

DISCOURSES ON  
**ISAVASYA UPANISHAD**

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## P R E F A C E

This has been completely revised and very considerably enlarged by Sri Swami Chinmayanandaji. The need for the publication of revised edition within the past few years clearly indicates the great spiritual thirst these invaluable discourses on ISAVASYA UPANISHAD by Sri Swamiji have created in the minds of the seekers of Truth.

The introductory notes on "Religion—the Science of Life", "Gyana Yagna", "Personality in Man", "The Subtle Body", etc., are extremely useful for the correct understanding of this Upanishad, which contains no more than eighteen Mantras. It is hoped that this revised and enlarged edition, as its predecessors, will be of very great benefit to the earnest seekers in the spiritual realm.

The Chinmaya Publication Trust hereby thanks Mrs. Sheila Puri, the Publisher of the previous editions of this Upanishad, for surrendering her publication rights to the Trust.

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## RELIGION

### THE SCIENCE OF LIFE

RELIGION is not for the animals ; among the buffaloes and the tigers we have no religion. Religion is the remedy to the particular unrest felt by man, even when he is fully equipped with all the best in life. Religion is the technique by which an individual gets his mind and intellect trained to grasp and understand the larger themes of the Universe and his own exact place in it.

To the materialists, who claim that Religion is an extravagant luxury of the rich, there is no perceptible need felt within, and so they need no intellectual theory, spiritual surroundings nor divine endeavours for the satisfaction of their sense of spiritual unrest. Religion serves mainly the evolved ones who have the intelligence to watch life as a whole while living their own personal life and who have the discrimination to feel the imperfections of it all and who have the cultural energy to seek and regain a greater and satisfying perfection. Unless the impatience felt by the individual at the sorry scheme of things outside and within himself is acute, he will not seek the way to grow out of that state of affairs. To the seekers, Religion points out the way ; and in this sense the Hindu Religion is a perfect "science of self-perfection" comprising in it of a complete technique.

Now an important question comes up ; " What compels some of us to have this spiritual unrest while

others have not?" The *Sastras* attribute it to the evolution and growth of the individual; and in this we shall find that Vedanta starts where Darwin's theory ends in a visionary promise that man will still grow to the final stage of evolution, the Supermanhood.

To Darwin, the chronology of the fossils gave a glimpse of the development and growth of the organisms and on the basis of it, he evaluated and classified the living things. To him the vegetable life is higher than the inert life of the rocks; the animal life is more evolved than the vegetable kingdom and among the animals the most perfect and potent so far evolved is man with his intellect. Thereafter he leaves us with a grand vision of a greater generation of Super-men.

If to Darwin the measures of development were the amount of intelligence exhibited by each being and the perfections of their structures, the measuring rod to the Spiritual Masters of the *Upanishads* was the quantity of awareness or consciousness manifest through a given physical and mental equipment.

In the world of men, certainly, all of us have not the same sensitiveness to react readily to the world outside or to the quality of our thoughts or emotions. Some of us exhibit an utter incapacity to be fully aware of the outer circumstances; there are many among us who cannot dispassionately analyse and discriminate our own inner weaknesses. Such of us are indeed only two-legged animals according to the Science of Vedanta. They are only the serpent-men, the scorpion-men, the tiger-men, etc. They have not come to the full stature of manhood.

Thus viewed, the Vedantic Teachers have classified all men other than the *Mineral-men*, into three groups—the Animal-man, the Man-man and the Super-man.

The *animal-man* stage is the dull insensitive stage of least awareness, and men of this stage constitute the slaves, the under-dogs, the sensuous, the un-principled atheists. To them, religion and spiritual practices are meaningless, since they are no better in their quantity of awareness in them than the cow in their backyard.

Some of them evolve into the next higher stage of a greater awareness, the *Man-Man* stage. These constitute the religious and the true seekers. Our *Sastras* call this type of men as the *Adhikarins*, meaning 'the Fit Ones' for the spiritual life.

#### WHO IS FIT ?

When I say *Adhikarins*, I am not repeating the word in the connotation in which it has come to be used by the orthodoxy, who made use of it to keep us all, including themselves, in complete darkness regarding the sacred wealth of knowledge contained in our Scriptures. It is this foolish policy that has brought about the Hindu decadence. The Priest-class of a by-gone past, probably when there was a mighty era of Ecclesiastical Government, misinterpreted Mother *Sruti's* intentions and successfully created a community of Vedantins and a vast community of ignorant mules out of the glorious Aryan stock. As time passed on, when the majority of Hindus were ignorant of the real Science of Religion, the Priest-class also, grown indolent in their riches, stopped themselves getting educated in the scriptural text-books. Thus, we, both the Priest-class as well as the laity, came to live a tradition of ignorance with its concomitant superstitions.

It is the tradition of ignorance that gave power to a Priest-class to decide who are fit for spiritual life and

who are unfit. Certainly this is an absurd proposition. It is not in the hands of one ignorant, imperfect mortal to judge the mental and the intellectual qualities of a seeker and come to measure his spiritual thirst. All of us, educated in the modern colleges,—who have a capacity to think for ourselves, have an *awakened* intellect, a heart of abiding emotions, a balanced character and an adventurous spirit to live the higher values of life—are all fit *Adhikarins* to enter the spiritual kingdom.

An Atom-bomb secret certainly needs an Army with all its ammunitions to guard it ; but, such guardians are not needed for the Eternal Wisdom of the Upanishads. It is neither your nor my responsibility to guard it. Mother *Sruti* Herself guards every *Gyana-Yagna-Sala*. The halls of learning, where the scriptural texts are taught, need no gate-keeper : the unworthy will be shunted away from the very atmosphere of such a sacred and divine study. Even if unauthorised members walk into the halls, they will not be able to hear the great secret ; for, in such an atmosphere surcharged with divine and subtle vibrations, a gross animal-man cannot keep awake for long. I am not exaggerating. Go to any assembly where spiritual discourses are given and you will find at least a couple of persons leaning on to the walls or to the pillars and conspicuously snoring away all through the *sat-sang*.

Addressing these men, *Sruti* in extreme kindness advises not to waste their time attending such *sat-sangs*, but to go out to any field of dynamic work, and thus gain the necessary inner qualities which will make them fit to profit by the discourses. It is only the lust and personal ambitions of man that gave the

wrong interpretation to the *Srutis*.<sup>1</sup>

From the above, it is clear that the interpretations of the intolerant orthodoxy are baseless, and the Hindu Renaissance can no longer wait upon these meagre excuses. Every intelligent man of culture and mental purity has a right to the great heritage of our Rishis. Hinduism minus Vedanta is only a dead religion. Vedanta contains the cream of all human experiences. They have been formulated after close observations of the outer and the inner lives of man, not at a given period of history, but through generations of Teachers and disciples. Such a great wealth of knowledge cannot be the personal property of either an individual or a community or a Nation. Vedanta is the common wealth of Man and every full-grown man, who has started asking questions upon the logic of creation, the goal of life, the state of perfection, etc., has a right of free access to it, irrespective of his caste, creed or nationality, age or stage in life.

#### THE TECHNIQUE

As we mentioned earlier, from the Man-Man stage, to grow out and evolve as a Super-man, Vedanta gives us certain scientific techniques. All Religions of the world, in their fundamental rituals, provide sufficient technique in evolving the animal-man to the Man-Man stage. In their higher practices of discrimination, ethical and moral living, detachment and higher meditation, we have the total scheme, by adopting which, from the Man-Man stage, an individual can consciously

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<sup>1</sup> This much I had to elaborate, because, after the announcement of the *Yagna*, I had been receiving letters from the orthodox section of the Hindus expressing their anxiety at my outrageous folly. According to some of them, by teaching Vedanta freely to all and sundry, I am molesting the purity of our *Srutis*!

hasten his own evolution to the Super-manhood.

To the Materialists, to whom life is an illogical and a meaningless procession from the womb to the tomb, there is no urge felt for self-improvement, there is no perfection to be achieved or any goal to be gained. To them, indeed, Religion is "an opiate to the people," "a conspiracy of the rich," "a diabolic extravagance of public time and public wealth," etc. This would indeed be the opinion of the buffalo-world also, if only we try to preach religion to them ! !

The greatness of Man justifying him to claim himself to be "the roof and crown of things" is in this that he alone can consciously grow and come to claim the bliss and perfection of the highest evolution. The Vegetable and Animal Kingdoms will have to wait till Mother Nature takes them into Her hands and brings them out through better moulds of the higher evolutions. The methods by which man can consciously evolve are the methods described in the Spiritual life.

In the lower scales of evolution, beings exist and act by instincts under the compelling force of the urge to preserve themselves : the self-preservation instinct. "Kill, loot, steal, but preserve yourself" seems to be the law of life in the lower kingdoms. But, having become man, Nature seems to tell him that he can no longer grow if he lives the religion of the animals. "Fight down the instincts. Thou shalt not kill. Thou shalt not loot. Thou shalt not steal. Even at the point of death, suffer it meekly but heroically, and yet leave not the higher principles of life such as love, tolerance, kindness, mercy, etc." This seems to be the only avenue through which man can enter the kingdom of his fulfilment and claim the bliss and peace of the Super-manhood.



That, as an organism, man has become physically the perfect, is the unanimous opinion of all physiologists. The next stage of growth is inward. There is a lot of animalistic-grossness and instinct-clogs in our head and heart, which are to be purified in order to bring about a greater amount of awareness or consciousness manifest through the inner equipments of man. All methods by which this is achieved are methods spiritual, be it in Hinduism, Christianity, Islam or Buddhism.

#### THE KEY TO OPEN

When once the mind and intellect have been cleansed of their grossness and made still of all their agitations, the individual comes to experience and rediscover the state of Pure-Awareness, which is the State of Perfection---most dynamic and potent, visualised by all the religions. "*Thou art That*," cries Vedanta repeatedly and denies for us any reality in our present misconception about ourselves.

It is something like an Emperor waiting outside his own locked palace-gate in the cold and dark threats of the wintry night. In his drunkenness, the King has forgotten that, in his own pocket is the key and that he has every right to open the door and walk within into the warmth, splendour and joy of his own palace-halls. The Scriptures, like the attendants of the King, are repeatedly appealing to us, reminding us that our sorrows of life will all end if only we take the key that is in us and open the doors and walk into our own palace. But, in our giddiness with vanity and self-forgetfulness, born out of the bleeding ulcers of animism in us, we have today neither ears to hear, nor the good-sense to seek, nor the courage to open the gates of our own kingdom and walk in to claim our heritage

as the sole monarch of it !!

Thus, religious life starts when one, by intelligently living the experiences of life, comes to feel the imperfections of one's own worm-existence. *Atma Kripa*, according to our *Sastras*, is the last gate to the temple of spiritualism. But, unfortunately, "the sick hurry and divided aims" of our materialistic world give us no mental or intellectual rest to estimate life and come to feel the incompleteness of it all. From desire to desire, we are whipped along to groan down the paths of life towards the abyss of Death. Earning and spending, acquiring and hoarding, "we lay waste our powers," ever seeking but never finding an unbroken and perfect state of peace or joy. The more the materialism encroaches upon our divine nature, the more we shall get into the kingdom of the animal and the farther away shall we thereby move from the bliss of perfection which is the true and rightful heritage of Man. Man's Eternal Nature is Bliss. Bliss alone is his *Swaroopa*. "*That Thou Art*," and not this—an ineffectual tearful creature—is the repeated assertion of the Vedantic Masters, who were all established in their own subjective experience of this great Truth.

#### WHY THE SORROWS ?

I can see, my friends, a great question rising in your minds : " But how is it, Swami, that, if our nature is Happiness, we are continuously unhappy and sorrow-ridden ? " The answer is obvious : *We are not knowing and behaving as we are*. We are neither aware of the outer world of things, nor are we living in the awareness of our own inner world. Life is a series of experiences lived by us, from moment to moment. In living one experience, we must have three things : (1) the Subject,

(2) the Object and (3) the relationship between these two. In our ignorance of ourselves, we miscalculate and accordingly evaluate the outer world of things, and thus come to entertain a false relationship. It is this that causes all our sorrows. In fact, the outer world-of-things is inert and cannot of themselves cause us either joy or sorrow. But, shame on us, we allow them to tyrannise over us, by lending our own strength to them !!

A man, while taking his bath in the Ganges, saw a bright thing floating down the stream. He swam to it and caught hold of it. He saw that it was a Malacca-cane with a silver-top. Along with the cane, while he was swimming back, he was caught in a dangerous whirl, and he lost his hold upon the newly gained stick. The stick floated down the river-stream. The man on reaching the banks was seen to be bitterly weeping for the loss of *his* cane. The cane that came down the stream would have continued its progress without causing this man any sorrow of its own accord. But, on going and *claiming it as his*, and thereafter when he lost the stick, it left him wounded at his heart. It was only the relationship that he fixed up between himself and the stick that gave the stick the potency and the strength to wound him.

Thus, in life too, we, in our ignorance of the nature of ourselves and the nature of the things around us, come to maintain a false sense of relationship which gives us our bitter quota of sorrow and pain.

Tomorrow, we shall try to analyse and understand the nature of our own spiritio-physical personality. A correct understanding of the *subject* alone can guide us to fix its relationship with the various objects it comes across.

## GYANA - YAGNA

Except for some insensible, fanatical and faithblind people, very few of us can at the outset imagine today that Religion is as acceptable as Science, or is at least scientific or that it has any function at all with life as such. If by Religion we mean the mad fanaticism and ignoble strife that we observe in the day's vitiated atmosphere beneath steeples, *gopurams*, or domes, then it is only too true to declare that Religion can provide us only with plenty of chances to confuse and confound our issues in life. Unintelligent and blind followers have made the best of philosophies serve as lifeless prescriptions for ritualism! Without its true stamina and vital dynamism Religion has become today, in the hands of a few, an inhuman engine to demoralise the generation and to feed it with false sentiments, superstitious fears and strife-breeding fanaticism.

But then, is *true* religion a superstition or is it a science? Is religion a ghastly conspiracy or a message of peace? Is God-seeking a foul deceit or a call of love? Are the words of prophets a poison or an elixir? Is a life of love and charity a dope or a tonic?

In fact it is to enquire into these and to come to, at least, a definite intellectual understanding of these that we have today met in this *Gyana Yagna*. Here we shall be going into the details of the entire import and the implication of the Bible of the Hindus—called the Upanishads. In this 21-day study-session we will be going through the *Isavasya Upanishad*, stanza by stanza in all detail. We shall be going into the

textbook without favour or fear, in a clear and simple attitude of research and understanding. These are days when many a doubtful question arises in the minds of the educated regarding religion and the scriptures. In our preoccupation with life we have neither the time nor the patience to see if the authors or the sources of the scriptures—be they prophets or Gods or God-men or mere mortal philosophers—have anything to give us to help us in leading a better life.

In every club-veranda, public meetings, university libraries and such places of learning and discussions, we, nowadays, often discover sincere heart-searchings and burning questions : “ Are the scriptures to be scraped ? Should the scriptures survive ? Can the scriptures serve ? ” We hope to try and come to a definite reply to all these questions by a thorough research into the thoughts and their implications as suggested in one of the sacred textbooks : *The Isavasyopanishad*.

During these days of the *Yagna*<sup>1</sup> I should request all of you not to consider me as a special creature with special powers or dignities ! I am no *Guru* nor are you my disciples. We both are fellow-students in the Halls of Wisdom trying together to make a brotherly research into the Great Wisdom of the Rishis. At best we are only equal and sincere seekers trying to do the pilgrimage together in a spirit of loving brotherhood and friendly companionship

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Before we enter into the main textbook, it is

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<sup>1</sup> These are summaries of the extempore discourses given by Swamiji that we have in the text. A session of such inspired discourses delivered, daily at a fixed time in a given city or town, wherein all listeners have their textbook in hand and they take down their own notes, etc., is called a *Chinmaya-Yagna*.

certainly necessary that we should know some of the fundamental thoughts of the Great Rishis. Let us presume that Religion has a great message to the world and that it is quite scientific. This is only a presumption. In our research if we were to discover that this is not true we shall declare to the world our findings. If we, on the other hand, by sheer accident, come to discover that in Religion there is a scientific treatment of life and its values, let us then try to live those nobler values and come to declare to the world the real meaning of true Religion.

