

HINDUTVA AS BRAHMATVA

Brahma, Rta, and Satya as Core Concepts of Hindu Religion

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Abstract

Hindu classical texts like the Veda, the Upanishad, and the Epics are primarily concerned with the eternal mystery of the absolute and relative reality, its comprehensibility, and its sustenance. The religious and cultural concepts of Brahma, Rta, and Satya, which have shaped the Hindu identity over the ages, are the essence of these texts and the Hindu religion. All these concepts are included and comprehended in one great universal, that is Brahma as a mass of consciousness.

The cosmic reach of the Hindu worldview is shaped by the creation of these cultural concepts, connections between these concepts, and between the concepts and sense experience. These cultural concepts have therefore created the world for Hindus by connecting the dots of the manifest and un-manifest reality. These concepts are abstract, open, adaptive, contextual, and connected in a system, but this abstraction and connectivity is their creativity and competence to straddle across time and space and make the dynamic reality comprehensible and enable meaningful and effective action.

In this sense these concepts are coexistent with the lived reality, they define reality and also create reality as known to us. They span, connect, and integrate different levels of objective reality to make it meaningful and complementary for those who believe in these conceptualizations, and make it possible for them to engage in constructive action. Hindutva is the unity of spirit that binds these cultural conceptualizations and links up the different periods of India's history into an organic whole. Achievements of Hinduism would not have been possible without the unifying spirit of Hindutva that runs through these conceptualizations.

Introduction

In recent years, there has been a trend, especially from the non-Western world, against the domination of Western paradigms in social sciences. Recent works in this field have questioned the appropriateness of the Western social science paradigms for the non-Western societies (Alatas, 2006; Chen, 2018; Gluck, 2018; Gunaratne, 2010; Li, 2020; Miike, 2019, 2017, 2016; Mowlana, 2019; Shohat and Stam, 2013). The main concern of these scholars is the intellectual dominance of the “professional center of gravity in the USA”, and, to a lesser degree, European academics. As Western theories and concepts do not always reflect the issues and debates in the developing countries, critics propose an epistemic shift toward a greater diversity of academic perspectives, leading to a greater diversity of fundamental theories, approaches and concepts worldwide (Gluck, 2018, p.2).

Eurocentrism, a term often used for Westernism, has been defined as the “procrustean forcing of cultural heritage neatly into a single paradigmatic perspective in which Europe is seen as the unique source of meaning, as the world’s center of gravity. Eurocentric thinking attributes to the “West” an almost providential sense of historical destiny” (Shohat and Stam, 2013, p.2). As another contemporary scholar further elaborates, “The idea behind Eurocentricity in its most vile form, whatever its theoretical manifestation, is that Europe is the standard and nothing exists in the same category anywhere. It is the valorization of Europe above all other cultures and societies that makes it such a racist system” (Asante, 2014, p.6-7).

In the Indian context, the assault on its cultural traditions was first officially announced by William Wiberforce in his 1813 speech to the English Parliament in which he argued that the English must ensure the conversion of the country to Christianity as the most effective way of bringing it to “civilization”. In 1835, Governor General Macaulay knocked down the entire intellectual output of India in his absurd statement that, “a single shelf of good European library was worth the whole native literature of India...” (Alvares, 2011, p.73). It is distressing that even as India approaches seventy-five years of independence from British colonialism, so many educated segments and educational institutions in the country still continue to sustain the “apemanship and parrotry” knowledge structure of the West (ibid.). The Western concepts of secularism, religion, and nationalism are still being explained and understood in India in terms of the Western cultural context whereas the corresponding Indian cultural concepts of *brahma*, *dharma*, and *rashtra* are rarely discussed.

As a universal concept, “communication” exists in all human societies. In other words, people in different societies must go through the process of exchanging words and gestures in order to achieve the objective of mutual understanding and coordination. Nevertheless, while recognizing the fact claimed by scholars that “we cannot not communicate”, “Communication is symbolic, dynamic, and developmental”, or “Communication involves elements such as sender, encoding, channel, message, receiver, decoding, feedback, noise, environment, etc.”, it is important to know that the way to perceive the concept and to practice communication is subject to the influence of the culture a person lives by. (Adler and Rodman, p. 17).

