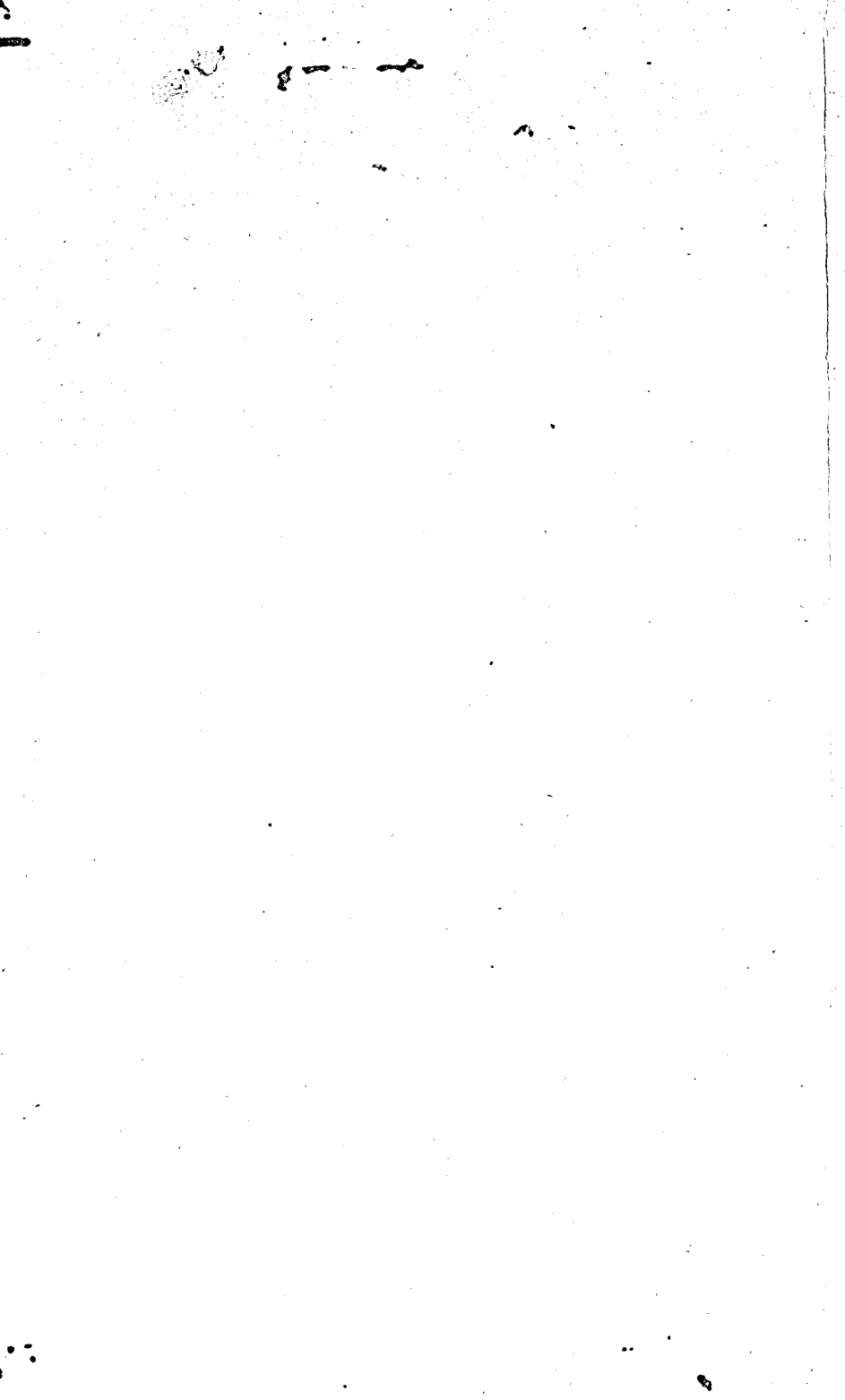


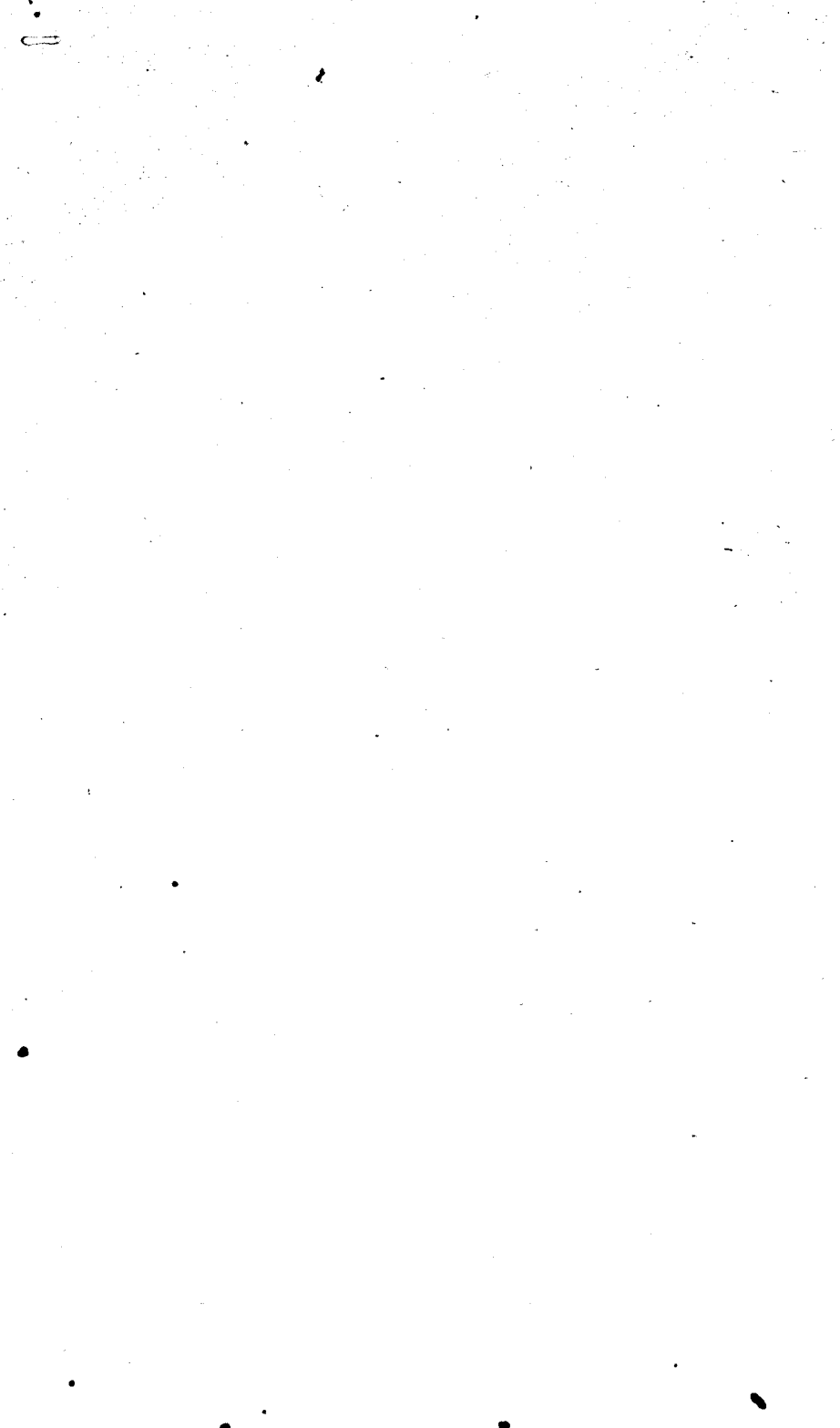
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