

Start with Meditation

In a recent notice it was suggested that the Society should review the ten concepts of Sanatan Dharma from an holistic point of view. The final paper for the Pewsey Group this term will look at these ten concepts as they are expressed in various traditions, which confirm their essential importance to humankind. This has been done in a way so that people who wish to can use these ideas as a weekly programme over the Christmas period.

The Shankaracharya told us that Sanatan Dharma, the natural laws of the Atman, is contained in all religions, is the basis of all religions and their centre.

On the first day let us look at Dhrh, which is having confidence and patience. This is described in 'Letters of the Scattered Brotherhood' (pub. Harper and Brothers) as follows:

*When you meditate or abide in your quiet times of communion, you do not charge in and do something like saying: "I will now be good and move mountains by my act of faith." No, you water your garden, knowing these ideas are growing into a heavenly garden. The indwelling spirit doeth the work, not you; you merely water it. Do you not see the comfort there is in that? I can tell you in prime language that a very gentle, calm, unemotional selfless and patient attitude toward your spiritual growth is essential – such as all old gardeners know. They know that patience, hoeing, watering and a certain order, a quiet rhythm, bring to birth a heavenly beauty.*

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On the second day we could consider the second concept, which is Kshama – giving consideration, putting oneself in the other person's shoes. This requires that we look upon each other not as separate, but One, part of a whole.

The Upanishads say: 'Your own Self lives in the hearts of All'.

The Beatitudes say: 'Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy.' In other Christian tenets we are told it can be advisable at times to 'falsify the accounts' in favour of another so that we act correctly.

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On the third day we could look at the two concepts, Dama, which is control over the senses and their expression, as well as Indriya Nigraha which calls for regulating the senses, not curbing them. To bring this about we are advised: 'Seek ye first the kingdom of heaven and everything else will be added unto you.'

To do this the Sufi mystic Hazrat Inayat Khan, in his book 'The Alchemy of Happiness' explains how mercury is turned into gold as a way of spiritual illumination. First the volatile mercury is changed into silver. This is done by stilling the mind, which is driven by the senses. The second process is done by melting the silver and adding the juice of the herb, which creates the gold. Melting the silver is 'melting the heart', and adding the juice of the herb suggests a method such as Turning or Meditation.

Jacob Boehme, the 16<sup>th</sup> century mystic said: 'If you can cease from all your thinking and willing, then you will hear the unspeakable words of God.'

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On the fourth day we could consider the fourth concept, Asteya, which means that you take only your share; the rest is theft. This Zen Buddhist story reflects on the pointlessness of taking more than one's share:

*Ryokan, a Zen master lived the simplest kind of life in a little hut at the foot of a mountain. One evening a thief visited the hut only to discover there was nothing in it to steal.*

*Ryokan returned and caught him. "You may have come a long way to visit me", he told the prowler, "And you should not return empty-handed. Please take my clothes as a gift." The thief was bewildered. He took the clothes and slunk away. Ryokan sat naked, watching the moon. "Poor fellow," he mused, "I wish I could give him this beautiful moon."*

One can learn from the temptation, made to Jesus in the wilderness, that no offer of riches and power would lead Him to deviate from His services and relationship to God. God only would He serve.

From these two examples we see that temporary gain is valueless and that only permanent gain enriches. And for that we need to remember that Schools have an aim and try to understand what it is.

In the Hymn of Jesus, He said unto John:

*John, it is necessary  
That one should hear these things from me  
For I have need of one that will hear.*

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The fifth day concerns the fifth concept, Shaucha, which is to cleanse the Body, Mind and Heart and Akroda, the tenth concept, which calls for the abandoning of agitation, which leads to wrong action.

