Indian philosophy and Hindu thinking as reflected in the works of early Aryans constitute the most in depth study about universe, man and nature. The purpose of human life, the relation of the world to the objects and the nature of knowledge were critically examined and well documented. It is in this context that we may ask ourselves the questions –

Who am I? What is the purpose of my life? How to lead my life?

The ancient Indian literature exposed and explained the mysteries of this universe. The existence of a single reality and its interpretation in plurality is explained in no uncertain terms. The word Veda has its origin from the root “Vid” in Sanskrit meaning to ‘know’ and thus Vedas encompass the accumulated wisdom and knowledge of ancient Hindu Seers called Maharshis. There is a great
wealth of Sanskrit works at the base of this knowledge pyramid containing critical and elaborated commentaries by renowned scholars on the Vedic literature. No land on this earth has witnessed the emergence of such great personalities as Adi Sankara, Ramanuja, Madhava, Raghavendra, Tulasidas, Surdas, Tiruvalluvar, Nanak, Gautam Buddha, Mahaveer, Kalidas, Rama Krishna, Vivekananda, Bhartruhari, Kabir and many more. There are also Socrates, Aristotle, Plato as well as the great prophets Jesus, Zoroaster, Mohammad and others from other parts. What did they teach? Why and how we have forgotten their teachings?

The countries purified by the relentless efforts of these great personalities and by their exhortations became the torch bearers to the rest of the world in every walk of human life.

Indian science flourished during prehistoric times. All the advances made by Indian scholars who were also scientists and mathematicians got obscured by foreign invasions.

1.1.1 Religion and Culture

All religions believe in a supreme being worthy of worship. All religious practices demand a virtuous life. Further, all wrong doings are required to be acknowledged and repented. Justice demands punishment during the life time or after the death for all sins committed. All religions evolved elaborate rituals or practices for worship. Ethical and legal rules are laid out. Philosophical and doctrinal aspects are well established. Architecture and arts are well utilized to present the precepts and perceptions of these religions into the society.

In general, ethics and doctrines are created to affirm human values and sustainable social order.
Religions are created by men to preserve themselves in a healthy environment. In almost all of these religions Divine inspiration is deeply rooted. Religion offered people a meaning to life beyond the mundane activity. Religion is also a tool to explain transcendental explanation for several of life’s mysterious happenings, even if some others feel it as an illusory escapism.

In the following pages some glimpses are provided about the ancient practices that existed much before the modern religions came to dominate.

1.1.2 Ancient Beliefs and Practices

Followers of ancient religions in Mediterranean and the middle east as well as Norse and Celtic cultures of northern Europe worshipped several gods. These gods were vested with powers to control moon, stars, mountains and others. Some gods were believed to control such aspects as love, war, strength, and even agriculture and farming.

**Egypt:** Ancient Egyptians (3100-1000 B.C.) considered their kings (pharaohs) as gods on earth. First, they considered Re (also called, Ra) as the supreme god. Later, they brought another god Amon. Subsequently they worshipped a composite god Amon-Re. A great temple was constructed at Luxor for Amon-Re. They believed in an underworld ruled by god Osiris and his wife Isis to give judgments to persons after death. The underworld was called Duat. They constructed many temples for several gods. It is noteworthy that importance was given by early Egyptians to moral values and right living and punishments for sinful living. As Ethiopians, Greeks and Persians invaded Egypt their civilization declined. Up to 6 century A.D. worship of goddess Isis continued.

**Greece:** Greeks in ancient times (ca. 2500 B.C.) believed that out of Chaos the first god Gaia was created. Gaia was
the earth goddess. She in turn created Uranos, the god of mountains, sky and seas. They together created titans. Titans were giants. Among them, Prometheus was important. Zeus was the most important god who along with other 12 gods lived on mount Olympus. Poseidon and Hades were the gods that ruled the underworld. Zeus had thunderbolt as his weapon. Other gods and goddesses included Aphrodite, Demeter, Ares, Dionysus and others. After death the souls were to go to Hades across the river Styx where they undergo the punishments.

**Persia:** Persia is modern Iran. Zarathrushna founded his religion around 1000 B.C. (There are considerably different opinions about his period, Some put the period around 6000 B.C. while some others place the time around 1200 B.C.). He is more commonly referred to as Zoroaster. According to his religion life is a constant struggle between good gods and evil gods. Zurvan, god of time, who is both male and female, gave birth to Ahura Mazda good god and Angra Mainyu the evil twin. When Ahura Mazda wins the war against his evil twin the whole world would become good. That is the concept in this religion.

**Mesopotamia:** People who inhabited the land between the two rivers, Tigris and Euphrates, were called Sumerians, Babylonians, and Assyrians. (ca. 2600-230 B.C.). They too worshipped several gods created from a primeval sea. These gods later created earth and its inhabitants. They worshipped the sun god, Utu, god for life Ninmah and moon god Nanna. Ishtar was the war god. Chaos before creation was symbolized by goddess Tiamat, the salt water god. Apsu was the fresh water god. Apsu and Tiamat had a son Marderk. Father and son killed Tiamat to create sky and earth with her body. These were the beliefs of the people who inhabited those regions in the past.
**Rome:** Romans, adopted the Greek gods. Aphrodite became Venus. Are became Mars. Zeus became Jupiter. Apollo was the god of harmony and civilization. Much of the Greek way of life was adopted by ancient Romans.

**Northern Europe:** Norway, Sweden, Denmark and Finland are known together as **Nordic** region. Ireland, Britain and northern France are included in **Celtic** region. People who lived in these regions around 1600-450 B.C. had their own traditional beliefs. The **Norse** believed in a tree of life called Yggdrasil. The home of the gods was the top of the tree called Asgard. At the middle of the tree midgard, humans lived. At the roots of the tree underworld exists, and this is ruled by Hel. Here the dead are judged. At the beginning there were ice and fire and when they met, the first to be created was Ymir a giant. A group of gods, Odin, Vili, and Ve together killed Ymir and used his body to create the world. The Celts had a sun god called Lugh. Sucellus is the king of all gods. Belanus was the god of healing. Druids were the religious leaders.

**Africa:** Here people practiced Voodoo. Their deities were Ioa. Rado was the helpful god and Petro the destructive god. In west Africa Vodu was the god. The religion was called Fon. It focused on rituals to summon spirits.

**China:** Confucianism and Taoism (or Daoism) were the religions that flourished during ancient days in China. **Daoism** or **Taoism** is attributed to Lao Tzu. There are different speculations about Taoism. It is considered as a successive developments by several Taos. Others attribute Taoism to a person, Lao Tzu, a contemporary of Confucius. It is believed that both of them actually met once. Lao Tzu was disgusted at the way people lived and left for Tibet. However, on his way to Tibet at the request of a boarder guard he wrote his teachings at Hank pass and handed over them to the guard. He composed 500 characters. Tao Te
Ching means ‘the way and its powers.’ The period was around 531-604 B.C. It is interesting to note that great masters Plato, Socrates, The Buddha, Confucius and Lao Tzu all lived around the same time, the sixth century B.C. According to Daoism Heaven, Water and Earth are considered as gods. Flexibility, Femininity, Humility, Non action and Tranquility are considered virtues.

Kong-Fuzi or Kung Fu Tzu was the real name of Confucius. (551-479 B.C.). He was a sage king. Actually Confucius gave moral guidelines for various activities in human life. He taught importance of family, respect for elders and the importance of learning. Five books were said to have been authored by him. They are History, Poetry, Rites, Changes and the Annals of Spring and Autumn. I Ching, the book of changes that contains several hexagrams is used for divination even to day. For ancient Chinese Di was the ruling god. All natural events were ordained by Di. The concept of Yin and Yang (positive and negative energy) and Feng Shui (Chinese Vastu) are part and parcel of Chinese way of life. While Confucianism stressed on masculine Yang, Daoism emphasized feminine Yin. The ancient culture of China was opposed and systematically eliminated by the communists after 1949.

**Japan:** Till Buddhism arrived into Japan from Korea in sixth century of Christian era, Shintoism was the native religion of Japanese. They believed in sacred spirits called Kami. Kami could be anything from mountain, river, person, animal, bird or even an ancestor. The sun goddess was the principal Kami. Gods for happiness and prosperity were called Shichi Fukugin. For rice, agricultural prosperity and fertility goddess Inari was worshipped.

**South America:** Aztecs and Olmecs (1200 B.C.-300 C.E.) worshipped jaguar as god. It was called Tezcatlipo. Mayan people (300-900 A.D.) who lived along the west coast of
south America built several structures. They took interest in astronomy. The Mayan calendar has become famous in recent times for its prediction of doom’s day.

We may find the beliefs and the practices of people of these lands as something strange, but, they are the facts. All these ancient people believed more or less that elements of nature are strong and powerful and are therefore to be worshipped as gods.

1.1.3 The Teachings of the Modern Religions

**Christianity:**

It is now one of the major religions of the world. Christians believe that God came to earth in the form of Jesus Christ. Christianity developed among ancient Jews. Jesus taught love and nonviolence. *Love thy neighbor* is an important aspect of this religion. Christians believe that on the seventh day (Sabbath) after creating the world, God rested. People should repent for their sins and live correctly. Then eternal life with Him (salvation) is possible. The Sermon on the Mount explains the need to love one’s enemies. Giving up materialism and obeying God’s laws are included in that sermon. Bible and the Church play important role in Christianity. Several quotations are given at appropriate places from The Holy Bible.