The *Gyana Yagna* is thus a movement of renaissance rather than an attempt at creating a sect of compromisers trying to build up a limited cocoon to bury themselves in ! We shall in the first three days go into these general definitions, which are absolutely necessary in understanding the chosen text, and thereafter plunge ourselves into the main textbook itself : The *Isavasyopanishad*.

#### SCIENCE AND RELIGION

When we watch the motives behind science and Religion, we clearly see that both of them have almost something very similar and common between them ; both of them have been striving sincerely to serve the State, or the generation, with the maximum quota of happiness in life. With all their crudities and imperfections we must admit that all Religions of the world had served their own immediate generations, at least, at the time of their heyday. Later on, those societies developed into new patterns and in the context of the more and more complicated scheme of things available in life, the same old religion might not have

come to serve these over-developed societies in all their varied activities and departments of existence, as efficiently as before.

Similarly, in the case of science also, we find that its anxiety is to discover means and methods by which its own generation can be more and more redeemed from the clutches of the wild and irresistible powers of Nature. The difficulty that we pointed out about Religion is equally applicable to science also. The discovery of the plough, for example, was one of the greatest blessings that science had then achieved for man. But today, when the world is teeming with its over-populated millions, the same old  $\wedge$ -plough is no more an efficient blessing and the modern scientists have to discover the tractors and the fertilisers.

Similarly, a ritualistic religion of a past era, which must have served the members of the society at that time, may not so efficiently serve the needs and demands of the present generation. But, all the same, we must admit that the motives of both religion and science had been to serve the generation or the State.

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#### TIME PASSED ON

From tribal organisations to communal living, national aspirations and international tussles—with all their power-blocks and maladjustments—men in numbers grew both in the complexity of their organisations and in the variety of their demands. In this momentous rush of history along the corridors of Time, State started its pilgrimage with Religion as its spouse. But somewhere about the Middle Age with the dawn of the Age of Machines—a brilliant maiden, Science, joined the company ; certainly with the same

sacred motive of serving the State. But the old Ma-Religion, disgusted, jealous and almost exasperated, stayed behind and Science kept pace with the moving world. Today, therefore, we find that Religion is still lingering in the portals of churches, mosques and temples, while the generation with Atom in hand has walked in and through parliaments seeking new fields of conquest in the outer world and, for all their sweat and toil, winning only fresh fields of carping sorrows in the inner world !

Satiated with its own empty seekings, throttled in all its hopes of peace and quietude, exhausted and weary, the poor old world is today with regret and despair looking back at its aged spouse, Religion, expecting some kind of rest and peace in her lap ! But alas ! Even that ancient Religion is nowhere in the vicinity. Far away Religion stands as a speck in the far-off distance, which has dwindled to almost nothingness because of the width of the yawning gulf between the old and the new !

It is this unbridgeable gulf that has really estranged us from the glorious *contents* of True Religion. If at all nowadays, some members of our generation make a bold dash to reach the goal of Religion, they invariably miss their aim and reach only the impoverished Religion of the middle-ages, which itself had, by then gathered endless decadence and consequent inefficiency into its folds. After that timeless age of Vyasa, Religion seems to have never moved forward in our country and, if at all it was ever vital, it was expressing its vitality only in gathering more and more superstitions and alien thoughts into its own folds !! Our attempt is to find out the True Religion in all its purity directly from the source—the very source which inspired the *Puranas*.



Perhaps, we may be rewarded ; perhaps not ! I hope you will take to this gamble and accompany me into the laybrinths of the Ancient Wisdom all in a spirit of seeking and adventure.

#### SANS FAITH—SANS PREJUDICE

I had to an extent some occasion to study the *Upanishads* in their original. I must admit that I did not bring into my studies even a trace of faith in their sacredness ; nor did I care to entertain any prejudice against them. With an open mind I reached their portals expecting nothing, hoping nothing. I studied and lived their Truth more as a seeker than as a believer, and I feel confident that in my rambles I have discovered some aspects of the great Rishies : their ways of thinking, their mental attitude and their method of approach to the problems of life.

I can almost assure you that so far no greater scientists had ever come to work in the world of science, at once so sincere and rational, as these great scientists, who dealt with life *as such* and recorded their observations in their Truth-declarations. Just as to the scientists the world-of-objects provided the field of enquiry, so also to the Rishies, Life *as such* presented itself as their theme for investigation and study.

Supposing a scientist feels a sentimental attachment with the sample of common salt in his test-tube, surely, he cannot thereafter do much of an investigation and discover the composition of Sodium Chloride ! He would neither burn it, nor dissolve it ! Similarly, if we are to maintain a sentimental attachment with life *as such* it would generate a host of false values in us. It would distort and dim our vision of the whole. Therefore, the great Rishies of old, as true investigators of

Life *as such* developed in themselves almost a super-human detachment from the Life and remaining as it were 'far from the maddening crowd of ignoble strife' they observed the entire Life as a theme of their intense and thorough research and study.

As a result of their observations, they came to certain fundamental conclusions which we must try to understand before we enter the text proper. Their first attempt was to find out the nature and functions of Life as available at the various levels of existence and to come to a common definition of Life. After very careful observations they came to declare that, "Life is a series of continuous and unbroken experiences." Thus, the life of an animal is a sum-total of its feelings just as the life of any man is determined by the sum-total of his experiences. If thus the 'unit' of life be the individual experience and the total life be the sum-total of all experiences, then a successful life is that in which the individual can have a larger number of successful and happy experiences. A life of failure is, therefore, that in which the majority of experiences are sorrowful.

#### UNIT OF LIFE

Naturally, the great scientists of Life, goaded and encouraged by their observations adventured forth with more and more daring to dissect and discover the constituents of even the 'unit' of Life, called the 'experience'. Just as in recent times the Unit of Substance, the Atom, has been ticked to smile and expose its contents, so too these great Doctors of Subjective Investigations brought their single-pointed intellect to observe the contents of the unitary 'experience.'

These close observations disclosed that no 'expe-

rience' in life is possible without its fundamental triple-factors, *viz.*, the '*experiencer*', the '*experienced*' and a set relationship that is to be maintained between the '*experiencer*' and the '*experienced*' called the '*experiencing*'. Unless these three factors function in the same given field of time and space no experience can ever come to pass.

The scientists of the modern days are also, certainly, in their own way, great investigators of the Ultimate Truth. But their field of enquiry is constituted of the world-of-objects or the '*experienced*'. On the contrary the great Rishies of old, the scientists of the inner world, sought the Ultimate Truth in an analysis of the '*experiencer*', or the world-of-the-subject. Thus, both being scientists, the only distinction between them is only in their fields of enquiry and in the methods of their respective sciences.

And you will find that the ancient methods of the Rishies were certainly much more perfect than the modern methods of the scientist of our own times. In fact in the 18th century we could not have made such a strong statement, but today we can make it, because, with the break up of the Atom and the consequent discovery of its contents to be nothing but electric charges in motion, even the great scientists<sup>1</sup> of the era have started declaring that physics can hereafter develop only by a thorough investigation into the structure, nature and behaviour of the mind.

The masters of the Upanishads however adopted totally a different approach to the entire problem. The world-of-objects can be brought under five main headings : Forms, Sounds, Smells, Tastes and Touches. Besides these, we know nothing of the world outside.

<sup>1</sup> Eddington.

And all the sciences deal with only these. As it were, the observer in us looks on to a world of variegated names and forms through five miniature peep-windows ; each limited in scope and giving us only a partial viewpoint of the world. The reports thus gained by the mind from its five observation-posts are together assimilated to form a full report of the so called world outside.

### THE TIRELESS THINKERS

Unless there be within us an Intelligent Conscious Principle that can carefully cognise these, the world outside has, in itself, no meaning or purpose. The tireless thinkers in the Vedic period, in their super-human daring flew yet higher to conclude, through convincing logical arguments, that the world outside is but a projection of the active mind.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, with exquisite intelligence and unerring consistency of thinking, in their super-human logic, the great Rishies came to recognise the sovereignty of the ' *experiencer* ' over the ' *experienced* ' and the ' *experiencing* '.

The ' *object* ' and the ' *subject-object-relationship* ' both have an existence and a function only when they are presided over by the Conscious Principle, the ' *subject* '. Therefore, they started an investigation into the nature, constitution and function of the ' *subject* ' and its world.

Not only the European readers of Hinduism, but even the haphazard *pundits* of India, do criticise now and then the introvert nature of the Hindu philosophy : " both the gods and priests, live in the East, looking into themselves, neglectful of the external world of happenings ". Little do they know that they are criticising not Vedanta as preached in the original texts of the

<sup>1</sup> Refer " Discourses on Mandukya and Karika " by Swamiji.

Scripture, but they are only criticising Vedanta as it is now available in these days of utter Hindu decadence.

Today, the same vital principles have become a glorious excuse for an incompetent and sluggardly generation to rot itself into a filthy mire of impotence and idleness. Never did Vedanta preach such a life of inactivity either tacitly or explicitly. This is only an instance of "Satan *reading* the Bible" for his own convenience ; an ineffectual generation of dull lotus-eaters have found it convenient to tar the face of brilliant Vedanta, by their deliberate misinterpretations of the wondrous life of perfect activity declared and advocated by the Vedic Philosophy.

#### THE PERSONALITIES

Let us come back to the present theme. If the ' *subject* ' be thus of the utmost importance, any scientific enquiry into life must necessarily be inferred through an investigation into the ' *subject* '. Thus, when they enquired they found that each one of us is not in fact behaving as though we are a composite whole but as if we are a multi-headed entity ! Within each one of us is functioning, as it were, three or four distinct personalities. Though biologically a single being, within it, telescoped as it were, are the four main aspects, each asserting its maximum to express itself as though each is a distinctly different entity.

Thus, in an individual there are the physical, the mental, the intellectual, and the spiritual personalities—each having its own world of values, ruminating over its own thoughts, desires and emotions, revelling in its own ideas and ideologies and consistently trying its best to break its sense of shackles and escape into a greater nameless Freedom, Peace and Joy.

And all these commotions happen at one and the same time, in one and the same bosom ; and such an one is considered in the political and economic field as a citizen. Thus, each one of us is a hornet's nest, breeding thousands of stinging desires within, each registering the demands of one or the other of the faces of ourselves. In order to slave for all these demands the poor man has alas ! but a pair of legs and hands ! !

Struggling and striving to earn, procure and hoard, to cook, consume and digest, this physical structure, a hapless slave to the domineering personalities—the intellectual and the spiritual—gets itself shattered ere it comes to its middle age. And all its living years are wasted—not only a waste for itself but a devastating waste to others ! This condition of life in which the present era has come to live has been applauded as “ the golden age of competitive life ! ”

Even in an ordinary home, four brothers living under the same roof, under the same parental protection, cannot all of them have the same sense of satisfaction at the same table even for a single day of the year ! Any menu of preparations will certainly give some dissatisfaction to some of them. When thus four distinct entities cannot have the equal satisfaction out of the same table, how can the four personalities in a man ever gain a complete satisfaction in the tussle and contention of the same set of dissipating external circumstances ?

And yet, the world in its haste, and blind to the inner constitution of man, is in all hurry-burry fretting and fuming, killing and looting to bring about constitutions after constitutions *for the happiness of man !* But at all their efforts failure alone grins at them again and again ! The material world of secular sophistry is today standing ashamed of itself, extremely sad and

completely a destitute in the by-lanes of Life—stranded, degraded, mobbed and polluted ! The blind worshippers of superficial facts and figures alone can dare hope to reclaim life from its present destitution through materialism ! Any one, who is slightly above the average in intelligence and vision, in the world of today is feeling instinctively that the great experiment of materialism has definitely foundered once for ever. To drag Man's boat-of-hope out of the sands and set it again on the main mid-stream of existence is now the function of True Religion.<sup>1</sup>

#### JOY SEEKERS

Certainly, every one of you will admit that what we seek in life is peace and joy. The way of seeking and the field in which we are seeking may be different from man to man, from place to place and from era to era. But all of us are demanding the same everywhere and at all times. Joy or peace, as generally understood, is that which we experience, when in the external circumstances, we come to live a pattern of things, which we have demanded for ourselves at a given period of time and place.

That which was, in our childhood, a great happiness and joy may not again provide for us an equal happiness or peace in our youth. A blue glass marble, or a tennis ball, would have been joyous presents when one was in one's childhood. But the same presents would not bring any happiness to us if they are presented to us at our diamond jubilee : conversely, they may

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<sup>1</sup> "I am now irresistibly taken away from the main plan of the speech, because, your anxious faces, pale and trembling with the threats of life, are whipping me off from the main channel of thinking. My apologies ! " : Quoted from last edition. (*Publishers*).

even be painful, inasmuch as, they would remind us of our old age and the impending 'calamitous day'!! Examples can be multiplied, to justify the working definition of joy or peace that we made just now.

In this the difficulty or the failure of man is mainly because the demand of the physical man is not necessarily the demand of the mental and in the same individual the intellectual personality would still have a third type of demand and, perhaps, the spiritual seeker in him would have yet another demand. Thus, four distinct sets of demands are made by each individual at the same period of time and space. Certainly, no two happenings can come to pass at one and the same time and place; the happenings being conditioned by both time and place. Therefore, however much we may try to bring about, through certain new changes, a *perfect* scheme-of-things in our life and a hope to gain out of it a *perfect* satisfaction, for all the four personalities in us, we shall end up only in a sheer disappointment.

#### OUR HOPE

But if there be a technique by which we can train, discipline and intergrate all these, wild and madly revolting personalities in us, together into one unit, certainly, we can thereafter order much more freedom and happiness for ourselves in the outer world. These techniques are together meant by the term Religion used by the Great Seers.

What this technique is and how to accomplish it is the main burden of the *Upanishads*—the sacred Book of the Hindus. What is the constitution and nature of man and how he should view himself and the world outside—in short, how he would act as the right "experiencer" correctly "experiencing" the true objects to be "ex-



perienced"—is the secret core of all *Upanishads*.

I am sure that I have now made it amply clear how far our enquiry would be interesting and fruitful, not only to ourselves but to the world at large, in case we undertake this work in a pure spirit of research and scholarship. I do not want your devotion for the ancient scriptures to be brought into this *Yagnasala*<sup>1</sup> to stultify or colour your poor discrimination. Bundle it up! Come here with a sharp and pointed intelligence; thirsty to know and willing to strive.

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<sup>1</sup> The Hall where such spiritual discourses are held, continuously for a fixed length of time till the text is over, is called Yagna-Sala.—*Publishers*.

## PERSONALITY IN MAN

So far we tried to gain a bird's eye view of the scheme of life and nature of our experiences in the world. We found that life itself is "*a series of experiences*" : both to the materialists and to the spiritualists. But there is a vast difference. The Materialists believe that life started in an accidental birth and it ends in an equally uncertain point, called death. To them each individual is an arrow that came from darkness into their flush of life, flying across it, towards darkness again ! To those who feel that this is a sufficient explanation of our existence, the philosophy of life would, naturally, be "eat, drink and be merry, for, we know not what is there beyond the grave".

On the other hand, spiritualists are those who believe that life is a continuous process, with a set purpose, a glorious pattern and a rigid logic. The life which each one of us is living today is an effect, and, since every effect must have a cause, our lives also must have their independent causes, even though those causes are not perhaps perceptible to us today. To the faithful and the truly intelligent the present life is, therefore, one of the numberless *incidents* in our eternal existence. To such folks, life has a definite purpose and a desirable goal. We have found how even the science-prophets of the west had unconsciously expressed this truth in their logical estimates of their objective experiments. Darwin visualises a generation of Super-men. The great Rishies of the *Upanishads* explain to us that life, which is "a series of challenges met,"

is to be lived for the purpose of improving ourselves to reach the State of Super-manhood. We also saw that an experience is possible only when the experiencer and the experienced (the '*subject*' and the '*object*') maintain a relationship between each other. Today we shall try to understand the nature of the '*experiencer*'.