J.S. Yadav, former Director of Indian Institute of Mass Communication, has observed that Western communication models and methodologies do not really help in understanding and explaining phenomena and processes in the context of Indian society and culture. Western models and methodologies are not very appropriate for Indian conditions. He has emphasized the need to develop and refine Indian or Eastern way of looking at language and communication and use appropriate research methods for studying communication events and processing. (Yadava, p. 191). In Indian culture, saints and sages have traditionally been opinion leaders communicating the norms and values for righteous social behavior on the part the individuals. Their role as communicators who influence communication at various

levels is important even today and needs to be studied to bring Indian communication model closer to the lived reality of the people of India (ibid. p. 194). It is in this context that the concepts of *Hindutva*, *Brahma* and *Rta* can be helpful not only in a better understanding of cultural roots of language and in India but also in accepting their role in promoting intercultural communication.

***Hindutva*-Essence of Hinduism**

When we think of the Hindu religion, we find it difficult, if not impossible, to define Hindu religion or even adequately describe it. Which is not surprising, because Hindu religion is primarily about the un-manifest, infinite and absolute reality, and its interaction with the manifest, and finite reality. Unlike other religions in the world, Hindu religion does not claim any one prophet; it does not worship any one God; it does not subscribe to anyone dogma; it does not believe in only one philosophical concept; it does not follow any one set of religious rites or performances; in fact, it does not appear to satisfy the narrow traditional features of any religion or creed. It may broadly be described as a way of life.

Dr. Radhakrishnan has explained how Hinduism has steadily absorbed the customs and ideas of peoples with whom it has come into contact and has thus been able to maintain its supremacy and its youth. The term 'Hindu', according to Dr. Radhakrishnan, had originally a territorial and not a credal significance. It implied residence in a well-defined geographical area. Aboriginal tribes, savage and half-civilized people, the cultured Dravidians and the Vedic Aryans were all Hindus as they were the sons of the same mother. The Hindu thinkers reckoned with the striking fact that the men and women dwelling in India belonged to different communities, worshipped different gods and practised different rites. (Radhakrishnan, 2018, p. 2).

As Dr. Radhakrishnan has observed; "The Hindu civilization is so called, since its original founders or earliest followers occupied the territory drained by the Sindhu (the Indus) river system corresponding to the North West Frontier Province and the Punjab. This is recorded in the Rig Veda, the oldest of the Vedas, the Hindu scriptures which give their name to this period Indian history. The people on the Indian side of the Sindhu were called Hindu by the Persian and the western invaders". (ibid.). That is the genesis of the word "Hindu". "In all the fleeting centuries of history", says Dr. Radhakrishnan, "in all the vicissitudes through which India has passed, a certain marked identity is visible. It has held fast to certain psychological traits which constitute its special heritage, and they will be the characteristic marks of the Indian people so long as they are privileged to have a separate existence". (ibid.).

Beneath the diversity of philosophic thoughts, concepts and ideas expressed by Hindu philosophers who started different philosophic schools, lie certain broad concepts which can be treated as basic. The first amongst these basic concepts is the acceptance of the Veda as the highest authority in religious and philosophic matters. This concept necessarily implies that all the systems claim to have drawn their principles from a common reservoir of thought enshrined in the Veda. The Hindu

teachers were thus obliged to use the heritage they received from the past in order to make their views readily understood. (SCR, p. 17)

Secondly, *Brahma*, the Being, known by various names-such as Param Brahma, Bhagwan, Purshottama- is to be worshipped as the Absolute Reality. In the Hindu tradition the first gods that were worshipped in Vedic times were mainly Indra, Varuna, Vayu and Agni. Later, Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh came to be worshipped. It has been declared in the Vedas that Narayana and Siva are forms of Brahma, the Supreme Spirit. In course of time, Rama and Krishna secured a place of pride in the Hindu tradition, and gradually as different philosophic concepts held sway in different sects in different sections of the Hindu community, a large number of gods were added, with the result that today, the Hindu tradition presents the spectacle of a very large number of gods who are worshipped by different sections of the Hindus. (ibid. p.18).

“The same God is worshipped by all. The differences of conception and approach are determined by local colouring and social adaptations. All manifestations belong to the same Supreme. "Visnu is Siva and Siva is Visnu and whoever thinks they are different goes to hell". "He who is known as Visnu is verily Rudra and he who is Rudra is Brahma's One entity functions as three gods that is Rudra, Tigris and Brahma." Udayandcarya writes: "Whom the Saivas worship as Siva, the Vedantins as Brahman, the Buddhists as Buddha, the Naiyyayikas who specialize in canons of knowledge as the chief agent, the followers of the Jaina code as the ever free, the ritualists as the principle of law, may that Hari, the lord of the three worlds, grant our prayers." (Radhakrishnan, 2014, p.184).