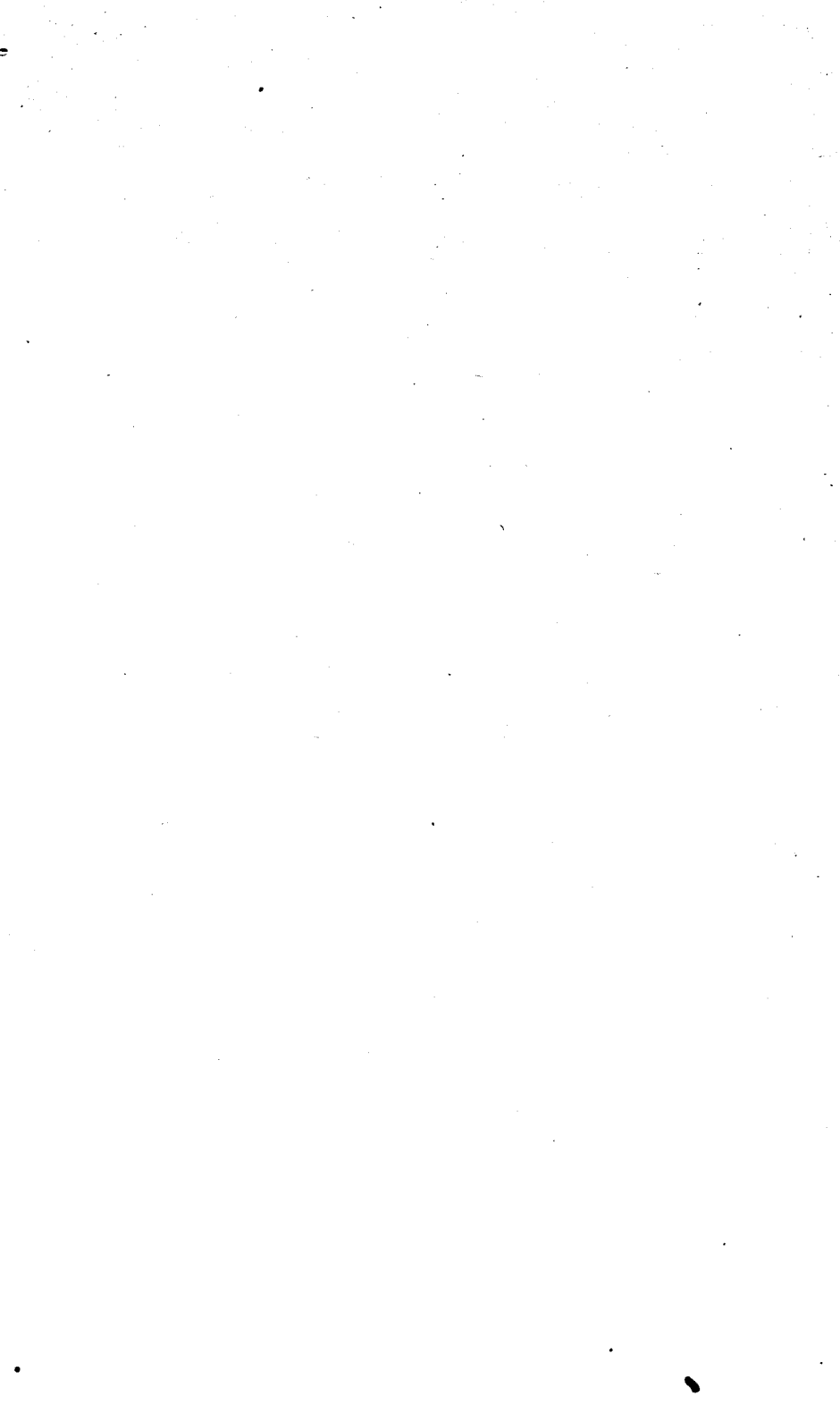
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1965

