressed as food or bread, which by being eaten or consumed generates new life. Hence, it is closer to the Marxist interpretation of dialectic materialism than to Greek philosophy.

Put in this context, we can understand the notion of totality in Brāhman in the Upanishads when the relation between the whole universe and Brāhman is exemplified as the ^{asal/source} sea and rivers, salt and water, or again the spider and its web.¹⁶⁾ In the Sāṃkhya system, prakṛti does not submit to puruṣa, but is an independent substance, uncreated and having its own law of evolution. Unlike Manicheism, the Sāṃkhya system does not assign matter to the evil power. Matter, prakṛti or Nature in itself is neutral, or even considered an occasion for liberation of the soul. Yet in Hindu systems like Sāṃkhya-Yoga, matter does not pertain to the reign of timelessness and spacelessness. In the monistic system of Śankara, matter is subjected to the relative view, the view of unliberated man. Hence, in both systems (Sāṃkhya and Śankara), matter does not take virtual part in the essence of the Absolute. Even if not wholly excluded from It, matter in those two systems still is not taken seriously into account.

Returning to pantheism, we have to repeat Zaehner's criticism that this type of mysticism is characterised by its

¹⁶⁾. See CD. p.93.

confusion. In this mysticism, the human soul expands its consciousness, and its individuality fades away into boundless being of Nature. Instead of being integrated in itself, the soul merges into the unidentified ego of Nature and loses its individuality. In terms of the Jungian psychology that Zaehner seems to favor, the human soul as the center of consciousness diffuses into what Jung called "collective unconsciousness". If Brāhmanism and the early Upanishads were typically pantheistic, as Zaehner believes, it would imply that such a characteristic of diffused consciousness, or better collective consciousness, would also be applicable to its God or Absolute with which the human soul identifies itself. It is, in Jung's psychology, the most virtual and archaic consciousness of human beings. A God or the Absolute who is bereft of integrity, stuffed only with blended consciousness appears as a mere sum total of the whole of Nature and is very far from the idea of personality. This fact, I think, and not so much the fact that materiality could partake of the characteristics of God or the Absolute, which renders His image less impressive, for consciousness and integrity seems to Zaehner to be a matter of great importance to any idea of God or the Absolute.

3.2. The notion of totality in terms of the human souls

If in Brāhmanism and the early Upanishads speculation on Nature as the expansion of the Absolute took place, it is

with the self that the later Upanishads are mainly concerned. The former deals with the expansion of the One, whether conceived as God or the Absolute, into what is outside itself, the latter deals with what is inside itself. So too, the human soul draws its attention in these two directions. Citing the Katha Upanishad [4,1], Zaehner wrote

"The self-existent (Lord) bored holes facing the outside world; Therefore a man looks outward, not into (him)self. A certain sage, in search of immortality, turned his eyes inwards and saw the self within."¹⁷⁾

In pantheistic mysticism, the human soul see what is outside of itself; in the second type of mysticism, the human soul sees what is inside itself and realizes its own prime characteristics. This is what the Yogins and the Advaita Vedāntists discovered. The difference between their philosophies we have observed at length in the preceding chapters. What is interesting is that although their philosophies are different, Zaehner is convinced, that in terms of experience, they are similar. Zaehner defines their mysticism as leading into the depth of the consciousness down to the ground or the essence of the soul, or, to use Zaehner's own word, to "its own ontological centre". This experience can be explained in different doctrines of liberation or moksha. In the Buddhist doctrine, to take an example from the heterodox Hinduism which Zaehner likes to

¹⁷⁾ Quoted by Zaehner in CD.p.89.

compare, especially to the perspective of the Bhagavad-Gītā, moksha is achieved in negative sense, i.e. by the extinction of the self. Yet such a performance can only be understood in the perspective of another "self" more profound and transcending phenomenal existence.

Hence, in this second type of Hindu mysticism, we can assert that the totality is seen as the integration of self mainly, as Zaehner's examples show, by detaching the self from its surroundings, from its material adjuncts or from the phenomenal world. Integration cannot, therefore, be separated from the retraction of the self into its own essence. In such a view, Zaehner, following the experience of many mystics, asserts that there should actually be two different selves in a human being, the one which used to be called the "lower self", "empirical ego", the other "the real self", the "true self", the "self-in-itself", or the "higher self". This is to say, in the empirical plane, that the isolation of the self from its material adjuncts in the Sāṃkhya-Yoga is not different from the extinction of the "empirical ego" of the Buddhists,¹⁸⁾ or the transcending of the "lower self" into

¹⁸⁾ That Zaehner equates in general the mysticism of Buddhism with the "isolation" of the Sāṃkhya-Yoga system can also be observed from an article, in which he states that Nirvāna is the isolation from Samsāra and in this sense salvation is, therefore, not of the world, but from the world. R.C. Zaehner. "Mysticism without Love" in Religious Studies, 10, Sept. 1974, p.258-9. The article was later compiled in The City within the Heart, London, 1980, a posthumous edition.

the "higher one" and achieving the absolute One as is in the Advaita Vedānta. Of course, in the perspective of such a liberation, God never takes part, because all are wholly human affairs. God of some sort can help as a means, like in Sāṃkhya-Yoga, but proves to be irrelevant once the liberation is gained.

What we have to take into account, even if such forms of mysticism do not gain union with God, is to see the proper characteristics of Absoluteness, which is implied in this conception of totality, whether it is in the "isolated One" of the Sāṃkhya-Yoga or the "Absolute One" of the Vedantists. What immediately impresses us is the immortality of the soul, now becoming or realizing the Absolute itself, liberated from ever-changing matter. This is not a fusion with the extension of matter but a transcendence of it. What is more persistently lasting than a substance that is unspoiled by matter? As such, the soul becomes dispassionate and unaffected by the essence of change. This is what Zaehner calls the realization of undifferentiated unity. This is a unity in itself in contrast to a union with something else. In Sāṃkhya-Yoga, the isolated soul finds its aloofness from all, so that nothing else has any significance except his own existence, even God or Iśvara, being just another puruṣa becomes insignificant. Similarly in the Advaita or monism, the liberated soul, content with its own existence,

disregards any other existences, since they are merely illusion.

There seems to be a dilemma in Zaehner's treatment on the subject of this inner mysticism. On the one hand, Zaehner sees that these forms of mysticism (Sāṃkhya-Yoga, Buddhism, the monism of the later Upanishads and the Advaita Vedānta) can only be understood as preparative to the theistic mysticism of the Bhagavad-Gītā, in which moksha is understood as achieving the state of liberation, but still exempted from the encounter with a personal God. Hence in the general plan, they can be regarded as equal. At the metaphysical level, however, Zaehner is well aware that there are great differences among them. We have seen earlier how Sāṃkhya-Yoga, the Buddhistic and the Upanishadic doctrines were welcomed by the Bhagavad-Gītā but modified somehow into its own purpose. In the first six chapters of the Bhagavad-Gītā liberation is described as the attainment by the soul of its own essence or to its own ground through yoga. However, Yoga can mean both the effort to gain this liberation and its fruit, which is a state of indifference.¹⁹ // It does not seem to matter Zaehner so much whether they gain it through detachment from the material world, by extinction of the "empirical ego", or again through "self realization". The problem which could rise from this is whether different ways

¹⁹. ZBG.p.24-5.

imply different goals of attainment? Moreover, as is well formulated by Zaehner himself, there are two different currents of mysticism which prescind from the idea of: "integration" and "isolation". These are to be distinguished clearly from "diffusion" of the self into the Nature in the pantheistic mysticism which we have seen above.

In terms of the liberation in the Bhagavad-Gītā, Zaehner could only take "integration" into account, as the word yoga (to yoke) itself would indicate. How is this to be reconciled with the "isolation" of the soul? Does it not sound paradoxical?²⁰ But Yoga as the effort to gain liberation is also understood as "spiritual exercises", and by "spiritual" one could mean that any implications with regard to the significance of matter are to be avoided. In this sense, perhaps Zaehner could relate the two directions "integration" and "isolation" into one perspective, for the avoidance of materiality is even more emphasized in the mysticism of "isolation". In Hindu mysticism, however, avoidance of matter is not based on the prejudgment that the matter is evil, but rather that it is a hindrance to the integration of the self.

