

CHAPTER-3

REALITY, LEVELS OF CONSCIOUSNESS (In Indian Context) AND THE WORLD

Reality is the state of things as they actually exist, rather than as they may appear or might be imagined. In a wider sense, reality includes everything that is and has been, whether or not it is observable or comprehensible. A still broader definition includes everything that has existed, exists or will exist.¹ The Merriam-Webster Dictionary states that reality is something that actually exists or happens; a real event, occurrence, situation etc.² So, reality is a whole and it acts and advances as a whole. It is everywhere complex, even in the atom. The self as real also is not simple. Reality is not the immobile and insentient matter; and is not insensitive to human interests and purpose. On the contrary, it is responsive to all human interests and purposes. There is a place for all values in reality. Even the so-called dis-values are not totally rejected by it for these help us to realize the higher values. For instance, ignorance is a disvalue as compared with knowledge. However, it is not the negation of all knowledge; rather it is an imperfect or partial knowledge of a thing, which is the ground for the attainment of perfect knowledge.³

3.1. Reality and ancient period:

God is the ultimate reality and is responsive to human interests and endeavors, to man's effort to realize the end of his life. The concept of God as wisdom, love and goodness is not a mere abstract thought, but is the concrete

reality. The Hindu concept of God as *Brahmā*, *Viṣṇu* and *Śiva* illustrates the triple character of God as the Primordial mind, the loving redeemer and the holy judge of the universe. God is continuously engaged in opposing every propensity in the universe that leads to error, ugliness and evil. Being immanent in the universe, God becomes the guide and the ground of the progress. He is not a mere spectator, but a sharer in the difficulties of the world. He loves the world so much that He gives Himself entirely to it. This love is His essential nature and not an ephemeral quality. He expects that we should respond to His call and oblige with Him. He wishes us to regard Him as our friend, lover and companion.⁴

In the *Ṛg Veda*, the Supreme Reality is described as one great person (*Puruṣa*) who is both immanent in the world and transcendent to it. It also states that the reality cannot be described either as non-existent or as existent. There are, according to it, two aspects of reality --- the personal and the impersonal, the determinate and the indeterminate. The Ultimate Reality (Brahman) is, therefore, both the personal God and the impersonal Absolute.⁵ In a like manner, the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, states:

*“dve vāv Brahmaṇo rūpe mūrtam caivāmūrtam
ca cāmṛtam ca sthitam yacca sacca tyecca.”*⁶

Taittirīya Upaniṣad has described Brahman as real, conscious and infinite. It has also asserted that matter (*anna*) is Brahman, life (*prāṇa*) is Brahman, mind (*manas*) is Brahman, consciousness (*vijñāna*) is Brahman and bliss (*ānanda*) is Brahman. *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* well-argued that ‘All this is Brahman’. Hence,

the *Upaniṣadic* texts have revealed different aspects or characters of reality; and considered reality to be one in essence but a plurality in appearance.

3.2. Reality and classical systems of Indian Philosophy:

Indian Philosophy is spiritualistic (*adhyātma-sāstra*) for it regards spirit as the ultimate reality and helps man to realize his self. Different systems of classical Indian Philosophy attributed different characters to reality. The materialistic or *Cārvāka* system regarded matter or material world as the only reality. That is, in this system, there is a revelation of reality as a material world of objects expressing sensible qualities such as sound, touch, colour, taste and smell. In the *Upaniṣads* also *anna*, that is, matter is considered a form of Brahman. The materialists express only one aspect of reality, and therefore, this view is partially true. In the *Bauddha* system, reality is considered as a continuous flow of momentary phases of existence. This system approaches reality from the level of vital consciousness or the experience of life process. To approach reality from the level of our experience of life-process implies that it is a living and changing system; and is essentially impermanent. Change and impermanence are the empirical characters of reality. Even the *Upaniṣads* have admitted this view of reality. For the *Jainas*, reality is many-faced – change and permanence both are real. In contrast with the *Bauddhas*, the *Jainas* emphasized the changing and permanent characters of reality.⁷

In the *Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika* systems, reality is a system of many selves and other entities. The self is a pure substance, which is infinite and eternal; consciousness is an accidental quality of it. God is the Supreme Self and the

omnipotent and omniscient creator, sustainer and destroyer of the world. According to the *Sāṃkhya* system, reality consists of two ultimate principles --- spirit and matter (*puruṣa and prakṛti*). Spirit or self is pure consciousness devoid of all change and activity; while *Prakṛti* is unconscious, ever changing and active. Both are eternal and infinite. *Prakṛti* is the material cause, which evolves the whole world of objects in association with *Puruṣa*. God is not necessary to explain the world. At this point *Yoga* system differs from the *Sāṃkhya* and holds that God who is the highest self brings about the association of *Puruṣa* and *Prakṛti*. It is noteworthy that while the *Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika* system displays pure existence (*sat*) as the character of reality, the *Sāṃkhya -Yoga* system emphasizes pure consciousness (*cit*) as its character. The *Mīmāṃsā* system believes in the reality of the world with all its diverse objects. It does not believe in God as creator of the world; rather states that the law of karma leads to the formation of all worldly objects. It also believes in many souls, heaven, hell and deities to whom sacrifice is to be performed in accordance with the *Vedic* commandments. These deities are not personal beings, but are only certain *mantras*, which are eternal and self-revealing. This concept of deities as *mantras* highlights the eternal sounds, which are constitutive of the objects of the world.⁸ *Upaniṣads* also admitted this fact by declaring that ‘*om*’ is the sound of the first creative stress in Brahman. *Vedānta* maintains that the highest Reality transcends all words and language. That is, it is beyond description and characterization. This Reality is described as ‘*niṣprapañca Brahman*’ which is the source and ground of all limited existence.⁹ According to *Dvaita Vedānta*, Brahman is the Supreme Person who is the omnipotent and omniscient efficient cause of the world. Brahman is absolutely

independent of and different from everything. This view of reality as an independent Self is the result of spiritual intuition. In *Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta*, Brahman (the Absolute Reality) is considered as a Personal Being possessed of all good qualities. This concept of reality is based on meditation (*dhyāna*) developing into conscious concentration (*savikalpa samādhi*). The *Advaita Vedānta* of Śāṅkara states that from the transcendental standpoint Brahman is indeterminate and attributeless reality (*nirguṇa*). On the contrary, from the empirical standpoint, Brahman is the omnipotent and omniscient creator possessed of many attributes (*saguṇa*). This view of reality arises from the level of super-conscious concentration (*nirvikalpa samādhi*).¹⁰ It follows, therefore, that all the systems have revealed a partial aspect of reality; and not the whole truth about it.