Bible said

"Honor your father and mother (Exodus 20:12)
You shall not murder (20:13)
You shall not commit adultery (20:14)
You shall not steal (20:15)
You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor (20:16)
You shall not covet (20:17)"
The essence of Christian behavior lies in the following ABC’s of salvation:

“For all have sinned and fall short of glory of God” (Romans 3:23)

“He himself (Jesus) bore our sins in his body on the tree (cross) so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness” (1 Peter 2:24)

“Every one who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved” (Romans 10:13)

**Islam:** Before Islam the Arabs worshipped deities of several gods. Every tribe had its own protecting deity. In Mecca a building called Kaba (cube) contained 360 idols. Mohammed born around 570 A.D. was the prophet who established Islam. The followers of Islam are called Muslims. The basic tenets of Islam include Shahada, Salat, Hajj, Zakat and Sawm.

- **There is only one God called Allah,**
- **Pray five times a day facing towards Mecca**
- **Make a pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in the lifetime.**
- **Help the needy by giving alms**
- **Fast during the period of Ramadan, the ninth month of the lunar year.**

These constitute the basic tenets of Islam. Islam is another major religion in the world.

The other highlights of Islam are:

- Be kind, honorable and humble to one’s parents
- Be neither miserly nor wasteful in one’s expenditure
- Avoid injustice
- Care for orphaned children
- Be fair and honest in one’s interactions
- Do not be arrogant in one’s claims or beliefs
The Prophet is reported to have said,

"Mankind are the dependents, or family of God, and the most beloved of them are the most excellent to His dependents".

**Islam:** Islam contains a code of behavior, conservation of social values, and it gives meaning for existence. It helps in toleration and developing adaptive capacities for stressful events of life. Family is an important socio cultural institution which makes a considerable impact on personality development and potential factor in emotional disorders. Islam grants women numerous rights in the home and in society. The Prophet has taught the lesson of equality. There is no place for discrimination on the basis of race, color or gender.

**Buddhism:** Buddhism follows the teachings of Gautam Buddha. Siddharta born in 480 B.C. at Kapilavastu (present Tilaurkot in Nepal), renounced the worldly life and did penance. After enlightenment he created a monk hood. According to him there are **five basic** elements in a person namely, physical body, sense perception, ideas, will and consciousness. All these also called skandas, are impermanent and change continuously. Together they make a person. But, there is no self to unite them. Buddhism contains the following in addition:

- **Birth and death cycle is endless. Nirvana or liberation is possible only from detachment to the world. A favorable birth can be obtained by performing good deeds in this life.**

- **Existence involves suffering. Desire and ignorance are the sources for suffering. Suffering can be eliminated by destroying desire and ignorance. Suffering can be eliminated following an eight fold path:**

  - **Right understanding, right thought, right speech, right behavior, right occupation, right effort, right
contemplation and right concentration. These eight form the spokes of the wheel of dharma, the righteousness.

**Teravada** is a branch of Buddhism followed by people living in Sri Lanka, Laos, Thailand, and Cambodia. They follow Buddha’s teachings and the scripture ‘Tripitaka’. Tripitaka is in Pali language. It contains three parts, *discipline, themes* and *teachings*. They do not believe in the theory of Bodhisattvas. **Mahayana** branch of Buddhism is followed in China, Tibet, Nepal, Vietnam, Korea and Japan. They believe that enlightenment is open to all (not just limited to monks). They believe in **Bodhisattvas**, persons who had achieved Nirvana (liberation) but would like to assist others providing inspiration so that others too can attain enlightenment. According to Mahayana Bodhisattva possesses generosity, morality, patience, courage, meditation and wisdom.

The ten major precepts (Pratimoksha) The Buddha explained to his disciples include the following:

1. Not to kill intentionally any living being
2. Not to steal nor encourage others to steal
3. Avoid sexual misconduct
4. Not to use false words and speech
5. Neither consume nor sell alcoholic beverages
6. Not to propagate faults
7. Shall not praise himself nor speak ill of others
8. Shall take up the way of not sparing the Dharma assets
9. Shall not harbor anger nor encourage others to be angry
10. Shall not slander the Buddha and his teachings
**Jainism:** Parsvanath (7 or 8 century B.C.) a north Indian prince who renounced the world preached moral code that included nonviolence, truthfulness, non stealing, and non possession along with sexual renunciation. Mahavira founder of Jainism expanded the teachings of Parsvanath. Much of the suffering in this world is attributed to violence. The senses of the body are to be controlled. Non violence and vegetarianism are important concepts in this religion. Renunciation of the material world is the means for spiritual advancement.

There is no supreme creator in Jainism. Guidance is taken from a succession of teachers called Jinas. They are also called Tirthankaras. Each Tirthankara is associated with an animal, an object, a pattern or any thing of that type. The last two of them were humans, Parsvanath and Mahavira. **Right knowledge, right conduct, and faith** are the corner stones for Jainism. Time is considered infinite and there are cosmic cycles of improvement and decline and at the lowest point of decline a Tirthankara will appear.

**Sikhism:** Sikhism believes in one God. They had ten gurus or teachers. Nanak (1469-1539) was the first guru who established Sikh religion. Every Sikh should observe the five rules –Kesh (uncut hair), Kanga (keep a comb), Kirpan (carry a sword), Kacha (have short cotton trousers), and Kara (steel or iron bangle). Sikhism believes in moral laws and karma. Actions in this life will influence the life in the next birth. Sikhs try to live well within the family and community. Serving the community and the **gurudwara** (Sikh place of worship) are ways to liberation. Sikhism emphasizes the need to share wealth with the poor.

*It is clear from a brief review of the history of mankind from the known times, their beliefs, practices and the emergence of modern religions all over the world, that man craved to find expression to his feelings and emotions about*
the purpose of life and the role of the natural powers in the universe.

In searching for happiness, causes for miseries were investigated. Nature remained always a mystery for man. His relentless efforts to investigate into the depths of the galaxies is unending and continues till his ego is satisfied.

Now the Hindu way of thinking will be explained in brief.

**Hinduism – Sanathana Dharma.:** Hindu thinking and Indian philosophy as reflected in the works of early Aryans constitute the most in-depth study about the universe, man and nature. The question of a single reality or pluralities of realities has been investigated very thoroughly than anybody else. The purpose of human life, the relation of the world to the objects and the nature of knowledge were critically examined and well documented. Vedas, Sastras, Darsanas, Upavedas, Smritis, Itihasas, Puranas and a host of other scriptures exposed the mysteries of this universe, its relation to the creation, man, the meaning of his life and the ultimate Reality as no other civilization, culture, country or religion has done to this date.

In this context it is apt to remember what **The Buddha** has said to his disciples, which holds true for all theories and propositions.

“... I taught you not to believe merely because you have heard, but when you believed of your consciousness, then to act accordingly and abundantly.”

~Lord Buddha

From the preceding one may draw the **conclusion** that man always attempted to understand the meaning for his existence and his ultimate goal. Religions played a great role in this direction. Religions are path providers for human elevation in all spheres of activity.
1.2 Life has a Mission – The Indian Concept

Now let us put a few questions to ourselves:

What is the mission of this life?
Is living for a long time the mission of our life?
Is earning a great wealth our mission?
Is conquering this world and impose our hegemony over others, our purpose in this life?
Is to live happily all through this life our goal?

Many would probably answer that to live happily in this world is our goal. If that is so then the next question comes to the mind is how to live happily.

What is happiness? How to achieve this happiness?
A precise answer to these questions requires more analysis. Ancient Indian saying from Upanishad explains as follows:

- The mission is to move from the path of unreality to reality; to move from the path of darkness (ignorance) into a lighted path (knowledge) and to overcome the fear of death and attain immortality.
- Is it necessary to go to a secluded place, perform penance through diet control, fasting and through other austerities? How to lead such a Divine life?

1.2.1 Self Exploration

It is said that mother is Divine, father is Divine and so on. Those sayings are all true to practice in day to day life. But, when further contemplated it will be observed that father, mother, brothers, spouse, relatives, friends and children - all get separated from us at different points of time. These relationships are impermanent.

Here, one should undertake self exploration. One has to deeply meditate on the reason for our conduct and our behavior. In this context we shall once again delve into our past and see what our ancestors had done in this regard.
Even when we have all these relations and we love and respect them, to ennoble our lives we may have to consider in daily life truthfulness as mother, knowledge as father, right conduct as brother, kindness as friend, peace as spouse and forgiveness as children. This sort of association will certainly ennoble the human personality and will endear all those relations much more to us. This is how values are to be fostered in our daily life. This is the path suggested by our ancestors.

One can make his own life blissful through his own hard work. All works should be executed in five planes. At the first level every individual has to put in effort. It is necessary at this level to understand that a person has both his own ‘self’ (‘I’) and his body, two distinct entities. He has to analyze the relation between these two and establish harmony between them.

At the second level, the person has to be in harmony with the family to which he belongs. All his efforts in conjunction with other members of the family should create a congenial environment at home.

At the next level his efforts should be in consonance with that of the community or the society wherein one lives.

In this order at the fourth level the efforts of all individuals, families and communities should harmoniously blend with the nature.

At the highest and fifth level all such group efforts should be harmoniously blended for universal peace.