²⁰ In the Bhagavad-Gītā, the Buddhistic elements also appear ambiguous. Zaehner quote the Bhagavad-Gītā [2,58] to show the Buddhistic element in which the integrated self is assimilated like a tortoise which draws all its limbs into itself. But in another verse [6,23] the Buddhistic element, contrary to the first, is shown to be similar to the Sāṅkhya-Yoga doctrine of the detachment of the self from all its material adjuncts, with its idea of "the unlinking of the link".

Elsewhere Zaehner is also prepared to explain that the liberated purusha is ^(not only) ~~no~~ more than an integrated self in the psychological sense. It is beyond merely psychological phenomena. It is a magical act of transcending the empirical self, and any psychological explanations are insufficient to comprehend the fact.²¹⁾ The immortality of the "liberated self" here corresponds to the transcendence of space and time, hence also away from materiality, to which the "empirical self" is still conditioned.

Once again we have to face the discrepancy between system and experience. As systems, "integration" and "isolation" are two different ways, in experience they could arrive at one and the same goal. As systems, both regard the macrocosmos as something that could be real. It is prakṛti that should either be submitted to the self or be avoided, but once moksha is gained it has no more relevance. Here, as in the first mysticism, the distinction between spirit and matter appears to be irrelevant.

The most remarkable characteristics of the Absolute, derived from this second type of mysticism, which is obviously neither God nor the sum total of material Nature, but the primacy of the Self, are immortality and the transcendence of space and time. As such the Absolute appears as tending more towards the spiritual than in the pantheistic

²¹⁾. MSP. p.129.

system. Such characteristics are very easily acknowledged, also in the later Upanishads, where natural elements are replaced by spiritual ones, sacrificial rites replaced by tapas and austerities, the worship of gods replaced by meditation on Brāhman. Yet the immortality of the Absolute - if it should be the case of these mysticisms, which is characterised by "enstatic" rather than "ecstatic" peace - only means, as Zaehner remarks, the state of eternal death rather than eternal life, for without God, love would be also eliminated.

3.3. The notion of totality in the monotheistic mysticism

In the Hindu monotheistic mysticism, God is held to comprise both Nature and human souls. This is obvious in the system of the Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta which views reality as divided into three categories: the objective world, the spiritual world of eternal selves, and God. But God is the totality, for he is not only one among the three, but the One that comprises the other two. Hence comes the name Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta, non-duality (Advaita) in difference (Viśiṣṭa). In such a view, God can be regarded as the cause of the existence of both Nature and human souls, which could not be the case in the two earlier mysticisms.

By the fact that the whole of Nature is comprised in God as His mode or attribute, Hinduism strongly stresses the

immanence of God.²²⁾ Yet, it cannot be drawn from this that God is therefore simply material, because, despite being himself the cause of emanation of all beings, he is still beyond them. At most, we can only agree with Zaehner in stating that such a view can arrive quite logically at the view that creation "ex nihilo" is not imaginable in Hinduism.²³⁾ In the early Upanishads, rich with expressions concerning the relationship of Brāhman to Nature, we can detect the stress on the immanence of Brāhman in the world through the similes that they develop as the "inner controller" [BA.U.3,7], "small seed" [Ch.U.6,12], "salt" [Ch.U.6,13] etc., and in terms of creation, as the cause of material world, like a spider to its web (or the most imposing simile of womb to all [BG.14,3-4].

In the monotheistic system, it is particularly stressed that God comprises especially human souls. But God is not, again, merely the sum total of human souls, neither the aggregate of liberated human souls - as the Nirvāna of the

²²⁾ That Nature is comprised in the existence of God is not the doctrine only of the Viśistādvaita Vedānta. The traditional Hinduism itself admits the belief that everything emanates from Brāhman and will be absorbed back into Brāhman at the end of the time, for this is the dharma of God himself, to repeat over and over through all the cycles of eternity. See Hin.p.104

* ²³⁾ I do not think that by indicating just one passage from the Chāndoqya Upanishad [6.2.1-2] to refute Zaehner's insistence, Frits Staal can validly change the general impression of emanation as the Hindu view on creation. Frits Staal, Ibidem, p.75.

Buddhist might be, as asserted by Zaehner in his commentary on the Bhagavad-Gītā, - for God is the Person beyond this. But human souls like Nature are certainly caused also by God and will return to him. In the Bhagavad-Gītā, Krishna states this quite distinctly.

Nature and human souls, then, constitute what Rāmānuja calls the "body of the Lord", but this, too, is not yet identical with God. They are only modes of God, parts of God, for just as the body of a man is united with his soul to form one human being, so also the case of the "body of the Lord".

Integration
There is an astounding integrity of God in the constitution of this body which the two earlier mysticisms lacked, because it does not separate the soul from materiality nor confuses it into a conglomerate of unconscious Nature.

fol. p 150
Consciousness
In the Bhagavad-Gītā, Nature, according to Rāmānuja, is not merely a conglomerate of materiality. There is a sense of consciousness which he wanted to stress when he asserted that beyond mere unconscious Nature there exists what the Gītā calls jīva-bhūtam from which Nature maintains its life. This is comparable to the higher self of man on a cosmic scale. Just as the higher self transcends the senses, the mind and the soul, conscious matter or jīva-bhūtam also transcends the whole of unconscious matter.²⁴⁾

²⁴⁾ Cf. pp.150-151 of this work

Hence, over the two earlier types of mysticism, this first stage of liberation in the monotheistic has shown two predominances, one with regard to "integration", the other to "consciousness". "Integration" of the self does not mean, in the context of monotheistic mysticism, merely unity in its own essence but also union with the whole of Nature. In our presentation of Zaehner's view of the Bhagavad-Gītā we learned that "integration" is a key word to explain the meaning of yoga in the course of liberation. Even though, according to him, the soul itself is not the agent of liberation, yet it is endowed with capacity to control mind and senses to gain "integration", which in the Bhagavad-Gītā can be compared to the "fixed still state of Brāhman" [2,72]. Indeed, "integration" is one among the important meanings of yoga in the Bhagavad-Gītā.

As for "consciousness", alluding often to the psychology of Jung, Zaehner intends the characteristic of a true personality. Far from being a state of confusion because of the merging of the subject into the object, as in the case of natural mysticism or the "cosmic consciousness", it is a stage of progression, in which the subject transcends itself and, though conscious of the object, it remains nevertheless unattached to it. Thus "consciousness" can not be separated from "integration". They are interdependent, for as the liberated soul through "integration", which would mean

control over its own faculties, gains the full sense of personality, "consciousness" would contribute the role of controlling the relationship of the soul without itself.