3.3. A comparative study of Śāṅkara, Bradley and Śrī Ramakrishna's views about reality:

Śāṅkara postulated the necessary existence of reality for differentiating the real and the unreal because nothing can be characterized as unreal unless the existence of the real is affirmed (*Brahma-sūtra*, III.2.22/ Śāṅkara's commentary). Brahman (the ultimate Reality) is non-dual as there is nothing similar to it, nor is there anything different from it. It cannot be put in any class of logical categories for it is beyond everything phenomenal, spatial, temporal and sensible (*Brahma-sūtra*, IV.3.14, III. 2.22, 31.16). It envelops all causes and effects, which are known respectively as *sāmānyas* (universals) and *vīśeṣas* (conditions) because it is the great *Sāmānya*. Nevertheless, it can be regarded as a mass of *sāmānyas* and *vīśeṣas* or the great whole consisting of the different parts; because its nature is

unitary (*Brahma sūtra*, I.3.1). It pervades and penetrates the whole of the universe, i.e., It is omnipresent. It is the ultimate consciousness. It is *Nirguṇa* (unqualified) because it is supra-logical and transcendental. Whatever is qualified is objective; but Brahman is not an object. It is eternal and beyond any positive description (*Anirvacanīya*). For this reason, a negative method, i.e., ‘*Neti-Neti*’, ‘not this-not this’ is used to describe It. It is called *Saccidānanda* (*Sat*=Existence, + *Cit*=Consciousness, + *Ānanda*=Bliss). But this description also conveys the negative meaning in which *Sat* means that it is not *asat* (non-existence), *Cit* denotes that it is not *acit* (non-conscious) and *Ānanda* means that it is not *duḥkha* (not-bliss).

Brahman becomes *Īśvara* (God) when it reflects in *māyā*; and it becomes *jīva* when it reflects in *avidyā*. *Māyā* is called *avidyā* because it is deceptive in nature. *Māyā* is neither absolutely real like Brahman, nor completely false or unreal like the sky-flower. Neither it is identical with Brahman, nor is it different from Brahman. It is not a material cause of the world; rather it is simply a process of measuring the immeasurable and forming the formless. *Māyā* is identical with forms and names, which constitute the world, and is similar to *Prakṛti*. If an attempt is made to establish a relation between *māyā* and Brahman, Brahman becomes *Īśvara* and *māyā* becomes His energy, which helps Him to produce the world (*Śvetāśvatara upaniṣad*, IV.10). *Īśvara* is *Saguṇa Brahman* (qualified Brahman) or *Apara Brahman* (lower Brahman). Being the personal aspect of Brahman, He is the highest and perfect personality as well as the highest appearance. He is unreal only for a man who has realized the non-difference of

jīva and Brahman. Śāṅkara has recognized the identity of *jīva* and Brahman. *Jīva* is free from all limitations of the body, the mind and the ego. The essence of it is pure consciousness. Like Brahman, *jīva* is also pure existence-consciousness-bliss. Therefore, *jīva* is verily Brahman and nothing other than Brahman.¹¹ The appearance of Brahman is regarded as the world. It means that the world which is unreal (*mithyā*) is an appearance of Brahman which is real (*satya*). The world is not separate from Brahman; rather it is dependent upon Brahman. If it were independent, there would arise the difficulty of dualism. There can be no relation between the world and Brahman because unreal cannot be related to the real. It is worth mentioning that Śāṅkara has accepted the theory of *Vivarta* (appearance) and not that of *Pariṇāma* (transformation). For this reason, Brahman appears as the world in a manner the rope appears as a snake. However, unlike the transformation of milk into curd, Brahman does not transform Itself into the world.

It becomes evident from the above that *Īśvara* is the highest appearance under whom all other appearances or unrels follow in descending order. As Dr. S. Radhakrishnan said: “*Īśvara* has less of reality than absolute being and the other objects represent an increasing deprivation of reality. At the bottom of the scale we get something which has no positive qualities to be deprived of, that from which nothing more can be taken away, which, in a word, is there, but is there as not-being, a nothingness which rises like a blank wall where reality ends.”¹² But unreality can be known in an ascending order also. The knowledge of the snake in a rope is reality of illusory standpoint (*prātibhāṣika satya*); but once

one knows the empirical reality (*vyāvahārika satya*), the former satya becomes unreal. In the same way, when one knows the absolute reality (*pāramārthika satya*), the empirical knowledge becomes unreal.

The British Philosopher F.H. Bradley's philosophy is divided into two parts – constructive, i.e., the philosophy of reality and destructive, i.e., the philosophy of appearance. He started with the destructive side and gradually proceeded to the constructive one. In his opinion, a relation cannot connect two terms because any relation should at first be related with the terms, which it tries to relate before connecting them, and in this way, it will go ad infinitum. Thus, Bradley concludes that a relational way of thought – which moves by the machinery of terms and relations – must give appearance and not truth.¹³ He has also rejected one by one the theories of primary and secondary qualities, space and time, motion and changes, causation, activity, self and things-in-themselves; because all these deal with contradictions either of things or of ideas, which, according to him, are the characteristics of appearance. After criticizing and commenting on all prior principles, he deduced that “ ‘everything so far, which we have seen has turned out to be appearance.’¹⁴” Appearance neither belongs to the extended, nor is it separate from it. It “ ‘consists in the looseness of content from existence and because of this self-estrangement, every finite aspect is called appearance.’¹⁵” Though every finite is an adjective of Reality, it is not real in itself. Appearance, neither singly nor collectively can be the Reality, but it exists, and that is why it belongs to Reality.

Regarding error and illusion, Bradley maintained that everything can be classified as non-existence and Reality. But error is such a dangerous and difficult subject that it cannot be assigned to either; therefore it has no place for existence. It is outside the experience of an individual. It is partially true and partially false; and can be changed into truth with the help of division and re-arrangement. On the contrary, illusion is that which causes conflict between our experiences – both external and internal. As a result, our own views create disorder, confusion and pain. In error, our ideas are not the same as reality; while in illusion, the difference between our ideas and reality creates conflict in our nature. As Bradley said: ‘everything is error, but everything is not illusion’. Error is a necessary aspect of the finite life and is likely to be present everywhere; and is to some extent the cause of illusion. Illusion is the want of correspondence between an idea and its existence. About Reality, Bradley holds that it is non-contradictory.¹⁶ If it were many in number, it would be relative. However, it is absolute. It is non-dual or one because it possesses a positive nature, which is beyond all differences. This positive nature of Reality envelops all differences in one harmony and holds everything in the unity of the Real. Reality is a concrete universal and a concrete unity in diversities. It is sentient experience, i.e., it is an experience, which is actually felt. Nothing can be real without being sentient. Abstract thinking does not make the ideal reality felt. Reality or Absolute satisfies the whole being which consists of three faculties, i.e., feeling, willing and thinking. This implies that it is the synthesis of all. It embraces all appearances. Here a question arises – ‘in what forms, do the appearances exist in Reality?’ ‘Are they merged in one or dwell separately?’ This question indicates that Absolute is only a bundle of