DEV SAMAJ

MOGA

# AN INTRODUCTION TO DEV DHARMA

By

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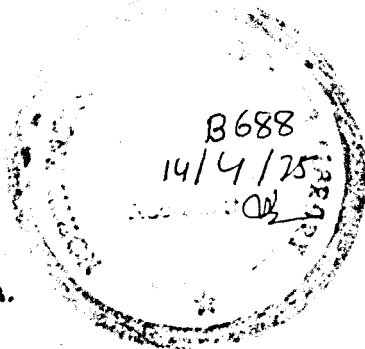
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## PREFACE

There has been a repeated demand for an introduction to Dev Dharma. There is a curiosity to know how Dev Dharma, differs from Brahmo Dharma, Vedic Dharma, Aurobindo Dharma. Is it like them a variation or reinterpretation or deepening of the theology and idealism of the Vedas and the Upanisads? Or is it a religion of deviation from the scriptural religion like Buddhism or Jainism?

This introduction is an attempt to satisfy this curiosity. It shows how Dev Dharma is a new cultural phenomenon in the world of religion in the twentieth century in continuation and culmination of the revolution ushered in by science. It is an achievement of the *application of scientific method* in the field of religion. It is as different from world religions as experimental physics of Galileo is different from the speculative physics of Aristotle.

There has been of late an intense concern with religion especially in the West. The intellectual of today does not find his fulfilment in the social and political reorganisations of society which was the case with the generation of yesterday. So deep is the dissatisfaction with social, economic and political way to fulfil one's destiny that some intellectuals are prepared to embrace old dogmas of religion as a desperate remedy. But the large section of intellectuals refuse to betray their scientific mental equipment. They will return to religion only if their commitment to *scientific method* is not touched. Dev Dharma is offered for such intellectuals throughout the world.

The philosopher of religion in his theoretical reconstructions is primarily occupied with specimens of theistic and vedantic faiths. Such exclusive preoccupations run the risk to reach wrong conclusions as to what constitute the

essentials of a genuine religious experience and what are the genuine problems for solution. This introduction offers a new specimen evolved out of the new cultural phenomenon of scientific methodology. This sample is offered to occasion fresh thinking for the philosopher of religion.