The third basic concept which is common to the diverse systems of Hindu philosophy is that "all of them accept the view of *Rta* the great cosmic order and rhythm. Vast periods of creation, maintenance and dissolution follow each other in endless succession. This theory is not inconsistent with belief in progress; for it is not a question of the movement of the world reaching its goal times without number, and being again forced back to its starting point..... It means that the race of man enters upon and retravels its ascending path of realisation. This interminable succession of world ages has no beginning. "Our life is a step on a road, the direction and goal of which are lost in the infinite. On this road, death is never an end or an obstacle but at most the beginning of new steps". (SCR, p.19). It may also be said that while all the systems of Hindu philosophy believe in rebirth and pre-existence, yet they remain sharply focused on the value of the past and the future in the present.

The Bhagvadgita opens with a problem. Arjun refuses to fight and raises difficulties. He puts up a plausible plea for abstention from activity and for retreat from the world, an ideal which dominated certain sects at the time of the composition of the Bhagvadgita. To persuade him is the purpose of the Bhagvadgita. It raises the question whether action or renunciation of action is better and concludes that action is better. Arjun declares that his perplexities are ended and he would carry out the command to fight. Right through, the teacher emphasizes the need for action. He does not adopt the solution of dismissing the world as an illusion and action as a snare. He

recommends the full active life of man in the world with the inner life anchored in the Eternal Spirit. The Bhagvadgita is therefore a mandate for action. It explains what a man ought to do not merely as a social being but as an individual with a spiritual destiny. (Radhakrishnan, 2014, p.71).

The development of Hindu religion and philosophy shows that from time to time saints and religious reformers attempted to remove from the Hindu thought and practices elements of corruption and superstition and that led to the formation of different sects. Buddha started Buddhism; Mahavir founded Jainism; Basava became the founder of Lingayat religion, Dnyaneshwar and Tuk-aram initiated the Varakari cult; Guru Nank inspired Sikhism; Dayananda founded Arya Samaj, and Chaitanya began Bhakti cult; and as a result of the teachings of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda, Hindu religion flowered into its most attractive, progressive and dynamic form. If we study the teachings of these saints and religious reformers, we would notice an amount of divergence in their respective views; but underneath that divergence, there is a kind of subtle indescribable unity which brings them within the sweep of the broad and progressive Hindu religion. (SCR, p.20)

Vedic Dawn

The Vedic civilization in India had established a golden age of knowledge and prosperity more than five thousand years ago. Vedic culture had created a harmonious relationship between the manifest and un-manifest world. The manifest world with all its diversities and natural surroundings was seen and perceived as the divine gift of the un-manifest by the Vedic sages. They did not see the world as place of suffering and sadness. The creative, and bountiful nature gave to the industrious and insightful plenty to work with and celebrate. In the Vedic age, pure ecstatic practice and contemplation of human speech echoing in the atmosphere through the sacred chant merged easily with the flow and sound of the divine river, on the banks of which such chanting and contemplation took place. “With the river’s raging as the background to the rhythmic recitation of the inspired hymns on the banks of Sarasvati, the association with speech on the one hand and music on the other can hardly be overlooked” (Ludvik, 2007, p.35).

In order to explain their visionary experience of the Absolute Reality, the Vedic sages chose the style of symbolism. The Vedic mantras use the names and forms of the objects and events to indicate the nature of the Absolute Reality. “The Ocean, Sky, Air, Water, Fire, Sun, Mountains, Rivers, Trees, Animals, Humans, Clouds, Rain and many more are objects in nature which stand out as alphabets of world language robed in silence, yet eloquent with exploding meaning that can be deciphered according to the intellectual attainment of each individual. The human body, eyes, ears, hands, feet, in breath, out breath, light, sound, movement—all these introduce us to a rich world of symbolical significance” (Agrawal, 1953, p.iv). The objects of Absolute Reality are an integral and essential part of all Vedic rituals and they are considered as the connecting points of the relative and the Absolute Reality. The idea that nature and language are integrated has been for ages well known in Indian culture which has maintained historical continuity much longer than western culture (Whorf, p. 249).