contradictions because all contradictions remain unchanged in it. Actually, reality is not the sum of the things. It is neither the total of appearances nor something without them. It cannot be realized completely by finite minds. Thought, being an abstract thing, can give only the bare outline of the Reality. There is nothing absolutely real or absolutely appearance. The thing that contains more contradictions is more appearance and less real; but the thing that possesses fewer contradictions is more real and less appearance. Therefore, the presence of reality in appearance is determined in certain degrees. Appearance cannot appear without reality, nor can reality be known without appearance. As Bradley said: “ ‘The Absolute we may say in general has no assets beyond appearances; and again, with appearances, alone to its credit, the absolute would be bankrupt.’¹⁷”

It has been stated above that the presence of reality in appearances is in different degrees. That is, appearances have different degrees of this presence. *Śaṅkara* also agrees that appearances have their degrees, and in his opinion, *Īśvara* is the highest appearance. Neither *Śaṅkara* nor Bradley accepted any degree or scale in Reality. Though *Śaṅkara* has accepted, *prātibhāṣika satya*, *vyāvahārika satya* and *pāramārthika satya*; only *pāramārthika satya* is the Reality, while the other two only appear to be real. Brahman of *Śaṅkara* becomes *Īśvara* when it reflects in *Māyā* and *jīva* when it reflects in *Avidyā*; while the Absolute or Reality of Bradley always remains absolute. Brahman cannot be known by thought, i.e. by finite mind; but Bradley said that one could know by thought the bare outline of Reality. *Śaṅkara* introduced the negative method to

describe the ultimate Reality, but Bradley remained silent on this possibility of approach.

According to Śrī Ramakrishna, the Absolute (Brahman) and the Personal God (*Īśvara*) are not two separate entities unrelated to each other or even related as substance and quality. Rather, they are different states or phases of the same eternal entity as the same water whether moving or still; and the same serpent whether lying coiled up or creeping. In one case, it is unmoving and uncreative; in the other, creating, maintaining and destroying the universe. Brahman and *Īśvara* being the different states of the same reality are equally real. Of these, one is static, the other dynamic. In this view, there is no conception of a lower grade or mere appearance of reality. In its static aspect (*nitya-rūpa*) the Supreme Reality is the undisturbed ocean of existence-consciousness-bliss (*Saccidānanda*); in its dynamic aspect it is God or *Īśvara* or as Śrī Ramakrishna preferred to say '*kālī*' - the Divine Mother. Unlike Śrī Ramakrishna, *Śaṅkara* maintained that Brahman is not engaged in any activity. The material world is just an illusory superimposition projected on Brahman by our ignorance. Likewise, God (*Īśvara*) is also a product of illusion-producing ignorance (*māyā*).

In Śrī Ramakrishna's view, the world of objects is real, being the product of the creative aspect of the Supreme Being; but though it is real, it is temporary or impermanent which will vanish. That is, the world is not an unreality, a product of '*māyā*' as taught by *Śaṅkara*. The term '*māyā*' has been often used by Śrī Ramakrishna to mean 'egoism', the self-consciousness in an individual that causes him to associate himself with what he does. This false sense of 'I' is the

ignorance, which conceals true reality from him like a veil. The world is real as long as Brahman exists. The sportive play (*līlā*) of Brahman may indeed be likened to a play, which is real as long as it lasts; the play is not a final, immutable reality in itself. The world is also not different from Brahman for It pervades every part of the world. In the words of the *Upaniṣads*, It is everything and everywhere – ‘*Sarvam Khalvidam Brahma.*’ Śrī Ramakrishna has illustrated this as: just as when one climbs a staircase and on reaching the top, sees that the roof is composed of the same material as the stairs; likewise, when one withdraws himself from the world to Brahman, he realizes that the entire world is Brahman. To the individual with deep metaphysical insight (*jñāni*), who has withdrawn himself from the material world of objects, the only reality is Brahman --- formless and indeterminate; but to the ordinary devotee (*bhakta*) of Brahman, the only reality is God (*Īśvara*). This God or *Īśvara* has manifold shape and form, though it is the same Brahman throughout. In the Gospel, it is stated that:

“There is an ocean of difference between a real all-renouncing devotee of God and a householder devotee ... a real devotee who has renounced the world, is like a bee. The bee will not light on anything but a flower. It will not drink anything but honey. But a devotee leading the worldly life is like a fly. The fly sits on a festering sore as well as on a sweet-meat. One moment he enjoys a spiritual mood, and the next moment he is beside himself with the pleasure of ‘woman and gold’.... An all-renouncing devotee will not touch ‘woman and gold’¹⁸...” (Gupta, 1942).

From the above analysis of Śrī Ramakrishna's concept of reality (Brahman), it becomes clear that what he teaches is not exactly the same as any of the various forms of *Vedānta*. Again, neither is his teaching wholly different from *Vedānta*; rather, it possesses the characteristics of all the *Vedāntic* schools. Śaṅkara's *advaita* postulated a single formless and qualityless reality (*nirguṇa Brahman*) which cannot be grasped by a man of ordinary intellect; but requires for its realization the most extensive kinds of discipline and withdrawal. He realized this difficulty and that is why he admitted a lower degree of knowledge that regarded Brahman as possessed of form and quality (*saguṇa*). However, he insisted that this conditioned Brahman is unreal, a product of *māyā*. On the contrary, Śrī Ramakrishna combined both kinds of Brahman – *nirguṇa* and *saguṇa*; and insisted that both are true, i.e., both are the mere aspects or states of the same reality. It is like a man who is at one time asleep, at another time awake and active --- though it is the same man. Therefore, *nirguṇa* and *saguṇa* Brahman are not higher and lower stages of Brahman; but the same Brahman in different states. Śaṅkara regarded only the path of knowledge (*jñāna- mārga*) as the highest way to Brahman. The other paths, viz., *yoga- mārga*, *bhakti- mārga* and *karma-mārga*, according to him, are only helpful in purifying the mind and preparing the aspirant for the path of knowledge. However, Śrī Ramakrishna stated that all the paths – *jñāna- mārga*, *bhakti-mārga*, *yoga- mārga* and *karma-mārga* – are equally efficacious.¹⁹