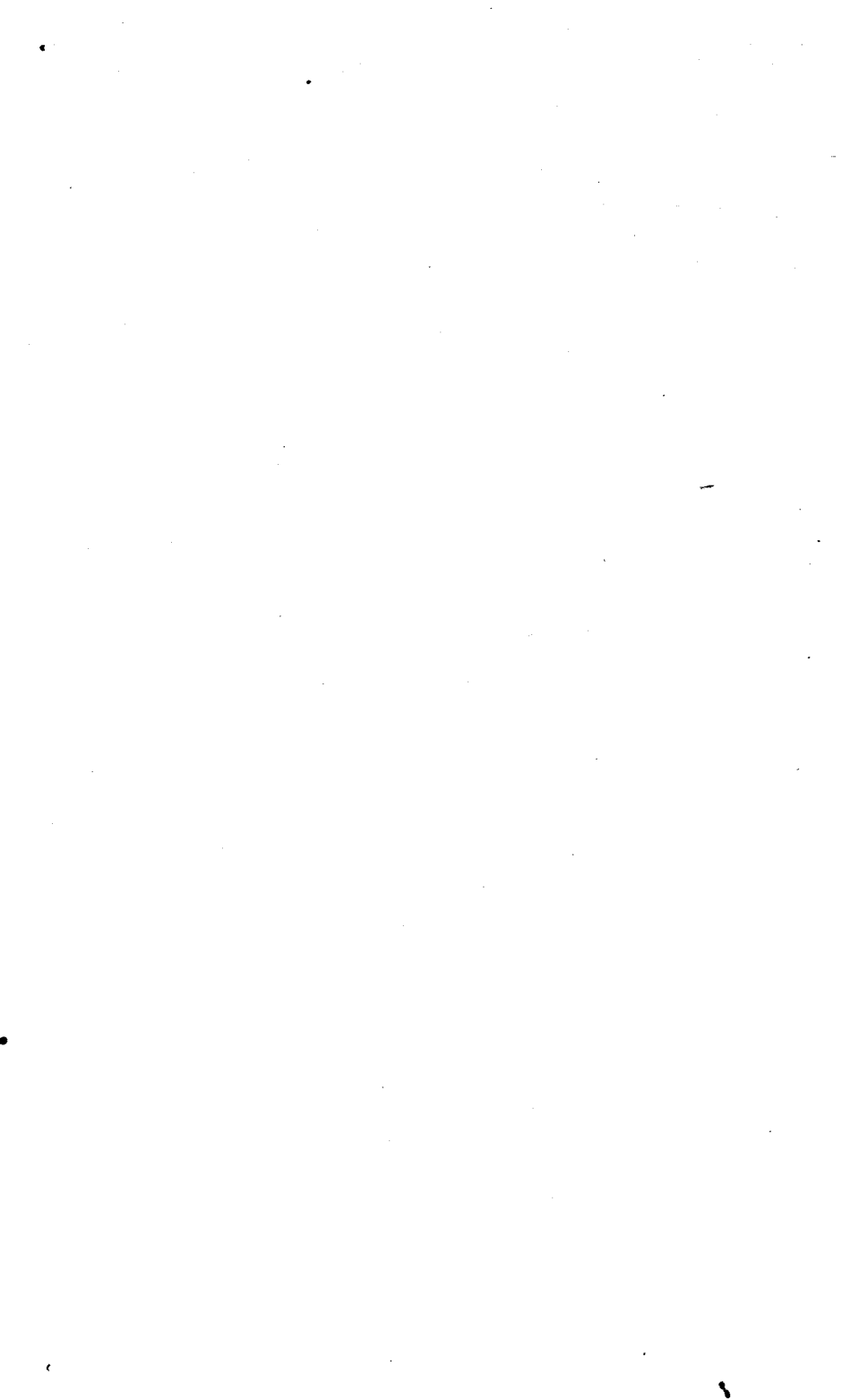
After Independence there has been an increase in the interest taken by the western scholars in the study of Indian culture, art, literature, and especially religion. Literature on religion which is being produced in abundance, both by the Indian and foreign scholars give the false impression that all fresh thinking on religion in India concerns reinterpretation or variation or modification or deepening on ancient scriptures of Vedas or Upanisads. This introduction shows that a Hindu genius can think independent, think bold, think creatively even on matters religious, to build a new edifice of religion which challenges the vedic and vedantic religions in the excellence of truth.

It is to these four categories of readers, the common connoisseur of religions, the troubled intellectual, the earnest philosopher of religion, and the foreign indologist, that this introduction is dedicated. If it serves to whet their appetite to go to the original writings of Dev Dharma, it will have done its job.

S.P. KANAL

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## I

### IN THE COMMONWEALTH OF SCIENCES

Dev Dharma can be best understood and appreciated in the context of the history of science in the last three centuries and a half.

Science was born as astronomy. Copernicus (1473-1543) was the first to revolutionize this science. He accepted the chair as professor of astronomy at the University of Rome. He taught the prevalent view of Ptolemy that Earth was the centre of the Universe and the Sun, the Moon, the five planets of Venus, Jupiter, Mars, Saturn and Mercury revolved round it. Now this view could not account for the eclipses of the Sun and the Moon, for the occasional migration of one planet with another. In order to explain these events *ad hoc* hypotheses about the influence of unknown spheres were evoked. More complicated motions were attributed to these heavenly bodies. Apart from these *ad hoc* hypotheses it was found necessary to ascribe to stars or planets 'a conscious intent.....' to account for their unexplained movements.

Now, what was the *verification* of the *ad hoc* hypotheses about other spheres or about the conscious intent of stars or planets? In the absence of verification what could be the value of such *ad hoc* hypotheses or 'attribution of the conscious intent' to stars or planets? Copernicus felt none. He gave up his job, determined to devote himself to a fresh study of the movements of the heavenly bodies. He chanced on the Pythagorean view that it is not the Earth but the Sun round which the heavenly bodies revolve. He worked the mathematical deductions of the Pythagorean view for thirty years. He did not have the help of the telescope to verify all the deductions he had drawn from the new hypothesis. But he did verify some of the deductions. His deductions were confirmed by the eclipses of the Moon in 1509 and 1511, by the positions of Mars in 1512 and 1518;

## II

### THE FOUNDER OF DEV DHARMA

In the last chapter it has been shown how Dev Atma brought the field of religion under investigation by scientific method and therefore founded the science of religion. In this way he completed the process by which different fields of Nature and social life were being covered by science. With the birth of science of religion no major field remained outside scientific investigation. It completed the process of the unity of knowledge and made it possible to present scientific world view to human understanding and human conduct.