But the more noteworthy distinction of monotheistic mysticism from the other two is the presence of love. Mysticism of "love" is wholly other to such an extent that it transcends the two main ways: "pantheism" and "isolation".²⁵⁾ Love is possible only in monotheistic mysticism, for God, Zaehner said, is love. How love is very much appreciated in this mysticism, could be seen when we presented Zaehner's view of God in the Bhagavad-Gītā and in Rāmānuja's philosophical system. By love, the phenomenon of personal encounter with God is made real and attains full meaning. As "integration" and "consciousness" are both effort and fruit in the perspective of mystical preparation for the encounter with the personal God, so also "love" is both effort and fruit in the perspective of this union with God. In the case

²⁵⁾ In his later writings, Zaehner seems to alternate between viewing the other two mysticisms as being on the same level and viewing them as being of different stages. They are on the same level in that they experience immortality but in different ways, for in "isolation" eternity is isolated from time, whereas in "pantheism" eternity is experienced as suffusing the temporal so that all transient things are seen to be aspects in some sense of the eternal. But they can be seen also as two different stages, for in "pantheism" self and cosmos are identified, whereas in "isolation" self is elevated into another stage of existence. Cf. "Mysticism without Love" in Religious Studies, 10 Sept. 1974, p.258 and "Can Mysticism be Christian?" in New Blackfriars, 46, Oct.1964, p.21;

of "love", the role of God is more clearly shown, for the human effort is aided by God's help and its fruit is the grace that is endowed by this same God. So "love" could be considered also both means and end and in "love", Zaehner says in his comment on the Bhagavad-Gītā, mysticism finds its crown.²⁶⁾

It is not without sense, therefore, that "Integration", "Consciousness" and "Love" are the three principal categories of the totality of liberated souls that Zaehner uses to analyse Hindu mysticisms, thus alluding to the Sat-Cit-Ananda of the Vedānta: Being, Thought and Joy, for are these not an impersonal Trinity himself, "inhering in and absolutely inseparable from the absolute One?"²⁷⁾

4. God in His Pre-eminence

After having examined the characteristics of God or the Absolute derived from the notion of totality dictated by mystical experiences, we proceed now to the subject of the pre-eminence of God or the Absolute. This is to balance the bias that might come from too much stress on immanence, very

²⁶⁾ "...As I grew increasingly familiar with the text... it became ever more insistently clear to me that here was a text the whole purpose of which seemed to me to demonstrate that love of a personal God, so far from being only a convenient preparation for the grand unitary experience of spiritual "liberation" (...) was also the crown of this experience itself which, without it, must remain imperfect." ZBG.p.3

²⁷⁾ CWH. p.141.

often over-emphasized in discussions on mystical experiences. In mystical experiences, the characteristics of God or the Absolute are viewed in the context of His or Its relationship to the liberated souls. As we now proceed, we will try to see the characteristics of God or the Absolute in its own terms.

The problem that arises immediately from this is on the personality or nonpersonality of God or the Absolute, whether He or It deserves that nomination. So far, we have been using both names, God and the Absolute, precisely to avoid any prejudgement. In the previous chapter, we have seen, that both tendencies were developing throughout the history of Hinduism. In this chapter we are to see the two tendencies in the context of an axiological assesment. The problem of the personality of God and the Absolute has been implicit since the early Vedas, when the Hindus, on the one hand, began to recognize the transcendent powers, which were foreign to them and, on the other hand, needed their constant contact with these powers on the basis of familiar relationship.

At first glance, it seems just a matter of choice between those two main characters, since the history of Hinduism offers both possibilities, either of embracing a personal God or of believing in an impersonal Absolute. But religious decision is more than a mere choice "ad libitum", for it considers all the possible implications and Zaehner's analysis on this point is thorough and sharp. As Zaehner

*vivekanjāna = discriminative knowledge
not science of difference*

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observes, Rāmānuja in his system, interpreting the doctrines of the Bhagavad-Gītā, criticised the Śankara school of monism. By monism, Śankara intends to say that reality is One and the diversities of the visible world are only relatively real. This, in Zaehner's analysis, implies in practice that Śankara adheres to viveka-jñāna, the science of difference, in seeing the reality. Rāmānuja's view prevails Śankara's by integrating the two components of the perishable and the imperishable into one constitution, the "body of the Lord", as he called it. God himself, the Lord, is not, however, identified with it, since it is only his body; rather, he surpasses it. Śankara's monism is similar to the dualistic Sāṃkhya-Yoga which adheres the same viveka-jñāna, regarding reality at two different levels. Rāmānuja's view was anticipated by the theistic Śvetāśvatara Upanishad, where it states that God, Rudra-Śiva comprises the perishable and the imperishable, and is still beyond them. So Rāmānuja and the theistic system prevail over the dualistic tendency in viewing reality by adherence to the three categories of reality. This prevalence, as Zaehner demonstrates with much cleverness, lies more on their "way" of viewing reality than on "what" their doctrines state concerning reality, for in scientific consideration the viveka-jñāna would seem inconsistent and imperious.

↳ *by depreciating the other
and claiming himself as preeminence*

To have an idea of how the thing could be more complicated, it is interesting to note that Radhakrishnan on his commentary to the Upanishads, creates not three but four categories of reality: (1) the Absolute, Brāhman; (2) the Creative Spirit, Iśvara; (3) the World-Spirit, Hiranya-Garbha, and (4) the World.²⁸ Of course, such a competition between the "personal" God and the "impersonal" Brāhman for the highest throne by elevating an ever higher position than the previous would appear unhealthy, for it would always be possible to add something or someone higher than the previous, "ad infinitum". Moreover, the personal God of the Śvetāśvatara Upanishad, in Zaehner's account, is completely different from the Creative Spirit, Iśvara as considered above, for he is beyond the identity of Ātman-Brāhman.

We need here to set up certain criteria to settle the highest rank of the divine, of which "excellence" is one of the commonest. Radhakrishnan, in one of his works, held that such "excellence" exists also in Iśvara of the Sāṃkhya-Yoga. Quoting the Yoga-bhāṣya, Radhakrishnan explains that Iśvara's pre-eminence lies in the fact that He is neither equalled or excelled by anything else, for if anything were equal to Him, his pre-eminence would lose its meaning, let alone were

²⁸ Radhakrishnan, The Principal Upanishads, ed. with introduction, text, translation and notes. London, 1953, p.65.

anything to excel Him.²⁹ Such a criterion, however, does not seem to give a sufficient foundation, for in the dualistic system of the Samkhya-Yoga it would sound too exclusive, since the pre-eminence of Iśvara among purushas excludes prakṛti, to which it is wholly foreign. Iśvara is pre-eminent naturally only among purushas but not over prakṛti. Another difficulty rises concerning the monistic system, for it obviously makes no sense to speak about pre-eminence in the context of a reality which is one without a second.

Hence "excellence", as a criterion, does not suffice for analysing the pre-eminence of a personal God or the impersonal Absolute. On the other hand, it would seem that personality or impersonality becomes irrelevant when one enters into mystical experiences with God or the Absolute, for it is no longer concerned with conceivable reality.³⁰ We

²⁹ " ...His pre-eminence is altogether without anything equal to it or excelling it. For, to begin with, it cannot be excelled by any other pre-eminence, since whatever might seem to excel it would itself prove to be that very pre-eminence. Therefore, that is the Iśvara wherein we reach this uttermost limit of pre-eminence. 'Nor, again, is there any pre-eminence equal to his.' Because, when one thing is simultaneously desired by two equals, the one saying, 'Let this be new', and the other saying, 'Let this be old', if the one wins his way, the other fails in his wish and becomes inferior. And two equals cannot obtain the same desired thing simultaneously, since that would be a contradiction in terms. Therefore we maintain that in whomsoever there is a pre-eminence that is neither equalled nor excelled, he is the Iśvara" (YB.i.24 cited by Radhakrishnan, Indian Philosophy, vol.II. p.369)

³⁰ Zaehner writes, "...It is ridiculous to argue, as Christians tend to do, that Brāhman is an impersonal Absolute while Krishna, as Iśvara, the 'Lord', is a highly personal

are reminded of Zaehner's insistence on considering such works as those of Pseudo-Dionysius and Nicholas de Cusa, in the Christian world. Such is also the experience of Meister Eckhart, as Zaehner sees it, when he tried to settle the question of pre-eminence by considering the Godhead as Nothing, that is, a dark abyss without bottom. But, unlike Śankara, who in practice would hold that liberation is simply a complete and utter dissociation from all that is other than the eternal "self", Zaehner considers such an experience, in Eckhart's terms, only a grasping of "God in His unity and in His solitude". It does not yet achieve "God qua God", for this last is never reached by human experience except through a self-resignation and divine grace.³¹⁾

But Zaehner can see still another criterion. In the context of God's personality, dialogue and encounter are made possible, and this leads, as we have seen, to the realization

God, for what they seem to be arguing is that because Brāhman is of neuter gender in Sanskrit it must therefore be impersonal. To this one can only reply that on these premises the Holy Spirit in Christianity must be both personal and impersonal, both masculine, feminine, and neuter - masculine in Latin, feminine in Hebrew, and neuter in Greek; and with none of these purely symbolic representations would I disagree. For does not the Śvetāśvatara Upanishad say: 'Thou art woman, thou art man: thou art lad and the maiden too'[4,3]? And then again, as if to right the balance, 'It is not male, not female, nor yet hermaphrodite'[5,10]. All this talk of safeguarding the personality of either God or man means very little indeed when we begin to concern ourselves with mystical religion." CD.p.141.

