

is different. It is the essence of the Upanishads, not in the sense that it is all condensed into terse form, but in the sense that the Vedanta Philosophy is made easy of understanding. When the Upanishads are compared to cows, the Bhagavad Gita takes the position of their milk. When one has plenty of milk at one's disposal one need not undergo the laborious task of maintaining cows. One who has studied and understood the Bhagavad Gita may be said to have caught the cardinal teachings of the Upanishads.

These three books, namely the Upanishads, the Brahma Sutras and the Bhagavad Gita are called the Scriptural Trinity-*Prasthanatrayam*. They constitute the final authority on scriptural matters. There is no conflict of views among these three. The elucidation of the ultimate Reality and the means of realizing It are categorically stated in these books. If a question is raised as to which is the scriptural authority in Hinduism, the answer is this trinity. There is not a single cardinal point in Hinduism that is not touched in these books. Elaborate treatment of particular aspects of spirituality such as Bhakti and Yoga may be found in other books. But they are mere explanations of what are pithily stated in the Scriptural Trinity. If ever a conflict arises between the statements in the *Prasthanatrayam* and other sacred books, the verdict of the former alone is traditionally accepted as final.

Enshrined in the Mahabharata

The Mahabharata or the Great Epic is held to be the fifth Veda. The Bhagavad Gita finds a place