The origin of the worship of *Devatas* like *Indra*, *Varun*, *Agni*, and *Mitra*, can be traced back to the times before the *Rg Veda*. While it continues in *Rg Veda*, there is an underlying recognition of an Absolute Reality, preceding the *Devatas* which is the cause of their creation. That all pervasive, indivisible, infinite and eternal cosmic energy is termed in *Rg Veda* as *Aditi*. There are many such *Devatas* in the *Rg Veda* from which any one could be considered to be the foundation of the Jew, Christian, or Islamic religion. In fact, the *Vedas* are a treasure of such creative thought and philosophy that they consist of spiritual power to generate universal systems of faith. The *Ekam Satya* mantra in the *Rg Veda*, enunciates the principle of cosmic coexistence and harmony which has given a distinct identity and direction to the Hindu religion:

इन्द्रं॑ मि॒त्रं वरु॑णम॒ग्निमा॑हुरथो॒ दि॒व्यः स सु॑पु॒र्णो गुरु॑त्मान् ।

एकं॑ स॒द्वि॒प्रा बहु॑धा व॒दन्त्य॒ग्निं य॒मं मा॑तरि॒श्वान॑माहुः ॥

They called him Indra, Mitra, Varuṇa, Agni; and he is heavenly Garuda, who has beautiful wings. The truth is one, but the sages call it by many names or describe him in many ways; they called him Agni, Yama, Mātariśvan. (Rg Veda 1.164.46)

This fundamental principle of cosmic energy as the unified source of all existence, which was enunciated in the *Rg Veda*, considers all existence to have been created from the same cosmic source, including the creation of the *Devatas* or gods. It is the distinguishing feature of Hindu religion that it recognizes and respects the value of all religions of the world. All faith in the divine creator, all modes of worship of the creator, and all modes of representation of the creator are considered as valid means to comprehend the Absolute Reality which is beyond words and thoughts. All religions are different ways of reaching the same goal of experiencing and expressing the same fundamental Absolute Reality which underlies all existence. This principle of unity in diversity in matters of matters of faith is the unique and earliest contribution of the *Vedas*.

***Brahma*-Absolute Reality**

Brahma the absolute reality, cosmic, transcendent principle and immanent source of everything that exists, one of the most fundamental and pervasive concepts of Hindu tradition, escapes every clear definition, and yet the Hindu religious literature is full of descriptions of the undescribable. As the fundamental principle of all existence it is the One without a second (*Rg Veda* 10.129); its implied meanings are 'greatness, sacredness, inner power, sacred Word and wisdom, and it has been characterized as Being (sat), Consciousness (cit) and Bliss (ananda). It is by nature eternal, foundational, and contains all powers. It is the source of everything and also all pervasive. *Brahma* is both being and non-being, it is far and also near, it is form and also formless, name and nameless, and creator and creation. It is complete wholeness and yet cannot be completely described by any concept. Above descriptions of *Brahma* in the Hindu literature show that it is practically impossible to treat *Brahma* as a unitary concept. It defies all definitions. *Brahma* is a mystery, an enigma, a mysterious power which is effective and produces objects and processes which have form and name and which can be located in space and time.

The *Rg Veda* contains several references of *Brahman* most of which found in the later portions of the *Rg Veda*, specifically Books 1 and 10. These mantras highlight the emphasis on action in the manifest created world in representations of *Brahma* as presented in the *Rg Veda*, particularly as regards speech which addresses the gods. In *Rg Veda*, *Brahma* is used in the sense of sacred knowledge, or a hymn, or speech, the manifest expression of the character of spiritual consciousness. The role of *Brahma* in the *Rg Veda* possesses characteristics of relationality, interdependence and co-creation. *Brahma* can refer to hymns or poetic formulae that contain a certain mysterious, enigmatic power, which, symbolizes the hidden potential life-giving power contained within the silence of the primordial undifferentiated, undivided, uncreated world. Such hidden power is embedded relationally within the wholeness of the world, which in turn is interdependent with the power of *Brahman*, for the life-giving power of *Brahma* requires the presence of the undivided world in order to act and thus create the manifest world. The Vedic seers held a deep understanding of cosmic inter-connectedness and expressed this consciousness using metaphors of relationality, interdependence, and co-creation in their hymns describing the relationship of manifest and un-manifest reality.