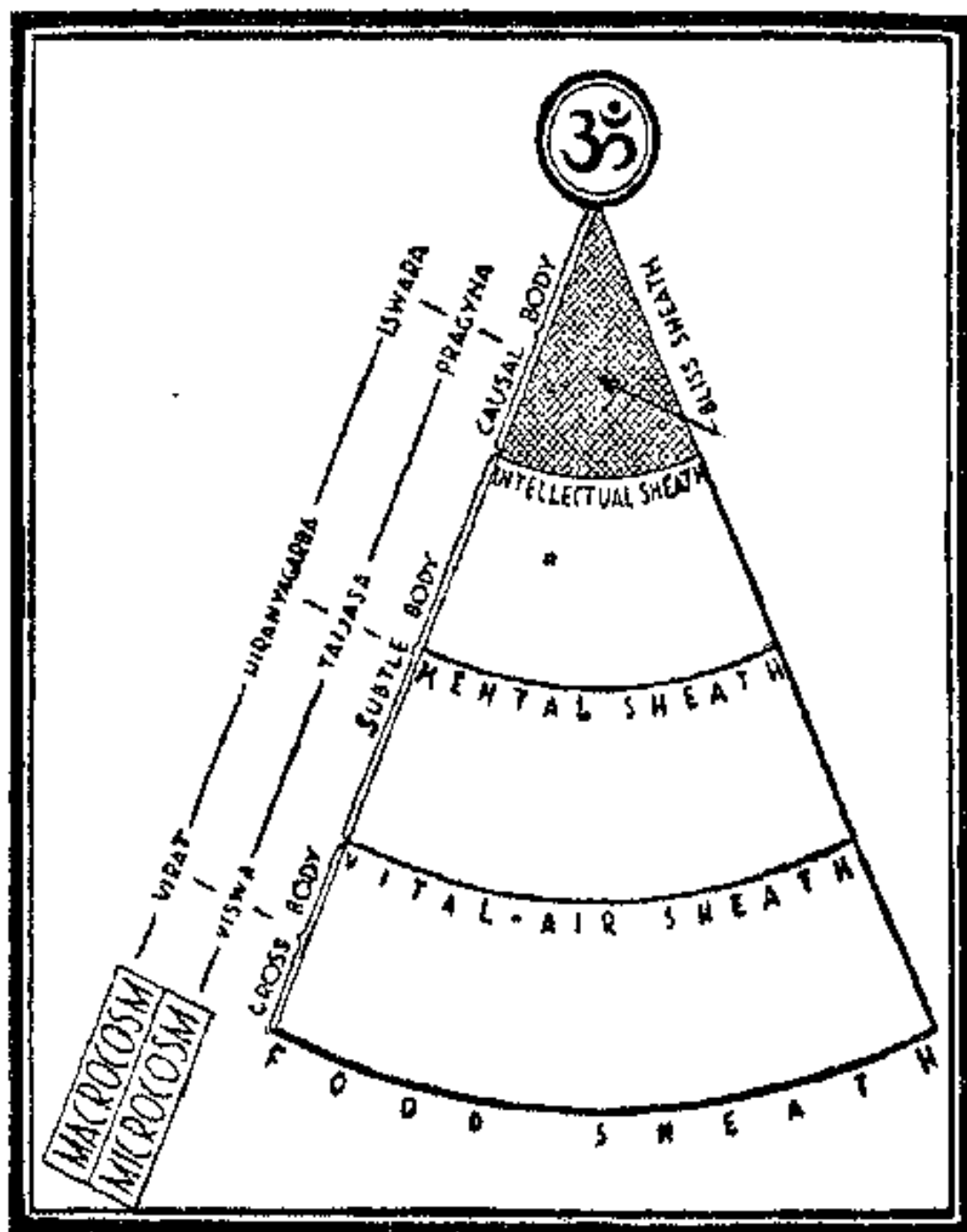
Physiology considers man as a physical structure with a brain, having the capacity to think and feel. The spirituo-physical structure of man as visualised and estimated by the eastern Saints of the old, goes beyond the themes of the western Biologists. The theory propounded by the Vedantic Seers is diagrammatically represented in the next page.

It is well-known that mere physical body will not move, grow or act unless the Life-Principle presides over it. A dead body can no more smile, eat or walk, think or feel.

When once life has 'flowed out,' the body falls down and, in a short time, starts decomposing into the very elements from which it had come. This is true, however great the man might have been while he was alive. This Life-Centre in each one of us is the sacred spot from which all activities emanate. If that Life-Centre be not in this Swami, from this very moment onwards he would end all discourses, for all times. You are all now listening to these words, mentally analysing them and intellectually understanding the same. None of these actions would have been possible if the 'life' is not vitalising your body, mind and intellect !

This divine Spark of Life, the Spiritual Centre—called the *Atman* in Vedanta—is considered to have been enveloped by the various layers of matter of varying

## SPIRITUO—PHYSICAL STRUCTURE



## PERSONALITY OF MAN

(A diagrammatic representation of the ever-expanding sense of limitation arising out of our Ignorance and the consequent false identifications with matter envelopments.)

degrees of grossness. The outermost shell, the grossest is the body ; and we almost all through our conscious existence go about conceiving ourselves to be only this body ; very rarely a few of us may be aware of the existence of our mental and intellectual personalities ; and indeed, probably none of us is even remotely conscious of the Vital Centre of all Life and Bliss in us.

The *Atman* or the Self is represented in the diagram by the sacred mystic symbol OM. This, our Self, our Real Nature is Omnipotent and Omniscient. This Spark-of-Life has come to be, in a sense, enveloped by matter and the various envelopments are called in Vedanta as "Sheaths." The term '*sheath*' indicates that just as the sword and its sheath have no contact, so too between the Eternal Divine Spark-of-Life and the matter there is no contact : it only indicates that in the presence of the Spirit alone the matter coverings gain a similitude of life.

There are thus five distinct sheaths :<sup>1</sup> (1) the *Food Sheath*, the outermost, (2) the *Vital-Air Sheath* lining it internally, (3) the *Mental Sheath* within, and still interior, (4) the *Intellectual Sheath* and, lastly, the subject of all (5) the *Bliss Sheath*.

Before we go into a minute study of the composition and nature of the various sheaths, let me explain to you the philosophical implications of the term 'interior'. When we say that one sheath is interior to the other, we only mean that the inner one is subtler than the outer. Again, the subtlety of a sheath is measured by its pervasiveness : say, for example, we have got a 4 cubic inches piece of ice. The area that it could cover is definite. But when it is melted, the water so formed can be spread out into a larger area

<sup>1</sup> Refer the diagram on page 25.

and hence we would, in philosophy, say that water is subtler than ice. Supposing now we heat the water to its boiling point, then the steam so formed can spread itself out in the entire atmosphere of the room : and so we consider steam subtler than water.

Similarly, the physical body is the grossest. The vital-air that we take in can be blown out to pervade a greater area than that which is occupied by the body ; so we consider the *Vital-Air Sheath* as subtler than the *Gross Food Sheath*. Our mind can certainly reach a distant place where our breath cannot reach, and our intellect can, in its visions, certainly reach places where our mind had never earlier dared to peep in !! Thus, we consider the *Mental* and the *Intellectual Sheaths* as more and more subtle than their outer Sheaths. The subtlest, thus, is the *Atman*, and "It envelopes all, and none envelopes It" ; says the *Srutis* : "It is All pervading."

We shall now try to study the composition of the various sheaths.

*The Food Sheath.*—That physical body which everyone of us is fully aware of during our waking-state-of-consciousness is termed as the *Food Sheath*. It is called so because it has come up from the essence of the food taken by the father ; it exists because of the food taken in ; and it ultimately after death, must go back to become food again. The substance of the physical structure, rising from food, existing in food, and going back to be food, naturally, is termed most appropriately as the *Food Sheath*. The organs-of-knowledge and the organs-of-action exist in this *Sheath*.

*The Vital-Air Sheath.*—The air that we breathe in, we all know, gets mixed up with the blood and reaches every cell of the physical body. Even without much

imagination, we can easily see how the oxygen of the air that we breathe in constantly forms an inner silk-lining, as it were, for the outer physical gross sheath. The *Vital-Air Sheath* controls all the organs-of-action, and according to the different functions it performs, the Science of Vedanta has classified it under five different names, the *Pancha-pranah*.<sup>1</sup>

*The Mental Sheath.*—None of us is entirely unaware of the existence of a mind in us. Mind is that seat in us which entertains our doubts, joys and the like emotions, and which constantly erupts into the non-stop flow of the thought-lava. Mind is the doubting element, while intellect is the determining factor in each of us. Mind can go in its flights to things and places *seen* or *heard*, and because of its vast reaches, it is considered subtler than all its outer envelopments we have explained above.

*The Intellectual Sheath.*—In fact, in the Vedantic literature, very often we find that the mind and the intellect are considered as one and the same. Intellect is mind which has come to a determined decision or a willed judgment. The intellect is considered as subtler than the mind because it adventures forth into realms *farther than* what it had heard before or seen. The hitherto inexperienced are the fields of its pleasures. And hence, we consider the intellect to be an interior

<sup>1</sup> *Pancha-pranah*.—We may consider them as corresponding to the five Physiological system that the biologists describe :—(i) *Prana*—The system of Perception : It controls all perceptions of the fivefold stimuli received from the outer world. (ii) *Apana*—System of Excretion : All things thrown out of the body seeds, spit, perspiration, urine, stools, etc., are expressions of this prana. (iii) *Vyana*—System of Digestion : The digestion of food received in the stomach. (iv) *Samana*—Circulatory system : That power by which the digested food is justly conveyed to the various limbs of the body by the blood stream. (v) *Udana*—System of Thinking : The capacity in an individual to raise his thoughts from their present level to conceive a possibility or appreciate a new principle, etc., is also a play of the prana.

*sheath* to that of the mind.

*The Bliss Sheath.*—This is the *Sheath* made up of negativity, or ignorance, in which we exist during our deep-sleep-state-of-consciousness. It is considered blissful because, whatever be the condition in which individuals are in their waking and dream-states, once they reach the halls of sleep, be they rich or poor, successful or disappointed, healthy or sick, young or old, all of them experience the same undisturbed peace and bliss. To the ordinary gross intellect this sheath is an unconscious state of “nothingness”—meaning, nothing of those things known to it as “things”. In this deep-sleep-state-of-consciousness man is experiencing a joyous condition wherein, none of his known experiences are repeated. But all the same, the joy felt is positively *known*.

The subtlest of all is the Life-Centre in us, which is the core of this five-sheathed structure. The five layers of matter discussed above, along with the Eternal Life-Centre at its core, together constitute the spirituo-physical structure of you and me. The clearer and purer are the mental and the intellectual *sheaths*, the greater is the manifested consciousness exhibited by the organism. The mind and intellect are almost absent in stone-life and we see no awareness in them at all. In the plant-life, Vedanta claims a rudimentary mind and intellect, and hence, in that Kingdom, we see a percentage of awareness in comparison with the dull and inert state of the stone-life. Much more clear and developed is the mind and the intellect of the animals and so they are definitely more aware. The supreme development, of course, is in man.

The purer the mind and intellect the brighter the beams of consciousness that shoot out from that



individual, and the saint or the prophet is he who has the maximum awareness manifest in him: the Sruti says that the "Knower<sup>1</sup> of Brahman becomes the Brahman". To realise the Pure Awareness, which is the Atman or the Life-Centre, is the goal of life, the culmination of evolution, the fulfilment of Super-manhood.

Though we are in Reality this Life-Centre alone, we in a misunderstanding of our real nature, super-impose our identity on one or the other of the outer envelopments grown into the Three-Bodies and claim to ourselves the different individualities.<sup>2</sup> Thus, at one moment we are the body, as when we say "I have grown dark" or "I am a Brahmin" or "I am short", etc.; at another moment we identify ourselves with our mind, as when we say "I am doubtful", "I am agitated", "I am worried", etc.; yet, at another time we consider ourselves to be the intellect, as when we say "I am dull", "I have an idea", etc.

It seems that there is a crowd in each one of us! Thus, identifying ourselves to be one or the other of the matter-envelopments, we play the fool and come to suffer the consequent sense of limitations, sorrows and unrest. In this sense *Samsar* is our own creation, and so, the entire responsibility for our limitations and sorrows lies with us only.

Although we live, within each of us the above-described madness and confusion of personalities, it is universally noticeable that every one of us is ready to sacrifice the outer for the satisfaction of the inner *sheaths*. For example, let us suppose that a man has a

<sup>1</sup> "Brahmavith Brahamaiva Bhavathi."

<sup>2</sup> The ego that arises in us when we identify with the Physical Body is called the *Viswa*; with the Subtle Body is called the *Tajasa* and with the Causal Body the *Pragna*. More details regarding these can be had in Swamiji's DISCOURSES in MANDUKYA with KARIKA.

painful ulcer in his forearm giving him unending tortures of the mind. A doctor approaches him and advises that he must get his arm amputated. The patient readily allows his gross body to be chopped off so that he may cure the agitations of the mind !

In another instance, when a religious or political ideal has taken possession of one's intellect, that revolutionary is ready to suffer any amount of physical discomfort and even mental tortures in order to preserve the convictions of his intellect : that is to say, when he identifies himself with his intellect, in order to satisfy the inner *sheath*, he is ready to flout and completely ignore the demands and claims of his outer *sheaths*.

When once we have followed closely our arguments so far, we can easily understand the state of mind of the great Prophets and Masters, when they, after discovering their Real Nature to be the *Atman*, readily ignores and suffers all their *Sheaths* even to be ripped open alive. A Christ persecuted and put on the Cross could sincerely pray to the Lord in all forgiveness and charity, "Lord, forgive them, they know not what they do". Or, a Mahatma in our own times could crumble down with bullets in his chest, singing "Ram, Ram".

We read in history that during Alexander's victorious march along the plains of India, he met a great Master in North India who cared not to pay his obeisances to the temporal victor, for which the saint was ordered by the king to be put in jail. Next day, Alexander went to the cage and introducing himself as the victorious emperor, and commanded the saint to ask of him any boon. The saint, it is reported, looked up at the monarch's face and, in withering contempt, with a serenity born out of true wisdom, replied, "You

are obstructing the Sun's light, please move away a little. This is all the boon I ask of thee." This illustrates the joy of fulfilment in a true saint and their mental equipoise in all conditions.

Rediscovery of the Self is not only the ending of all our confusions and sense of imperfections, but it is at once an ascent to a state of Super-manhood or Godhood.

The dream of the Upanishadic Seers was of a nation of Hindus, everyone of them a Superman, a Master of circumstances and happenings, around and within him ! How each one of us can accomplish this, is the theme of the Upanishads. The spiritual ritual in which our false animal values of life are offered as oblations into the well-lit fires of our discrimination is *Gyana-yagna*. We are now riddled with lower values because we identify ourselves with the matter envelopments and view life through these distorting media. How we can now withdraw our identifications with the outer envelopments and turn inward, as it were, in a spirit of self-discovery can be the theme of tomorrow's talk.

You may wonder why we should know all these details. "Is it not sufficient if I do as I am told?" asks a brother seeker. Friends, faith, no doubt, is a great and mighty ally to the seeker ; but blind faith born from fear and thriving in ignorance is a chain of slavery. Knowledge lends an edge to and a direction for *sadhana*, and helps us to do our pilgrimage with jet-plane-comfort, torpedo-precision and rocket-speed !!

## THE SUBTLE BODY

While describing the spirituo-physical structure of man we went into the details of the five different *sheaths*. They are again for convenience of study, divided into three bodies : the gross, the subtle and the causal. The Food and the Vital-Air *sheaths* together constitute the *gross* body while the Mental and the Intellectual *sheaths* constitute the *subtle* body and the Bliss *sheath* is called the *causal* body. Of these it is the subtle body that is the instrument for all *Sadhaks* in obtaining Self-perfection. All religions aim at the integration of the subtle body and every ritual is an exercise in strengthening and shaping the fibres of the subtle body.