³¹⁾ - MSP.pp.181-3.

of "Love" in which the human soul sees Another as its partner. God is always greater than the human soul, and the human soul can only be dependent on, and receptive to, God, to accept God and to be acted upon by Him. In such a proceeding, the human soul could play only the female role in its relationship with God. Male and female, by which Jung is intent on explaining the roles of the partnership between God and the soul, as animus and anima, are, however, the only symbols of a good relationship.³²⁾ This is no longer more simply an "integration" but goes beyond it, for "integration" presumed as a condition to encounter with God is only executed by the soul in its own terms, whereas partnership exists in the relationship of two persons. This is a state of union not merely with the "image of God" but with God himself, of which the monists are deprived.³³⁾

In the context of impersonality, on the contrary, one can perceive human soul as identifying itself as the Absolute. There is no longer a sense of Love, for there is no God to whom "love" is addressed. There is no sense of progression since moksha or "liberation" is gained by the "realization of oneself" which means that the ideal and the real are present in the human soul. In Zaehner's term, it would be closer to the idea of eternal death rather than eternal life.

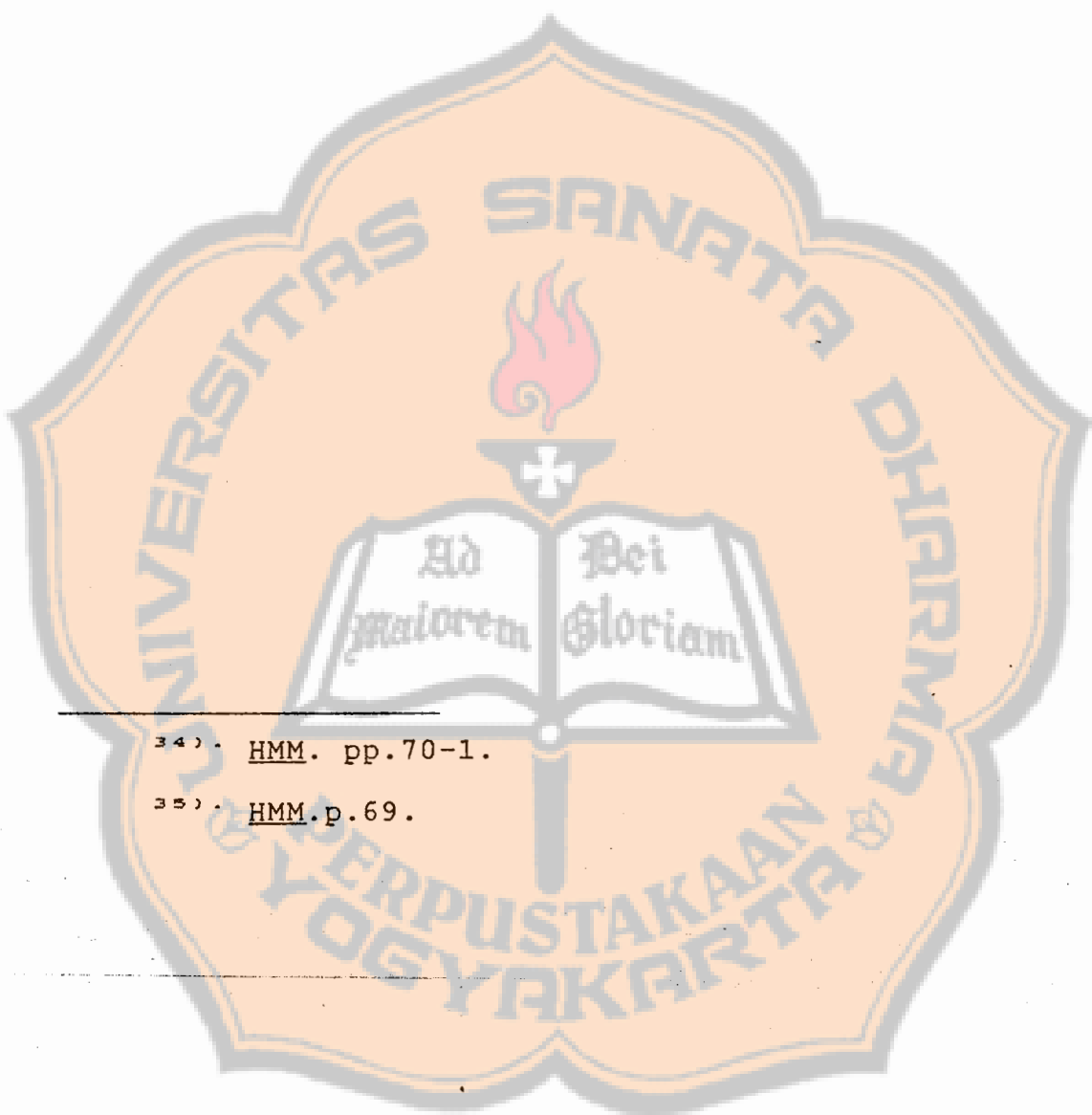
³²⁾ . MSP. p.113.

³³⁾ . MSP. p.120-1.

There is a great difference between "liberation" in terms of its relation to the impersonal Brāhman and in terms of its relation to the personal God, for whereas the liberated man actually "becomes" Brāhman in the first, he merely "approaches" God in the latter.³⁴⁾ In the Bhagavad-Gītā the pre-eminence of the personal God over the Absolute impersonal Brāhman is revealed, for Krishna, as personal God, asserts his supremacy over the impersonal and indescribable Brāhman, to become which or to realize oneself as which had been the aim of the Upanishadic sages.³⁵⁾

³⁴⁾ . HMM. pp.70-1.

³⁵⁾ . HMM.p.69.



CHAPTER III : CRITICAL EVALUATION

In the two preceding chapters we have analyzed Zaehner's approach in presenting God in Hinduism. His view on God fulfills the two different perspectives which are interrelated and complement each other: the perspective of religious development and the perspective of religious constancy. By way of critical evaluation we shall close our present work. Our intention is threefold: After presenting a synthetical resumé, we shall present Zaehner's merits which are concerned mostly with his brilliant arguments in bringing out the prominence of the monotheistic God in Hinduism. This is followed by our presentation of his demerits or rather the problematics with which his approach is mostly concerned.

1. Synthetical Resumé

Viewed in the perspective of religious development, God in Hinduism appears ever growing throughout the shifts of scriptures which are manifested in the development of the religious traditions. This growth is characterized by alternation of "mythical" and "philosophical" traits, so to speak. Hinduism permits such an alternation, considering philosophy and religion not as two separate areas but as two that are linked. This alternation which forms a dialectical process, Zaehner calls "demythologization" and "remythologization".

In the context of a growing religion such as Hinduism, Zaehner's view on the growth of God makes some sense. Nowhere in religions is the encounter between man and God or the Absolute ever so intimate at the risk of being confused, for one can perceive either that Hindu people developed the "concepts" of God alongside of the history of their scriptures and hence were somewhat deprived of a real contact with Him, or that God Himself was really present in the growth of their religious "experiences" at the risk of confusing the essence of man with that of God.