In 1975 the Shankaracharya said:

*What are the methods of purifying and cleaning the Antakarana? I will explain in detail. Good Action, Holy Action, Holy Thought and service, considering everybody to be part of the same Param-Atman, treating other people as our own selves. Remembering that the same Param-Atman permeates all living beings which we come across as a universal brotherhood. These are the things that purify and provide light with which the Antakarana is purified.*

Our ordinary minds see everything in terms of a duality Yes/No, Like/Dislike and Pleasure/Pain. Our Higher Mind sees all as a unity. To escape from duality we need to try to think differently.

In the apocryphal Gospel of St Thomas, Jesus said in reply to a disciple's question about entering the Kingdom of Heaven: 'When you have made the two one, and when you make the inner as the outer.....then you shall enter.'

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On the sixth day we could look at the ninth concept, Satya, which is 'truth'. There is only one truth about an aspect. There cannot be two truths about the same subject. Anything else is relative truth.

Truth, we know from the Ladder of Self Realisation is manifested through insight. The truth spoken by Dr Roles at the end of 'Voyage of Discovery' is as follows:

*Our connection to the Realised Man can never be broken. It is not subject to physical presence or death, and belongs to a different time. The bond between master and pupil is never broken.*

Truth is concerned with the whole. It is concerned with re-membering and it affects our understanding of time. Here are two examples from our School of the Fourth Way.

The first is from Mr Ouspensky's time:

*The moment (when my husband came back from war service and our four year old daughter ran along the path, ran alone down the path to meet him), seemed to me to be caught like a fly in amber and I had a completely new and different sense of time. Since that day I have understood in my heart the theories of many dimensions, however difficult they may seem to the head.*

The second insight came from Dr Roles's time, from a senior member of the Pewsey Group and was referred to in a recent feedback paper: 'Autumn Term Review – Sanatan Dharma' 11.11.2011. Here again the person experienced Insight on two occasions that were the same moment. She wrote:

*It is a moment given, of experiencing no time and something that is present out of time. It makes it very clear that 'our connection to the Realised Man can never be broken.....the bond between master and pupil is never broken'.*

In the Meno dialogue by Plato, pertaining to the Greek school of philosophy, part of the dialogue with Socrates gives much encouragement on Re-membering the Whole, Time, and Truth:

*Thus the soul, since it is immortal and has been born many times, and has seen all things both here and in the other world, has learned everything that is. So we should not be surprised if it can recall the knowledge of virtue or anything else which, as we see, it once possessed, so that when a man has recalled a single piece of knowledge – realised it, there is no reason why he should not find out all the rest.....for seeking and learning are in fact nothing but re-membering.*

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For the seventh day we can join concept seven, which is to find the cause of things with concept eight to acquire knowledge made manifest in the scriptures.

The Shankaracharya sums up these aims in the following way: *The system of knowledge and method of meditation are simply to lead people to discriminate between the transitory and the eternal.*

The Vedas tell us that there are three ways to Self Realisation, through Devotion, through Knowledge and through Right Action.

The Bhagavad Gita, the cream of all Indian knowledge contains four ways. The fourth way could be interpreted as the Way of the Householder and requires us to apply all the traditional three ways together in our living.

Shakespeare tells us, through Hamlet's words what powers we have:

*What a piece of work is a man, how noble in reason, how infinite in faculties, in form and moving how express and admirable, in action how like an angel, in apprehension how like a god.*

Meditation is the essential ingredient common to all four ways and in Christian terms this is what the 'Scattered Brotherhood' has to say:

*The nearest way to His nearness is through a refined essence of spirit. If you could distil thought you would get near to the refinement. As thought is to emotion, so this quality of perception and feeling is to thought. That is why it is impossible for human thought to conceive it. He is here, eternally here, your friend and saviour and that is why meditation, the laying aside of human thought is so essential.....that silence beyond silence is the silence He presses through, and the flaming powers, the inspirations, the immortalities; this is the Presence, the pure Presence. Here is where it is all accomplished, for this is He, eternally here.....So close your eyes, put away all thought and lie deep in the silent reaches where you will be restored, reborn, made new.*

### Meditation