In order that we may come to understand the scientific implications of this plane, we must have an intimate knowledge of the structure and nature of the subtle body. In Vedanta, mind and intellect are often considered as one whole, because, the stuff remaining the same, when we are in a doubting state of confusion we are in the Mental *sheath* and when we, with reference to our previous experiences and knowledge, come to a firm determination and a definite judgment we are said to be in the Intellectual *sheath*.

If, thus, the mind is the very substance of the subtle body a complete knowledge of the nature of the mind would be a complete knowledge of the subtle body.

Friends, you all know that there is a mind working in you. You often say, "My mind is confused" or "My mind is agitated" or "My mind is bad", etc.

But have you ever thought : what is this mind ? Now, I want you all to leave your passive habit of merely listening to what the speaker says--and think independently for yourself. This, in fact, is meditation supreme.

What is the mind ? Thoughts cannot be the mind, because the quality, nature, and identity of our thoughts never remain the same although we feel that our mind is ever the same. If thoughts were the mind, it would have changed as often as our thoughts !

Nor can the mind be "desire", because desire has no existence apart from thoughts.

Our *Sastras* are much more direct. For their crystalline clarity of expression, completeness of exposition, thoroughness of explanation, no scientific literature in the world has yet come to compete with the perfections gained in these lines by the Hindu *Sastras* in the hands of the *Rishis*.

According to our *Sastras*, thought is but a manifestation of the mind, but the mind itself is a delusory nothing, seemingly conspicuous, a delusory something created when thoughts flow. This is better understood if we take the example of a river. River is not water, nor is it water with two banks. A river is there where waters flow ; the *flowing* is the essence of the river. Similarly, thoughts are not the mind, But thoughts flowing one after another in an unbroken continuity create a delusory "something" called the mind. And this mind threatens us, nay, even governs over us persecuting us with its low demands, animal instincts, vicious urges, or at some moments with its higher demands of divine calls and spiritual urges.

#### CULTIVATING THE MIND

To control and develop this mind and bring it

within our hold is the secret of all personality-development. He who is a master of his mind is a master of the world. Mastery over the situations in life without a mastery over the mind, would be only a mere vain dream.

And this is the great secret of the failure of man today, as individuals or communities or nations in the world. In short, the tragedy of man is the tragedy of the condition of his mind. The blast of the atom-bomb that is heard in the Pacific recently is but the softest echo of a mightier blast that has happened in the inner world of man !

And all religions in the world prescribe for every aspirant a complete scientific process by which his shattered human mind, destroying itself today under the radiation of its own low values, can be cured back into a healthy and vital existence.

Mental control means the control of the thought-flow. When thoughts are least agitating in us we are in the maximum state of happiness. The more the stormy flood of gushing thoughts the more disturbed the mind becomes and, naturally, the individual is plunged in a painful state of agitation. Calm the mind through a process of stilling its thoughts. But, unfortunately, this is not easy for us because of the working of what are technically called in Vedanta as "*Knots of the Heart*".

I can see your eyes bulging out and your brows bending up into a question mark ! You seem to say, "Oh Swami, in our world, we have cut open and examined millions of hearts and never have we seen anywhere and at any time any knots in them as your old *Sastras* say. And also we have enough scientific knowledge to realise that if there be even a single knot

in the heart that heart will not function any more ! ”

My friends, why quarrel with the style of a particular language or the word-meaning of the terms used. When the Rishis of old used the term '*Knots of the Heart*' they did not mean to contradict nature. The term only means that there is a triple-forked process which binds humanity to the lower realms of discord and unhappiness. These three knots are constituted of (a) ignorance, (b) desire and (c) action.

#### HEART DISEASE CURE

If only man is fully aware of his All-Perfect Omnipotent, Omniscient nature ! But he is ignorant of his real spiritual identity and because of his *ignorance*, he feels himself imperfect, and the revolt against this sense of imperfection manifests itself as *desires* in the mental zone. Desires throw open the volcano-peaks of the mind and they errupt to throw out the scorching lava of thought-currents. Without a desire behind it no thought can rise. None of you, I am sure, is thinking now either of a wheel-barrow or the National Flag. But, some of you may be thinking of a fan, because, in this sweltering heat you may have the desire to have a fan for yourself ! Without desire, no thoughts can rise up ; a thought current means a desire behind it. And when a desire gets fully established in the mind, in the onward flow of thoughts, generated by it, the very desire in self-expression manifests as our *actions* in the outer world.

Thus, *ignorance* at the spiritual level *itself* is the *desire* rising in the mental zone, and the desires are amplified in the grosser sense-world of objects as our *actions*. In short, the grossness or divinity of an individual's *actions* express themselves in the quality and nature

of their *desires*, which, in their turn, advertise the degree and depth of his *ignorance*.

The attempt of religion is to eliminate ignorance through spiritual practices until the devotees come to gain the Light of Wisdom. The ignorance in man manifesting as desires in his mental plane, comes out into the world as actions. Therefore, the kind and gracious *Rishis* advised all seekers first of all to purify, control and regulate the texture of their actions. "Be good ; be kind ; be tolerant ; be merciful ; be selfless" are some of the advices common in all great religions of the world.

When actions are thus controlled and purified, they being but expressions of the thoughts of the actor, those thoughts get themselves purified. Thoughts are, we found, generated by desires and so, pure thoughts naturally, compel pure desires. Desires, we found, are nothing other than the expressions of our spiritual folly,<sup>1</sup>—the ignorance of our own real nature—in the language of the *Rishis*, called *Avidya*. All spiritual practices are scientific techniques by which we purify, strengthen and direct the activities of the subtle body so as to help it to commit *hara-kiri*.<sup>2</sup> With the end of *Avidya*, Eternal Knowledge comes to shine where it was not awareful of Itself before, and the processes of evolution reach their last destination—Perfection.

It must be the experience of all of you that a discipline of action, though in itself pretty difficult,

<sup>1</sup> To realise and experience our All-fill Spiritual Nature, is to feel the fullness of life. So long as this is not experienced one feels a sense of sad-imperfection, and man's intellect suggests methods of regaining this sense of fullness, which are called desires. Each desire in the bosom of man is an attempt of his intellect to discover a fuller satisfaction in his own life.

<sup>2</sup> The ancient technique of heroic suicide, practised by the Japanese soldiers in the recent war.



is to the majority of you very easy compared to the endless strain in bringing about a similar discipline in your world-of-thoughts. For example, the vow of *Brahmacharya*, though difficult, is not impossible to a man of will and determination. But to accomplish and perfect *Brahmacharya* of the mind is, you will all certainly admit, almost an impossibility. We may, due to the values of decency inculcated in us through education, good breeding, culture and social pressure, desist from vulgar animalisms like rape or arson or looting ; but how few of us are innocent of these criminalities in our minds !

#### THE SELF-APPRECIATION

Thus, though the goal of all *Sadhaks* is the elimination of *Avidya*—the elimination of all our matter-envelopments—we are advised by the beloved *Rishis* of old, who perfectly understood the difficulties of an ordinary man, that the most practical and the most easy way of controlling *Avidya* is through a control of our actions in the outer world. Thus, in all religions of the world ethical and moral perfections are insisted upon as the fundamental qualifications to enter the portals of the temples or the churches or the mosques or the *gurudwaras*. Without these, now-a-days, the faithful all round the globe are flocking to these sacred institutions and though they all sincerely and faithfully go through the mechanical processes of the rituals prescribed, even after a lifetime of devotion and worship, the Gods seem to be as far away from them as they were when they first reached there !

I have neither the time nor the occasion here to go into a comparative study of all the religions of the world with reference to their respective emphasis upon

the moral and ethical values of life. In haste, however, we may stop here to try to understand, the scope of these values insisted upon in Hinduism.

The three main corner-stones upon which temple of Hinduism has been so elaborately built up seem to be the triple insistence on honesty, non-injury and self-restraint (*Satyam*, *Ahimsa* and *Brahmacharya*). Volumes of *Dharma Sastras* that flood the libraries in India are all annotations, amplifications and comments upon these three pregnant words. The Aryan India raised their entire culture of living, thinking and feeling upon these three sacred foundations. The sons of the Upanishad Seers planned their individual, domestic, communal, social, national and international life upon these three "fundamental duties of man unto himself"

In these days of rocket-planes and supersonic speed, in the sick hurry of our life, when each 24-hour day is not sufficient even to meet all our life's necessities, it is absurd and most impracticable to demand that you should go through the entire literature and know for yourself the real import of those three laws of life.

But the present generation has one great blessing in that they are acutely intelligent and can show a million times more discrimination than the past generations. Nature always compensates. Thus, if you are given a direct insight into the very secret principle behind these three fundamental values, you will be able to apply them in life without going through the entire literature.

#### FIRST-AID METHODS

*Satyam* (truthfulness) has come to be used so often that we seem to know its implications very well, but in no given set of circumstances can an ordinary man

come to a definite decision as to how to act truthfully ! Without going much into the details, I will try to touch upon the essence of these teachings.

Self-restraint (*Brahmacharya*) is not a mere control of the sex impulses. It is a life lived under a strict policy of self-control in all the activities of all the senses that go out into the fields of their respective objects. Thus, to talk too much or walk too long distances, to eat even a morsel more than is essential are all crimes against a life of self-restraint.

If *Brahmacharya* be thus a value of life applied in the physical plane, *Ahimsa* (non-injury) is a value of life to be lived in the mental zone. Non-injury is not an inert ineffectual slave-mentality allowing ourselves to be killed or to be persecuted by any individual or individuals. Cowardice is not sanctioned by non-injury.

*Ahimsa* in its real spiritual import means therefore, only "kill not with cruel animal intentions". Non-injury is the spirit that should dominate in the plane of our motives. Our motives should not be polluted by ideas of cruelty or hatred. Thus, if you hold up and fight against a robber in your own home or stand up against the unwise policies of a Priest or a President, you are not transgressing *Ahimsa*. To kill a bug or a mosquito, to smash a serpent or a scorpion in your house, is not a cruelty, while to allow these to grow and flourish in the name of non-violence is madness sanctioned only by a misinterpreted culture. It is this misinterpretation that has brought about the fall, decay and death of the glorious era of Hindu dominance. Elimination of the wicked and the protection of the good is the very creed of every true Hindu—whether it be priest or God or Government.

Thus, non-injury as advised by the architects of the Hindu culture is only a value of life to be applied at the level of our motives. Our motives should be non-injurious, blessed and pure. In the execution of that motive, we may have to weed out the thorny shrubs to make the garden beautiful and gay—this is no cruelty (*himsa*).

*Satyam* or truthfulness is the spirit to govern our intellectual world within. Having got some experience from the outer world and having cooked it well in the mind, when it is digested by the intellect into a shapely decision or determination or conclusion, *Satyam* is, to have the honesty of your own intellectual conviction to act thereafter in terms of that knowledge. The world outside is, indeed, a great university in which all of us are free students. Nature is every day, moment to moment, giving us a variety of chances to learn through the innumerable experiences. Man, provided with an intellect and mind, is the only being who can read and understand this unwritten script of nature's language. And having thus learnt, man is expected to act up to his own gained wisdom. But many of us do not ; and naturally, we suffer. A majority of us have forgotten the use of our intellect and mind, and dumping them in disuse they have lost their burnished efficiency. Religion by its insistence upon this principle, —“ be truthful to your own previously gained wisdom ” —is only insisting that we should constantly and consistently exercise our subtle bodies constituted of the mind and the intellect.

#### ALL DHARMA

If once you have correctly understood this, the implications and the fields of emphasis for these three

great values of life, you have understood the gist and essence of the vast Sanskrit libraries all round the globe treating upon the themes of *Dharma Sastras*.

When a man has learnt to live thus in perfect self-control, ever vigilant to gather knowledge from the lived experiences, and when he has lived some years an inner life based upon the principles of non-injury in his motives and truthfulness to his wisdom, he becomes the chosen child of nature to be lifted to the top of the evolutionary ladder—the Super-manhood.

The techniques, by which this last lap of the pilgrimage is accomplished, constitute the contents of the different *Yogas* (practices), advised in religions. In Hinduism we have four different technical strategies prescribed for us for accomplishing this final transformation from manhood to Godhood, from our carping sorrows to the voiceless bliss. These *Four Paths*—*Bhakti* (Devotion), *Gyana* (knowledge), *Karma* (action) and *Hata* (mystical)—are neither contradictory nor antagonistic to each other, but they all run converging to the one and the same goal. This shall be the theme of our study tomorrow. In no religion of the world do we find such a variety of delicious methods prescribed for our joy-ride to Joy.

In all other religions, except perhaps Buddhism, there is only one beaten-out footpath through which everyone in the fold must, without protest, jolt along—the *Path of Devotion*. This insistence and the lack of accommodation in other religions had compelled many of their faithful to go astray seeking ‘fresh woods and pastures new’, and invariably all of them could find ample living space only in the endless temple-halls of Hinduism.

## THE PATHS

Since it is through the mind that we perceive the world and gain our experiences, as our mind so our world. Nobody would deny the fact that a healthy mind and intellect are as much necessary as physical health to make a full life a fuller and nobler joy. We have been discovering so far in our discussions, that religion is unavoidable in any scheme of true living inasmuch as it is a perfect science which alone can rehabilitate the disintegrated inner constitution in man.

Our age is suffering, in spite of its luxuries and plenty, scientific growth and intellectual assertions, social developments and political awareness, mainly because of the shatterings in our own inner constitution. If in rehabilitating, or at least in reconstituting the inward turmoil, religion can play a leading part, then certainly we can consider it as an essential necessity in life. But does it?

The Science of Vedanta advises the treatment of meditation for making a genius out of an ordinary man. The logic of meditation<sup>1</sup> is quite scientific and it can be easily comprehended when we try to understand its technique.

In life, it has been always observed that to solve a problem is to rise above it. The problem of scarcity is never solved unless plenty has replaced it ; weakness is not cured unless the patient gets himself established in strength. Similarly, the problems of our weakness in life—arising out of our intelligent attachment with

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<sup>1</sup> Read Swamiji's exhaustive book : Meditation and Life.

our own body and the body-created relationships with its outer world—cannot be ended unless we come to control the body with our mental stature. So also, mind cannot be controlled unless we plan and execute our strategies from the intellect. The limitations experienced in and through the body, mind and intellect can all be mastered if we could discover and establish our identity with the spiritual personality in us.

#### INNER REHABILITATION

With this idea in mind, when we enter religion to study its technique, rather than to quarrel over the individual belief or peculiarities in ritualism, we shall find that all the methods prescribed by all the religions of the world indicate one or the other of the techniques for rehabilitating the mind and intellect of the seekers. The more we study, the more we shall become convinced that without a complete training in this Science of Religion it is almost dangerous for man to face life.

When we thus start our religious studies, we shall find that all round the world, the spiritual masters have prescribed, each a different method at different periods of history to suit the temperaments of his age. Naturally, unlike in other religions, in Hinduism we find that, from its hoary past to its decadent present, four distinct methods in detail are prescribed. Hinduism is an ever-growing tradition rather than an uncompromising revelation, and, therefore, in its sacred books we find all the four parts equally emphasised even today.

In thus prescribing different methods, the great Rishis of old, during their close observation of man and society had classified them under four groups. They classified them on the basis of the temperaments in man. They found that though the majority are

essentially *men-of-heart*, a substantial minority is constituted as the *men-of-head*. In between these two types—the emotional and the intellectual—there are a few who can be considered as men of “*Mixed temperaments*”, who are sometimes emotional and sometimes intellectual. Lastly, there are those who fall under the fourth category which are men who have neither a highly developed intellect nor a fully grown heart: the *under-developed*. To prescribe to all these four different types of people, one and the same method would have been psychologically absurd and, therefore, the four different methods advised seem to be quite appropriate and extremely scientific.

#### THE FOUR WAYS

To the men of emotion, the *Path of Devotion* has been advised. They have plenty of love to give. They have tears to shed. And their emotional temperament finds an extreme satisfaction when they are praying at and adoring the lotus feet of their Saviour and Guide, the ‘Beloved-of-their-heart’.