The Upanisads provide more fertile ground for metaphysical representation of *Brahma*. While the Vedic *Brahma* is seen as the creative energy, in the Upanisads, the concept gradually acquires meaning beyond its concrete associations, cosmic connections, and various other realities. It becomes more and more an abstract, all-pervading, transcendent supreme Principle (Baumer, p. 3). While this concept has rarely been personified or idolized, it retains its impersonal and metaphysical nature and immanent fluidity, thus making its twofold nature of fundamental importance. Jan Gonda (1950), who devoted an entire book to *Brahman*, describes it in terms of its dynamic creativity, as "the potency or principle of cosmic energy from which all things are derived, as the ultimate basis of the world, as one with the true immortality and eternal reality" (Gonda, p.10). He associates *Brahman* with two aspects of power, both "personal" and "impersonal" (Ibid. p.62-63, 66).

While there are rudiments of the doctrine of *Brahma* in Sanskrit texts right from the Vedas and the Upanishads, an exhaustive postulation and discussion of *Brahma* is given in *Vākyapadīya*. It was Bhartrhari who first systematically equated *Brahma* (the Absolute) with *Śabda* (language), going on to argue that everything arises as a manifestation of the *Śabda Brahma* (Coward & Kunjunniraja, 1990, p. 34). *Śabda Brahma* has also been defined as Communicative Brahma (Wilke, 2011, p. 629).

Bhartrhari harmonized the speculations of the *Sabdikas* with *Advaita* philosophy. He believed that grammar gives the foremost spiritual training and is the most important subsidiary texts of the Veda. Grammar is a gateway to liberation, a cure to the blemishes of speech, and purifier of all other disciplines. It is the first step on the ladder towards liberation, and is the straight Royal Road for those desirous of that goal. The soul which has passed beyond errors in grammar can observe *Brahma* in the form of *Om* (Pillai, 1971, pp. 2-4).

This conception of the levels or layers of Brahma integrates the Vedic meaning with the Upanisadic. What's more, humans participate in this creative movement toward manifestation, because they have at once both silence and sound, both the nonmanifest and manifest, both the spirit and matter, they move and form the bridge between the non-differentiated primordial world absolute reality and the multi-form, propped-up created worlds. Human beings are the living cords which connect the objective world to the world of cosmic energy. Upanisads highlight the co-creative aspect of *Brahma* in the sense that the human beings form a connection with the energy of *Brahma* to co- create the universe through the medium of sacred speech which is a representation of *Brahma*.

In the Rgveda, *Brahma* is used in the sense of 'sacred knowledge or utterance, a hymn or incantation. Brahma is mantra or prayer. It has a mysterious power and contains within itself the essence of the thing denoted. In the Upanisads Brahman means the supreme reality. It is derived from the root brh. 'to grow, to burst forth.' The derivation suggests gushing forth, bubbling over, ceaseless growth. (Radhakrishnan, p.52.). Thus, the word denotes activity and not just passive knowledge. Knowledge without practice is worse than action without knowledge. The concept of *Brahma* suggest a fundamental kinship between the aspiring spirit of man and the spirit of the universe it seeks to attain.

Brahman is not merely a featureless Absolute. It is all this world. Supra-cosmic transcendence and cosmic universality are both real phases of one absolute reality. In the former aspect the Spirit is in no way dependent on the cosmic manifold; in the latter the Spirit functions as the principle of the cosmic manifold. The supra-cosmic unmanifest reality and the cosmic integration are both real. The two, *nirguna* and *saguna Brahman*, Absolute and the relative, are not exclusive. It is the same *Brahma* who is described in different ways. The two are like two sides of one reality. The Real is at the same time being realized. The nirakara (formless), and the sakara (with form), are different aspects of the same Reality. The seeker can choose either in his spiritual practices. Knowledge of both is considered supreme salvation. When an individual rises to full awareness, he knows himself to be related to universal consciousness, but when he turns outward he sees the objective universe as a manifestation of the universal consciousness. The withdrawal from the world is not the conclusive end of the human quest. There has to be a return to the world accompanied by the awareness that the objective reality is relative and it is sustained by the absolute reality. The objective reality has to be experienced and shaped to be in harmony with the absolute reality from which it emerges and into which it merges.

Thus the central concept of Hindutva, *Brahma*, appears in four levels or aspects in the course of its evolution from the earliest Vedic texts: as the transcendental universal Being, preceding any immanent reality; as the causal factor of the differentiation; as the innermost essence of the particular beings determining their individual existence; as the dynamic essence of spiritual knowledge reconnecting the differentiation to the original unity. Thus, *Brahma* is the known, the knower, the knowledge, and the path of knowledge. The one who knows *Brahma* becomes *Brahma*. It is *Sat Chit Ananada*, the bliss of the knowledge of the truth.