Śrī Ramakrishna's view of reality is integral, as it is not confined to Hinduism only. Rather, he accepted the views of reality in *Islam*, *Christianity* and

other religions too as true. His multi-dimensional view of reality do not merely assert that the different aspects of the ultimate reality are true; but also signifies that to understand the true nature of the ultimate reality, it is necessary to take into consideration all the different views of the ultimate reality. It also provides the foundation for the establishment of harmony of religions.²⁰

3.4. **Consciousness in general:**

Consciousness is the state or quality of awareness, or, of being aware of an external object or something within oneself.²¹ The word ‘conscious’ has been derived from the Latin word ‘conscius’ where ‘con’ means ‘together’ and ‘scio’ means ‘to know’. Consciousness has been defined as: “sentience, awareness, subjectivity, the ability to experience or to feel, wakefulness, having a sense of selfhood, and the executive control system of the mind.”²² Webster’s Third New International Dictionary states that consciousness is –“(1) a. awareness or perception of an inward psychological or spiritual fact: intuitively perceived knowledge of something in one’s inner self (2): the state or activity that is characterized by sensation, emotion, volition, or thought: mind in the broadest possible sense: something in nature that is distinguished from the physical. (3): the totality in psychology of sensations, perceptions, ideas, attitudes and feelings of which an individual or a group is aware at any given time or within a particular time span...”²³

Consciousness in Sanskrit is called ‘*cit*’. It is a core principle in all ancient spiritual traditions, which originated from the Indian sub-continent. *Cit* is one of the three aspects forming the *Satchidānanda* (Ultimate Reality).²⁴ The Ultimate

Reality is pure consciousness. It is non-dual, non-relational, unitary and universal. It is prior to every form of existence. It is the datum of all experiences. The word ‘*chaitanya*’ also denotes ‘consciousness’ or ‘spirit’ or ‘intelligence’ or ‘sensation’. It is the cosmic intelligence, the consciousness that knows itself and knows others.²⁵ In the *Rg Veda*, *Nṛsād* (the dweller amongst men) is regarded as *chaitanya* or ‘consciousness’ or *prāṇa* or ‘vitality’, because both dwell in men.²⁶ In the *Upaniṣads*, it is stated that the *Ātman* (the self or spirit) represents itself differently in the seven-fold movement of *Prakṛti* according to the dominant principle of consciousness in the individual being. These seven folds of consciousness are – (i) physical consciousness, (ii) vital consciousness, (iii) mental consciousness, (iv) supra-intellectual consciousness, (v) consciousness proper to the universal Beatitude or Blissful consciousness, (vi) consciousness proper to the infinite divine self-awareness and (vii) consciousness proper to the state of pure divine existence (*Taittirīya Upaniṣad*, II.1-6). In old Indian psychology, there are three levels of consciousness – waking state (*jāgrata*), dream state (*svapna*) and sleep state (*susupti*). In addition to these, there is a fourth state called *Turīya*. The waking state is the consciousness of the material universe. The dream state is a consciousness corresponding to the subtler life-plane and mind-plane. The sleep state is a consciousness corresponding to the supra-mental plane proper to the gnosis, which is beyond our experience. The *Turīya* beyond is the consciousness of our pure self-existence with which we have no direct relation at all. This fourfold scale corresponds to the degrees of the ladder of being by which we climb back towards the absolute Divine.²⁷ The

various levels of consciousness have various levels of power. It is noteworthy that all knowledge is internal and draws the mind towards consciousness.

3.5. Consciousness and yoga:

Yoga is the science of peeling off layer after layer of individual consciousness wherein the secrets of life, death, religion, human destiny and God are perceived in its fullness. It had cracked the problem of consciousness and showed it to be the core of the individual and of the universe. It is a physical, mental and spiritual discipline, which has been developed around the fifth and sixth century B.C. in ancient India's ascetic and *Śramaṇa* movements. Etymologically, 'yoga' means connection, conjunction, attachment or union. It is a union of the individual self with the Supreme self [*saṁyogo yoga ityukto jīvātmā-paramātmānoḥ*].²⁸ In the *Pātañjala* system, *yoga* does not mean union of the individual self with the Supreme self (God); rather it denotes the cessation of all mental modifications (*cittavṛttinirodha*). According to *Patāñjali*, "Yoga essentially consists of meditative practices culminating in attaining a state of consciousness free from all modes of active or discursive thought, and eventually attaining a state where consciousness is unaware of any object external to itself, that is, is only aware of its own nature as consciousness unmixed with any other object"²⁹ (Bryant, 2009). The practice of *yoga* consists of eight steps – (i) *yama*, (ii) *niyama*, (iii) *āsana*, (iv) *prāṇāyāma*, (v) *pratyāhāra*, (vi) *dhāraṇā*, (vii) *dhyāna* and (viii) *samādhi*. If these steps are practiced with devotion, then a man will be able to have an experience of the self (God).³⁰ *Bhagavadgītā* is also called 'yogaśāstra'. It states that the word 'yoga' is derived from the root 'yuj', which

means ‘to join’. Each of its eighteen chapters is called *yoga*. In it, *yoga* denotes the joining of the individual soul with the Supreme. That is, it is a means of achieving union with the Lord. There are various definitions of *yoga* in the *Gītā*. One such definition is – ‘...*samatvam yoga ucyate*’ [here *yoga* denotes equanimity] (*Gītā*, 2.48). Another definition is – ‘...*yogaḥ karmasu kausalam*’ [i.e. *yoga* is efficiency in action] (*Gītā*, 2.50). *Yoga* is also regarded as self-control or control of the mind [*ātma-samyama-yoga*]. This has resemblance to *Patañjali*’s use of the word ‘*yoga*’. In the sixth chapter ‘*yoga*’ is defined as – ‘...*duḥkha-samyoga-viyogaṁ yogasamjñitam*...’ [i.e. severance of connection with pain is called *yoga*] (*Gītā*, 6.23). From the psychological point of view, *yoga* is nothing but practical psychology. It is the self-fulfillment of the *Puruṣa* through his Energy. The movement of Nature is twofold – higher and lower. The lower Nature acts through limitation and division, is of the nature of Ignorance and culminates in the life of the ego; but the higher Nature acts by unification and transcendence of limitation, is of the nature of knowledge and culminates in the life divine. The passage from the lower to the higher is the aim of *yoga*. This passage may affect itself by the rejection of the lower and escape in to the higher or by the transformation of the lower and its elevation to the higher Nature. There are three features of the higher when it works integrally on the lower nature. In the first place, it acts with a sort of free, scattered and gradually intensive and purposeful working determined by the temperament of the individual in whom it operates. Secondly, it stands organized by our past evolution and without rejecting anything essential compels all to undergo a divine change. Thirdly, the divine power in us uses all life as the means of the integral *yoga*. *Tantra* is one of the most

remarkable *yogic* systems prevalent in India. The *yogic* methods of *Tantra* are different from that of *Vedānta*. While in all the schools, the Lord of the *yoga* is the *Puruṣa*, the Conscious Soul that knows, observes, attracts and governs; in *Tantra*, it is rather *Prakṛti*, the Nature-Soul, the Energy, the Will-in-power active in the universe. On the one side, we have the *Tāntric* conception of the Energy, the *Śakti*, as the sole effective force for all attainment; on the other side, we get the *Vedāntic* conception of the *Śakti* as a power of illusion.³¹