It will interest the reader to know something of the Master-Mind who stepped out of the traditional revelational or intuitive or speculative approach to the problems of religion and set out to plough and cultivate the religious field with scientific tools and method. It required the highest quality of courage to apply the scientific method to religion, for no prejudice in the pre-scientific period specially, was so emotionally charged as the prejudices and illusions of religion. The religious beliefs and illusions are so cosy and comfortable, so satisfying to the vanities and weakness of man that he would risk anything but to surrender them to the knife of verification. He would rather interpret science in such a manner as to keep his religion intact. This is exactly what was done and is being done. Descartes, Leibnitz and Kant, the giants of Western philosophy, set themselves to reconcile religion and science. Kant destroyed reason to make room for faith. Even today the effort of some scientists to seek in science some support for their ancient faith confirms how reluctant even men of higher reaches are to touch religion and place it under scientific discipline. We can measure the Dev Atma's love of truth, who in the year 1898, openly declared

### III

## HOW DEV SAMAJ WAS BORN

At the end of the year 1873, at the age 23, Dev Atma came to Lahore to join his post of a drawing master for which he had applied at the advice of his principal. He got an introduction for Pandit Navin Chandra Roy, who it was believed, had established a branch of Brahmo Samaj at Lahore.

In Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Brahmo Samaj had been the initiator of reforms in religious beliefs and social customs. It was Raja Ram Mohan Roy who agitated and got passed a law against *Sati*. It was he who had exposed the false worship of idols.

Dev Atma felt in tune with the reformed character of the beliefs and social practices of Brahmo Samaj. His soul was aroused to prophetic zeal, to propagate this reformed religion. His role in Punjab was the same as of Rishi Davender Nath Tagore, in Bengal. He picked up Brahmo Samaj from its mediocre existence and made it into a dynamic force for social good. He discovered his gifts of oratory. He could command large gatherings to complete submission to his word. His was eloquence, not only of words, but of spirit. His words carried light and life for the audience.

He discovered his gifts for wielding pen. At his own initiative and at his own expenses he started two journals in 1875, one in urdu, entitled *Bradar-i-Hind*, and the other in Hindi entitled *Hindu Bandhu* to 'cultivate the *spirit of reform* in this country'. His were the first Hindu journals in Punjab.

His spoken and written words had the force of hurricane in shaking people out of complacency with evils and untruth in beliefs and practices.

## IV

### WHEN HE BECAME A SCIENTIST

Dev Atma's attitude to science upto 1893 was that of traditional supernaturalism. Science poses a challenge to the religious or supernatural world-view. The religious leaders or the philosophers of supernaturalism meet this challenge by reinterpreting their doctrine of God, soul and the world to suit the conclusions of science or to accommodate science within their idealistic thought. The attempts range from the vulgar and fantastic attitude which distorts the scriptural words to find the latest invention or discovery of science in them to the subtle intellectual constructions to save the supernatural world view. Descartes, Spinoza, Liebnitz, Kant, Hegel, etc., etc., in the West, as Swami Vivekanand, Aurobindo, Dr. Rabindranath Tagore, Dr. Radhakrishnan, in our country, are all out to save supernaturalism. Dev Atma had not emancipated himself from supernaturalism till 1893. He missed the significance of the revolution in knowledge which scientific *method* ushered in human society. He was yet bound to the past like other intellectuals. To illustrate, let us take the scientific theory of evolution. It is interesting to read how he felt comfortable to *mix up* evolution and creation. In an article in the September 1893 issue of his journal, *The Conqueror*, he writes, "Such as are able to peep into the phenomena of the various kingdoms of *creations* on this earth and the stages through which they have passed, can easily comprehend the Law of Evolution that is at work. How our Earth was gradually transformed from its nebulous state into its present solid state, fit for the life of the Vegetable, the Animal and the Human worlds. How the last named three have come into existence one after another: Man, the last creature on the stage, has again incessantly undergone operations of the same Law of Evolution and his present

## V

### THE BIOLOGY OF HUMAN SOUL

The study of soul is more primary to religion than the study of God. There can be religion without God but there cannot be religion without soul. Buddha built a religion without God. There are arguments which Buddha gives to reject the existence of God or Brahman.<sup>1</sup> His eight-fold path to Nirvana does not include any worship or meditation on God or Brahman. Jainism is another great religion which rejects God as a creator or controller of the universe. It holds that each soul, a separate entity, is God—infinite power, infinite knowledge, infinite bliss and infinite faith—if freed from *karmic* matter. So, religion, for it, is not relation of man to God. Its religious exercises consist in establishing relation with Thirthankars or evolved souls rather than God. In the six orthodox schools of Indian philosophy *Moksha* is held to be the ideal. But except for Uttar Mimamansa, no school holds *Moksha* to be a state of union with or absorption into God or Brahman.