Rta-Cosmic Order

The concept *rta* or cosmic order is the basic foundation of the Vedic culture, and Indian linguistic tradition. *Rta* is a multidimensional concept which is connected to other fundamental concepts like *sat*, *satya*, *dharma*, *brahma*, and *atma*, in the *Veda*, Epics, *Upaniṣads* and the *Dharmaśāstra*. In its most fundamental sense, *rta* is the law, order, system, harmony underlying all natural phenomena. *Rta* is the all-pervasive universal order that is same at all levels of existence, and the objective world is the expression of that order. The field of *rta* is physical, mental, spiritual, and ethical. Nature as it is known to us is not seen as a chaotic occurrence of events and objects. While it may appear as random and disorganized, the fundamental processes of nature that underlie all objective, and subjective realms too, function as a complex system in which all parts are coordinated and integrated into a larger whole.

Vedic sages and scholars realized the overarching presence of a cosmic order that held together in a complex and adaptive system at the different levels, forms, and phases of all the objects and processes that comprised the cosmos. All the forms of being existing and developing in harmony within an interconnected web of relationships were seen as organized in a system which integrated all the parts into an undivided whole in flowing movement. The cosmic order which extended to all levels of existence from the infinite to the infinitesimal was seen as inviolable, never to be broken, even by the Vedic divinities who were in fact considered as the guardians of *rta*.

This universal principle of creative unity is revealed in some of the earliest stages in the evolution of multi-cellular life on this planet. A multitude of cells were bound together into a larger unit, not through aggregation, but through a marvelous quality of complex inter-relationship maintaining a perfect co-ordination of functions. The larger co-operative unit accommodates greater freedom of self-expression of individual units, to develop greater power and efficiency in the organised whole. It is not merely an aggregation, but an integrative inter-relationship, complex in character, with differences within of forms and function. There are gaps between the units, but they do not stop the binding force that permeates the whole or the dynamic identity of the units. The most perfect inward expression of such organization has been attained by man in his own body. But what is most important of all is the fact that man has also attained its realization in a more subtle body outside his physical system in the universe. (Tagore, 1931, p.2).

The question how a particular entity functions as a coherent whole sub-system within a coherent system has exercised generations of biologists and physicists dissatisfied with the mechanistic approach. Since the twentieth century, concepts of quantum coherence and the related systemic intercommunication have been used to convey the wholeness of the organism, where the whole and the parts are mutually integrated, and every part is as much in control as it is open and responsive. This internal coherence of energy underlies the unity of activity and the identity of the particular organisms. Every single organism from the tiniest quark to the largest quasar in the infinite cosmos seems to be able to exist and work autonomously while

perfectly keeping in step and tune with the whole. There is no choreographer orchestrating the dance of the particles and waves in all the systems. Ultimately, choreographer and dancer are the same (Ho, 1997, p.360).

Īśa Upaniṣad brings out the systemic aspect of cosmic order most succinctly and clearly. It says that the Absolute Reality is both universal and particular. The creation of the particular from the universal does not affect the integrity of the universal. The principle or quality of wholeness and integration is prior to the principle of particular and diversity. Oneness becomes many in the image of the oneness. That is whole, this is whole, taking out a particular whole from the absolute whole leaves the absolute whole integrated and creative as before. Every particular entity has to be an integrated whole to maintain its identity amongst an integrated system of infinite entities. The wholeness or integrity of each part is the bedrock of the wholeness of the universe and the order of the cosmos, and the order of the cosmos is the bedrock of the wholeness of the particular (Radhakrishnan, 2007, p. 566).

Rta is the principle whereby the Absolute Reality becomes manifest and perceptible to human senses. In *R̥g Veda* it is said that, 'heaven and earth exist in close unison in the womb of *rta*'. (*R̥g Veda*, 10.65). *Rta*, thus, is the one single system that embraces the cosmic order. The concept of *rta* explains the course of the evolution and sustenance of the natural and human world in terms of rhythm, time cycle, seasons, and biological growth. It refers to three basic elements of birth, growth, and transformation as the components of the complex cosmic system which functions according to its own self-organizing principles and law. Scholars, scientists, and poets in all ages have always found it amazing that the Absolute Reality is so well-ordered.