Such is the tendency of the Hindus' dealing with their God or the Absolute. Quite understandably, Indian philosophy is never wholly detached from religious belief and philosophy on God would demand accordingly a mystical dimension. In such an approach the human experience of the transcendent forms an element of prime importance; in this we discern no longer categories of "true concepts" but rather of "genuine experiences". Hence God or the Absolute is not conceived of except in His relation to the human soul. Therefore in order to highlight his point of view, Zaehner is compelled to explore Hindu mystical experiences.

Zaehner's view on this approach ranges between two other determining positions. On the one hand he has to defend the credibility of mystical cognizance against the imperious metaphysicians who deprecate mysticism as exercising

exclusive categories for judgment and as manifesting, therefore, only partial truth.¹⁾ While on the other he has to prevent mysticism from a simple-minded attitude which claims mysticism as a common language for all kinds of ecstatic experiences or that it indicates the same or similar phenomenon everywhere.²⁾ Mysticism is, then, in Zaehner's view, a particular religious phenomenon; they could be very different from each other, according to the different experiences and doctrinal conditioning, and they could yet be comparatively analyzable on the basis of "the seemingly similar phenomena in parallel traditions".³⁾ From this one can draw distinctive characteristics of the different experiences. So, according to Zaehner, as there are sacred and profane mysticisms, there are also many different religious mysticisms even in a given religion like Hinduism.

In the perspective of the religious development, we can see the shifts of God's names or God's terms each time a new

¹⁾ Such criticism is clearly adressed, p.e. to M. Frijhof Schuon who in his Transcendent Unity of Religions makes such a distinction between a higher "metaphysic" and a lower "religious" knowledge. See MSP. p.30

²⁾ Such a criticism is adressed to Huxley's The Doors of Perception, which according to Zaehner resumed all opinion now being common which would believe that mysticisms everywhere were all the same. See the introduction to Mysticism Sacred and Profane, p.ix.

³⁾ See his Introduction to the Mysticism, Sacred and Profane. In dealing with the category he warns, however, not "to expect to make out a watertight case to which we could affix that satisfying formulae." MSP.p.xi

period began and thereby the shift of the significance that each name conveyed. These shifts could be considered in accordance with the growth of Hinduism in its inmost life. Such a growth would allow a radical transformation in the inner life of Hinduism to take place, giving much space to the growth of a variety of trends. Zaehner's analysis of God or the Absolute in the Scriptures permits us to see the affinity among the concepts proposed by those Scriptures; and from these to infer a general view of the growth of God or the Absolute. We have seen, that some different trends were growing together in Hinduism, yet only two are remarkably prominent and deserve to be dealt with seriously: they are monism and monotheism. These phenomena in Zaehner's view could be seen as the growth of either human internalization, which through "magical" power gains the identity between Ātman and Brāhman, or the progress of human understanding through reason and devotion which continuously reaches its peak in the experience of an encounter with a personal God.

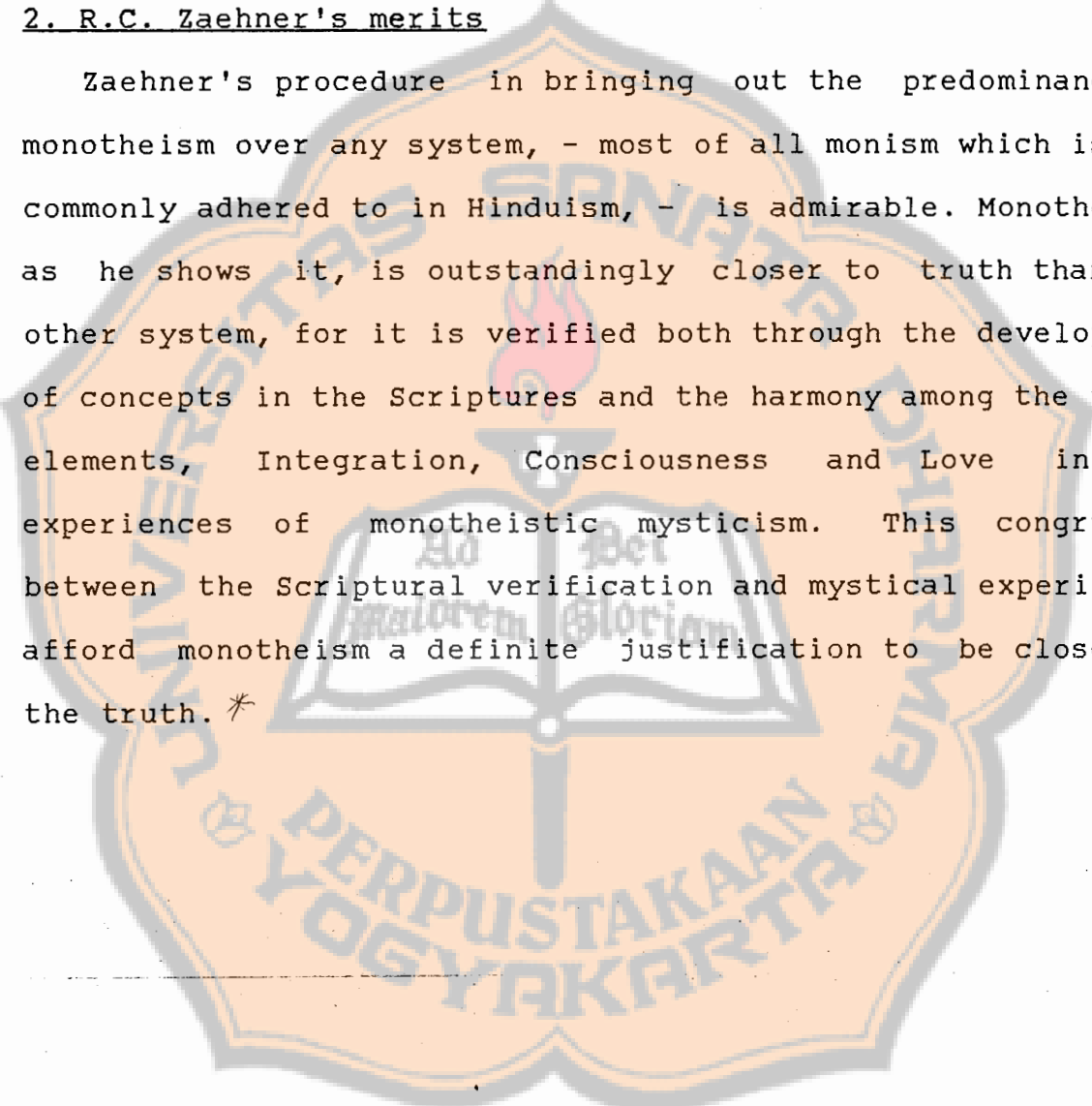
In the first case which is the case of the growth of monism, Zaehner remarks, ^{the Absolute} God appeared to tend more and more towards the impersonal, while the human part became more and more presumptuous to the extent that man claimed to be identified with the impersonal Absolute realized as his own essence. In the historical observation we can see the progress of monism as becoming gradually magical, ending in

the wiping out the existence of God altogether and replacing it with the human Soul or Self. Hence in practice the soul leaves all other existences and draws itself into its own aloofness.

In the second case, that of the growth of monotheism, the trend is quite the opposite; for as God appeared more and more personal, his figure grew more and more prominent by virtue of the appearance of his proper characteristics. The analysis of the second perspective, however, affords us with philosophical formulations which show the pre-eminence of monotheism over monism.

2. R.C. Zaehner's merits

Zaehner's procedure in bringing out the predominance of monotheism over any system, - most of all monism which is the commonly adhered to in Hinduism, - is admirable. Monotheism, as he shows it, is outstandingly closer to truth than any other system, for it is verified both through the development of concepts in the Scriptures and the harmony among the three elements, Integration, Consciousness and Love in the experiences of monotheistic mysticism. This congruence between the Scriptural verification and mystical experiences afford monotheism a definite justification to be closer to the truth. *



In the historical context, Zaehner's analysis shows how the concept of a personal God in Hindu Scriptures grew, predominating over any other concepts thanks to the gradual development of God's qualities. In this point the God of Hindu monotheism surpasses any other concept with regard to two remarkable qualifications; for monotheism avoids on the one hand the excessiveness of rationalism which denudes religion of its mythical elements, and which would deform it into some sort of philosophy of God, while on the other hand it avoids the magical tendencies in which the human and the divine activities come to be confused.