This method, however, will have no appeal to the purely intellectual. They have no emotion to give. There are no fluid sentiments in them that in impatience gurgles forth seeking for themselves a way to flow out. Cold logic and unagitated reasoning are the vehicles of the head in expressing itself. As such they need dry arguments and philosophical mountaineering which alone can fag out their irrepressible intellectual stamina, and bring them smoothly around the ugliness of their own over-developments. Pure philosophy and steady meditations are for them. The method of Vedanta, the *Path of Knowledge*, caters to this small group.

To the members of the ‘Mixed-Group’ neither of



these two ways would in themselves be sufficient. These are men, who are extremely emotional before breakfast, coldly intelligent till lunch time ; and perhaps, by evening tea, they are back again in the soft morass of endless emotions. This uncertain type cannot consistently apply itself to either of the above classes : either to the Path of Devotion or to the Path of Knowledge. To them was advised the *Path of Action* which is a happy synthesis of both the above two methods.

Lastly, we have that group constituted of those in whom neither the head nor the heart has sufficiently grown to entertain the urge for a spiritual rehabilitation. They would have been the desperation of any prophet of any religious group. But in the Infinite Wisdom of the Rishis, they seem to have evolved a method of exercises with which, first of all, the seekers develop in themselves a sufficient mental and intellectual agility. Those exercises are called by the familiar terms of Postures (*Asans*) and "breath" control (*Pranayama*).<sup>1</sup> This way of self-development is called the *Path of Mysticism*.

#### FOR ALL

Misconceptions and ignorance in us have provided today the superstitious belief in us that religion or spiritual perfection is most available only for a few strange individuals. The present-day generation thinks that they should run away from life into the jungles, and that in order to gain this perfection it is necessary that they must live an 'inhuman' life there amongst strange bedfellows, facing circumstances unnatural and

<sup>1</sup> We have already indicated that Pancha Pranas (*cf.* Foot-note on page 31) are the 5-fold manifestations of Life in us. Therefore Pranayama means control of all expressions of life—Physiological, mental and intellectual—and not mere breath-control. Remember Pranayama is not mere Swasayama.

super-human !

People, educated and cultured, have asked me, " Do you then, up in the Himalayas, milk your own tigers ? " etc. These wrong impressions are only the stink rising from the dust-bin of our own ignorance. It is not a fact that Bibles of the world had ever sanctioned for man such a divorce from life. It may recommend a temporary retreat, and advise the individual to have a quieter place for the higher contemplation. Even this is only for a few specialising ones and that too for a fixed time. But religion is not an existence divorced from life. It is only a method of quiet searching and deliberate self-adjustment, whereby an individual, so cultured and perfected, can come back to the world to face it more efficiently and more fully.

In the *Four Paths* so far discussed, we need not be great philosophers or scientists or logicians, nor need we be great psychologists, to understand that the attempt in all of them is to gain a greater control over the mind. Any practitioner in any one of the *Paths* in the spiritual scheme will certainly come to have a greater mastery over his own mind, and this mastery over the mind ends in a greater and surer integration of his personality, and the more one gets integrated in the mind, the more dynamic becomes one's intellect.

#### SELF-WITHDRAWAL

Be it through *devotion* or be it through logical revaluation of the world-of-objects and the factors of individual personalities, called *discrimination* in Vedanta, be it through *selfless-action* or be it through *psychic exercises*—whatever be the methods pursued, the seeker thereby gains a sufficient amount of withdrawal from his natural dissipations and his mental energies are

conserved for some higher purpose. This state is called in the Hindu Scriptures as *Prathyhara*.

To understand these terms as something strange and unusual is not to understand these rightly. In fact, every one of us, in our own walks of life, has to a large degree this capacity of 'self-withdrawal' (*Prathyhara*) from all distracting mental pre-occupations. Without this nobody can succeed in any profession in the world. Any successful man at his desk must be experiencing this 'self-withdrawal' when he forgets everything about himself except the piece of work in hand. To that extent, we may say that all of us have a certain amount of *Prathyhara* even without a systematic practice.

Our mental energies generally get exhausted because of our mental dissipation. 'Self-withdrawal' immediately produces extra dynamism in the mind which is to be carefully conserved and made use of for the constructive purposes in the within.

In the religious methods the energy so distilled out is made use of in concentrating the mind on a Divine Object-of-contemplation, which has in its association an inspiring thrill. A mind exposed to this atmosphere of inspiration gains, as it were, an unknown strength for greater and subtler flight: *Dharana*. This capacity of the mind to concentrate, when extended in time, as well as in its depth of tranquillity, is called Meditation (*Dhyana*). Continuous and continued *Dhyana* lifts the meditator into the experience divine (*Samadhi*).

The theory of all religions unanimously declares, in the raw sense of a science, that meditation is the process by which we drop all our low values of life and come to discover for ourselves the enduring

principles of living. Meditation by its own mysterious logic generates in us a powerful energy which can be used for reinforcing moral and ethical living. A cure for our mental hysteria, an efficient lubricant in our intellectual movements, meditation strengthens the personalities in us and gives us the inner stamina to free ourselves from the follies and foibles that vicariously reach us through our false identifications with our body, mind and intellect.

#### CULTURE OF BHARAT

Ours is an Age of Science. The new India thrilled with her freedom is looking forward for a healthy future wherein the maximum number can come to enjoy the maximum amount of peace and happiness in life. From time immemorial, ours has been the land of spiritualism and the whole world has always been looking upto us to teach them the right ways of living and the true moral standards of behaviour. Geographically, India is but a sub-continent, but our Spiritual Empire has no boundaries at all in the world. Even today the world is looking up to India with reverence and adoration—not because of her material wealth, military strength, man-power or literature, but they are looking up to us the ‘world monopolists’ in this great Science of Living. In no other field can we so immediately come to excel ourselves as in the Field of the Spirit, since we have a full theory and a complete technique of rehabilitating man as a better social being and a greater unit in Nature.

The attempts of establishing peace through war have been proved completely to be but a madman’s midsummer day-dream !! The melodramatic attempts at bringing about a greater happiness to man merely

by a scheme of greater production and better distribution is the most modern experiment which has already been realised as a failure by all subtly intelligent observers. It is waiting for the common man's discovery. The cynical desperation with which the day's thinkers are gasping today at the scheme of things in the world, before it takes roots and spoils the beauty of the generation's character, it will do good to bring this idea within the understanding of the world. This great mission can be accomplished only by an awakened Hindustan that has grown strong in her morality, firm in her ethics, and devoted in her spiritual strength.

#### MEDITATION, THE WAY

The Technique of meditation can be practised by everybody without the least effort if the seekers know at least the fundamental rules of it. Because of an ancient traditional belief, which in later times has been much exploited, the art of meditation has been completely wiped out from our life. Today we leave our homes to meet the urgencies of our profession and the excitements of our occupation after attending to the cleanliness and the satisfaction of the hunger of the body. Unfortunately we neglect to look to the inner cleanliness of the heart. We criminally neglect to tune up our mind and intellect although we have already seen that we experience the world through these two instruments.

Long neglect converts even the greatest garden into the wildest jungle. Life-long neglect of the inner courtyard of man, the mind-and-intellect, makes it equally a jungle full of crawling vipers and poisonous weeds.

When the individuals are thus ulcerated within,

that leprous generation can have only a painful, social, national or international existence. Any attempt at bringing about a greater world of happiness without rehabilitating the individual personalities is an attempt that is futile.

A strong edifice cannot be built with poor bricks ; a happy world is not constituted with maladjusted members. Any attempt at rebuilding a community or a nation or a world is to be started with a careful rearing up of the individuals themselves. Nothing can so surely accomplish this as efficiently and completely as religion can, if we rightly understand religion to be the Science of Self-perfection.

The technique of religion in a word is ' meditation ' and how it is pursued, we will not merely discuss but shall learn through practice<sup>1</sup> and come to experience the knowledge of it. The Upanishads constituting the Hindu Scriptures are the sacred books that give this "secret knowledge", for their faithful followers of acute intelligence, deep devotion and adventurous daring.

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<sup>1</sup> Swamiji takes meditation-classes each day before the close of the discourses. The "lessons" in meditation given out by him, and practised by the entire audience are compiled and edited into a volume "Meditation and Life",—*Publishers*.

## THE UPANISHADS

The contents of the *Upanishads* are the esoteric spiritual knowledge, recorded for the purposes of reflection and contemplation, and, therefore, the deeper a man can dive into the significances of the passages, during his meditation upon them, the greater shall he discover their hidden meanings. Mere superficial readers cannot be fully catered to, with such philosophical literature which are discourses upon Pure Truth challenging the authority and authenticity of the fields of the mind and the intellect.

As such, many are the unprepared students who, having reached the portals of the *Veda*, had made a very quick and sudden retreat from these texts in their sheer inability to understand or appreciate or follow the right import of the words of the Great Masters.

The Authors of the *Upanishads* are unknown. Is it then of Divine origin? This is a view based on sheer faith and it cannot come to command universal acceptance. We find Patanjali in his *Bhashya* pointing out how Panini has made the fine distinction between "Spoken by him" (*Tena Proktam*) and "Made by him" (*Tena Kritam*). The *Vedas* are *Proktam* and not *Kritam*; the latter is used only with reference to books dealing with material topics and phenomenal themes.

In *Brihadaranyakopanishad* we find the *Vedas* are described as breathed out (*Niswasitam*) by the Supreme Lord. By this term it is suggested that to the Divine Author it was as easy, natural and effortless as the breathing is to us, and also that the *Veda* is the very

“breath of God” . . . . in the sense that if there be no Veda then the concept of God also will end ; no breathing, no existence is the inexorable law of life.

*Vedas* are eternal books of knowledge of the Hindus and they are compiled and edited in book-form in four distinct volumes—the *Rig Veda*, the *Yajur Veda*, the *Sama Veda* and the *Atharvana Veda*. Each of these *Vedas* has in itself three distinct divisions as the *Mantras*, the *Brahmanas* and the *Upanishads*. Of these divisions, made according to the themes discussed therein, towards the end of each of the four text-books are appended the *Upanishads*.

They contain the fiery declarations of realised Truth, made by Masters who had tried to capture the Infinite in a web of finite words. These constitute the highest philosophical explanations that the Super-men have ever made in the world of creatures. These vital and vibrant Truth-declarations, compiled and added to the tail-end of each *Veda* textbook, are named also as *Vedanta* meaning “the end of *Veda*” ; both metaphorically and literally it is true, for these represent metaphorically the “fulfilment of knowledge”, as well as literally they constitute the “concluding portions” of the immortal textbooks called the *Vedas*.

As a systematic series of audible sounds, which have a mutually understood sense or meaning for the speaker and the hearer, language can be used only in conveying lived experiences, which are commonly known to both the parties using the language. In short, language can be used only in the conveyance of finite experiences, which are the common property of all living men in their day-to-day life. At best a language can hope to express only some of the feelings, and can, to an extent only, if at all, bring out all thoughts



of one's intellectual life in their full intensity. But beyond these, however intimate and best-lived may be the experience, the experiencer cannot express those deeper layers of life fully in any language. In fact the deeper we go into any aspect of life, the more it becomes inexpressible in language. Certainly, the Infinite cannot be expressed at all in the language of the finite.

And yet, these great Rishis have made not an altogether unsuccessful attempt, if not in expressing at least in conveying the Infinite to the intuitive appreciation of such students of the literature, who have been prepared for living it. The impossible have been thus rendered possible because of the suggestiveness of the words and not because of the literal meaning of the words. Therefore, we find that the *Upanishads*, when read with a mere 'dictionary-understanding' of the language, lands us in confusions, *un-understandings* and misunderstandings.

In short the concept of Truth is not easy to comprehend or to express. But the special style and technique followed by the sacred *Upanishads* bring the Truth nearer to us—the term *Upanishad* literally means "*bringing nearest to us the Transcendental and make it exist for us*". They make the Incomprehensible Truth comprehensible ; the Self which is ever with us, but lost to us in the clouds of our misapprehensions, is unveiled and brought to our subjective experience by these declarations, and so it is called as the *Upanishads*.

As the very word *Upanishad* indicates, we have to sit (*Shad*) near a master (*Upa*), at his feet (*Ni*), and get ourselves initiated into the sacred mysteries expressed through indications provided by the wizardly language

of the Scriptures. We shall be taking a very careful note of all these ideas regarding the style, language and the theme during our discussions upon the *mantras*.

#### WORK OR WORSHIP

From time immemorial the way of right living had been a serious question with all thoughtful generations, and, era after era, each generation found a convenient answer for itself, to suit the condition of circumstances and temperaments of the people. It is not an exclusive problem that is facing us today, when we discuss in the press as well as in the platforms, whether we are to be secular or spiritual. These words may be new to us ; the problem may look like a new weapon forged at the anvil of our times. But the fundamental idea underlying them is eternal and is ever the same. This problem can be solved only when we have found out for ourselves an answer to the great question : “ What is the *goal of life* and what should be the *aim of existence*.”

Is life to be spent in self-denial, renunciation and soul-seeking, or, is it to be a life-long sincere struggle to serve ourselves and those around us for our material needs and physical happiness ? Is life to be spent in walking the Path of Renunciation or in striving on the Path of Action ?

Even this is not a new idea at all. Among the philosophical literature of India we find that we had among our great thinkers those who had advocated a synthesis of *Karma* and *Gyana* and they were called the *Samutchyavadins*.<sup>1</sup> Even among these advocates of synthesis there were three distinct groups : some emphasising the need for a synthesis in which importance

<sup>1</sup> A school of thinkers who advocated the Yoga of Synthesis.

should be given to *Karma*,<sup>1</sup> others to *Gyana*,<sup>2</sup> and still others who glorified a synthesis of equal doses of both action and knowledge.<sup>3</sup>

#### SECULAR OR DIVINE

Roughly we may say that during every changing century in the history of man there was a swing between the two extremes : work and knowledge : secular and divine. One era advocating the quiet growth in the inward life and the attainment of the consequent mental and intellectual culture, and another era emphasising and advocating endless bloodshed, copious sweat and fatiguing toil in bringing about more and more material welfare into the domestic, social and national life and thereby raising men and institutions to the peaks of " Mammon's own heaven " !

We, as a generation, may be said to be living now at almost the fag end of the material swing ; the world is getting exhausted and fatigued with its own material exertions and with tears in eyes, despair writ large on her face, regretting her follies and panting to regain her lost kingdom of peace and quiet growth—yonder stands the lust-shot West bleeding and agonising, looking up to the East for solace and peace !!

The Great Rishis of old, as observers of the life entire, had watched this periodical swing in the attitude of societies and communities and have tried their best to come to a correct understanding of the problem in its right proportion. Their immortal solution for this great problem seems to be the theme of the *Upanishad* that we have the *Isavasyopanishad*.

<sup>1</sup> Karma-Pradhana.

<sup>2</sup> Gyana-Pradhana.

<sup>3</sup> Sama-Pradhana.

## THE SOLUTION

As and when we are dissecting finally the *mantras* of the *Upanishads* discovering for ourselves their beauties of expression and wealth of knowledge we shall certainly watch for and detect the final solutions that these great masters have pointed out to us. Theirs is a call certainly to the '*Path of Knowledge*' but they do not condemn the '*Path of Action*'. On the other hand, they too emphasize its importance in the scheme of the greater '*Life of Renunciation*'.

According to them we may say that the '*Path of Action*' is to be lived intelligently and with religious zeal, so as to complete our biological, mental and intellectual developments, at the end of which alone can we strive sincerely and hope to walk the *Path of Knowledge* and successfully reach the higher peaks of Perfection and Truth.

Thus, the Rishis cannot be considered as condemning the '*Path of Action*' as anything contradictory to the '*Path of Knowledge*'. Nor are they recommending it as something to be taken together in hand in a spirit of synthesis. On the other hand, they recommend both of them, to be followed in a serial ; first, desire-motivated actions, followed by desireless actions, which develop the individual's mental and intellectual potentialities ; which makes him fit for the highest avocation in life called meditation. When an individual reaches the stage of meditation, renunciation comes to him as natural and logical—even as unavoidable. We shall see this theory stage by stage revealed to us as we go through the *mantras* in all detail.