One may ponder on the facts that – a single flower cannot form a garland, a single plant cannot be a garden. Like wise, Divinity can be witnessed only in unison and harmony of collective efforts and with the nature.
It is the unflinching or unshakable faith in the existence of a Supreme power or source of energy that can be conveniently named as **God** that is needed to experience a Divine life or happy life. Constant meditation on any form or formless Absolute is needed. In fact this is the exploration inwards of a person mentioned earlier. It is always easier to take the assistance of a form in the shape of an idol, linga or a picture. It could even be a point at the middle of the eye brows or one’s own heart. It is the end that is important and not the means. Ultimately it is the practitioner’s devotion, determination and love towards an invisible source of love, help, assistance and compassion that can be experienced and called Divine power that helps one lead a happy life.

There are many now a days, who deny the existence of this Supreme Reality. One must face them with strength, courage, unwavering faith and determination. If one has some reason to deny the existence of the Supreme Power commonly referred to as God, others have many more reasons to believe in His existence.

The farmer who wants to raise a crop, has first to remove all the weeds from the field, get it ploughed and put water to the land. Thus, when the land is made ready, the seeds are sown. Then only, in the course of time the fruits of all the labor are received as a crop.

So also a person who desires to lead a Divine life should **first** weed out the six internal enemies – desire, anger, greed, attachment, egotism and envy.

In the mental field, **next** observe discipline and cultivate love and service in action and **then** sow truth as the seeds. **Later**, Protect the mental field with a prayer daily so that extraneous elements do not corrupt the crop of peace and tranquility.

Christianity explains five ways to praise God: Being happy about Him; (34:1-3), Extol God (34:1), Boast about God (34:2), Glorify God (34:2) and Exalt God (34:3).
Hinduism mentions nine methods of expressing one’s devotion to the Lord. We praise the god when we experience His protection, goodness and His provision. It should be with reverence, spirituality, mental dedication and enthusiasm.

Indian science of yoga due to Patanjali described an eight fold path called “Raja Yoga” to achieve an immortal life. They are Yama, Niyama, Asana, Pranayama, Pratyahara, Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi.

Oneness is to be found in all the religions as far as human values and the duty of man towards his creator are concerned. Absolute trust in Him will provide deliverance from fear and eternal joy.

1.2.2 Body - a vehicle

Indians considered human body as a four wheeled vehicle. The four wheels are identified as right conduct (dharma), wealth (artha), desires (kama) and liberation (moksha). They are also called ‘Purushartha’ Human behavior must follow the right path as dictated by scriptures, a life of values. With such a behavior one may earn wealth in order to satisfy his legitimate needs in life and other desires. Fulfillment of all wants in the life should satisfy a person and he should seek liberation.

Thus, the Indian viewpoint about the mode of living suggested follows four steps:

1. Live according to Dharma.
2. Earn wealth following Dharma.
3. Fulfill your desires in this world with the wealth so earned.
4. After enjoying this life substantially, when old age takes over, be ready to give up this body as a ripened fruit falls to ground from the tree.
Considering these four steps as four wheels of a vehicle which are supported by faith and steered by mind the vehicle is started by intellect. The food consumed is the fuel for the vehicle. The driver of the vehicle is the soul or the Divinity (individual consciousness) within. When we keep full faith and confidence in the driving spirit of the Divine, the goal is reached without any doubt. Such is the logic and belief of the Indian seers. These are some of the aspects of Sanathana Dharma.

**Hinduism** believes in one God, “Parabrahma”. Rigveda, the world’s oldest scripture enunciates “Ekam Sat Vipra Bahuda Vadanti” – meaning that there is one and only one God known by several names. Eesavasya Upanishad belonging to Shukla Yajurveda begins with a verse advising that the whole universe is pervaded by Eeswara (God) the Supreme Reality. Hence, one should enjoy this life with a feeling of sacrifice. One should not aspire for other’s riches. The Upanishad exhorts people to perform constant selfless service to humanity. One must perform all stipulated duties without expecting any benefit. Service to man is considered as service to God. Mother, father, teacher and guests are to be treated as gods in this world and service must be rendered to them with great respect. “Sanathana Dharma” also known as Hinduism, however, differs from some other modern religions in the sense that there is an extensive literature which analyzed in depth, the purpose of human birth and the ultimate goal that is to be reached in this life namely, self realization.

Present endeavor based upon the experiences and understanding of the past should provide the path way for our future existence. Indians have a great cultural legacy from the past and it is but natural that they shall build their future plans based on this accumulated wealth of
knowledge overcoming the deficiencies and undesirable practices that might have crept into it in course of time.

1.3 The Great Indian Culture

1.3.1 The Indian knowledge Tree

The great Indian knowledge tree has its origin in Vedas. Vedas represent the accumulated human knowledge. The scattered knowledge has been collected and restructured by Sage Vyasa into four namely, Rig Veda Yajur Veda, Sama Veda and Atharvana Veda. Each Veda contains four identifiable components, called, Samhitas, Brahmanas Aranyakas and Uponishads. These form the roots for Indian knowledge tree.

Henry David Thoreau, a great American philosopher, observed that “in the great teachings of Vedas, there is no touch of sectarianism. It is for all ages, climes and nationalities and is the royal road for the attainment of the great human knowledge”

1.3.2 The Branches of the Knowledge Tree

Upavedas

There are four subvedic scriptures called Upavedas. They are Ayur Veda, Dhanur Veda, Gandharva Veda and Sthapaty Veda.

Ayurveda dates back to Rigvedic times (at least 6000 years back). It contained both the schools – the School of physicians and the School of surgeons. Charaka and Susruta were the respective pioneers of these two schools.

Dhanurveda is mainly attributed to sage Viswamitra. The art of music and dance come under the purview of Ghandharva Veda. Sthapathy Veda contained the
technology of architecture and sculpture. Panini’s “Ashtadhyayi” is concerned with construction of temples.

**The Vedangas**

- There are six *Vedangas* or organs of Vedas, thorough knowledge of which is essential to understand the Vedic verses in all aspects. They are:
  
  (i) *Siksha* that deals with phonetics,
  (ii) *Vyakarana*, the Sanskrit grammar,
  (iii) *Nirukta*, the philosophy of etymology,
  (iv) *Kalpa* the various procedural rules for rituals,
  (v) *Chandas* dealing with prosody and
  (vi) *Jyothish*, the science for understanding the past, present and future.

**The Darsanas**

Six disciplines of philosophy and the science of creation were contained in six sciences or ‘Darsanas’. They are:

(a) the *Nyaya* system due to Akshapada Gautama,
(b) the *Vaiseshika* system of Kanada,
(c) the *Sankhya* system of sage Kapila
(d) the *Yoga* system of Patanjali
(e) the Poorva *Mimamsa* of sage Jaimini and
(f) the Uttara *Mimamsa* or *Brahmasutras* of sage Vyasa.

All these sciences are concerned with a detailed analysis of this world, its existence, and the explicit interpretation from Vedic texts. They are considered as the greatest exposition of the human intellect.

**The Smritis, Itihasas and Epics**

The code of behavior for humans following Vedic texts are contained in eighteen major *Smritis* of which ‘Manu Smrit’ is very famous.
Four major *Itihasas* contain the past history of the great Indian continent (Bharat Varsha) and they incorporate the practice of ‘dharma’ (right conduct) in daily life. They are Ramayana, Yoga Vasista, Mahabharata and Harivamsa.

**Puranas and Satras**

In addition to the Itihasas, there are *eighteen major puranas* and eighteen minor puranas meant for a common man to understand the Vedic culture and contribute to his moral education. Bhagavatha purana and Vishnu purana are well known. All the major eighteen puranas are attributed to sage Vyasa.

Based on the Vedic texts, Agama Sastra explains the rules and regulations for worship of God and construction of temples.

In addition there are *large number of works by sages and scholars* dealing with several aspects of human life. Sanskrit literature is so vast and so rich in its content dealing with every aspect of human life, that it is impossible for any one to list them out.

The renowned author Mark Twain has observed that

“India is the cradle of the human race, the birth place of human speech, the mother of history, the grand mother of legend and the great grand mother of tradition, our most valuable and most constructive materials in the history of man are treasured up in India only.”

*The great Maharshis of India, established the traditions. The great rulers of Satya yuga stood as legends in human memory. The kings and emperors of Krita and Dwapara yugas gave us a history to be proud of. No wonder India is the birth place of human civilization.*
Indian Culture

The famous American historian Will Durant stated (1885-1981) that -

"India was the mother land of our race and Sanskrit the mother of Europe’s languages. India was the mother of our philosophy, of much of our mathematics, of the ideals embodied in Christianity of self government and democracy. In many ways Mother India is the mother of all”.

Romaine Rolland the great French Philosopher (1886-1944) opined that

"India is the one place where all the dreams of living men had found a home from the very earliest days”.

The great Upanishads and Bhagavad Gita provided an insight into the meaning of this world and man’s existence in it.

1.3.3 Agriculture and Horticulture in India

All the four Vedas mention agriculture and its promotion: Chanakya’s Arthasastra (ca 300 B.C.) described expansion and management of agriculture. Agnipurana (400 A.D.) Brihat Samhita of Varahamihira (400 A.D.) are some works which dealt with Indian agricultural prowess. Even Matsya Purana, Vayu Purana and Skanda Purana mention some aspects of agriculture. During first century A.D Parashara described a time schedule for farming operations. Krshisukti by Kashyapa, supposed to be a resident of Kosala, written around eighth century A.D. described the influence of type of land and weather on agriculture. He mentioned that agriculture was a noble profession. He described irrigated crop production. Surapala wrote Vrikshayurveda during tenth century. This book contained not only scientific guidelines for agriculture but also a section on horticultural wonders Chakrapani Misra in 1577 A.D. In his book Visvavallabha described methods for detection of underground water as well as construction of
reservoirs. He even described plant disorders and treatment for the same.