In the context of mystical experiences monotheism presents God in an excellent manner that corresponds only to an integrated person and adult in consciousness; this comes to mean that only independent man, who had been able to control his own faculties, mind and senses, and any other things outside himself could gain such a condition. This is absolutely contrary to the regressive consciousness in a monistic type of mysticism which comes to the state of an unborn child or a deception of simply blending into a cosmic consciousness of pantheism.

The God of Hindu monotheism in this consideration is a personal God, the Supreme one, who is none other than a God of Love, of which the Bhagavad-Gitā clearly speaks. It follows, that union with God which is the goal of human life

in monotheistic mysticism is not the realization of self, but the realization of love. Hence, the superiority of monotheistic mysticism, according to Zaehner, lies not so much in its ability to present the true concept of God as in showing up the compatibility of characteristics that exist between the personality of God on the one hand and the integrated soul which gains its liberation on the other. Zaehner's concern is obviously not with the metaphysical knowledge of God but with the mystical insight of the monotheistic worshippers.

From the superiority of monotheism, we can now discern the characteristics of God. Only in monotheism does such a discernment make sense at all, for although God is One, His characteristics are real and discernible.

The characteristics of God in the perspective of monotheism are described as personal, powerful, magnificent and benevolent. This, according to Zaehner, could already be guessed since the Vedic time in the figures of either Varuna and Indra or Rudra and Vishnu. Some sense of morality could have also been perceived because Varuna is described as the guardian of rule (ṛta). Moreover by his own divine right he can execute both punishment and mercy. In the same way Rudra is described as both dreadful and tender. In Indra and Vishnu there are also hints of a personal God in their power and heroism. The supremacy of one personal God is, however, made

explicit only in the figure of Rudra-Siva of the Svetasvatara Upanishad, for there is stated that this God is beyond both the perishable and the imperishable.

By the Bhagavad-Gītā, the personal God is presented as the God of Love, very much involved in human life to the point of incarnating himself as avatars, "for the protection of the good, for the destruction of evil doers, for the setting up of the law of righteousness" [BG.4,8]. The most famous incarnation of God is in the person of Krishna, of whom the Bhagavad-Gītā speaks and in which He is presented as the teacher of Arjuna who imparts his doctrine of Love and moral values. On this point Hindu monotheism, far from being merely deistic in character, shows itself as a teaching of a highly moral character. This is clearly shown in the Bhagavad-Gītā and reaffirmed by Ramanuja's philosophy of the Visistadvaita Vedanta.

Hence, according to Zaehner, there are two particularities in Hindu monotheism as we shall now note. In the first place it is not the focus of a convergence of the whole development of the Scriptural and Philosophical thought but it appears as just one trend among many evolutions that took place in Hinduism. Hindu religions seem to develop in divergence rather than in convergence. Somewhere Zaehner states that the development of Hindu views on god can be described as moving

from the polytheism to monotheism.⁴⁾ Yet in their diversity of development, Hindu religions faithfully maintain certain traditional beliefs as a pledge of their orthodoxy. Hence Hindu Monotheism, in contrast to the Monotheism of the prophetic religions such as Christianity or Islam, appears very different. From this appears the second particularity for, because of its attachment to the traditional view of emanation and absorption in creation, Hindu monotheism does not show itself as an absolute monotheism, in which God is wholly transcendent. This implies quite naturally the absence of the idea of "creatio ex nihilo" and demands that Hindu monotheism be more properly called a "qualified monotheism".⁵⁾

Now, this qualification does not mean at all that we reduce our appreciation of Hindu monotheism on its own terms, for by elevating the personal Krishna as the pre-eminent God

⁴⁾ "In India, ... religion starts with a more or less crude polytheism, passes through a quest of immense significance both for a unifying principle of the universe and for that in the human soul which the Indians instinctively felt to be immortal, to an apperception, more or less clear but never clear-cut, of a God who transcends both the Brāhman and the atman - that principle by which all things cohere and which indwells the human soul as its finest essence." AST.p.167

⁵⁾ There are some other qualifications of the Hindu monotheism. Pratiwi Bowes, for example, calls it "qualified Monotheism" in the sense that the tradition remain believe in the three figures around whom religious devotion is centered while they treat one among them as the Supreme Divine Being. Pratiwi Bowes, Ibidem, London, 1977, p.33.

above the impersonal Brāhman the Bhagavad-Gītā, Zaehner concludes, has definitely brought the controversies to an end. If the Hindus revere devotedly the Bhagavad-Gītā as their cherished Scripture, the conclusion that can be drawn from them would demand serious consideration. There is no wonder, then, that on this subject controversy becomes poignant.

3. R.C. Zaehner's Demerits

We come to see, now, some faults of Zaehner, which to a great part are concerned with his approach which is very particular. His works, scholarly though they are, are not presented in a tough system, but rather in an exotic literary style.

To begin with, he is keen on using peculiar terms but leaving much freedom in meaning. He likes to make reference to certain terms but imposes his own intention on the meaning of the terms. Hence he confuses his readers with difficulties which are not necessary. Still he is reluctant to give any working definition which could serve to explain his arguments. That Zaehner is very loose in giving the meaning of a term is obviously shown in the use of "myth" and "magic" that we have analyzed above. "Myth" is not merely a fantastical story of primitive people but a "true story" on the beginning of time, "in principio", that is in a

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When Zaehner criticized, - again another example, - the trend of "demythologicalization" in Europe, using Bultman's terminology, he did not really mean to criticize him but to those who by stripping the mythical elements of a religion simplify the religious phenomena as mere rational. But this is the misuse of a term which seems to be dictated by Zaehner's love for exotic expression. Such a lack of precision in using terminology will confuse, of course, many of his readers, who would naturally misunderstand his position. It is true that religious phenomena are not easily grasped in exact formulations, but the lack of precision and consistency in terminologies would only make the thing even worse and less comprehensible.

He also lacks precision in terms of his position and sometimes resorts simply to some paradox. This occurs, for example, when he speaks about personality and impersonality. In our analysis we have seen that "excellence" cannot be taken as the criterion to justify the supremacy of the personality or impersonality of God or the Absolute, because it would only invoke indeterminable presumptions. The criterion must, therefore, be derived from the agreement of different verifiable experiences. The personal God remains supreme not because He is more excellent than the impersonal Absolute in characteristics, since impersonality would avoid