## OUR TEXT

The *Isavasya Upanishad* is the last chapter of the

*Sukla Yajurveda Samhita* and since it is found as an integral part of a definite and known *Samhita* this *Upanishad* is sometimes called as the *Samhitopanishad*. The *Upanishad* declarations, when they are in metrical form, they are called as 'mantras' and versified *Upanishads* are called 'mantropanishads'. *Isavasya* is one of the most prominent and beautiful, even unparalleled, 'mantropanishads' known to us today.

*Isavasyopanishad* has two recensions *Kanva* and *Madhyandina*. The former recension has the entire eighteen mantras, as the text stands now, but in the *Madhyandina*, the fifteenth stanza here is the concluding mantra : "The face of Truth is covered by the disc of Gold, Oh ! Nourisher ! O Sustainer ! unveil this so that I, Satyadharma, may enjoy the Vision". Uṛatta Bharta, the famous author of a gloss on the *Sukla Yajur Veda*, considers the above quoted as the concluding mantra of this *Upanishad*. However, we find that in the *Brahma Sutras*, Vyasa refers to both the recensions and he gives equal authority to both of them.

Very rarely have we, even an internal evidence, to ascribe definitely many of the *Upanishads* to a recognisable *Guru*-personage. And, never have the Great Rishis dared to sign their *Upanishad*-declarations as their own. Thus, the *Upanishads* are not generally named after any known master. Often they are known by a symbol, with which we may recognise the particular text mentioned in our conversations. The symbol in many cases is often taken from the first word of the first *mantra* in the *Upanishad*. Thus, this *Upanishad* is called *Isavasya Upanishad* by borrowing the opening word from the text.

The thought flow in the *Isavasyopanishad* gallops on to its vivid goal in seven distinct waves. Because of

the brevity of the expressions, which are made to convey an entire philosophy, at once sublime in thought, divine in concept and scientific in treatment, to a hasty reader the *Isavasyopanishad* should be a confusing medley of rambling thoughts and, perhaps, would seem to contain only some wrecked, half-expressed ideas.

This conclusion has become very familiar especially with alien commentators, because each new adventurer reaching the portals of this scripture gets himself all the more confused because some of the expressions used in the *Upanishad*, though looking familiar, bear in themselves special significances and particular connotations in the context of the stanzas.

In the *first wave* an entire chapter of ideas has been summarised by the Great Teachers to expose the theory of Truth and how it can be gained via the "Path of Renunciation" and how the realised Truth can be maintained and consistently enjoyed through values of life founded upon a complete detachment from all the material glory, the passing successes and the flimsy popularities !!

In the *second wave* the Master indicates the "Path of Action" which according to the Seers must be sincerely pursued by all others who cannot follow the earlier advocated "Route of Renunciation". In the third stanza, which forms the *third wave*, it is even hinted that to refuse to walk either of these two paths is to go astray into an abyss of pain and darkness !

In the *fourth swing* of the Seer's poetic-brush, his word-pigments have gathered a transcendental shine to indicate vividly to his students what exactly is the *goal of life* which was already indicated in the first stanza and how one who has gained that goal will

thereafter live in his inner world of subjective Truth-experience.

Immediately following these immortal verses explaining the Infinite qualities of the 'Subject', the Rishi, in the following six stanzas (9—14) is exhausting the *fifth wave*. There he indicates to the students that Knowledge and Action (meditation and worship) are to be taken together, hand in hand, if they are to be coaxed to yield their maximum dividend. Neither of them is to be practised to the exclusion of the other, but they are to be faithfully followed one after the other as a harmonious and integrate programme. Then alone can one of them be reinforced by the other, and the attitude so reinforced, by its harmonious synthesis with the other, in its turn can vitalise the other. Thus, mutually strengthening each other ultimately the pair takes the individual seeker to the State of Self-recognition, or Self-awareness.

The next three stanzas (15—17) together constitute the *sixth wave* of thought in the scripture which is a call of the mortal man, to the glory of the Immortal Self in himself, to reveal Itself in the Joy of Self-experience.

The last stanza in itself represents the *seventh wave* of thought. After explaining the highest goal both the teacher and the taught together pray to the Supreme for guidance and help on the Path of Self-development.

No *Upanishad* study ever starts in the old Rishi-tradition without both the master and the disciple chanting together an invocation *mantra*. This prayer-chanting concludes always by a 'prayer-of-peace'. In these days of acute scepticism the wooers of materialism may wonder at and even doubt the power and strength, necessity and function of prayer in life. If

prayer be a practice in beggary certainly it will demoralise us and make us a generation of incompetent ineffectual beggars only ; and that is most probably what we see around the globe when we observe today the religious map of the world.

#### PRAYER-SENSE

These are days when the so-called religious men are employing their so-called Gods, through misconceived prayers and hypothetical ritualistic ceremonies, as their advocates, commission-agents, doctors . . . . . and even as abettors in their murderous ways of shameless crimes !! This is not the fault of prayer as such. A dagger can be used in murdering one's own mother or in protecting one's family. A murderer's dagger is neither hung nor even accused for having perpetrated any murder. Similarly, the technique of prayer, is indeed a powerful blessing in the hands of an intelligent man ; but it is we, who, employing it for evil purposes, have come to molest and demean the incomparable glory of prayer ; we have lost the efficacy of prayer by our wrong use of it.

When viewed with understanding, prayer is a technique by which we tune ourselves to the highest perfection and thereby come to invoke in ourselves a greater perfection of both the mind and the intellect in ourselves. To help us in this self-invocation we may judiciously and intelligently make use of any object of the outer world whether it is showing camphor in front of a *Shiva-linga*, or burning a candle at the altar of the Cross.

In all such actions, whether at home, in bed, or a thousand miles away in the dense forests on the peaks of the Himalayas, or its valleys, the subjective action is



one and the same. During prayer, we dive, as it were, into ourselves and diving deep come out of the depth with the precious pearls of energy, strength and vitality, to the surface of our own personality.

The prayer of the Rishis in their Halls of Wisdom were thus a preparation both for the master and the students in unscreening themselves and in bringing out of themselves a vigour of mind and intellect which is fully competent to grapple with all the problems of life ; they reached an inner freshness and vitality by remembering the Unlimited and the Eternal State of Perfection. This particular Peace Invocation is a famous one oft-repeated at the end of all ritualistic ceremonies in India when the priest happens to know what he is doing !



# ISAVASYA UPANISHAD



# ISAVASYA UPANISHAD

OR

(*Vajasaneyi-Samhita Upanishad*)

ॐ पूर्णमदः पूर्णमिदं पूर्णात्पूर्णमुदच्यते ।  
पूर्णस्य पूर्णमादाय पूर्णमेवावशिष्यते ॥  
॥ ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ॥

*Om. Poornamadah poornamidam  
Poornath poornamudachyathae  
Poornasya poorna madaya  
Poornamevavasishyathae.*

OM PEACE PEACE PEACE

That is Whole ; this is Whole ; from the Whole the whole becomes manifest. From the Whole when the whole is negated what remains is again the Whole.

This peace invocation reads as though a pleasant contradiction in terms. On a very superficial reading one is apt to consider only its word-meaning and then each sentence should certainly confuse and confound any modern student who dives into it especially through its literal translations available for him in English or in any vernacular. This is a philosophical truth-declaration, and as such unless we know something of the Vedantic conclusions over the theme of the transcendental Infinite and its 'relationship' with the finite, this stanza should necessarily confuse any reader.

According to the Vedantin the Self alone is the

Truth—One without-a-second, All-pervading and Eternal. It is about this Infinite Truth that the *Upanishad* is to deliberate upon and indicate through its explanations. The Great Seers of old, who had experienced this Great Truth, which is the Life Spark in us, have declared unanimously that the finite plurality, constituting the world of phenomena, is a super-imposition upon the Truth, and that they have intrinsically no reality of their own. In short, to them, the pluralistic world is false when viewed from the pinnacles of the Infinite ; the appearance of the many is as false as the ghost in the post !!

In the darkness the weary traveller misunderstands the way-side post to be a ghost. In the ghost there is certainly the differentiation of its parts and consequently a perceptible plurality ; its head distinctly rests on its trunk, which again is not the same as its limbs. But when the traveller recognises the post, the ghost-vision, with all its heterogeneous parts, rolls away at one single stroke of cognition and the post alone remains thereafter vividly in the recognition of its perceiver, the comforted traveller !

The post was always 'whole'. When the ghost appeared to grin its fury and threats at the deluded traveller, to him, who was suffering under his delusion, the ghost was the 'whole', that is, where there was that ghost there was no trace of the post. On a closer inspection, later on under the discriminating light, when the same traveller discovered the post the entire ghost retired from his vision and the post as a 'whole' remained in the experience of the same pilgrim. The ghost was not where the post was not ; the ghost was exactly where the post was. In short, the ghost rose from the post, remained in the post, borrowing its

reality from the post, and it merged back in the end into the post.

Similarly, the stanza declares that the Supreme is the only Reality upon which the mind-and-intellect-conditioned perceiver (Ego), because of his ignorance of the Reality, sees It not but in Its place sees the ghostly world of plurality and the phenomenon.<sup>1</sup> The phenomenal world cannot have an existence where Truth is not ; the appearance of the world of plurality, as risen up for the experience of the perceiver, exists only in Truth. And when the perceiver, by transcending his equipments of mind-and-intellect, re-discovers the Truth in all Its Purity, the super-impositions of the mind-and-intellect, cognised in terms of the pluralistic world, rolls away and he experiences the auspicious vision of Truth in all Its transcendental Glory.

The great Reality, Absolute and Infinite, is expressed here by the common pronoun 'That'. There is a definite purpose and a deep significance for this usage.

A disciple after living life fully and vitally, in the maturity of his observations upon life's fleeting panorama and its endless pains, seeks a master to enquire of him if the goal of life be only pain and death ! He asks the master if there is not a greater goal to be achieved in life than this meaningless hiking through pain to the abyss of death !! As far as that young seeker's intellect is concerned it could never independently rip open the rag of matter and peep at the Truth if any within.

Now the master explains, and his explanation should necessarily be indicative about the great goal of life, the secret of nature's activities. It is to indicate *that*

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<sup>1</sup> Read DISCOURSES in MANDOKYA and KARICA by the same author—(Publisher).

goal of life to the disciple that the master is using here the common pronoun 'that' ; " *that* goal of life, O ! Disciple, about which you had been asking me, *that* is *Whole* ". All *Upanishads* are attempts at indicating ' *that* ' Infinite Eternal Goal through the finite language.

The Supreme Reality is a homogeneous one entire ' *Whole* '. Since the multiple plurality are nothing but super-impositions upon the Truth they also constitute nothing but the ' *Whole* '. Certainly ' *this Whole* ' rises from ' *that Whole* '.

When something arises out of another invariably the cause must undergo a definite change, when it facilitates the production of the effect from itself. This is what happens in the world. The mud changes in its name and shape when pots are made ; a lump of gold should necessarily undergo transformations when out of it a chain is made ; when a tree is grown into its full stature the seed has exhausted itself.

Similarly, when the multiple world of the finite has risen from the one great Infinite, may be, the cause has died itself off in reaching this modification as an effect. This great doubt is being negated by the Seer of the *Upanishad* when he asserts that, " *When this Whole is taken out of that Whole, the Whole remains* ". This is certainly against the ordinary observations in life : When something is born out of a thing the cause necessarily undergoes a change in becoming the effect.

When a *sastra* declares anything against the actual experience in life a Vedantin is not to accept the *sastric* declarations literally, but he must strive hard to understand the correct import of the statement. Similarly, here, when the Rishi says that even after the production of the finite the Infinite still remains uncontaminated and unchanged there is some significance in the *method*



of this production. In all the Upanishads there are ample evidences to support the Vedantic theory that creation is not an actual production and that the relation between the world and Truth is not a relation between a cause and its effect.

The Vedantic masters—both the Seers of old and the *Acharyas* of our own times—unanimously point out that the multiple world of objects, is only a *superimposition* upon the Reality. In producing the ghost the post has not undergone any change ; similarly, in the emergence of the finite, the Infinite has come to suffer no change. Therefore, when the appearances of the finite world of plurality has, at the realisation of the Infinite, rolled away, the Infinite ‘ *that* ’ remains as the whole.

Thus, both the Guru and the disciples at the opening of each day’s lessons reminded themselves of their own Real Nature, and thus tuned themselves to Truth. Any attempt in making oneself fully attuned to the Divine through a recapitulation and remembrance of the glories of the form and qualities of the Divine is the true prayer.

In thus praying together, they invoked between them the greatest blessings of the Eternal Truth and thus humbly submitted to Its grace to shower upon them safety from adverse circumstances and inward mental disturbances.

This prayer-stanza is always followed by a triple invocation of peace. This repetition of the peace-invocation three times is being explained by great *Acharyas* as invocations raised by the seekers demanding peace from the three “ possible sources of obstacles that may hamper the study of the scriptures at the feet of the Master.

A set of obstacles could come from *sources unseen* ; another set could come from *sources known* ; and yet another set of obstacles could rise up from *within ourselves*. Here all these sources of obstacles are being compelled to radiate nothing but peace for the time being so that our study may be fruitfully concluded without any obstacles.

After this “ peace invocation ” the teacher starts to give out his great declarations on his own realised Truth-experiences. And this constitutes the entire bulk of the *Upanishads*.

# ISAVASYA UPANISHAD

## I

ॐ ईशावास्यमिदं सर्वं  
यत्किञ्च जगत्यां जगत् ।  
तेन त्यक्तेन भुञ्जीथा  
मा गृधः कस्य स्विद्धनम् ॥

*Om Isavyam-Idam Sarvam  
Yet-kinca Jagatyam Jagat |  
Tena Tyaktena Bhunjeetha  
Ma Gridhah Kasyavid-dhaman ||*

All this, whatsoever moves in this Universe, including the Universe, itself moving, is indwelt or pervaded or enveloped or clothed by the Lord. That renounced, thou shouldst enjoy. Covet not anybody's wealth.

The Seers of Supreme experience, living the Transcendental Truth, has opened this *Upanishad* with this daring statement of the Sublimest Truth. *Vasyam* is a pregnant word in Sanskrit with unlimited suggestiveness and innumerable meanings. The root "*Vas*" means "clothing", "covering", "inhabiting", "enveloping", or "pervading". And here in the context all these meanings are applicable. The Great Rishi exclaims that "all this" (*Edam Sarvam*), that we are perceiving through our sense-organs or by the intervention of our mind and intellect—*all this*—is indwelt by the Spirit which is the Lord of the world-of-perception. Spirit muffled in matter is the living being. In

every entity in the world-of-objects the Spirit indwells, permeating everywhere in Its homogeneous All-pervasiveness. Matter is but an equipment through which Truth expresses Itself in Its dynamic form—"life", as known to all of us. But, in fact, beneath it all, pervading everywhere, is the very kernel of Life, the Spirit of the Self, which is the Lord of these matter habitations.

The Lord is thus Omnipresent ; and acts as the Governor, Ruler, Monitor—the "Governor" of all environments, the "Ruler" over all sense-activities, and the "Monitor" in all mental and intellectual functions. And yet, we are not conscious of this Lord ! This is a great tragedy, and this is to be ended. "Allow not this darkness of ignorance to shroud the Light of Truth. Bring out the Lord to envelop the phenomenal world, and thus, in His Infinite Light, let the experience of multiplicity be to the enlightened seeker a vision clothed in celestial Light Divine," seems to be the silent import here.

In short, "Lift the Veil of Matter," "Clothe matter with the Light of the Supreme Lord," "End the false hallucination . . . . Experience the God-vision"—these are all implied in the teacher's exalted outburst of confident wisdom. When properly analysed and logically re-evaluated each one of us can end all our misapprehensions, and the spirit shall emerge out of all our mental projections and the consequent inner confusions.