1.3.4 India and Mathematics

The Vedic mathematics is concerned with two types of works, one dealing with mathematics of space or geometry and the second with arithmetic and others.

In deed, India invented the number system. The concept of zero was attributed to Aryabhatta (5 century A.D.) even though some consider Pingala (200 B.C.) as the person who introduced the concept of ‘sunya’. Mathematical series were mentioned in Yajurvedic hymns. Ancient Indians knew elliptical orbits with three centers, number system with base 10 and many other astronomy related mathematics. Aryabhatta explained that due to the power of attraction of earth, the living beings at different places are not scattered away into space. The decimal system was developed in India in 100 B.C. Many mathematical calculations were performed even before 2000 B.C. in India (Vedic times). The concept of \( \pi = \frac{22}{7} \) was first proposed by Bodhayana much before Pythagoras. Two aspects of Pythagoras theorem were discussed in Sulba Sutras by Bodhayana and others. Algebra, Trigonometry and calculus originated from India. Quadratic equations were solved by Sridharacharya in 11 century. Indian number system has specific names up to \( 10^{53} \) even before 5000 B.C.

Einstein, the great scientist of yester years said that “we owe a lot to the Indians, who taught us how to count without which no worth while scientific discovery could have been made”.

Most of the advances in the sciences were in fact made in India centuries ago according to British historian Grant Duff.
1.3.5 Ancient Indian Astronomy and Cosmology

Aryabhata, Varahamihira, Brahmagupta, Garga, Asita, Devala, Atharva Muni, Parasara are wellknown names in ancient astronomical studies. Aryabhata wrote Aryabhatteeyam in 475 A.D. at the age of 23. Brahmagupta wrote in 598 A.D. Brahmasphuta Sidhanta at the age of 30 updating astronomy and covering other topics in mathematics. Ballala Sena a ruler of Mithila wrote Adhbhuta Sagara (ocean of wonders) focusing on anomalous phenomena. A concise history of Indian Astronomy was written by S.B. Dikshit titled,’ Bharateeya Jyotisha Sastra’ published by government of India.

Vedic literature explains the entire macro cosmic manifestation in its totality as just one quarter of the unmanifest which undergoes evolution and devolution (Purusha Sukta). In this connection one may refer to the book ‘Ancient Indian Astronomy and cosmology’ to learn more about the prowess of Indians in this field.

1.3.6 Education in Ancient India

In ancient India there were several languages spoken which had no script. For the development of knowledge script is not necessary. We understand that Script has come into existence much later only, and we may infer therefore, that education did not begin with letters of alphabet. Again, among all countries of the world, civilization evolved and reached its crescent in India only, when others still remained in the darkness of ignorance. Along with culture, science also developed. But, for leading a useful human life subjects such as Astronomy, Architecture or even Medicine are not absolutely necessary. Even when these sciences were non-existent in the realm of human knowledge, man led a happy life. The sciences developed slowly to help and assist human life to be more comfortable and healthy. In those ancient times education was classified into two
groups – one that helped him to understand the mission of his life and the ultimate destiny and the rest of them that are not directly concerned with the human life mission. They are called ‘para and apara’ respectively. It is nowhere written that to understand “right conduct” one needs to go to a school. Formal education through schools has come into practice much later. Even when subjects like medicine (Ayurveda) were taught, nothing learned was allowed to cross the boundaries of ‘dharma’. Knowledge was received by ancient ‘Rishis’ during their meditative process and they gave that as Vedas. Later Sastras, Darsanas, Itihasas, Puranas and Smritis evolved over centuries of time. Great works from eminent poets, scholars and spiritual leaders like Adi Sankara, Ramanuja, Kalidasa, Panini, Bhavabhooti, Bhasa, Bhartruhari, Bana and from many others enriched the Indian literary scene.

The great epics Ramayana and Mahabharata played a very useful role in formulating guidelines for right conduct on all planes of social living. To lead a useful human life rules and regulations need not necessarily be based on a particular religion. Sanatana dharma evolved in India out of the hearts and souls of ancient ‘rishis’, whose only ambition in their lives was social welfare. All prayers envisaged only development of social values, welfare of human life, irrespective of caste, creed, country or religion. The ancient Hindu aspirations were always not only universal but also intra global “Lokaassamastah Sukhino Bhavantu” (May all the worlds be happy and comfortable) and that was how Indians wished.

The Gurukula System in India: In ancient India, the system of education was called Guru Kulas. Guru means teacher and kula indicates an extended family. The students or disciples who were accepted by a guru were considered as their own family members. They were taken into the family of the teacher as a part and parcel until their
education was complete. The disciples participated in all the house hold chores of the teacher along with his other family members and the teacher taught them whatever was needed for the students based upon their caliber and requirement. Thus the children of emperors, higher officials and the children of the poor peasants, all stayed together as equals in a “guru kula”. At the end of their education, the disciples presented gifts to the teacher according to their capacity and whatever was given was accepted by the teacher and this gift was called ‘guru dakhsina’. Generally the ruler of the land used to take care of all the gurukulas in his kingdom by gifting away cows, food stuff etc. The same Hindu system of education was followed with modifications by Jainism, Buddhism and Sikhism. There existed a lineage of gurus or highly respected eminent teachers. During medieval times there was an assembly of great scholars at Varanasi where all scholarly disputes were settled. The decision of this assembly was considered as final.

The ‘worlds’ first university was established at Taxasila in 700 B.C. where over 10,000 students studied sixty different subjects. The university of Nalanda established in 4. century B.C. was famous for its contributions to the cause of education. Sanskrit is considered as the most suitable language for computer software by Forbe’s magazine (July 1987). Bhaskaracharya determined the time taken by earth to orbit the sun in 5th century itself as 365.258756484 days without using any computer or calculator before astronomer Smart made his prediction. Navigation existed 6000 year ago in India. The world is derived from Nav (ship) and gati (course of journey).

1.3.7 Commerce in ancient India

Right from ancient times India exported, commodities like sugar, palm oil, coconut oil, cotton cloth, butter, cast Iron, tin sheets, copper vessels, dyes, pigments, lac, perfumes, musk, tamarind and many others items. Copper ware was
used even before 3000 B.C. Indian silk cloth and spices were imported by Romans.

Till 1896, India was the only source for diamonds in the world. India was called “Ratnagarbha” (the source for diamonds). Precious stones were sold in the streets of Vidyanagar the capitol of Vijayanagara empire.

The Greek historian Herodotus acclaimed Indian cloth as the most precious variety in the world. During the British rule India’s large clothing and handicraft industry was left paralyzed to make place for British mill cloth.

1.3.8 Indian Languages

**Sanskrit:** It has 50 alphabetical letters; each letter has a specific and standard pronunciation which produces a sort of spiritual and beneficial vibration. There is no such facility in English language which is developed from the 26 lettered Latin alphabet. Sir William Jones the founder of Asiatic Society opined that:

_Sanskrit is a complete language than Greek and is more comprehensive than Latin._

Sanskrit is called the language of gods as these letters of Sanskrit produce sounds when uttered from the various centers of energy in the body. Indian yogic science identifies these centers with various gods (centers of conscience or intelligence). Panini, the originator of Sanskrit grammar stated that one who understands his grammar understands God. Prof. Huston Smith said that for every psychological term in English there are four in Greek and forty in Sanskrit.

Indian culture is the amalgamation of diverse sub cultures. In India there are well developed languages namely, Assamese, Bengalee, Hindi, Oriya, Telugu, Tamil, Kannada, Malayalam, Marathi, Gujarati, Rajasthani, Punjabi, Kashmiri and Urdu in addition to English spoken
and understood widely. These languages by and large have their well developed scripts and each one has rich literature. In addition there are many other languages and several dialects in use.

1.3.9 Indian Festivals

Eighty percent of Indian population follow Hinduism or Sanathana Dharma, a lifestyle supported by the authority of Vedas and Vedic literature. Navratri or Dussera, Ganesh Chaturdi, Diwali, Holi, Ram Navami, Krishna Jayanti, Raksha Bandhan are some of the important festivals observed by Hindus. Eid-ul-Fitr, Eid-al-Adha, Ramadan are some of the Moslem festivals celebrated in India. The major festivals for Christians are Christmas, New year day, and Easter. Buddhists celebrate Buddha Poornima and Jains observe Mahaveer Jayanti. Persians celebrate Navroz. Modern India stands for unity in diversity.

1.3.10 Indian Architecture and Sculpture

Indians are famous for their artistic talent world over. The great Chennakesava temple at Belur, Hoyasaleswara temple at Halebid, Brihadeeswaralayam at Thanjavur, Sri Ranganathaswamy temple at Srirangam, the Sun temple at Konark, the Ramalingeswara temple at Rameswaram with its exquisite corridors, the imposing Minakshi temple at Madhura are only a few examples of South Indian architecture. The beautiful frescos at Ajanta and the art at Ellora caves, the Buddhist Stupa at Sanchi, are other aspects of Indian prowess in this field. Taj Mahal, Qutub Minar, Red fort, the palaces at Fatehpur Sikri exhibit another angle of latter developments in this field. The list is too big to be conclusive.