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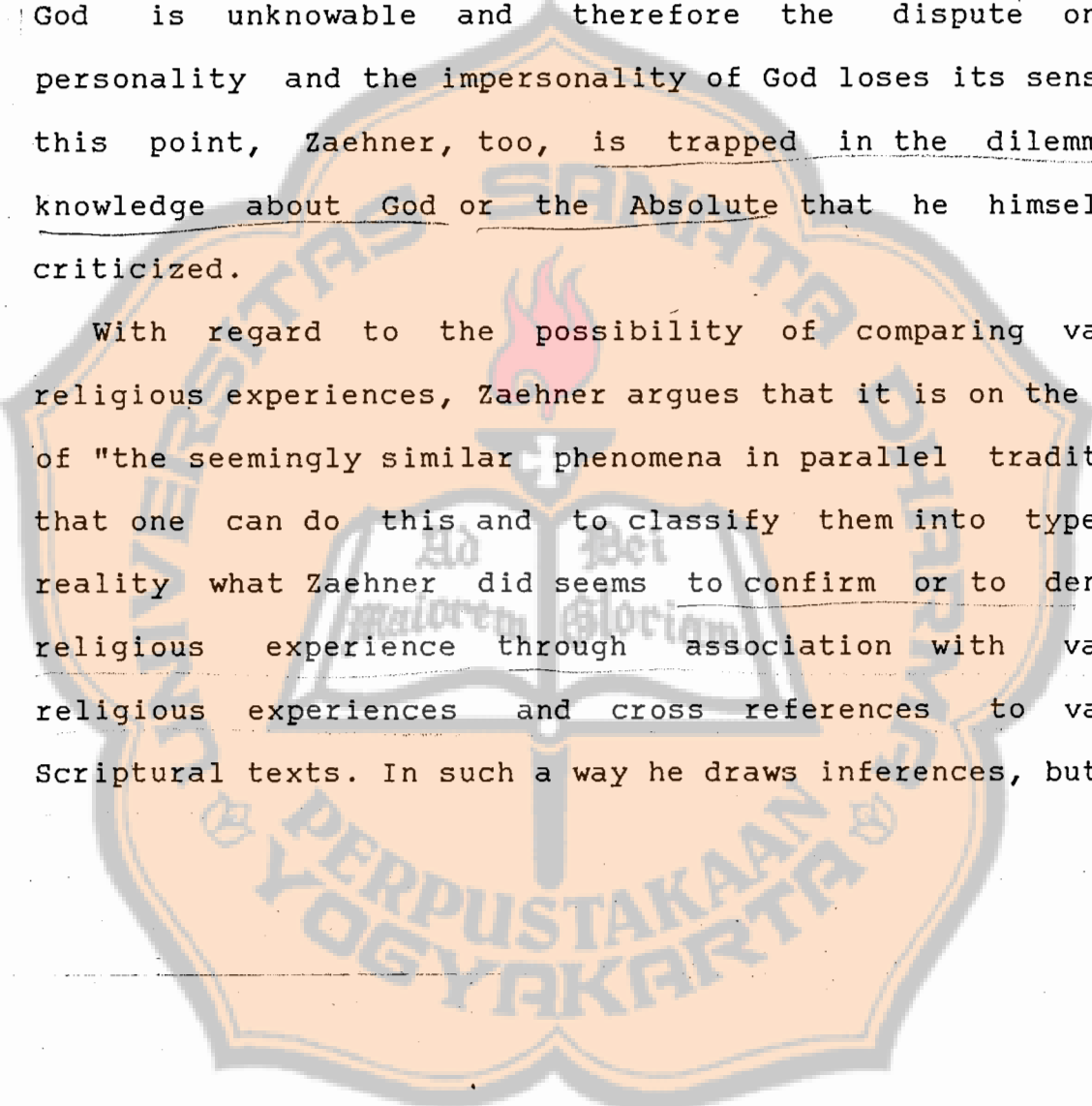
any characterization, rather this supremacy is justified by the unity of diverse verifiable experiences.

There still remains problematics, however, regarding the term "personality" when it is applied to God. In his comparison between the personal God and the impersonal Absolute, Zaehner has succeeded in putting into relief the predominance of the personal God as the supreme one. He sees that the monotheistic system is more sensible than the monistic. But when he refers to some works of Christian mystics like Nicolaus de Cusa or Meister Eckhart, he begins to hesitate as to the content of the word "personality". It ends with the statement that in terms of his divine right, God is unknowable and therefore the dispute on the personality and the impersonality of God loses its sense. In this point, Zaehner, too, is trapped in the dilemma of knowledge about God or the Absolute that he himself has criticized.

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With regard to the possibility of comparing various religious experiences, Zaehner argues that it is on the basis of "the seemingly similar phenomena in parallel traditions" that one can do this and to classify them into types. In reality what Zaehner did seems to confirm or to deny any religious experience through association with various religious experiences and cross references to various Scriptural texts. In such a way he draws inferences, but only



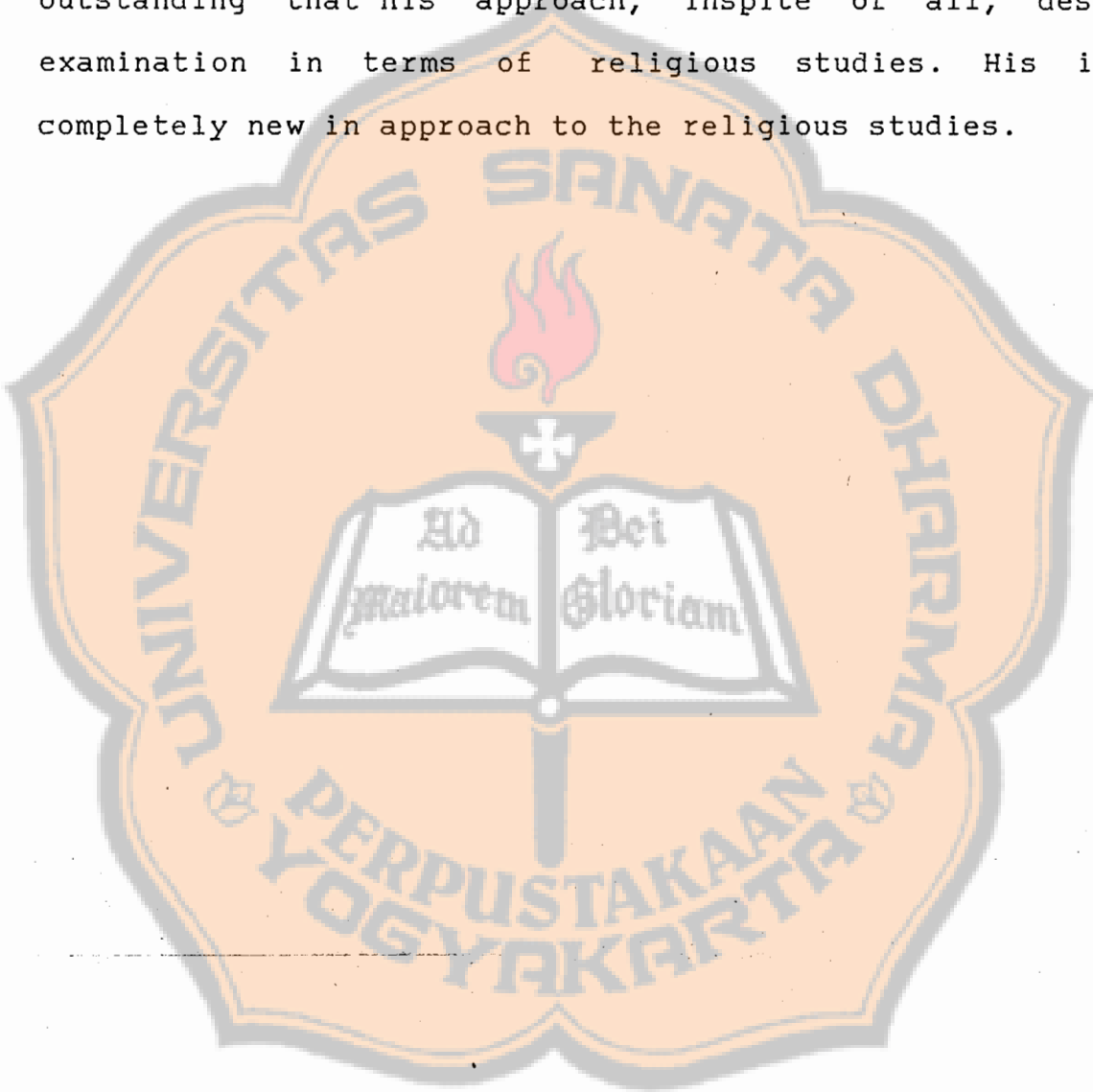
with much caution draws formulations to describe some positions such as "closer to truth", "approximately correct picture" of God, to avoid objective presumptuous conclusions. His aversion to the claim of Paul Tillich to what he calls the "Protestant principle" as "the ultimate criterion of all religious and all spiritual experience" is in this context clearly understandable.⁷⁾ Nevertheless his analysis is concentrated so intensively on the religious and mystical experience to such an extent that he disregards the differences of formulation on the metaphysical level that might exist between a Pantheistic and a Pan-en-henic system, or between Samkhya-Yoga and Advaita Vedanta. This in practice could imply that he depreciates the sense of philosophical formulations at all.