Vedānta has referred to the seven planes (*bhūmi*) where the mind dwells. When the mind is involved in worldliness, it dwells in the three lower planes – at the navel, the organ of generation and the organ of evacuation. In this state, the mind loses all its higher visions; and is engrossed in the thought of money and woman. The fourth plane of the mind is at the heart. When the mind comes here, one has the first glimpse of spiritual consciousness and sees light all around. A man whose mind rises to this centre becomes speechless with wonder and does not go downward to the worldly objects. The fifth plane of the mind is at throat. In this plane, the aspirant becomes free from all ignorance and illusion. He does not enjoy talking or hearing about anything but God. The sixth plane is at the forehead. When the mind reaches it, the aspirant sees the form of God day and night. At the sight of the incomparable beauty of God's form, one becomes intoxicated and moves fast to touch and embrace it. But he does not succeed because even then a little trace of ego remains in him. The top of the head is the seventh plane. When the mind rises up to the head, one goes into *samādhi*. In this state, the *Brahmajñāni* directly perceives Brahman. He remains unconscious of

the outer world and his body does not last many days. The ‘seven planes’ of *Vedānta* has resemblance to the ‘six centers’ of *yoga*. The first three planes may be compared to the first three *yogic* centers, namely, *Mulādhāra*, *Svādhīsthāna* and *Manipura*. The fourth plane is the center designated in *yoga* as *Anāhata*. The fifth plane is the *Viśuddha* center of *yoga*. The sixth plane and the center known by the *yogi* as *Ājñā* are one and the same.³² The six centers are like the ‘lotuses’ in the subtle body. These lotuses can be seen through *yoga*. *Iḍā*, *Pīngalā* and *Suśumnā* are the three principal nerves according to the *yogis*. All the lotuses are located in the *Suśumnā* and are formed of Consciousness like a tree made of wax—the branches, twigs, fruits and so forth all of wax. The *kundalīni* lies in the lotus of *Mulādhāra*. This lotus has four petals. The center called *Viśuddha* has a lotus with sixteen petals. The sixth plane corresponding to the center known as *Ājñā* has a lotus with two petals. After passing through the six centers, the *kundalīni* reaches the thousand-petalled lotus called *Sahasrāra*. In this lotus dwell *Satchidānanda*, the Absolute; and the aspirant goes into *samādhi*.³³

In the *post-Vedic* period, *Śramaṇa* culture was developed in many parts of Eastern India. The expression – “*samaṇā vā brāhmaṇā vā*” asserts that Buddhist literature considered all the non-*Brāhmaṇic* systems as *śramaṇa*. There were some *śramaṇa* sects, which were called *parivrājakas* (wanderers). In this culture, *samādhi* is regarded as the highest goal of all spiritual practices. The highest *Samādhi* is *nirvija* (seedless) in which the thought-waves of the mind are restrained, and the deep *saṃskāras* are completely removed. If one remains in this state for more than twenty-one days, his body will be destroyed; and the *jīvātman*

will unite with the *Paramātmān*.³⁴ In this respect, the Gospel of Śrī Ramakrishna states:

“ ‘Generally speaking there are two kinds of samādhi. First, sthita or jaḍa samādhi: one attains it by following the path of knowledge – as a result of the destruction of the ego through reasoning. Second, bhāva samādhi : one attains this by following the path of bhakti. In this second samādhi a trace of ego remains like a line, in order to enable the devotee to enjoy God, to taste His līlā. But one cannot understand all this if one is attached to ‘woman and gold’³⁵” (Gupta, 1942).

Further, there are five kinds of *samādhi*. In these *samādhis*, one feels the sensation of the Spiritual Current like the movement of an ant, a fish, a monkey, a bird or a serpent. Sometimes, the Spiritual Current rises through the spine, crawling like an ant. Again sometimes, the soul swims joyfully in the ocean of divine ecstasy like a fish. Sometimes, the soul feels the Spiritual Current pushing it like a monkey and playing joyfully. That Current suddenly reaches the *Sahasrāra*. Sometimes, again the Spiritual Current rises like a bird hopping from one branch to another. It may hop from *Mulādhāra* to *Svādhīsthāna*, from *Svādhīsthāna* to the heart and then gradually to the head. Sometimes, the Spiritual Current moves up like a snake. This is called the movement of *Mahāvāyu* (the Great Energy).³⁶ So, the *Mahāvāyu* move upward in the body and one goes into *samādhi*. After a man has attained *samādhi*, all his actions become less. For such a person, all devotional activities such as worship, *japa* and the like, as well as all worldly duties cease to exist. As Śrī Ramakrishna said:

“After attaining *samādhi*, I once went to the Ganges to perform tarpan. But as I took water in the palm of my hand, it trickled down through my fingers. Weeping, I said to Haladhari, ‘Cousin, what is this?’ Haladhari replied, ‘It is called *galitahasta* in the holy books’. After the vision of God, such duties as the performance of tarpan drop away”³⁷ (Gupta, 1942).