1.3.11 Indian music

Music is a form of sound energy. Indian music has its origin in Sama Veda. Vedic hymns are sung at auspicious
occasions as Samas. The first treatise on dance drama and music is ‘Natysastra’ by Bharata. Indian music system divided an octave into 22 Srutis (semitones.) while the Western music system contains 12 semitones only. The basic 7 notes are Sa, Re, Ga, Ma, Pa, Dha, and Ni.

India has two very distinct forms of music schools. They are the South Indian Carnatic music and the North Indian style of Hindustani music. The basic notes are the same in both the schools. Persian influence is more on Hindusthani music. It is noteworthy to remember that each basic tone is related to some color and a bird or animal. ‘Sa’ is related to green color and peacock. ‘Re’ is associated with red color and a bird called ‘chataka’; while, ‘Ga’ is related to golden yellow and goat. ‘Ma’ is identified with yellow color mixed with white and a bird named ‘Crowncha’. ‘Pa’ is connected to black and a bird ‘Kokila’ the Indian cuckoo. ‘Dha’ is shown to have association with yellow and horse. Lastly ‘Ni’ is connected to moonshine color and elephant. This information is available in the book ‘Amarakosha’, In the chapter of ‘Natyavarga’. The melody is based on ‘Raga’ and the rhythm is dependent on ‘Tal’.

There are 6 fundamental ‘Ragas’. ‘Hindola’ is to be sung at the dawn of Spring. It creates a feeling of universal love. ‘Deepak’ is appropriate to be practiced in the evening of Summer days. It generates love and compassion in the environment. Rag ‘Megh’ generates courage when sung in the mid day of the rainy season. Rag ‘Bhairav’ allows serenity and calmness to prevail during morning times of Autumn. ‘Srirag’ generates pure love when sung in the late evenings of October. ‘Malkose’ arouses braveness even at the midnights in winter season. Indian music is a music for the soul. The ragas provide great soothing effect on the mind as well as to the body.
Hindustani music has two variations called, 'Khyal' and 'Dhrupad'. Some of the instruments used in this school of music are tabla, tanpura, sarangi, drum, harmonium, sitar, sarod, santoor, shehnai, bansuri. Carnatic music is said to be more structured than Hindustani music. There are 72 different variations in 'ragas'. Veena, Venu, gottuvadyam, mridangam, kanjira, ghtam, violin, harmonium are main instruments used in Carnatic music. Purandara Dasa (1480 A.D.) is considered as the father of Carnatic music. Thyagaraja (1759-1847), Muthuswamy Deekshitar (1776-1827) and Syama Satry (1762-1827) are famous as the trinity of carnatic music. Some of the great vocalists are Tansen, Roshan Ara Begum, Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer, M.S.SubbuLakshmi, M.Balamuralikrishna, John B.Higgins, Bade Ghulam Ali Khan, Kumar Gandharva, to name a few. Welknown instrumentalists include Ravi Shanker, Pannalal Ghosh, Hari Prasad Chourasia, Alla Rakha, Zakir Hussain and others. Sanskrit literature illustrated 120 'Talas', connected to duration of time. There are only three levels for basic tones low, middle and high. Indian music imbibes melody that inducts human soul to merge with the music. Indian music is conducive to develop yogic power and is soul stirring in nature. It lifts the spirit to an elevated state.

1.3.12 Indian Dances

Like wise in the field of dance Bharatanatyam of South India, Kathak of Uttar Pradesh, Kathakali and Mohiniattam of Kerala, Kuchipudi of Andhra Pradesh, Manipuri of Manipur, Odissi of Odisha, Dandiya and Garba of Gujarat. Yakshagana of Karnataka, Lavani of Maharstra, and Dekhni of Goa are some of the popular forms of dance entertainments in India. Generally all dances are performed in temples in front of an idol of God or Goddess praising the Divine. Movements of the body are harmoniously blended with devotion and meaningful gestures. Indian culture
revolves around the Divine. Indian music and dances are both dedicated to the Supreme power that created this universe.

1.3.13 Indian Drama and Literature

Kalidasa was the greatest drama writer in Sanskrit, whose dramas thrilled the scholars and laymen alike. Abhijnanashakuntalam, Vikramorvaseeyam, Malavikagnimitra are some of his famous works. Sakuntalam is an incomparable master piece in dramatic poetry. Megha Sandesh Raghuvamsa, Kumarasambhava are other great works from him. Bhasa’s Swapnavasavadatta, Sri Harsha’s Nagananda, Bana Bhatta’s Kadambari, Dandi’s Dasakumaraharitra are some other famous works in Sanskrit. Entertainment for the common man was created out of the great epics of Ramayana and Mahabharata and from stories of Puranas. Bagavadgita was acclaimed by William von Humbolt as “the most beautiful and perhaps the only philosophical song existing in any known tongue.” While permitting entertainment the providers of it never crossed the boundaries of morality. All of them are recreating, and yet informative and educative.

1.3.14 Indian Medicine – Ayurveda

Indian medical practice known as Ayurveda is first mentioned in Rig Veda. It is a science of health and welfare. It recognizes ‘Panchamahabhuta’, the five basic elements of creation, namely earth, water, fire, air and ether. The influence of air (Vata), fire (Pitta) and water and earth (Kapha) on Prana, the life sustaining force is the governing principle of Ayurveda. Atreya Samhita is considered as the oldest reference for Ayurveda. There are several branches of Ayurveda corresponding to internal medicine, surgery, ophthalmology, psychiatry, paediatrics and other modern specializations. Ayurvedic medicines are generally derived from herbs, minerals and animals.
1.3.15 **Mining and Metallurgy in Ancient India**

India was in the knowledge of producing Copper, Gold, iron and steel from ancient times. Copper was in use even before 3000 B.C. There were special alloys and compound produced in India which have not come to light. They are ‘Tamo garbha Loha,’ a lead based light alloy resistant to acids, ‘Pancha loha,’ a copper alloy malleable and corrosion resistant, ‘Araara tamra’, a copper zinc lead and iron alloy light and hard, ‘Chapala Grahaka’ in two varieties, ceramic and glass, ‘Ravishakti Apakarshana darpana,’ a special glass that concentrates light energy, and ‘Usha Shakti Apakarshana Darpana’ a special glass for concentrating heat energy from the sun. Indians also developed ‘Badhira Loha’ a sound proof alloy. The iron pillar in New Delhi is a standing example for Indian prowess in the field of metallurgy.

In the preceding a brief account is given about our beloved mother land and its excellence in various fields from ancient times. We take great pride at the past heritage of ancient India irrespective of our caste, creed or religion. India, our mother lend far excelled all other lands.

The readers may by now understand that Indians possess a great heritage from the past. In all fields the ancient Indians excelled.

Now let us look at the family structure and its importance as it is the second in the level structure.

1.3.16 **The Indian Family System**

Family system is the unique building block in Indian culture. The Indian joint family system nourished several moral and ethical values that went into the character of individuals in the family. The Indian joint family system and Indian marriage system are unique in the world.
**What is a Family?**

A family is a group of people characterized by consanguinity, common residence and sharing the same moral, cultural, social, religious and economic considerations with one or more parents and their children’s included. Family is also based on the right to property or wealth as well as duties and responsibilities to persons in the group on reciprocal basis. Family exists on the foundation of love – love between father and mother, between parents and children and so on extended to offshoots and relatives. Marriage is the most important institution that sustains and fosters a family.

There are several types of families, but the most important classification is based on leadership by gender.

**The System of Patriarchy:** It is a family where persons related though male line along with their wives and children live together. If a boy in the family gets married to a girl from another family, the girl comes to the house of the boy and lives with his family. Likewise, the girl from the family leaves the house and lives with the family of her husband in another house.

**The System of Matriarchy:** It is a family where persons related through female line along with their husbands and children. If a girl from a family marries a boy from another family, the boy comes to the house of the girl and lives with her family.

In India - it is the patriarchy family system that is followed in most parts of the country. However, there are few communities at some places such as Khasis in Meghalaya and some communities in Kerala where matriarchy family system with some variations is practiced.

**The Indian Joint family:** Joint family system was the most important aspect of Indian social system as has been already mentioned. It played a dominant role in the past.
In a joint family several generations of kindred live together at one place. In such a family there may be grand parents, parents, children and their spouses if some of them were married, and even other relations. In a joint family there may be more responsibilities and duties, but also the system has the advantages of increased security, greater dependability especially at the times of crisis of any type and wider recognition.

**Functions of a family:**

1. To satisfy the biological needs and sustain the clan,
2. To give psychological satisfaction to human life.

In a family most of the important responsibilities are taken over by the elders, giving security, comfort, intimacy, trust and affection to the younger members and children. Again, bringing up the younger members and the children, on the other hand, gives psychological satisfaction to the elder members who find a purpose and goal for their lives.

**Joint family has Advantages:**

1. It provides material wealth to fulfill the needs of the family members.
2. It promotes and maintains moral, cultural, social and religious values for the benefit of the society.
3. It provides a healthy and harmonious environment for the growth of the children.
4. It provides a base for establishing norms for social development so that a credible legal system is defined.