It is very well known to us that the body, mind and intellect envelopments cannot and will not function of their own—they being mere inert matter—unless they are vitalised by the Life Force. The Spirit is therefore called as the Lord of Matter in whose presence the inert aspect in us gains, as it were, a semblance of life. And yet in our preoccupation with the object-of-

experience, we are blind to the existence of and the perfections in the Subject, the Great Lord.

“ *All this should be covered (clothed) by the Lord (Isa).* ” The world-of-matter acts as the veil, covering from our vision the Divinity within, and, therefore, we are unable to perceive the Divine Presence everywhere around us in the without. The Light of Consciousness illumines all our perceptions, feelings and thoughts. It illumines our sense-organs, mind and intellect. It pervades all and nothing pervades It. And yet, the paradox is that the world-of-plurality covers so successfully the vision of Truth, in whose Light alone the plurality can be experienced.

In the Upanishads there are two approaches to Truth—one through the external world-of-objects and the other through a subjective enquiry into *this* assemblage, which the seeker by error and habit has come to call as himself. This *Upanishad* in its very first *mantra* starts by a declaration that the seeker's own multiple personality is presided over by the *Isa*, the Lord. The student is apt to misunderstand here that the *Atman* is divinely sparkling only in himself! May be, if he has got enough broad-mindedness, he may include in his concept all mankind and may come to understand that the Divine is presiding over the forms of only men!

To negate this misunderstanding in the seeker the very first line of the *mantra* continues in an adverbial clause to modify the pronoun *this*! It says that the term *this* includes and incorporates “ *all that moves on this Universe—including the Universe, itself moving* ”. The entire world of perceptions, feelings and ideas exist only in the Supreme Reality, just as all kinds of waves, bubbles, froth and whirls exist only in the ocean. We cannot have a wave but in the ocean; in fact, the

wave is nothing other than the ocean ; waves are but expressions of the strength, might and power of the ocean. Similarly, whatsoever (*Yat-kincha*) names and forms are there in the Universe, all of them are but expressions of the glory of the Eternal Truth ; in themselves they are nothing other than the Spirit.

*Jagat* suggests the “state of change”—the whirl of change to change. Not only the things and beings that constitute the world is ever in a state of flux, but the very world that supports them all is also in a perpetual state of constant change. The perishables, perishing in a world, which is itself ever-perishing ! And such a dizzy phantom of constant change, and, therefore, decaying phenomenal world, should not be allowed to veil from our experience the Eternal, Changeless, Omnipresent Lord, who is the Immutable Substratum<sup>1</sup> for all change.

And detecting this Light of Truth is no miraculous accident or an arduous achievement. Pause for a moment and analyse any experience and we can experience the ever-shining Reality behind all changes. The fact is that we cannot experience change except with reference to some changeless factor ; with reference to the relatively steady trees on the road-side alone can we detect the rate of change in our moving vehicle. We know the world is changing—but with reference to what ? We know the very instruments of our experiences, body-mind-intellect, are ever-changing—but with reference to what ? Are these momentary shows to screen the Paramount Divinity for ever ? That changeless Entity which is ever-present in all changes, yet

a'

<sup>1</sup> Change is relative. Without reference to something fixed, changeless, imperishable, we cannot ever recognise movement, change or perishability. That Eternal Factor is Reality, the Truth.

Itself never undergoing any change at any time, is the Truth, which is to be detected, followed, and ultimately apprehended by us in the quiet of our meditation.

For example, yonder stands a tree. If we analyse our experience of the tree we will have to accept that our concept of that tree is nothing but a sum-total of our knowledge of its form, sound, taste, smell and touch. These are impressions interpreted to us by our sense-organs. If there are no sense-organs these impressions cannot be. But when the tree is destroyed and it leaves no more any impression in our mind it is not a zero factor because when we were observing these factors, we also were unconsciously observing another common quality running uniformly through all these factors.

“ There is a form, there is a taste, there is a sound, there is a smell and there is a touch for the tree.” Thus we noticed. Devoid of all qualities as interpreted by the sense-organs there is yet in that tree the “ principle of existence ” as expressed by us unconsciously in our assertion of the *Is-ness*. This factor, the Divine Principle of Existence, but for which none of these impressions were possible, is generally not noticed because of the perceiver’s preoccupation with his perceptions.

Beneath the perceptions, as it were, dwells this mighty Spirit of Perfection as a subtle Divine Power, All-pervading and Eternal. The *Upanishad* starts with this stanza wherein the Rishi advises that we must come to experience this Spirit through a process of renunciation—renunciation of our preoccupations with our perceptions. Perceptions change, but the Truth behind them is changeless ; perceptions perish, but the Truth is imperishable. The perceptions are pluralistic,

whereas the Truth is non-dual.

To identify ourselves with this All-pervading Truth is to realise the Self within. To "see" It in and through the disturbing trellis of the phenomenal world is to realise the Truth in the outer world of plurality. How this is harmoniously done is the very theme of the entire *Isavasyopanishad*. We will see it as we proceed further.

When we are told of a Paramount Power presiding over the world of matter the teacher advocates that we must come to experience this great joyous perfection through the renunciation of our false values and attachments, which we have cultivated in ourselves in the jungles of our own perceptions.

The ghost-vision frightens the deluded one and his mind gets into a serious state of perplexity and confusion. The only way to pacify him and bring peace and tranquillity to his mind is to help him to discover the 'post'. Now to my friend who is agitated by the vision of the ghost, I and his companions, who are seeing the post, can only advise him: "Dear friend! Renounce the form and qualities of the ghost, and enjoy". Beneath the 'ghost' is the 'post'. So long as we are entirely engaged in the vision of the 'ghost', in our mental preoccupations, we have neither the tranquillity nor the intellectual composure to see the 'post'. Having seen the *post* the 'ghost' can never be. The sight of the *post* is itself the discovery of peace within, for, the present mental agitations are all caused by the "error in perception" and the consequent fear.

The Great Master of the *Upanishads*, in this very opening *mantra*, advises his students to renounce the false and thus come to enjoy the Real.

"That renounced" (*Tena Tyaktena*)—This is the effective part, the technique, to experience the Lord,



that “envelops all this” (*Isavyam Idam Sarvam*). Identified with the beauty of a sculpture many a time we fail to notice the material with which it is made. Very rarely are you recognising the paper on which these words are printed—you are seeing the ideas through the word-meaning, and not the colour of the white paper. And yet you know that these printed words are impossible to be read, if the paper were black in colour! To see the colour of the paper is to ignore the words. To renounce the enchantments of and hangers for the names and forms is to recognise the Lord, the Infinite.

We are indebted to Sri Madhwacharya for a beautiful new meaning to this portion of the mantra. *Tena* means also “By Him”, who has been indicated already as *Isa*, the Lord, in the first line. *Tena*, therefore, is “by Him, the Isa”; *Tyaktena* means “renounced, gifted away”. So, *Tena Tyaktena* meaning “that which is left to us by Him, you enjoy (Bhunkteh)”. Offer unto the Lord, and then as His Prasada<sup>1</sup> what you get “enjoy” it.

“Where is the wealth” (*Kasyasvit Dhanam*). All wealth belongs to Him alone—the Infinite alone is the Reality. It is the core in all forms. It pervades everything within. And It envelopes everything. The world is like an iceberg floating on water. Water frozen and floating on water—it is nothing but water. Since everything is His, whatever that is permitted by Him,<sup>2</sup> take it as His, and live life in this attitude of dedication and gratitude is the way to true enjoyment.

<sup>1</sup> Geeta, Chapter III, Sl. 12. “What Gods give to you, offer it to them, and then partake it; or else you are a thief. “Given by God” (*Tena Tyaktena*).

<sup>2</sup> Wherever you see greatness, beauty, or glory, O Arjuna, know that to be a bit of My Glory: Geeta, Ch. X—41.

*Tena* also can mean “therefore”. The entire world of multiplicity is *Varyam* by the Lord. He is within and without. “Therefore” through detachment from all plurality, come to experience the Supreme Harmony of the One Truth, that pervades all, that indwells in all, that clothes all. Thus through renunciation of attachment, ego, desire, misconceptions and sensuous values, enjoy what is given by Him, considering all, as His ; never covet<sup>1</sup> (*Ma Gridhah*) others wealth. To covet is “to desire to possess more and more, to hoard, to collect and aggrandise”.

Enjoy (*Bhunjeeetah*)—The root “*Bhuj*” means “to enjoy” and also “to save”. Sri Sankara Bhagavathapada takes this later meaning and interprets it to mean “Saving one’s Self”. According to Sri Sankara, therefore, the meaning would be that the way to protect one’s Self, and enjoy Its glory lies in the renunciation of attachments for the Not-Self (*Anatma*). The seer of the *Upanishad*, however, by avoiding the mention of the objects to be enjoyed, probably means both : at a lower level “enjoy” what is given by Him, without covetness, attachment, etc. ; and at the greater heights the student in meditation is told to renounce the perceptions, feelings and thoughts, which are “other than Atman” (*Anatma*) and seek the Eternal, Imperishable Self, having experienced which, come to enjoy the glories of *Kaivalya*, the Godhood.

In short it all adds up to this : “Renouncing the fleeting world and its equally fleeting objects, in the ‘Lord-is-all-this’ experience, come to enjoy the Self.”  
 a Saving the Self is to enjoy the Self. By enjoying It one

<sup>1</sup> Interesting to note that the word *Gridha* in sanskrit is “vulture” ; the seer has rightly used the term “*Gridha*” which suggests greed which is vulture-like.

saves It ; by not enjoying It one kills It.<sup>1</sup>

The puranic ideal of charity (*Dan*) also can be read into this phrase "*Tyaktena Bhunjeetah*". Giving is the true enjoyment of wealth. Make wealth as much as you can, by right means, and hold on to it as a trustee. Give it away intelligently to patronise right causes . . . . thus enjoy. Covet not wealth, nor hoard it to lie idle.<sup>2</sup> For, "Whose is the wealth" . . . . it belongs to the Community ; and it must go back. Yours shall be the enjoyment—of making it, of distributing it back to the deserving individuals or institutions.

Just to show how sanskrit commentators have used their ingenuity to milk out of the Mantra more and more meaning, I must mention how *Tena Tyaktena Bhunjeethah* has been interpreted as *Tena Tyaktae Na Bhunjeethah* ; "By Him" (*Tena*) "if forsaken" (*Tyakte Sati*) "Don't" (*Na*) "Enjoy" (*Bhunjeethah*)—meaning "Never enjoy that which is God-forsaken". This is, however, not at all acceptable, as the splitting of "*Tyaktena*" is not permissible or acceptable. But the suggestion is pregnant with its sweetness.

In the very first *mantra* there is, therefore, not only a statement of Truth and its amplifications but a definite method of realisation is also pointed out. Even this much would have been sufficient to raise that mantra to the pinnacles of a literary perfection and philosophical beauty unparalleled in any language ; but this is not all. To crown the entire effort, as it were, here within the same *mantra* the Rishi has also hinted at with a phrase how such a Perfected One will

<sup>1</sup> Refer "Self-destroyer" (*Atmahanah*) in the 3rd Mantra.

<sup>2</sup> Narada in Sreemad Bhagavatha, says, "Men are owners of only that much of property in their possession as is necessary to feed their stomachs. Any one who thinks that he is the sole proprietor of anything more is a thief and deserves to be punished as such."

live thereafter and how a seeker in his pilgrimage should try to live. As an injunction to the seekers and as a description of the mental attitude of the Perfect One we have the statement in the last quarter of the stanza : “ *Do not covet the wealth of another* ”. Covetousness arises from the muddy pools of desire ; desire procreates thoughts and thoughts degenerate into actions.

The Seer in the *Upanishad* is advising not to covet the wealth of others and thereby he is prescribing for the seeker a severe training for the control of his desires. To control desires is to control the actions and to that extent it is an attempt to throttle the activities of the “ ignorance ” or “ error ” in us.

Sankara goes a step further and interprets the last feet of the stanza to mean as an exclamation from the Rishis, “ whose is the wealth ? ” By this question he implies that there is no wealth which belongs to anybody, and that there is nothing in the Universe which can permanently remain with us ; we ourselves are passing ; the world of objects is also ephemeral and in this eternal-change who is to covet and for what ? Thus, he laughs at the very idea of desiring anything in the world since there is nothing in the Universe which deserves our desiring.

The very first stanza of this inimitable *Upanishad* is in itself a miniature philosophical text-books complete with its philosophical enunciations of Truth, its explanations of the technique of realising that Truth, and its vivid exposition of the values of life that a perfect man of truth would thereafter entertain in his everyday life.

Each of these topics, themselves the theme of a chapters of discussion in all orthodox text-books, has been clearly pointed out here with simple phrases, each constituting a *pada* of the stanza. Thus, in the

four-line-stanza there are these four aspects of philosophy completely discussed through indicative and pregnant phrases.

This stanza is intended for those of our generation who believe in the " Path of Renunciation " or " Knowledge ". In the next stanza we have a complete exposition of the " Theory of Action " which is the manifesto advocated by the opposite group of mental temperaments.

This is an immortal and eternal controversy. So long as man is constituted as he is, there will certainly be this great controversy raging with differing intensities at different periods of history. As it were, like waves, they alternately come and keep the society under their hold. At one period of history men are apt to advocate, encourage and live the Life of Renunciation and Pure Knowledge, while following it comes the other wave of a revolt against this life of quiet growth and inward culture, and in its place history carves out a wild outward civilization of material gains and physical comforts: these usher in an era of sweat, toil and labour.

The *Isa Upanishad* seems to be an attempt at reconciliation of these two—the Path of Knowledge and the Path of Action.

There are some critics who fail to detect and experience the glamorous beauty of this perfect scripture. According to them this is a compilation of some stanzas available then in the community, and the hasty editor, whoever he be, must have been in a terrible hurry to finish his job. This opinion clearly shows that they have failed to follow the theme or the mode of treatment in Indian Philosophical text-books, wherein the teacher wants the students to discover the unsaid therein. These mantras are not only the briefest expositions on

philosophy, but also they are, each one of them, an exercise in contemplation. There are a lot said in each Mantra, and, indeed, a lot more lie unsaid in between the stanzas. Not to realise these would be criticising a book not read by the critic himself . . . a born blind man !!

The entire *Upanishad* is to be understood as given out by the seer in his inspired moments in seven-waves-of-thought.<sup>1</sup> We have just now finished the first-wave-of-thought constituted of the very opening Mantra. Therein the glory of the Path of Meditation, and how through renunciation of the *Anatma* the seeker reaches to experience the Lord, pervading whatsoever is in this Universe, have been explained.

Now supposing this Path of Contemplation is too hard for a certain type of seekers ; then what are they to do ? The path for them is the Way of Action which is being explained in the following mantra.

## II

कुर्वन्नेवेह कर्माणि  
जिजीविषेच्छतं समाः ।  
एवं त्वयि नान्यथेतोऽस्ति  
न कर्म लिप्यते नरे ॥

*Kurvanneveha karmani  
jijivishet chatam samah  
Evamto'ayi na-anyatha-ityah-asti  
na karma lipyate nare.*

<sup>1</sup> First Wave Mantra I ; Second Wave Mantra II ; Third Wave Mantra III ; Fourth Wave Mantras IV—VIII ; Fifth Wave Mantras IX—XIV ; Sixth Wave Mantras XV—XVII ; and the Seventh Wave Mantra XVIII.

Performing verily work in this world one should desire to live a full hundred years. This alone is right for there is no other right path. Action never clings to a man of this temperament.

In the earlier stanza the goal that was pointed out was certainly, the Eternal and the Absolute—the goal for everyone. In order to make a direct and straight route to that great goal the pilgrim needs a lot of mental and intellectual calibre, must be light in kit and must be wiry and strong in his inner limbs. He must be a man of renunciation with acute discriminative tendencies, a strong will and an indomitable faith in himself. He must certainly be one blessed by a great Guru who must interpret to him the implications and imports of the *Srutis* correctly.

All of us are not of the same temperament. Some of us lack in many of the unavoidable and imperative qualities necessary for a pilgrim to walk the Path of Knowledge. Oftener than not we all have ample desires for wealth, for relationships and for glory and recognition. Those who have these inclinations towards a life in the world are to practise sincerely and diligently the life-of-action, says the Scripture here.