Usually, the body does not remain alive after the attainment of *samādhi*. The exceptional cases are like the sages like *Nārada* who keep their bodies alive for bringing spiritual light to others. That is, none but the great souls can return to the plane of relative consciousness after attaining *samādhi*.³⁸

3.6. Śrī Ramakrishna’s view on different levels of consciousness revealing different aspects of reality:

Śrī Ramakrishna accepted different levels of consciousness, which resulted in different experiences, and different revelations of Reality respectively. Though Reality is same throughout, it reveals itself differently as we approach it from this or that level of experience. Mainly, there are four levels of consciousness, such as, waking, dreaming, dreamless sleep and *samādhi* including both *savikalpa* and *nirvikalpa samādhi*. Besides recognizing all these levels, Śrī Ramakrishna has spoken of the seven more levels of consciousness also. The first three levels of the seven-fold level of consciousness may be collectively called the level of ordinary sense-experience. When Reality is viewed solely from this level, it is revealed to us as a material world of objects possessing sensible qualities like smell, taste, colour, touch and sound. This depends mainly on the operation of the five organs

of cognition (*jñānendriya*) and five organs of action (*karmendriya*). The fourth level of consciousness is called the level of illumined non-sensuous consciousness. The fifth level of consciousness is the level of enlightened consciousness that is free from the influence of all ignorance (*avidyā*). It enables one to understand Reality as somehow divine, though remote. The sixth level of consciousness is dualistic, devotional consciousness. In this level, a man considers Reality as a personal God and himself as the 'I' or the 'ego' related to and dependent on God; in a manner as a part is related to the whole. He also believes in the reality of the world as the manifestation of God Himself. The seventh level is the super-conscious level where Reality is revealed as pure subject-objectless consciousness, i.e. as indeterminate (*nirguṇa*) Brahman.³⁹

Swami Vivekananda maintained that at the super-conscious level, the human being becomes free from the limitations of the ego; and there remains no difference between individual consciousness and the infinite consciousness of Brahman.⁴⁰ It is noteworthy that there is a much resemblance between Śrī Ramakrishna's levels of consciousness and Chaitanyadeva's states of mind. Chaitanyadeva experienced three states of mind – conscious state, semi-conscious state and the inmost state. In the first state, his mind dwelled on the gross and the subtle body. In the second state, his mind entered the causal body and was absorbed in the bliss of divine intoxication. In the third and the last state, his mind was merged in the Great Cause; and he remained absorbed in *samādhi*. This is called *nirvikalpa* or *jaḍa samādhi*.⁴¹ Śrī Ramakrishna's consciousness hovered about the borderline of the absolute and the relative existence, the transcendent

and immanent aspects of the Brahman. He had variety of spiritual visions of the Personal God and realized oneness with the Eternal Being (Brahman). The subject and object merged in one undivided existence and nothing remained to differentiate the realization of the Absolute. The Absolute cannot be objectified to one's consciousness through reason, intuition or imagination; and therefore cannot be known in this sense. But the Absolute became 'more than known' to Śrī Ramakrishna, because his own consciousness became one with it. For him, the transcendental existence instead of being merely a construction of philosophical speculation, mathematical abstraction or poetic imagination; became a tangible and living fact of experience on account of his frequent plunges in the ocean of nameless and formless reality.⁴² In this context we can quote Rabindranath Tagore who during his Hibbert Lectures for 1930 on 'Religion of Man' said:

“We have the age-long tradition in our country,... that through the process of *Yoga* man can transcend the utmost bounds of his humanity and find himself in a pure state of consciousness of his undivided unity with Parabrahman ... It is widely known in India that there are individuals who have the power to attain temporarily the state of *samadhi*, the complete merging of the self in the infinite, a state which is indescribable”⁴³ (The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore, 1996).

Śrī Ramakrishna stated that one should weep for God with a yearning heart. Tears shed for Him will remove the impurities of the mind and will enable a man to attain *yoga*. Therefore, *yoga* is impossible unless the mind becomes pure; and perfection in *yoga* is called *samādhi*. The mind of a *yogi* is under his control;

he is not under the control of his mind.⁴⁴ ‘Woman and gold’ are the obstacles to *yoga*. That is, as long as there is *bhoga*, there will be no *yoga*. It has been illustrated in the Gospel as –

“... Avadhuta chose a kite as one of his twenty-four gurus. The kite had a fish in its beak; so it was surrounded by a thousand crows. Whichever way it flew with the fish, the crows pursued it crying, ‘Caw! Caw!’ When all of a sudden the fish dropped from its beak, the crows flew after the fish, leaving the kite alone”⁴⁵ (Gupta, 1942).

In the above-mentioned example, ‘fish’ is the object of enjoyment; and ‘crows’ are worries and anxiety which are the indispensable object of enjoyment. As soon as one gives up the objects of enjoyment, he attains *yoga*. Swami Vivekananda pointed out that the twofold process of removal of ignorance and the manifestation of the inherent divinity of the soul is called *yoga*. That is, *yoga* is the process of transforming human consciousness into divine consciousness. The four *yogas* – *jñāna*, *bhakti*, *dhyāna* and *karma* are nothing but the ways of manifesting the inherent divinity. The key element of the inner transformation is intensity, which Śrī Ramakrishna called *vyākulatā*.⁴⁶

3.7. (a) **The concept of world:**

World is the manifestation of the Unmanifest (Ultimate Reality). *Yājñavalkya*, the greatest sage of the *Upaniṣads* said that though Reality is not this, not that, not anything subject to time, space and causation; yet It sustains the universe in It.⁴⁷ This fact has been described in the *Ṛhadāranyaka Upaniṣad* as:

“*Etasya vā akṣarasya prasāsane Gārgī sūrya-candramasau vidhṛtau tiṣṭhataḥ*”
 [Under the mighty rule of this Immutable, O *Gargi*, the sun and the moon are held in their positions] (*Br. Up.iii. 8.9*). The *Purāṇas* state that God Himself has become the twenty-four cosmic principles; and the world is a ‘mansion of mirth’. For *bhaktas*, God Himself has become *māyā*, the universe and all living beings. Some devotees (*bhaktas*) see everything as *Rāma*; while some others see everything as *Rādhā* and *Krishna*. It resembles seeing everything green through green glasses. In contrast with the *Purāṇas*, *Vedānta* stated that the world is a ‘framework of illusion’. That is, it is illusory like a dream because it is not eternal and imperishable.⁴⁸ Just as a dream merges in the dreamer, so also the world merge in Brahman from whom it has arisen; but it never merges into nothingness.