Respect for elders, mutual trust, affection, honor, honesty, commitment, and sharing are inherent in a family structure. A family is a harbor where members of the family take refuge. For a child the horizon becomes wider to learn basics in life in a joint family system.
The Indian Itihasas explain the ancient Indian family system. It is Ramayana that highlights the duties of a man and woman in various roles. While family relationship is important ‘dharma’ and its protection is considered to be more sacred than the former. One may have to give up even his own devoted wife when it comes to satisfying the mindset of people governed. To honor a promise, kingdom can be sacrificed. Father’s word has to be upheld by the son. **Protect ‘dharma’, ‘dharma’ protects you** is the ancient saying in India. That is the Indian value system.

1.3.17 The Indian Marriage System

For any individual his future always bears a reference to his past and the present disposition. This is dependent on his parentage and his up bringing by them. Man and woman joined through wed lock as a couple play the important role of parents at a later stage. Thus, the up bringing of the children and the way a couple gets married are interlinked. In India marriage is considered as a very a sacred act. The institution of marriage is not for just biological need. It is in fact an initiation of bringing two different families together for a holy purpose.

During the marriage ceremony the groom says,

: **“...dharma praja sampdyartham striyamudvahe”**,  
Which means that to live according to righteousness and to beget good children I am marrying. Children are needed to maintain the lineage, which is not just a personal or family need but also a social need.

The groom is instructed during the ceremony that his earning wealth and with that wealth fulfilling all his desires shall be only with right conduct or observing ‘dharma’. This is stated in the Vedic promise,**“...dharmardha kameshu tva yaisha naati charitavya”**.
The father of the bride informs the groom that the bride there after is going to be his associate in all rightful duties that will be performed by him thereafter. This is stated thus a “saha dharmachareetava”.

The groom promises the bride, “…grihnaamite suprajastriya hastam” - meaning that he takes the hand of the bride only to get good children.

The wife is given to the man to follow throughout his life as a shadow in all activities. **Sapthapadi** is the process of the bride and the groom performing seven steps together and it has the following significance.

- **Step 1. Ekamishe** - for the plenitude of food
- **Step 2. Dhve Oorjve** – for the mental and physical strength and healthy life
- **Step 3. Treeni Vruthaya** – for the performance of spiritual duties and spiritual obligations
- **Step 4. Chatvaarimayo** – for the attainment of happiness in all walks of life
- **Step 5. Pancha Pasubhyaha** – for the welfare of all living beings
- **Step 6. Shadru Thubhyaha** – for the bountiful seasons
- **Step 7. Saptha Sapthabhyaha** – for universal peace.

From the above it is clear that in India marriage is performed with deep commitment to dharma and the community rather than with only emphasis on man and woman relationship.

After the marriage the parents of the groom have the same responsibility towards the bride as her own parents. Mutual welfare, sharing the responsibilities, creation of a pleasant environment in the house and harmony with the society around are foundation stones of Indian marriage and family life. For an Indian, marriage is for life. Sri Ram and Sita are considered as the most ideal couple.
Kasturba Gandhi has praised her husband Mahatma Gandhi as follows. “I thank you for being your life long associate and helper. I thank you for giving me an opportunity of leading a life with you that stood before the whole world as an example for self restraint. I thank you for considering me as your partner and equal in your mission for India”. This was revealed by Mahatma Gandhi in his book ‘The Story Of My Experiments With Truth’. Noble persons exhibit exemplary behavior. Kasturba proved to be an ideal wife and cooperated with the Mahatma all through her life. She treated him as her teacher. She worked as the treasurer for all the donations received by Gandhiji. Once there was a discrepancy of four Rupees in accounting. Gandhiji scolded her for the discrepancy in public! All persons in public life must take this as an example for their conduct of public affairs.

1.4 The Impact of Invasions on Indian Culture and Education

In ancient times there were many universities training youth in various sciences and arts. Taxasila, Nalanda, Ujjain, Varanasi, Mathura, Kanjeevaram, Navdveep are such places. The university at Kanchi taught not only Vedas and Vedic sciences, but also, the tenets of Jainism and Buddhism. During 7th century Huen Tsang, of china studied for 5 years at Nalanda University. It has 8,500 students and 1500 Professors. The university housed in three mini buildings was completely destroyed in 1220 A.D. by Bhaktiar Khiljee. Many other universities were also subjected to the same fate by foreign invaders.

In spite of the destruction caused to the Indian centers of education and culture by the Muslim invaders, the Indian system withstood onslaught with great resilience. By the time the East India company established itself well in India
around 1820 A.D. as per a report prepared by Thomas Munroe the then Governor of Madras province there were 12,498 schools where in 1,88,650 were learning. In a similar report prepared under instructions from the governor of Bombay Elephensten there were 1705 schools for 35,153 school going children while the population of Bombay province was 46,81,735. In Bengal and Bihar states as per the report of William Adam there were one lakh schools for a population of four crores. In a book titled “Memories of central India” (1820) Malcolm had stated that for every one hundred houses there was one school.

The British did not like the Indian culture deeply rooted in a well established system that could not be destroyed by many foreign invaders and withstood all vagaries of time and nature. It is very clear from the speech of Lord Macaulay to the British parliament on 2nd February, 1835.

“I have traveled across the length and breadth of India and I have not seen one person who is a thief. Such wealth I have seen in this country, such high moral values, people of such caliber, that I did not think we could ever conquer this country, unless we break the very back bone of this nation which is her spiritual and cultural heritage and therefore I propose that we replace her old and ancient education system, her culture, for if the Indian thinks that all that is foreign and English is good and greater than their own, they will lose their self esteem, their native self culture and they will become what we want them, a truly dominated nation”.

Macaulay achieved what ever he desired and wanted to implement. A big section of present English educated people decry their own religion, culture and traditions. They think that every thing that is western is great, and try to imitate western culture including dress, food and food habits. It is unfortunate that the present youth have forgotten their own noble inheritance. The British created in India as Macaulay wanted.
“a class of persons, Indian in blood and color, but English in taste, in opinion, in morals and intellect.”

Education that provides, more materialistic benefits, comforts, pleasures and luxuries may look glorious at first, but it degrades and degenerates human society. Albert Einstein has pointed out:

“over emphasis on the competitive system kills the spirit on which all cultural life depends. Any system that breeds competition and rivalry will create jealousy, greed and mean mentality”.

The present system of education is provider of information. It does not make a person as a human. Personal prosperity should be within welfare of the society in which one lives. Happy life exists only in harmony with others. When the present educations system aims at character building then only it could be understood. Holistic education is for social welfare and is not cut-throat competition.

1.5 Interfaith understanding

India being a country of several religious faiths it is also necessary to train the young and the youth to comprehend the importance of religion and religious tolerance. The role of religion in molding the character of a person and its limited role in civic life should be highlighted. Even though majority of Indians are Hindus, yet there is a need to stress the importance of this so that inter religious rivalry does not create any problem to daily life.

When one looks into the basic principles of all the great religions of the world, Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, Judaism a fundamental unity of thoughts will be noticed among all these religions. The role of universal love and selfless service to humanity
underscore all of them. Prayers purify man and service to fellow men is means to cleanse the mental thoughts. In the core of all religious exhortations we find unity. Multiplicity of religions explain the diverse roads to attain happiness or liberation. If there are differences and dissentions, then they are entirely due to the ignorance, narrow mindedness and selfishness of individuals or groups rather than among the precepts of the religions. Man’s pursuit to find happiness should be guided by principles of morals, values and ethics. It will be realized that happiness is within and cannot be found any where in the external world.

1.6 Culture leads to Happiness

Man seeks happiness. In this pursuit he gives up values. If he only tries to understand the source for happiness man will not give up morals and ethics. Happiness is internal and not external. Yet, man is trying to find happiness in external objects like money, power, name, fame, position and similar such things. Man got accustomed to lead a self centered life. Entering into unscrupulous competition to amass wealth, he is engulfing himself into worries, disappointments and dejection. Only after experiencing bitter knocks in the routine mundane life, his attention is drawn slowly inwards. Seeking solace and rest in the realm of his own native Self. Man can realize his inherent state of happiness only when he understands – mind its operating principles, its nature and ways and means for the control of it. It is the mind by its mercurial wandering and dislikes, causes anxiety, produces anger and frustration that finally results in immense stress to the physical and mental bodies. This has been explained in Gita.

If one dwells in his mind about objectives of sense, an attachment develops in his mind. This attachment gives rise to desire. If the desire is not fulfilled anger materializes.
From anger comes delusion. Delusion leads to loss of mental balance, which in turn leads to deprivation of comprehending power. Then one perishes with lack of understanding. Worldly objects do not give permanent satisfaction. All mundane pleasures are transient and ephemeral.

According to an eight century, Buddhist monk Santideva, “all the joy the world contains has come from wishing happiness to others- all the misery the world contains has come through wanting pleasure for oneself.

One should investigate into the nature of this phenomenal world and of the mind. The keys to happiness and suffering are to be determined. Once the reason for ignorance is found out realization emerges. All these discoveries contribute to knowledge.

This is the goal of self exploration.

1.7 Modernism and its Effect on Culture

The British brought English education to India to facilitate their governance. In turn the Indians at first looked for changes in their life style to England and also to Europe. Perceptible changes were introduced in daily life in food, clothing and even in personal grooming. But, after the second world war Indian attention shifted slowly towards the United States. Western education, Western philosophic thought, Western culture and mannerisms crept into Indian society. English language played a dominant role in this process. Rapid industrialization, consumerism and brand materialism accelerated this process.

Effect of technology and Science: Modern Technology shortened time and distance. Faster movement of men and materials is made possible. The world has become small. Mechanization and automation reduced labor costs.
Development of electrical and electronic industry changed the life style completely. Radio, Television, Radar, communication engineering, nuclear power, space technology are some mile stones in scientific developments.