Rta is closely connected to the later concepts of *satya* and *dharma*. While *rta* may be seen as the structure of the cosmic reality at its both manifest and unmanifest levels, *satya* is the practical and operational aspect which is integrally connected to the Absolute reality. It is because of these two principles that in Indian tradition the cosmos is considered as ordered and not disordered or disorganized. These two concepts also connect the cosmic level of order to the human and social levels of life. At the human level, moral and legal order is expressed through the norms of truth, non-aggression, freedom, and ecological alignment of human existence with the cosmic order. Thus, *rta* and *satya*, or *dharma*, uphold the essential unity of the immanent and transcendental reality of the cosmos.

***Satya*-Social Cohesion**

Indian conceptualizations of *rta*, *satya*, and *dharma*, are not comparable with Western principles in the sense that they provide specific ethical permissions or prohibitions. Truth in the Western sense is the sum of what can be isolated and counted, it is what can be logically accounted or what can be proved to have happened, or what one really means at the moment when one speaks. While the Indian conception of truth is marked by an inner realization of the wholeness of

reality, the Western view of truth is better described in English dictionaries as truthfulness or veracity of individual explicit statement. In Indian tradition, on the other hand, truth is best defined in *Mahābhārata* when it says, '*Satya* is *dharma*, *tapas* (austerity) and *yoga*. *Satya* is eternal *brahma*, *Satya* is also the foremost *yajna*, and everything is established on *Satya*', (MB, V, p.497). In an illustration of this principle, *Mahābhārata* says that speaking truthfully to a criminal is not acceptable as the truth. Verbal truth is only one side of the concept which is much more general. Truth is signified by virtue of conformity to the order of righteousness, interdependence and cohesion and harmony on which the cosmos is founded.

In *Rg Veda*, it is repeatedly stressed that only truthful speech and communication delivers well-being, and harmony. The *Vāg Sūkta* makes it explicit that only the speech that originates from the depths of the ocean of creation, and which is blessed by the cosmic order of the five elements of fire, sky, air, water, and earth, is worthy of achieving success and benefits. Insightful speech in faithful persons is considered as an unseen, all-pervading, creative and liberating energy, producing, sustaining, and extending all creation. It defends the cause of righteousness and freedom, removes ignorance, confronts and overcomes evil, and rewards the meritorious with riches (*Rg Veda*, 10.125).

Similarly, *Gyan Sukta* speaks of the excellent and spotless treasures hidden in speech which are disclosed when there is knowledge and truth in the utterances. People with wisdom use speech that wins them friends. Only those who make effort can speak and understand truthful speech. A person who has not understood the essence of speech can only utter words that are hollow. Good speech comes to those whose action is good and who do not disown friends. People have similar eyes and ears but they do not have similar comprehension and expression. People who are neither knowledgeable nor experienced can only have meaningless speech. An energetic, and knowledgeable person succeeds in society and wins praise in society. (*Rg Veda*, 10.71).

In Indian knowledge tradition only the speech that conforms to *rta*, *satya*, and *dharma*, is possessed of moral and social value. Inappropriate speech can bring adverse results for both the individual and the social order. This is a fundamental difference between Indian and western conceptualization of speech and communication. In *Rg Veda* it is repeatedly stressed that only insightful speech that conforms to natural and social order delivers well-being, and harmony.

आ पवस्व दिशां पत आर्जीकात्सौम मीद्वः ।

ऋतवाकेन सत्येन श्रद्धया तपसा सुत इन्द्रायेन्द्रो परि स्रव ॥

Seers of cosmic and social order, faithfully following the righteous path through truthful speech and action pay homage to the lord of four regions. (*Rg Veda*, 9.113)

ऋतं वदन्नृतद्युम्न सत्यं वदन्त्सत्यकर्मन् ।

श्रद्धां वदन्त्सोम राजन्धात्रा सोम परिष्कृत इन्द्रायेन्दो परि स्रव ॥

Speech that is truthful and faithful, and is purified by truthful action, flows in radiant magnificence to uphold the cosmic and social order. (ibid.)