It is clear that it is not God but human soul that is the crux of religion. God is one of the hypotheses to solve the riddles of the human soul. This hypothesis is not found to be necessary or indispensable in the history of religion. There are world-religions and schools of philosophy that envisage the ideal for human soul without God or Brahman.

As a scientist, Dev Atma studies soul in the context of the history of science. There is the science of biology which studies the origin of living organisms with the use of scientific method. Darwin put forward the theory of evolution as an explanation of the origin and disappearance of animal species. This theory was not new. It was a speculation with the Greek thinker Anaximender in 610 B.C. Aristotle (384-322 B.C.) did try to give it more substance of facts. He was tutor to Alexander, when he was prince.

## VI

### THE PSYCHOLOGY OF HUMAN SOUL

As a scientist, it was imperative for Dev Atma to declare, that human soul has a biology, that is, it has evolved from the animal world. Again, it is born, like the life-forces in plants and animals. Like them, it is not above the laws of Nature about change *i.e.* it is subject to development, decay and death. This scientific view about the origin and nature of human soul cost him the sacrifice of dearly held hoary beliefs that soul is uncreated and eternal or that soul is created and divine, or that soul is untouched by change and is immortal. He parted company with the idealistic or metaphysical or religious thought of thousands of years.

He also parted company with the materialists and naturalists who denied the *psychology* of the human soul. It has been an error in the thought of philosophers and scientists no less than in the thinking of the common man to hold that if human soul has no divine origin, then it is, in ultimate analysis, body. It is thought that if man has come from animals, he *is* animal. Since life has come from certain chemical and physical conditions, so biology *is* chemistry and physics in its last analysis.

Dev Atma rises above this error of the naturalism, for he keeps firm hold on the concept of *evolution*. It is true there is causal relation between the lower and the higher species of animals. There is incontrovertible evidence that man has evolved from animals. But the effect is not to be equated with the cause. Water is formed by the combination of oxygen and hydrogen by an electric spark. But the qualities of water are different from oxygen and hydrogen. Life had its beginnings in chemical and physical conditions. But the laws of biology cannot be reduced to laws of chemistry and physics. In the same way human soul is an *evolute* from some species of animal world. But to be an

## VII

### THE PATHOLOGY OF HUMAN SOUL

When Dev Atma comes to the study of *moral* good or bad, right or wrong, he brings the same scientific outlook and insight to it.

His first insight is to see that these ethical concepts are related to the life of soul and are to be studied in relation to it. What is good or bad of soul is to be studied with the same scientific impartiality as a medical man studies the good and bad of body.

The good of an organism is health and growth; its badness is its ill-health and stunted growth. In the same way, for Dev Atma, good of a soul is its health and growth; its evil, its diseases and stunted growth. When we think, feel and act in such a way that our soul gets strength and health, we think, feel and act right. But when we think, feel and act in a manner that our soul's strength is decreased we think, feel and act wrong.

Let us take our urge for food. If we know what is nutritive food, feel attraction for it and make a habit of taking it, we do the right thing. Suppose we take what is harmful for health, like coffee or chillies, or take *in excess* even nutritive food, and feel attraction for such things and make a habit of it, we do wrong, we become intemperate.

Intemperance is evil both for body and soul. The body's functioning is impaired through intemperance. Its *vitality* is reduced with time. The damage to body shows itself, later on, in the difficulty experienced in digesting normal food. The stomach becomes too sensitive to function normally.

Now the individual wants to avoid overeating. But he may find himself *helpless*. His soul may now find no strength to resist its temptation and he may succumb to it.

## VIII

### THE HYGIENE OF THE HUMAN SOUL

Dev Atma stays a scientist to the last in his principles and methods of investigation, in his understanding and interpretation of the facts in the field of religion. There is nothing outside or beyond Nature. So the meaning and explanation of *all* human experience is to be sought in Nature.

It is generally thought that there is explanation *in* Nature for the evil in human character and conduct. Sin or *paapa* is due to man's *bodily* appetites, to man's attachment to *things of the world* or to his *egotism*. Bodily appetites and egotism are part of the *Natural* order. We can step out of sinful life if we reduce our appetites and egotism. This is possible if we cultivate our interest and attention on something *supernatural*, say God or some God-intoxicated saint. The way out of evil or *paapa* is way out of natural order. There is no salvation for man, so long man maintains living and loving connections with natural and social order.