Material science and development of new material technology expanded the scope of utilitarian applications. In the field of medicine tremendous developments, new inventions, greater research made human and animal life more healthy. Better understanding of the causes for diseases and methods for their cure could be comprehended. In all fields of human life computers entered with a big bang. In the field of medical science too great achievements are made and the life span increased substantially.

**Science, technology and their effect on ethics:** However, all that is modern did not result in real advancement. Many new professions came into existence. Predominantly agriculture based country, India, adopted industrialization and urban life came into prominence. Joint families got separated. People started moving to distant places for employment. Family structure received a jolt. Values started depreciating. Electrical, electronic and computer based gadgets made people more money conscious. Materialism replaced spirituality. Man became slave to desires. Consumerism induced both wife and husband to earn more money to fulfill ever increasing expenditure for sensual pleasures. No society can afford to be static. Change is the order of life. With time, life style always changes. But, changes should be for the good of the society. All modernity has brought no reduction in man’s efforts in day to day life. Modernity brought more stress on body and mind resulting in serious diseases like diabetes, hypertension and heart diseases. Industrialization and accompanied pollution is bringing new viral diseases. Excessive sound pollution is telling upon the mind making life restless. Selflessness and
service ceased to be the motivation for political career. Simple legal issues are allowed into litigations. Justice is delayed if not denied. On the whole, modernization brought out by science and technological developments resulted more unethical practices and contributed to the degradation of moral values. Yet, man can come out of this state by rededicating himself to an ethical and morally justified practices, imbibing human values. This is still not a difficult proposition.

**Lack of civility**

Civility is defined as polite behavior. Civics deals with the duties and rights of citizens. Every resident in a state is a citizen of that state. To civilize is understood as improving one's habits and manners towards civility. By civilization one understands that there is a high stage of social and cultural development. The west has taken the Greeks and Romans as reference for many things. The Germans felt that they were superior to other races. They became the reason for two great world wars resulting in enormous human and property loss. They not only fought among themselves but also dragged many countries in the world into the war including India. By their own standards they are not as civilized as they claim to be. The advantages of industrial revolution in Europe and else where were wasted in the world wars. The subsequent cold war resulted in weapon proliferation. Polarization of power into the economically powerful countries resulted in groups of countries ranged one against the other. On the other hand end of cold war brought a single super power dictating the entire world with its allies. It is clear that certainly the modernity associated with industrial development and science and technological advances will not help man to live a peaceful life. It is the spiritual and value based life as advocated by great saints and sages that provides a solution.
1.8 Harmony between Culture and Modernism

Modernism brought intense stress into human life. Materialism brought the need for more money. To earn more money man has started giving up values. This led to degradation of human culture. For all the problems mind is the reason for it is the seat for all the thought. Let us investigate this mind.

Mind: Mind is the seat of thoughts. Thoughts arise out of the inherent characteristics of mind that one ever willing, yearning, prompting and insisting on effort and action. Mind contains the impressions or experiences of the past and even the past lives and is motivated, therefore to carry out such actions that are prompted by past experiences. Present actions again form the base for future thoughts and actions. Thus mind creates past, present and future.

The natural state of mind is stillness. In stillness the three qualities of mind viz. balance, activity and inertness are in equilibrium. When this equilibrium is disturbed, activity (Rajas) becomes dominant leading to action and consequent experiences. Then it is necessary to control this active state so that the state of equilibrium is regained where the mind is peaceful, calm and serene.

The pure intelligence or the absolute within (soul) is covered by maya orn and is responsible for the creation of a variety of thoughts that originate and die incessantly in the mind. Once the thoughts are controlled and suppressed and mind is made still; the Divine nature of the inner self will be revealed. To control mind it is necessary to understand the nature of the mind. Every step in the process of controlling the mind will be vehemently opposed and mind will try to run away from all controls that are being imposed on it. Hence, to control this ever escaping mind from control, great courage, strength, intelligence and will power are needed.
“I” and “Mine-ness” manifest as mind. Now, it is necessary to understand the root cause that thinks rather than the thought. If it is possible to know who is thinking and control that source, then there will be no thought at all. This is “I” that develops possessiveness. The task is made difficult only because that attempt is made to understand mind through mind only.

So, long this “I” ness exists, there will be thoughts. If “I” and “Mine” thoughts are eliminated then, there will be no more disturbing thoughts that create an illusion and prevent clear understanding of the nature of the self. In other words, mind will become a bridge to illuminate the source where the Divine consciousness or Self dwells. This is self interrogation that leads to self realization.

**Need for Control of mind:** A first step to realize the self is turn the mind inwards by closing the eyes and observe silence. Practicing this with great diligence leads to a situation where the incessant thoughts become lesser and lesser and finally cease to arise. This is all within one’s reach. Everyone is entitled to realize that state where there is peace, tranquility and immense happiness. In this state when one analyses any situation, the solution appears with crystal clarity. Persistent efforts are needed to sustain this peaceful state. Otherwise, sooner or later thoughts will creep into mind and explode with greater vigor. The state of happiness thus described cannot be explained but has to be experienced only with the blessing of the Divine.

**The Indian System of Yoga:** One method to achieve control of mind and attain peace is practicing of ‘Yoga’. Yoga is a Divine gift to mankind to transcend problems and suffering. Raja Yoga is an eight step process proposed by sage ‘Patanjali’. The eight steps are respectively – Yama, Nyama, Asana, Pranayama, Pratyahara, Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi. The student may refer to any other source for
this aspect. No attempt will be made to elaborate this here further. However, a brief presentation will be made of the popular part of yoga, pranayama.

**Pranayama:** There are a variety of breathing exercises that go under the name of Pranayama. Pranayama leads to excellent internal massage of abdominal organs. World over pranayama gained importance as a means to stabilize mind and control it effectively. Human life is supported by living cells in the body, billions in number. Blood acts as a medium and carries nutrients and oxygen to these cells. The nutrients are oxidized to produce energy and in this process carbonic acid is produced. The acid is neutralized by bicarbonate buffer in the body. Proper breathing eliminates the acid produced continuously in the body. The air inhaled has five components which assist in crystallizing, assimilating, eliminating, metabolizing and circulating aspects of works in side the body.

**Anuloma-Viloma** or alternate breathing is carried out by breathing alternately once through the right nostril and next time through the left nostril. This type of pranayama calms and purifies the nerves and stabilizes the mind. It also increases the thinking power.

**Ujjai** breathing helps eliminate digestive and pulmonary problems. Strengthens the circulatory and nervous system. It is performed by exhaling out the air in the lungs completely and then inhaling air through nostrils with glottis partially closed. A low continuous noise is produced during this process.

**Kapalbhati** is another respiratory exercise for abdomen and diaphragm with accent on exhalation. This type of pranayama eliminates toxins from the body and purifies the tissues and nerves.

**Bhastrika**, a combination of Kapalbhati and Ujjai breathing regenerates the liver, spleen, pancreas and fortifies the abdominal muscles.
There are some more types of pranayama techniques that are beneficial to humans. All these techniques must be learned under the guidance of an expert yoga teacher. Practicing them without proper guidance may lead to dangerous situation. These pranayama techniques are explained only from the point of improving the health. Yoga has nothing to do with any religion. It is a gift to the world by the great ancient Indians.

1.9 Ceiling on Desires

Human wants are never completely satisfied. If one is satisfied another will come up. It is inherent in human nature. All desires come from the five organs of perception – eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and skin. A desire to taste a delicate food, a desire to look at a beautiful object, an urge to hear melodious music, curiosity to smell a fragrance again or feel the touch of a smart baby are all the creation of our sense organs that impress upon human mind for more and more of the same. This drives the person to develop an attachment to that source and possess the source of that pleasure. If the want is fulfilled, it is fine. Another want waits in the queue. If it is not fulfilled it breeds anger. From anger comes delusion. Delusion creates loss of recollection which results further in loss of comprehending capacity. Finally one loses control of mind. A person should be prudent in the choice of works to be undertaken to satisfy one’s own desires.

The outcome of all actions, again, needs to be considered with equanimity. Success and failure are the two sides of the same coin. Thus, failure to achieve a target must be assessed in a rational way and ways and means be thought over for getting over the situation. Such an attitude developed will help and will lead to better results in any subsequent endeavor.
1.10 The Sayings of the Enlightened

Before we conclude this chapter on Indian culture let us pay our attention to the sayings of some of the great prophets, saints and eminent persons that will always infuse and inculcate in us the spirit of tolerance, love, kindness, and compassion which make up human values.

Jesus Christ had said, “... behold, the kingdom of god is with you; not without”. The material world is illusory in nature and real happiness exists in giving love aplenty and serving the fellow beings, especially the poor and the needy affectionately.

Kabirdas, a great mystic and devote of the Lord said – “Is Ghat Antar bag bagiche” Rabindra Nath Tagore translated it as – “Listen! My beloved Lord is within – in your body is the garden of flowers”.

Tagore translated further the doha of Kabir as – “The flute of the infinite is played without ceasing, and its sound is love. When love renounces all limits, it reaches truth. Keep within you, truth, detachment and love”.

Rabindranath Tagore went further to explain that, “Hari is the east, Allah is the West, look within your heart, for there you will find both Karim and Ram”.