The *Asya Vāmīya Hymn* of Ṛṣi Dīrghatamas in Chapter 1 of *Rg Veda* states that the ultimate abode of speech is *Brahma*. It also says that 'Speech has been measured out in four divisions, the Brahmans who have understanding, know them. In that three divisions are of hidden speech, men speak only the fourth division.' Here speech is related to the cosmic order and is understood as the idea of the word as distinct from the spoken word. The spoken word is a limited manifestation of the inner word that reveals the truth. Thus, it says that 'the vibration of speech creates or fashions out the manifold forms out of the waters of the infinite ocean of the ultimate Reality.' (Agrawala, 1963, p. 150).

It needs to be emphasized that *rta* or cosmic order does not absolutely determine the life of an individual. It is only one of the five factors involved in the accomplishment of any act, which are *adhithana* or the basis or centre from which we work, *kartr* or doer, *karta* or the instrumentation of nature, *chesta* or effort and *daiva* or fate. The last is the power or powers other than human, the cosmic principle which stands behind, modifying the work and disposing of its fruits in the shape of act and its reward. We must make a distinction between that part which is inevitable in the make-up of nature, where restraint does not avail and the part where it could be controlled and molded to our purpose in speech and action. (Radhakrishnan, 2014, p. 48).

इति ते ज्ञानमाख्यातं गुह्याद्गुह्यतरं मया ।

विमृश्यैतदशेषेण यथेच्छसि तथा कुरु ॥

Thus has wisdom more secret than all secrets, been declared to you by Me.
Having reflected on it fully 'do as you choose.

The above verse from the closing chapter of *Bhagavadgita* highlights the role of human will in shaping one's own destiny. The essence of Hindu religion is that we are free to use our intelligence and exercise our discrimination to speak truthfully. We can co-operate with cosmic reality but we can also refrain from it. Even error is a condition of growth. Neither nature nor society can invade our inner being without our permission. We need not speak or act from simple and blind beliefs acquired from habit or authority. Inarticulated assumptions adopted inevitably and emotionally have often led to individual failures and caused untold human misery. It is therefore important that the human mind should seek rational and experiential justification for its beliefs. We must have a sense of real integrity within ourselves and with the cosmic reality. (ibid., p. 445).

Conclusion

The concepts of *Brahma*, *Rta* and *Satya* enfold and unfold the fundamental essence of hindutva running through Hindu religious and spiritual tradition. This essence is the umbilical relationship of relative and the Absolute Reality. The concept of *Brahma* belongs to the realm of the Absolute Reality which includes the relative manifestations. As Rabindra Nath Tagore put it, “the consciousness of the reality of *Brahma* is as real in Indian tradition as a fruit held in ones palm” (Radhakrishnan, 2018, p.941). The Absolute Reality is knowable not on the basis of mere perception, but on the basis of *Pratibha* or insight into the essence of the objective world. *Pratibha* is not merely intuition or vision. It is an experience based on both reason and intuition, and may be called rational intuition. *Sabdanusanam* or the discipline of words as established in the Vedic texts by learned scholars and sages is seen as a means to achieve conscious experience of the Absolute Reality. The concept of *Brahma* emphasizes the freedom and creativity of action that is rooted in the Absolute Reality.

This cultural conceptualization of the nature of Absolute Reality has far reaching implications for Hindu religion and philosophy. Whatever the form of particular and manifest reality, it emerges from and merges into Absolute Reality. Since the immanent arises from and exists in the transcendental *Brahma*, it gains its power, freedom and creativity from that source. When human activity is illuminated with the light of *Brahma*, then the limiting aspect of its separateness loses its locality, and our action is not in a relationship of competition and conflict with others, but of accommodation and integration in conformity with the *Rta*, the order of nature. Action stemming from an awareness of the source of all activity, *Brahma*, the Absolute Reality, unfolds and uses complete awareness to create cooperative and integrative activity for the welfare of all.

The contemporary relevance of the concepts *Brahma*, *Rta*, and *Satya*, which constitute the essence of hindutva, can be seen in the context of the social, economic, political and ecological problems of our time which require solutions at the global level through mutual interaction and cooperation. *Brahma* is the conscious experience of the dynamic and interconnected Absolute Reality. Every nation, every government, every society, every race, every culture, every religion is essentially a manifestation of *Brahma*. Individual and social interactions which are of the nature of Absolute Reality connect them all in a dynamic web of unity in diversity. *Brahma* is the infinite, dynamic and emergent cosmic order, and this dynamism is the source of its freedom and creativity. Hindutva has the power to bridge the gaps that separate nations, communities and people, and bring them together in the global family.

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