Dev Atma holds that just as the conditions of evil or *paapa* or pathology of the human soul, are in the natural order, the conditions for his good or *punya* or hygiene, are also in the natural world. Evils of human soul are not due to its interest in and attention to persons and things but in the *basis* of relationship with persons and things. There is no evil in our appetite for food or sex. If we are temperate in our satisfactions of food and sex, there is no evil in our relation to edibles and to partner in life. Asceticism in food, as Mahatma Buddha found, is not good but bad or evil. The exercises in under-eating or destroying taste sensibilities are futile and evil. In the same way, if our basis of relationship with wife and children is altruistic, it is a relation for our spiritual good. It is an evil to leave them in pursuit of will-o'-the-wisp of communion with a super-

## IX

### WHEN DO WE LIVE RELIGION ?

Dev Dharma is the science and art of religious life. We have dealt with the science or theoretical constructions of Dev Dharma. We have seen how Dev Dharma accepts scientific method as the only true method for knowledge in different fields including religion and how this method opens out a secular interpretation of the soul-life and what is right or *punya* and what is wrong or *paapa* in conduct. All our discussions were so far concerned with these new scientific theoretical reconstructions in Dev Dharma, which makes religion for the first time a member of the commonwealth of sciences. Dev Dharma is as much a science as physics, chemistry, biology or sociology etc., etc., is a science. It, like all these sciences, seeks its tools of interpretation in the natural order of things. It eschews supernaturalism in the explanation of the highest religious life.

Now we pass on to say something about Dev Dharma as an art. We pass from the abstract know-what to concrete do-what.

The know-what of Dev Dharma about soul is that soul has its origin, growth and development and death in natural conditions. Just as every living thing in Nature stays healthy under certain conditions or gets diseased or dies under certain other conditions, human soul gathers in health and strength in certain conditions and gets diseased or dies under certain other conditions.

The conditions for the health and disease of human soul are in the basis of its relationship. Man stands in relation to his society in the form of son or daughter, brother or sister, husband or wife, as a member of a clan, community, country and humanity. We live and act in these relations. There is healthy or right conduct in these relations. There is unhealthy or wrong conduct in these relations.

## X

### DO WE NEED TO WORSHIP ?

Worship is the quintessence of religious consciousness. He who does not know how to worship is an exile from the world of religion.

Religious consciousness, in its developed stage, is value consciousness *i.e.* it is *faith* in the reality of values, it is *aspiration* to own and actualize them, it is an *effort* to overcome the resistance of brute biological facts and civilise them into value facts. But such faith, aspiration and effort is ethical consciousness.

Religious consciousness, besides this ethical consciousness, is illumined by its awakening that man both as an individual and as a group is not sufficient unto himself and he must seek and find some power which can give 'grace and beauty to his life's unquiet dream'. He has faith that the power that he must seek and find transcends in value excellences his highest aspiration for his life. Such a power is the worshipful being and worship is rapport with such a worshipful being. The psychological conditions for rapport are faith, reverence, gratitude and love towards the worshipful being. So far Dev Dharma is one with the well-developed religions.

There has been development in the conception of the worshipful being and the needs for which worship is offered. The first interpretation by man of events in his surroundings was in term of 'spirits'. Rainfall and draught, storm and lightening, fertility or lack of it, diseases of body and mind, prosperity and poverty, were interpreted as caused by spirits. There was a region of gods and goddesses, a world apart, and world above the natural world. These *devtas*, gods and goddesses as individuals or between them manipulated what happened in the natural and social world. Since

## XI

### HIM WE CALL DEV ATMA

In the world of religion Dev Atma represents a different type of personality. *In the main* there has been monolithic or single-track type of religious leaders or *Gurus*. Their intellectual foundation was other-worldiness. They thought that human soul 'comes from afar' and has its destiny linked to 'the afar' whence it comes. The human soul is not part of the natural or empirical world and in fact the empirical world and its pleasures are traps, from which it must seek deliverance. Its destiny was to link itself and seek communion with the world afar, the world of God or Brahman. This intellectual foundation has moulded the personalities of *gurus*, prophets, messengers, *rishies* and *munies* etc, who developed *vairagya* or detachment for the empirical world and sought communion with God, *Allaha* or *Ishwar*. They have been God-intoxicated souls. Their *definitive* characteristic is their exclusive *communion with the Divine*.

Let us suppose for the sake of argument that there *is* God. Even if there is a God, it is no less true, that there *is* the inanimate world of air, fire, water, earth ; there *is* the world of vegetables, fruits and flowers ; there *is* the world of the animals, birds, beasts ; and there *is* the human world of parents, brothers, and sisters, husband and wife, of the members of community, nationality and mankind. If there *is* relation to God and the duties of appreciation, gratitude, love and devotion for him, there is need to recognise our relation to the mineral, the plant, the animal and the human worlds and to render appreciation, gratitude and service for all the existences in these four kingdoms which help us in our growth and development. The traditional *gurus* sung with fullness of heart in praise and love of God, but where are the *gurus* who sing repeatedly in full