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Indeed Zaehner would be in difficulty to speak about criteria because he avoids to set up any. His approach would be simply deductive. At least this is what he seems to do. In such a way he would risk somehow making use of his own belief as criteria, since, as he himself asserts, one cannot be free from the subjective influences even in doing the scientific work. In this context, criticisms such as those of Frits Staal or Ninian Smart could be easily understood, not so much because Zaehner's arguments are dogmatic, as they claim, but because he does not make himself clear in terms of the

⁷⁾ CD. p.11

criteria of his approach. If he makes use of Christian terminologies, these do not work, as criteria but merely as cross references and associations, for in reality he also makes use of terminologies of other non-Christian religions.

Lack of precision in terminology, too centered on mystical phenomena and making use of various scriptural texts and religious mystical experiences for references, all weaken Zaehner's position in terms of science. Moreover he makes use also of various fields such as Philology, Phenomenology, History of Religions, and Psychology but lacking a solid system. This makes his position even less impressive. On the other hand Zaehner's originality and intelligence are so outstanding that his approach, inspite of all, deserves examination in terms of religious studies. His is a completely new in approach to the religious studies.



CONCLUSION

We have studied Zaehner's plausible approach to the problem of Hindu deity. He does not labour over the concepts of God or the Absolute in Hindu scriptural and mystical writings, rather he is interested in analyzing the different mystical experiences from which different texts and philosophies were composed. In his attempt, he does not stick himself to any one scientific field, but encompasses other disciplines. As such Zaehner invites us to assess his particular approach and consequently follow his inferences or to disagree and refute his conclusions.

Overlooking his exotic style and prescinding some terms that he uses inconsistently, we can accept his approach which reveals a new perspective in the studies of religious phenomena. We can say with Zaehner that truth in terms of the religious studies is not to be discovered objectively but only to be deduced approximately through congruences of different verifications. Indeed he has shown us that a personal God surpasses the impersonal Absolute; this implies that monotheistic system is closer to reality than monistic system.

To end our present work, one last point needs to be emphasized in regard to the study of God in Hinduism. Zaehner often stressed that Indian thinking tends to shy away from

* clarity or away from arriving at fine distinctions¹; To him there is no clear-cut or watertight conceptions in Hinduism. His approach to the study of God is never a case of "either/or" but rather of correspondence, analogy, and interconnection.² The Hindu Scriptures characterize their God as "loving the obscure and hating the obvious". The Bhagavad-Gītā is not exempt from such thought patterns, for as Zaehner remarks, the Bhagavad-Gītā proceeds ambiguously in the distinction between the absolute Brāhman and the personal God, where "most modern scholars have seen no clear distinction between the two."³ This should not be an excuse, however, for scholars to escape from serious research and from a distinctive presentation.

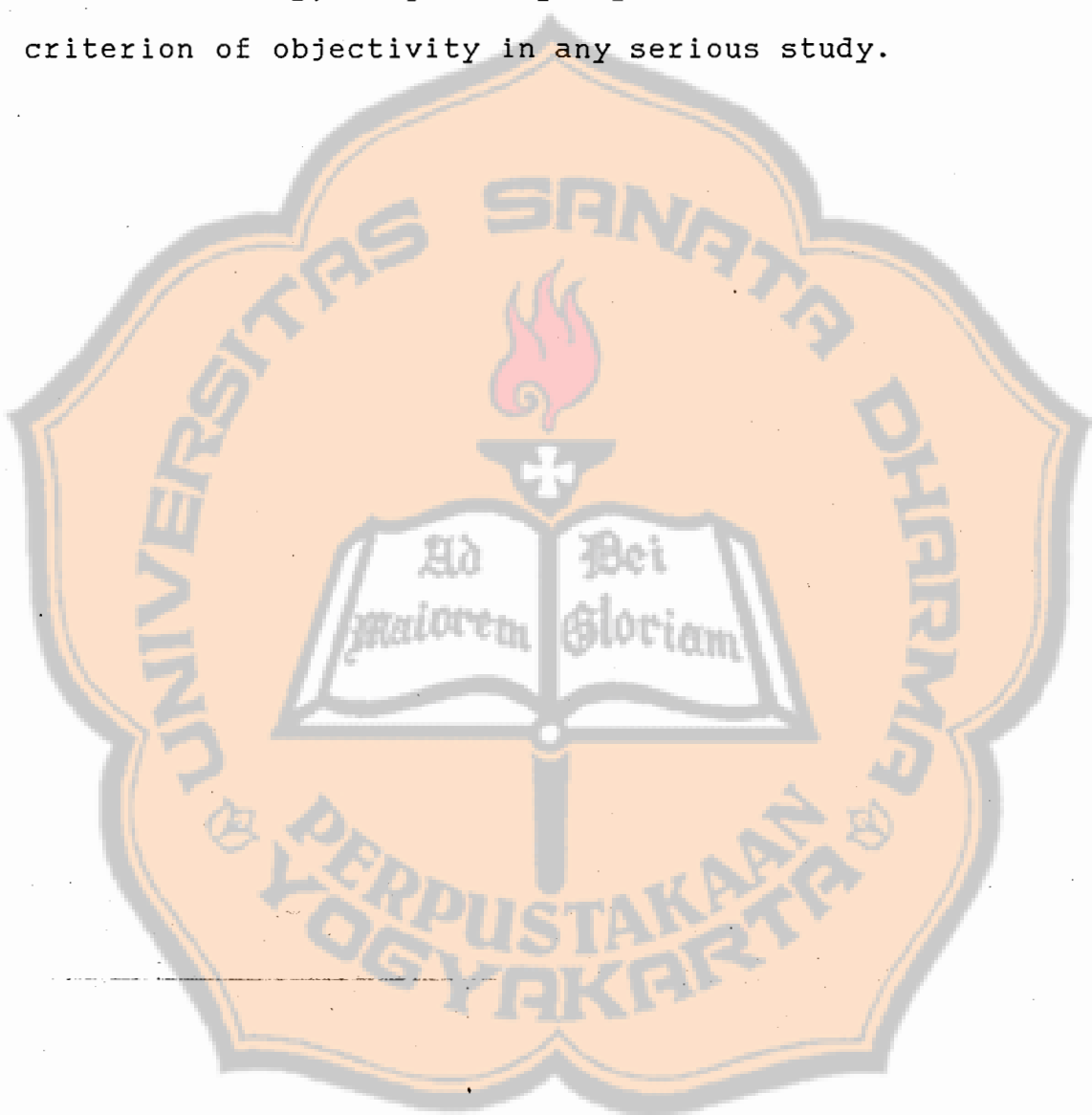
It was only after deep study and thorough analysis that Zaehner, discovered the idea of a personal God as the goal of the whole quest of the Bhagavad Gītā. There are some scholars of Hinduism who have done comparative studies on monotheism and monism in Hinduism. Some have researched on monotheism of the Bhagavad-Gītā. With their effort the phenomenological approach has become better recognized. In spite of his reticence to this popularity, Zaehner is notable in

¹ - AST. p.31.

² - Hin.p.18.

³ - HMM. p.78.

practicing this approach especially in his analysis of the mystical experiences. His analysis brings out the profound meaning of those experiences and also the differences that exist in such experiences. He has discovered new paths and arrived at a new conclusion. This carries its own implications. Hence it is not fair to equate Zaehner's works with the observation practiced by the eighteenth century polemicists. This would amount to simple identification with the modern phenomenologists to the eighteenth century philosophers. But Zaehner must be taken seriously for his bold approach. He was well aware that his work would be seen as unscholarly, especially by those who insist on the criterion of objectivity in any serious study.



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