Kabir’s Dohas were so intensive in appeal, extensive in range and pointed in presentation, that the Sikh gurus incorporated 740 dohas (couplets) into Guru Granth Sahib, the sacred scripture for Sikhs.

Jalaluddin Rumi, a Persian Muslim mystic (1207-1273) stated that ‘religion is a personal experience; urge for the spirit to rejoin divinity was the goal.’. The dignity of life, in particular human life (which is conscious of its Divine origin and goal) is important. He expressed that for those who love God, God alone is their nation and religion. This is universality. How great is the thinking of those great
Muslim scholars and how close is it to Indian thought of Upanishads.

Another great Persian mystic poet Hafiz (1325-1390 A.D.) said that “disputes of religions are but a false pretense. Having not seen the truth they speak nonsense” in his Odes of Habiz. (translation; Gertude Bell).

In another verse he said – “for according to my religion, it is sin to be angry and displeased with any body”. He advised further, – ‘not to fight and wrangle for accursed wealth but live in peace and amity’.

**Prophet Mohammed** said, “The best of charity is that which the right hand gives and the left hand does not know it.”

**The Prophet** said further, “He who helpeth his fellow creature in the hour of need, and he who helpeth the oppressed, him will God help in the day of travail”.

He further said, “It is your own conduct which will lead you to reward or punishment”.

**Guru Nanak** said, “Truth is higher than all, but higher than truth is character”.

**Tulasidas** said, “Truth is the foundation of all merit and virtue”.

**Rama Krishna Parama Hamsa** said, “He who has faith has all, he who lacks faith lacks all”.

**Swami Vivekananda** said, “Education is not the amount of information that is put into your brain and runs riot there undigested all your life. We must have life building, man making, character making, assimilation of ideas.”

In the following life sketches of two great personalities of yester years are presented. These examples are given to encourage the youth to understand the difficulties these men faced in their lives and the efforts they have put to
come up in life, the failures they experienced and the successes they achieved. The students may learn more from their life histories in greater detail from several sources available.

**Exemplary Life sketches**

1. **Albert Einstein:** Everyone knows Albert Einstein as an eminent scientist. He had his schooling in Germany at Munich around 1886. Around 1891 he studied Mathematics. In 1895 he failed an examination and hence could not pursue a diploma course in Electrical Engineering at Eidgenoessiche Technische Hochschule (ETH-Engineering College) at Zurich. He tried to find a way to join the engineering college at Zurich by studying further at a secondary school at Aarau. Finally, he could graduate from ETH in 1900 in Mathematics. He could not impress and obtain an assistant position in any of the colleges while some of his friends could do it. From 1902 to 1909 Einstein had to work as a third level expert at a Patent’s office in Bern. The job was purely temporary and was given to him on the recommendation of his friend’s father! In 1906 he was promoted to second level and his job was made permanent.

It is impossible for anybody to visualize that Einstein could ever become a world famous scientist at this stage. However the great scientist in him was restless and was working incessantly during spare time on ideas that he had in the field of Theoretical Physics and published a series of articles. He had no access to any literature in that field and was not in contact with any of his colleagues. In 1905 Einstein obtained his doctorate from ETZ for his thesis on ‘a new determination of molecular dimensions.’
From the above phase of Einstein’s life one can see how persistence, confidence and determination can help a person to progress in life.

Einstein later in 1905 published his special theory of relativity. He showed that mass and energy are equivalent. He made very important contributions to quantum theory. In 1908 he became a lecturer at University of Bern. In 1909 he became a professor at University of Zurich. In 1910 he became a full professor at a university in Prague. In 1912 he became the Chairman of his department at ETH in Zurich! That was how his ambition got fulfilled. This was the period when he worked on general theory of relativity. By 1915 his work on relativity was complete and he started lecturing on his theory. Ultimately it was the observations during eclipses by British and other scientists that projected him as a great scientist.

In 1901 Einstein expressed “I have given up the ambition to get to a university”. And to what heights did he rise in eminence! A person who has given up the hope of joining a university could obtain the coveted Chair at the same University. Success follows those who cherish values.

On 7th November 1919 London Times wrote the headline praising his theory as ‘Revolution in Science - New Theory of the universe - Newtonian Ideas overthrown’

In 1921 he visited U.S.A. for the first time and addressed an overflowing gathering at Princeton. He received Nobel prize in 1921. His hectic worldwide tours gave asset back to his health in 1928. Nevertheless, he soon recovered and started his international visits from 1930. He toured Europe
extensively giving lectures on his works. He became U.S. citizen in 1940.

In 1952 when the first President of Israel died, he was invited to be the President of Israel! Any one would have jumped at this invitation. He felt the offer very embarrassing. He had to find a very polite way to decline the offer. One week before his death in 1955, he wrote a letter to Bertrand Russell an eminent philosopher of yester years stating that all nations should give up nuclear weapons. He always wanted international peace.

We have here the example of Albert Einstein, a person who as a student dreamt of joining a university, gave up all hopes of getting admission and ultimately not only joined it but became the chairman of his department. A person who could not clear an entrance test for admission to a university obtained his doctorate from the same university and later was awarded Nobel prize. A person who moved across countries without citizenship and with peace and knowledge initiative was invited to be the president of a country. Albert Einstein stand as an unforgettable personality in the field of science and human values.

2. **Abraham Lincoln**: In the United States slavery was permitted once in several states. Kentucky was one such state. Near Hodgenville in that state Abraham Lincoln was born on February, 1809 in a one room farm cabin. His mother died when he was 9 years. Young Lincoln had to work as a farm laborer while his age children were all going to school. With a brief formal education less than one year Lincoln while working educated himself and succeeded in becoming a lawyer.
Lincoln is an example of self made men. Neither poverty nor opportunity prevented him from getting educated. Strong motivation, persistence willpower are sufficient to achieve a goal. A person with definite ideas of his own, Abraham Lincoln decided to go into politics and serve the people. From 1832 on wards he participated in elections. In 1836 he won an election to congress. In all he lost eight elections. Even in business he received severe set backs many times. Finally, in the year 1860 Lincoln was elected as 16th President of the United States. On the issue of slavery when certain states wanted to separate out of the union he decided to go for civil war with those states in 1861.

On November 19, 1863 his address at Gettysburg in Pennsylvania is considered to have shaped the destiny of the United states. His emphasis was on ‘Liberty, Fraternity and Equality’. The civil war ended in 1865. The result – slavery was abolished. This was his life long dream. On April, 1865 during the victory celebration he fell to the bullet of an assassin.

From the life history of Abraham Lincoln we have a real hero who in spite of several defeats did not give courage. He doggedly fought for the values he believed till he achieved victory. He expressed that he would not be either a slave or a master. One of his famous quotations is, No man is good enough to govern another man without that other’s consent.

He is one in the history of mankind who fought for up holding human values. On slavery he said, “Slavery is founded on the selfishness of man’s nature – Opposition to it is love of justice”.
Summary
1. Indians developed a great civilization of their own in ancient times.
2. Indians excelled in all fields of human activity during Vedic times (@ 5000 B.C.).
3. When examined in depth, all religions preach the same basic human values.
4. Joint family system and marriage system are unique in Indian culture and oriented to social welfare.
5. Value education in general aims at bringing out the inner virtues of a person, build a person’s character and personality.
6. Value education in professional fields should provide the means to understand one’s social and natural obligations through a critical analysis in all works undertaken.
7. Happiness is not dependent on material prosperity. It is a state of mind that one can cultivate.
8. Control of mind can be achieved through ‘yoga.’ This ancient Indian solution has nothing to do with any religion.
9. Life has a mission. At the outset it is seeking continuous happiness. This happiness comes through equanimity, selfless service and detachment.

Self Appraisal
The student may put the following to himself and assess his answers objectively:
1. Am I aware of the various facts revealed in this chapter about ancient Indian achievements in various fields (i) fairly well (ii) not so well (iii) very little.
2. Ancient Indian culture was really great. (i) I agree (ii) I disagree. Reason your answer.
3. Do I really know about our ancient education system?
4. Did you now understand why the British introduced their education system in India? Why?
5. Introduction of British system of education in India
   (a) helped India in several ways.
   (b) deprived Indians of their own education system.
   Debate.
6. Can I practice meditation for a brief period every day? I shall try and record my experience.
7. Many in the west also have taken to yoga. Why not me and experience its benefits?
8. Electronic and electrical gadgets are for my use. I shall not become a slave to them. Keep in mind such items as T.V. and Internet. Experiment and record.
9. Religion should help man ascend to universal plane encompassing love, kindness and compassion. Debate
10. ‘How to put a ceiling on desires.’ Debate in the class. From this what do you learn? How it can be useful?

Questions
1. How do you justify that India is a great country?
2. What is the mission of human life according to Indian view point?
3. Give an account of Vedic literature.
4. What are the features of Indian classical music?
5. Discuss Ayurveda and its utility.
6. What is a family? How is it classified? What are functions and uses of family system?
7. Give your opinion about the statement that ‘Marriage is for life’.

8. Give an account of education system in India during ancient days.

9. How was the Indian education system influenced by foreign invasions.

10. What is the role of religion in human life?

11. Explain that there is unity of purpose among diverse religions.

12. What is happiness? How is it attained?

13. How science and technological developments influenced man’s happiness?

14. What is mind? How does it operate?

15. How Yoga helps man control his mind?

16. What made Albert Einstein a great scientist?

17. Why Abraham Lincoln is remembered as a great president of The United states?