Advaita Vedānta stated that the world is the product of *māyā*. By explaining the world as *māyā*, *S aṅkara* meant that the world does not possess an objective existence, as it is a kind of projection (*adhyāsa*) of the human mind. Nature of the world is basically determined by the human mind. Therefore, the world has an anthropocentric nature and such a world is *māyā* according to *Śaṅkara*. The world is unreal (*asat*) because it is not eternally real and immutable. But unreality of the world does not mean denial of its actual existence as an empirical reality. On the contrary, what *Śaṅkara* wanted to say is that the world does not possess eternal, universal, undeniable, uniform and indubitable existence.⁴⁹ In contrast with *S aṅkara* *Sri Aurobindo* maintained that the world is not unreal even if it were a dream. Rather, it would be real as a dream—real to itself in the present. He also said that we can not even say that the world is unreal

because it does not have absolute existence. Therefore, the world has been given a status of ‘reality’ by *Sri Aurobindo*.⁵⁰ *Rāmānuja* also maintained that God has created the world out of Himself and hence, it is real like Him. God includes within Himself unconscious matter (*acit*) and the finite spirit (*cit*). The former one is also called *Prakṛti* and during the state of dissolution (*pralaya*), it remains in a latent, subtle and undifferentiated form. The undifferentiated subtle matter gradually becomes transformed into three subtle elements – earth, water and fire that become mixed up together and produces all gross objects. Every object of the world is a mixture of these three elements. This process of triplication is called *trivṛtkaraṇa*. He denied the fact that the world is illusory or unreal. *Rāmānuja* maintained that the word ‘*māyā*’ denotes God’s power of creating wonderful objects. To say in other words, it is the inscrutable power by which God creates the world.⁵¹

3.7. (b) Theories of Creation:

The *Vedāntic* concept of creation (world) is enshrined in the ‘*Nāsadiya Sūkta*’ of the *Rg Veda* which is commonly known as the ‘Hymn of creation’. The *Sūkta* is full of deep philosophical insight about the creation of the universe.⁵² The first two verses of it have been translated as:

“Existence was not then, nor non-existence,

The world was not,

the sky beyond was neither.

What covered the mist? Of whom was that?

What was in the depths of darkness thick?

Death was not then, nor immortality,
The night was neither separate from day,
But motionless did That vibrate
Alone, with Its own glory one –
Beyond That nothing did exist.”⁵³

In their search for the ultimate principle of the universe, the *Vedic* seers arrived at the truth that the primeval cause of creation is beyond the limitations of name, form, space and time. This cause is singular and transcendental in nature. This fact has been expressed in the *Sūkta* as – ‘*Tad ekam*’ [That one]. When the universe was un-differentiated, the non-dual Brahman remained united with its inscrutable power, namely, *māyā*. However, in the differentiated state, the universe was projected into existence by the apparent modification (*vivarta*) of Brahman. It is noteworthy that *māyā* possesses two powers called *āvaraṇa* (concealment) and *vikṣepa* (projection). The former one obscures and conceals the true nature of Brahman; while the latter one creates the universe and all its objects by the process of evolution. Therefore, the universe is the manifestation of Consciousness (Brahman) under the operation of *māyā*. *Aitareya Upaniṣad* states: “... the universe has consciousness as its eye and consciousness is its end. Consciousness is Brahman”. *Vedānta* upholds the perpetual cyclic nature of evolution of the cosmos or universe. The universe is not absolutely created or destroyed. Rather, it passes through a series of transformation from the non-manifest to the manifest state through different stages of periodic expansions and contractions. The first element that appears in the universe is *ākāśa* (space). The next element is *prāṇa* (vibration). As the vibrations become faster, space creates

all the worldly objects. All forces found in the universe such as gravitation, heat, light etc. are vibrations or *prāṇa*. If the vibrations continue, various names and forms emerge and merge to be recycled again with new names and forms. At the last stage of the cyclic evolution, everything becomes finer and is resolved back into the primordial undifferentiated state from where it came into being. This state is called '*anidvatam*' which implies that the universe is characterized by vibrations.⁵⁴

The *Vedāntic* theory of creation has marked resemblance with scientific theories. Now-a-days, cyclic cosmological theories have become very much interesting to cosmologists and astrophysicists.⁵⁵ Edwin Powell Hubble, an astronomer, in course of his working at the Mount Wilson observatory observed that the universe is continuously expanding; and this observation formed the basis of the **Big Bang theory** in 1929. The theory states that the universe began with an intense burst of energy at a single moment in time and has been expanding ever since.⁵⁶ Some versions of this theory became the mainstream of scientific view. A point to be noted is that the essential statement of the theory is attributed to Georges Lemaitre in 1927. A similar theory had been proposed, but not pursued by Alexander Friedman in 1922. There is another model called **oscillating universe**, which follows from Friedman's theory. According to this model, the universe expands for a time and then contracts due to the pull of its gravity in an unceasing cycle of Big Bang followed by **Big Crunch**.⁵⁷ One more model called **cyclic model** has been developed by Paul J Steinhardt and Neil Turok in 2002. This model states that the evolution of the universe is cyclic in time and the

universe undergoes infinite cycles of expansion and contraction in which the density and temperature remain finite.⁵⁸

The cyclic model repudiated the concept of the origin of the universe out of nothing and reiterates that the ‘bang’ denotes the transition from the contraction of the universe to its expansion. It also suggests that ripples of the previous cycle govern the growth and decay of the next cycle. *Ākāśa* and *prāṇa* correspond to the matter and energy respectively. *Prāṇa*, is the substratum of all energy and regulates the evolution of the universe. Swami Vivekananda is the first *Vedāntist* who tried to co-relate *Vedānta* cosmogony and scientific cosmology. He, by reiterating the cyclic theory of the universe said that the universe goes through a series of expansion and contraction during its evolution.⁵⁹ He brought about the great syncretisation of *Vedānta* and science based on ‘*bhāvamukha*’ experience of his master, Śrī Ramakrishna. This very experience enabled Śrī Ramakrishna to raise the world from the status of *mithyā* (unreal) to the status of *līlā* (divine play).⁶⁰

3.8. Śrī Ramakrishna’s view on world:

According to Śrī Ramakrishna, world with all its wonderful objects is the sportive creative activity of Brahman (the Absolute). It is not an imaginary show evoked by an illusion-producing *māyā*. All objects of the world such as earth and heaven, plants and trees, birds and beasts, man and woman are forms of the Divine Mother ; and therefore real and conscious or intelligent. The world has no permanent and eternal reality like Brahman; but has a relative reality only. It is called ‘*samsāra*’ for it is always changing and moving. It is noteworthy that when

the creative activity of Brahman is ceased, there exists no thing, no being and no world at all. Likewise, in the state of *samādhi*, the whole world with all its objects ceases to exist; only Brahman in its pure, eternal and immutable being exists. As Śrī Ramakrishna said: “ ‘God alone is real (*vastu*), everything else is unreal (*avastu*); the world is devoid of all value (*asāra*), God is the only value (*sāra*) ...’⁶¹” Here a question may arise as to if the world is the manifestation of the creative activity of Brahman, why is then so much sin and suffering in the world? This is known as the problem of evil in Philosophy. Evil is a necessary part of the sportive creative activity (*līlā*) of Brahman. Without the forces of evil, there will be no enrichment of Its *līlā*. If there is no difference and diversity in the world, there will be no human endeavours and achievements. Consequently, there will be no history and no world because world is after all a history of many things and beings. That is, in creation, there must be an opposition of two forces – good and evil; and sin and suffering arise out of such opposition.