## XII

### THE SOCIAL CULTURE OF DEV SAMAJ

Dev Atma had already matured into a dynamic social reformer long before he founded Dev Samaj in the year 1887 and long before he settled down in 1895 to his new thinking in the field of religion through scientific method. When he came to Lahore in the year 1873, he was captured by the reformist character of Brahma Samaj. Brahma Samaj was the spearhead of reforms in religious and social life of the Hindus. It refined the religious rites of worship, marriage, birth, and death. It challenged certain social wrongs and championed reforms in them. Dev Atma's evolving soul whole-heartedly accepted these innovations and these reforms in religious and social life. He went beyond it. He provided outstanding leadership to carry these reforms in the lives of his people at large. He had magnificent personality. He was a gifted orator and people hung on his lips. He utilized his gifts of figure, form and speech to produce a mass-awakening to the needs of renovating the Hindu society in its religious rites and practices and social customs and conventions. He edited, at his own expense, two journals, one in Urdu called *Bradar-i-Hind* and the other in Hindi entitled *Hindu Bandhav*, to reach readers beyond his direct influences. He wielded a powerful pen in the service of the reforms and the *spirit* of the reforms. He felt unbounded sympathy for Indian women, for the injustices done to them in the form of child marriage, enforced widowhood, denial of opportunities of education and career. He was pained at the injustices done to untouchables in the form of social humiliations and denial of opportunities for education and better professions. He could not sleep over the pains and sufferings of women of his community or the depressed section of his country. He could not keep quiet over them. He shouted as a man who saw a house on fire to help the occupants of the house to wake up and run for life. His heart beat with

### XIII

## INTELLECTUAL CULTURE OF DEV SAMAJ

Intellectual culture of a group is the *framework of thought* in which the members of a group interpret or understand the physical and social events in their environments. We know there is a difference between the primitive framework of thought and scientific framework of thought. In primitive intellectual culture events are interpreted in terms of spirits and in a scientific cultural pattern the same events are interpreted in terms of other events or impersonal laws.

Professor T. P. Nunn, in his excellent book entitled *The Aim and Achievement of Scientific Method* says, "The scientific traveller on a higher plateau of the Andes and his native guide view in different ways the impossibility of getting their potatoes to cook. To the latter the impossibility is due to the simple fact that 'the cursed pot', doubtless owing to the devil in it, 'did not wish to cook potatoes'; to the former it is an interesting example of the dependence of the boiling point upon the pressure....."

This difference of interpretation is not due to difference in the intellectual capacity of the adults of the two groups. The difference is in the intellectual culture of the two of them. The adult in the primitive group is brought up in the belief system of spirits. The adult in the group of scientific pattern of thought is brought up in the belief system of impersonal laws.

Our Hindu intellectual framework is different from the Christian intellectual framework. The *doctrines of karma and transmigration* of soul are peculiar to our Hindu cultural pattern but they are absent in the Christian cultural pattern.

This Chapter will give a bird's-eye view of the intellectual framework of Dev Samaj.

## XIV

### THE MORAL CULTURE OF DEV SAMAJ

The moral culture of a social group is the system of *habitual responses* of the group in its relationship to others, in general, and in its interpersonal relationships in particular. It is the *total quality* of the *conduct* of the members of *that group*. It is, therefore a thing apart from the scriptures or the idealised literature and statutory laws that are not operative in the day-to-day commerce of life of the group. For example, non-violence is found preached in Bible and in Hindu scriptures. But the western society never assimilated this teaching into its culture, whereas it became an outstanding feature of Indian culture. It is no wonder that Gandhiji initiated non-violent approach to meet the challenge of political slavery and this approach was found workable in Hindu society on *mass scale*. In the same way, the social altruism as found in Christian society is conspicuous by its absence in Hindu society. An anthropological study reveals *differences* in the modes of behaviour in different groups and these differences must not be blurred in the interest of scientific study.

So it is *not* the scriptures or the practices of this or that individual that we must consult in order to know the moral culture of a religious society. If we wish to know the moral culture of a religious group, we must stay with that group, see what makes us comfortable or uncomfortable in it, what thinking and feelings are stimulated in us.

We take you to the Dev Samaj as a religious group to study its moral culture.

If you stay in this group the first things that strike you are certain *basic respects* which all the members share as a group.

## THE SPIRITUAL CULTURE OF DEV SAMAJ

Whitehead defines religion as what a man does with his solitude. The definition has the merit to emphasise an essential and inseparable aspect of religious life. It is essential to a complete human life to have some hours of solitude or contemplation or *sadhana* in which to refill his life with fresh sense of harmony, inspiration, strength and re-direction.

The reader may like to know what a Dev Dharmi does with his solitude. How do his experiences of solitude differ from that of a *Vedanist* or a man of God? A *Vedanist* seeks for an experience in which the infinite variety and plurality of existences is dissolved for a *Nirguni Brahman*. The solid earth on which he sits, disappears into nothing for him, for it, like other physical objects, has the character of dream object which disappears at his awakening into *Brahman vidya*. Further, he tries for the more comic in his experiences in which he himself, as 'I' who contemplates, disappears in the impersonal universal consciousness. He does not have the consciousness that he is part of this impersonal universal consciousness, for that itself implies distinctness, but all distinctness is *mithya* (false) for him. It is this death of truth of daily life that a *Vedanist* celebrate in his solitude.

A Dev Dharmi never transports himself to that world of *mithya*, call it by any dignified name of *Nirguni Brahman* or God, which cancels for him or degrades for him the world he carries in his every breath and which is the breath of his life. He does not seek states of trances or mystic experiences in which the normal powers of perception and reason go out of gear or become functionless.

In his solitude a Dev Dharmi seeks *Ekta* or unity with the world of existences. But he does not seek that *Ekta* or