The Divine Mother exists as Divine *Māyā* in Brahman. The Divine *Māyā* functions in the world as two opposed forces, namely, *vidyā* and *avidyā*. The former one is of two kinds, namely, discrimination (*viveka*) and renunciation (*vairāgya*). The latter one is of six kinds, such as, desire (*kāma*), anger (*krodha*), lust (*lobha*), infatuation (*moha*), pride (*mada*) and jealousy (*mātsarya*). *Avidyā-māyā* constitutes the ego of man and binds him to the world with the false sense of ‘I’ and ‘my’. It is also known as *ajñāna* or ignorance. But when *vidyā-māyā* becomes manifest, all ignorance (*avidyā*) disappears.⁶² This fact has been described in the Gospel as:

“One may enter the world after attaining discrimination and dispassion. In the ocean of the world there are six alligators ... But you need not fear the alligators if you smear your body with turmeric before you go into the water. Discrimination and dispassion are the turmeric ...”⁶³ (Gupta, 1942).

Avidyā- māyā is responsible for all kinds of evil in the world. That is, evil is the necessary consequence of man’s egoism and freedom. The actions performed by men with a sense of egoism are regulated by the law of karma and generate their consequences in their lives. Good actions produce good results like satisfaction of mind and happiness; while bad actions produce bad results like remorse and misery. Nobody can escape from the operation of the law of karma. Again, without the sense of freedom and responsibility, there would have been more sin in the world. To be more specific, without a sense of freedom, there would be no individuals and without individuals, there would be no play of the moral drama of the world.⁶⁴

The belief in the permanence of the world is like a thorn and this thorn is the power of *avidyā- māyā*. Śrī Ramakrishna compared the world to a ‘thorny bush’ --- if one touches it, he will bleed. This resembles the camel which continues to eat thorns though its mouth bleeds. In a like manner, the worldly man loses his children and still desires for more. This is the nature of the world and to come out of it, *vijñāna* is necessary. *Vijñāna* implies knowing God in a special way, and for the attainment of it both *jñāna* and *ajñāna* must be discarded. Śrī Ramakrishna suggested two solutions (*upāya*) against the thorns: (a) removing the past thorn that has already entered the body and (b) taking preventive measures

against future thorns. So, both past and future thorns must be dealt with carefully.⁶⁵ To quote him:

“Why should you be frightened? Hold fast to God. What if the world is like a forest of thorns? Put on shoes and walk on the thorns ...”⁶⁶ (Gupta, 1942).

It appears, therefore, that there is nothing wrong on our part to remain in the world. The only thing that should be taken care of is that we must direct our mind toward God; otherwise, we will not succeed. The more one realizes the unity of mind with God, the more his mind is withdrawn from worldly objects. Mind is like milk. If we keep the mind in the world which is like water, then milk and water will be mixed. Due to this reason people used to keep milk in a quiet place and let it to be transformed into curd and then churn the butter from it. Similarly, through spiritual discipline practiced in solitude, one can churn the butter of knowledge and devotion (*jñāna* and *bhakti*) from the milk of mind. Afterwards, that butter can be easily kept in the water of the world for then only, it will not get mixed with the world; rather the mind will float detached on the water of the world.⁶⁷ In this context the story of *Vilwamangal* from *Bhaktamāla* can be referred to:

“Vilwamangal used to visit a prostitute. One night he was very late in going to her house. He had been detained at home by the śrāddha ceremony of his father and mother. In his hands he was carrying the food offered in the ceremony, to feed his mistress. His whole soul was so set upon the woman that he was not at all conscious of his movements. He did not even

know how he was walking. There was a yogi seated on the path, meditating on God – with eyes closed. Vilwamangal stepped on him. The yogi became angry ... ‘I beg your pardon’, said Vilwamangal, ‘but may I ask you something? I have been unconscious, thinking of a prostitute, and you are conscious of the outer world though thinking of God. What kind of meditation is that?’ In the end Vilwamangal renounced the world and went away in order to worship God ...”⁶⁸ (Gupta, 1942).

The above-mentioned story indicates that the mind of a worldly person can be purified by discrimination and renunciation. Once a Brāhmo devotee asked Śrī Ramakrishna: “Is it good to renounce the world?” He replied –

“Not for all. Those who have not yet come to the end of their enjoyments should not renounce the world ... They should try to perform their duties in a detached way ... You should renounce the world only in mind. But a sannyāsi should renounce the world both inwardly and outwardly”⁶⁹ (Gupta, 1942).

Actually, both worldliness and liberation depend on the will of God. Until a man feels that God is the Master, he will have to come to the world repeatedly; and consequently, there will be no liberation. First comes God and then the world. For this reason, Nārada advised Vālmiki to repeat the word ‘marā’. ‘Ma’ means God and ‘rā’ means the world. The phenomenal world belongs to that Reality to which the Absolute belongs; and the Absolute belongs to that very Reality to which the phenomenal world belongs. After dissolution, the world remains involved in God; and God at the time of creation evolves as the world. Therefore,

it is impossible to detach God from the world. Despite this, some men cannot free themselves from the attraction of worldly objects. They do not love God in a way they love 'woman and gold'. They are 'bound creatures' who being immersed in worldliness are degraded day by day; still they believe that they are happy and secure. There are again two other classes of man called 'the liberated' and 'the seekers after liberation' who considers the world as a deep well. Another class of man called 'the ever-perfect class' are never entangled in worldliness. They are like bees, which light only on flowers and sip the honey. They drink only the Nectar of Divine Bliss and their enthusiasm for God is amazing.⁷⁰ This spiritual zeal has been described in the Gospel by referring to the earnestness of the *gopis* of *Vrindāvan* as :

“Thou art my All in All, O Lord! – the Life of my life,
the Essence

of essence;

In the three worlds I have none else but Thee to call my
own ...

Thou art the Mother tender-hearted; Thou the
chastising Father;

Thou the Creator and Protector; Thou the Helmsman
who dost

steer

My craft across the sea of life”⁷¹ (Gupta, 1942).

In fine, it may be stated that the world is not impermanent for a man (*jñāni*) who lives in it after knowing God. Even after attaining *jñāna*, the *jñāni* lives in the world for the purpose of teaching men and enjoying the Divine Bliss. As Śrī Ramakrishna said: “Returning to the relative plane after reaching the Absolute is like coming back to this shore of a river after going to the other side. Such a return to the relative plane is for the teaching of men and for enjoyment --- particularly in the divine sport in the world.”⁷²

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