The Great Rishis, in their godly detachment from the world and its happenings have observed the scroll of history unrolling itself upon the Tables of Time. If we study the history of men and nations with detachment, we too can easily see certain fundamental truths demonstrated amidst their changing destinies. Noble and eternal values of life when negated and flouted, the generation tumbles down into a wreckage and their revival is almost always directly proportional to the sincerity, intensity and strength with which the rising generation adopts the nobler and enduring values of

philosophical and religious perfection.

Thus, closely observing life and its vicissitudes these great Rishis with their acute intelligence have estimated the results of *action*, *inaction*, and *unaction*. According to them *unaction*—a seemingly physical inactivity which in fact wears a thick veil to cover the extreme inner activity (*Sattwa*)—is the sublimest which is the attitude for the seekers walking the Path of Renunciation and Knowledge. The opposite is *inaction*—external and internal morbidity, inertia and sloth (*Tamas*). This inactivity kills the generation. *Action* is the dynamic and conscious work either to fulfil a given and known desire or to enjoy the very activity itself as its own goal (*Rajas*).

The Masters of the Scriptures declare that if any given individual generation of a given period of history has not the required tendency of *unaction* to pursue the Path of Knowledge as described in the previous stanza, they should immediately take to a dynamic and conscious programme of activity, and should steadily walk the Path of Action. Here the second stanza is dedicated to extol the Path of *Karma*.

In the previous stanza the Way-of-Renunciation was perhaps too much emphasised. The student wants to know if we are to renounce *everything*, including the desire to live a long life of useful pursuit? Of, is it that we must renounce everything of the world, and must totally disregard wealth?<sup>1</sup>

Tyaga can thus be either, of the world of objects, or of the motive of selfish aggrandisement and satisfaction, or of both.

<sup>1</sup> For the Upanishad says: "Not by karma, not by progeny, not by wealth, is Immortality reached. The only way to its attainment is by renunciation alone" (Mundaka III—2-6).



Thus an explanation is urgent and imperative. Therefore, the teacher elucidates his own ideal in this Mantra. In case you are not able to live the life of God-vision, achieved through renunciation, then do certainly desire to live a full hundred years of productive, selfless work.

The Master says : “ Performing, verily, work *alone* in this world should one wish to live a hundred years ”. In the earlier stanza we were told that the Path of *Dhyana* can be pursued efficiently only by those who have no more desires for wealth, progeny or glory. But the Rishi at once realises that all the members of a generation cannot and will not maintain this ideal attitude of discrimination and detachment. The majority should necessarily be a type of people who will have intense and strong desires and, consequently, they will not have the necessary mental and the intellectual poise for an easy and graceful flight to the beyond. To them the Eternal Preacher prescribes an efficient code of activity. The expression “ performing, verily, work *alone* ” is indeed very powerful. It amounts to saying that having been born as a man there is no other go but to work.

Alone (*Aeva*)—The term adds power and strength in its usage. It must be read along with all the words in the first line of the mantra. By doing verily (*Kurvan Aeva*), work verily (*Karmani Aeva*), strongly desire to live verily (*Jigiveshad Aeva*), a full hundred years verily (*Satam Samah Aeva*). The force of the different statements have supremely enhanced by this reinforcement ; such usages are common in Sanskrit.

Thus, the *Upanishads* have glorified sweat and toil to the highest pinnacles of recognition as service. The “ dignity of Labour consists in service ” is a fact nowhere

else so openly declared and so religiously glorified as in the Hindu scriptures. Dedicated and noble work alone can polish the animal-man to a state of true culture and right discipline. To those who know what it is, work is not a slavery or a drudgery but it is the *chutney* to life. But when a dissipated and demoralised generation have in their misconstrued enthusiasm fallen off their track into a disastrous wreckage, they trumble down into the pits of "more wages and less hours" !! To them even "no work and all money" would still be only a state of terrible and agonising discontentment !! Man is not born to revel in idleness. Nature will whip the *tamasic* on to the road of right or wrong activity (*Rajas*), and thereby evolve him steadily to (*Sattva*) a state of joy with "activity in inactivity", which we earlier mentioned as *unactivity*.

\* \* \*

As usual I have gone off the drive ; but in the context of the present day I shall not regret it. Our *Yagna-salas* are not to fashion *pundits* out of the discarded by-products of the university mills, but they have come here in order to gather in each one all the capacities and then fuse together into a homogeneous mass of true purity which is the definition of Hinduism.

\* \* \*

The decadent Hinduism has come to understand Vedanta as preaching a philosophy of escapism. This is our blind belief supported perhaps by what we have heard from illiterate *pundits* of the day. Parrot-like repetition of mythological stories is being glorified in these days to be the hall-mark of wisdom, learning and erudition !! Such misconceived notions have maintained

a steady fall and have made us not only ignorant of Vedanta but have made us shamelessly declare our misconceptions on Vedanta as our final verdict upon it!! Here is a stanza from the very text-book of Vedanta—in the very first *Upanishad*, and in the second stanza of it—which declares that he who cannot afford to live the noblest Life of Renunciation and self-restraint, must unavoidably live the life of intense activity striving his best to fulfil all his desires through sweat and toil, and must teach himself to live in appetising enthusiasm all his life—"a full hundred years" in the service of man and in the glorification of the Lord.

The *Upanishad* repeats, "thus it is right for thee and not otherwise than this". The text insists that this alone is the way and negates all other possible or imaginable choice. The one who thus intensively plunges into life—eager and anxious to meet daily its new challenges, and at every turn doing his best to meet each challenge with truth and purity as his standards of values—to such a one actions do not cling.

Thus : (*Evam*)—Physical activities for an entire lifetime, with Knowledge of the Real, and in a spirit of paying homage unto Him, detached from the anxiety for the fruit and from the ego-sense, is recommended here.<sup>1</sup> For, such activities are laudable ; they are no bar to the spiritual progress ; in fact, they are helpful to prepare the student for the highest meditation flights. The term *Evam* meaning "in this manner" can be referring to what has been already indicated in the previous stanza, or may refer to the pattern of work as expounded in the following mantras of this *Upanishad*. In either way it amounts to saying that even a Man

<sup>1</sup> "Renouncing all actions to Me, with mind centered on the Self, free from hope and ego, fight—free from mental fever."—Discourses on Geeta III : 30.

Perfection, who through renunciation has come to experience the world “clothed in *Isa*”, must also work ; to the seekers, dedicated work is a *Sadhana* for their inner purification of *Vasanas*.

Though the goal is Godhood experienced in perfect *unactivity* realised through the Path of Renunciation—the stages of progress for the *animal-man* to the state of *god-man* are through an intermediary junction called the *man-man*. The *animal-man* revels in “inactivity” and he gets evolved to the state of *man-man*, first through a desire-motivated programme of intense activity (*Sakama Karma*), and then through a subtler life of activity which is pursued without motive or desire (*Nishkama Karma*). Selfish work fulfils itself into selfless work and selfless work accomplishes its goal in purifying the mind and intellect of the individual, who, thereafter, gains an initiation into the Path of Meditation.

In the old scriptural context the word *karma* has been used only to denote the ritualistic actions, which later on in the mythological days came to be interpreted as the *Ashrama Dharma*. In the context of the present day we have yet to reorientate and revitalize our *Upanishadic* text by understanding the word *karma* to mean and to include all our day-to-day activities—our social, economic, political and domestic duties. These activities when pursued in an attitude of detachment by individuals, they can never come under the reactions of these actions. But when these duties are performed with expectations of definite results their actions, in the form of reactions, cling to the man. The individual should therefore, if intelligent, function purely in a spirit of “work for work’s sake”.

<sup>a</sup> Sreemad Bhagavat Geeta seems to have sprung directly from the spirit of this *Upanishad*. Lord has

used the sentiments of this scripture so liberally but freely in the Geeta that the song of the Lord looks almost an original and independent work ; but a close student cannot be deceived. When Krishna exhorts Arjuna in all of them there is indeed a flavour of the *Isavasya*<sup>1</sup> mantra now under discussion here. There are eighteen mantras here and we find 18 Chapters in the Geeta. Earlier in the classic we read that Nara and Narayana did tapas in Badrinath and they became Arjuna and Krishna of the Geeta. Even taking the obvious meaning we have in Geeta a dialogue between Krishna (*Narayana*) and Arjuna (*Nara*) ; between God (*Narayana*) and man (*Nara*). In this *Upanishad* also the disciple seems to be Nara (*Na Lipyataḥ Narue*). Total surrender unto Narayana and to work in a spirit of selfless service is the burning theme of both this *Upanishad* and the Discourses in the Geeta.

And why not ? Has not Krishna the right to do so ? Yagnavalkya, the compiler of the *Sukla Yajur Veda Samhita* is the Seer of this *Upanishad* which is the 40th Chapter of the *Samhita*. And, Lord Sun was the teacher of Yagnavalkya, But Krishna was the very teacher of Lord Sun—because in the Geeta we read that Krishna taught this knowledge to Vivaswan, the Sun-God. Thus, the Guru of Yagnavalkya was a disciple of Lord Krishna. In the Geeta<sup>2</sup> Krishna expressly says that he was reviving the yoga that he taught long ago to the Lord Sun. Naturally, therefore, we find a similarity in ideas in both *Isavasyopanishad* and in the Geeta.

<sup>1</sup> "Therefore engage yourself in doing karma only" (Geeta IV—15)

"Your duty is only to do karma ; never expect the fruits of it" (Geeta II—47)

"Through dedicated karma alone Janaka and others reached true perfection" (Geeta III—20).

<sup>2</sup> Chapter IV—1.

Attachment to the results not only vitiates the capacity in the individual to perform the work, but it leaves certain impressions in the mind which debilitate and demoralise the individual concerned in all his future activities. Depersonalisation is the secret of inspiration, and a work done under inspiration is certainly a thousand times more irresistible in its effectiveness. The secret of all-enduring work lies in this depersonalisation of the worker from his work. The scripture here is advocating every man of energy and activity to work tirelessly in the world in a continuous and unbroken mood of inspiration.

“Action never taints such a man” : (*Nakarma Lipyatae Narae*)—Lord Krishna also says in the Geeta that work can never contaminate Him, as He works with detachment and total selflessness.<sup>1</sup> This may be true in a Godly Perfect one like Lord Krishna. What about us? From the mantra “even in you a mere man” (*Twayi Narae*)—even though at this moment we are not perfect, even in us, to the extent we can bring the spirit of detachment and the joy of dedication into our work, to that extent our actions cannot affect us. Such actions contribute a purgation of the existing *Vasanas*, and purifies the instruments of meditation in the seeker.<sup>2</sup>

A long period of such activities, undertaken in a spirit of detachment, to a large extent cleanses the mind of its impurities, such as desires, attachments, hatreds, selfishness, jealousy, greed, etc. Such a purified mind alone can have the required intellectual temper and spiritual stability to pursue the path of righteousness

<sup>1</sup> Geeta IV—24.

<sup>2</sup> Read Swamiji's “Discourses on Geeta”—Introduction—wherein this idea has been vividly described.

through intense and high meditation.

Thus ends the *second* “wave-of-thought” in this Upanishad. The *first* explained to us the “path of renunciation” and realisation, and the *second* has exhorted us to wish for a full hundred years of vigorous life, spent in loving service of man and seeking of Him in and through the joys of “selfless activities”. The following represents the *third* wave-of-thought” and it explains what happens in case one is “unwilling to follow either” of the above two paths.

### III

असूर्या नाम ते लोका  
अन्धेन तमसाऽऽवृताः ।  
तां स्ते प्रेत्याभिगच्छन्ति  
ये के चात्महनो जनाः ॥

*Asurya nama tae loka  
andhena thamasa-avritah  
Tham-sthae prethyabhigacchhanthi  
ye kee caatma-hano janah*

Sunless are those worlds, and enveloped in blinding gloom to which all those people who are slayers of their own souls go departing from here.

The destination or the goal reached by those who are spiritual suicides are mentioned here. In the scheme of the *Upanishads* the first stanza was relegated to explain the goal, the process and the training for those who are walking the Path of Renunciation, while the second stanza was employed in explaining the Path of Action which is mainly meant for those who

have not got the qualifications for pursuing the Path of Meditation. The Great Rishis thus divided mankind into two groups—the meditators and the active workers. All human beings born should toe the line either of the meditators or of the great men of action. Activity, when pursued properly, can raise the individual to the upper strata from where he can comfortably start the process of meditation.

Now a doubt may arise as to what would be the destiny of those who are not following either the Path of Meditation or the Path of Action. Them and their pilgrimage this particular stanza explains. The *Upanishad* Masters declare that having been born as man, an individual, (or society, or community or nation) who refuses to live either the Life of Meditation or the Life of intense and continuous Activity, that individual (or community) is to be considered as a suicide. Such a nation must necessarily come to fall into an abyss of darkness and despair. The individual (or the community) should thereafter certainly come to experience a terrible fall in its cultural and spiritual eminence.

This fall into decay and death is here hinted at by the beautiful term “the Sunless Worlds”. To consider that “Sunless World” is an old and ancient expression, empty and hollow, is to fail to understand its entire import and significance. Though the language of the Rishis is an old one, almost dead now, it expresses the immortal ideas, and as such they are ever new to all students of life and literary beauty. The “Sunless World” need not necessarily confuse us with its own connotational implications ; but don't we in our modern times, characterise certain periods of decadence and cultural decay as *dark ages* ?



If a generation refuses to live the higher values of the Life Divine, and plan out its cultural activities and creative programmes, it must at least necessarily work in the world with all enthusiasm and zeal to produce sufficiently, to distribute equally and to enjoy liberally. In short, the world can sustain itself only through diligent activity either in its spiritual life or in its planned-out material existence.

This particular stanza under discussion is opening out to us a danger which is well-known in our communal living. If a community is neither willing to live the higher values nor be efficient in its constructive material programme, such a generation should slowly decay both in their head and heart and come to live a life of barbarous excesses. To them, thereafter, is the philosophy of the animal. Their pre-occupation thereafter can only be in demanding ample chances to earn with the least activity, maximum idleness and endless leisure, indiscriminate breeding, with no duties towards their own children ! If such be the state of existence of any community, surely that community would be considered in the language of history as " the community that has lost its soul " and it will only carve out to itself a civilization clamouring urgently for the sorrows of a *dark age* ! !

A historical truth which affects the individual must affect the life of any community constituted of such individuals. If an individual, refusing to take up the noble task of improving and maintaining himself, always tuned up to the higher values of living, he is to take up a programme of endless and fatiguing activity, pursuing a vigilant and alert life of duties performed and rights demanded. If the individual is fit and ready neither for the former, nor for the latter, he should

be considered as dead and inert dross, steeped in inactivity, living in the 'form of a human being', but in fact a disgusting limp man-of-matter only. In fact, the Great Rishis consider such human creatures merely as walking corpses! Such demeaning and ulcerated entities are termed here in the scriptures as the "Slayers of their souls" (*Atmahanah*).

The first mantra exhorted the students to renounce his false identifications with his body-mind-intellect layers, and thus save the Self, and come to enjoy the Self-perfection. Thus live on, thereafter, serving mankind and wishing to live full hundred years of your life (*Jivivishead*) insisted the second mantra. Here in this mantra, the contrast is beautifully brought out when people who are living neither of the ways are labelled as Self-destroyers or Suicides (*Atmahanah*). Identifying with the body we kill the Divinity in us; detaching from it (*Tyaktena*) you come to enjoy the Self.

The men of wisdom in the scriptures forecast that such people who are "Slayers of their souls" will go to the 'Sunless Worlds', *when they leave their bodies* (*Pretya*).

Sri Sankara however has his own "orthodox" interpretations. He wants to point out that mere rituals without Knowledge will bring the individual only to the Heaven, the abode of the *Suras* (Gods). Without the Knowledge of the Self even these worlds of the *Suras* is only the worlds of the *A-suras*, full of sorrow. When compared with the Absolute Bliss in the Self, they are indeed *A-suriya* worlds.

Blindening Darkness (*Andham Tama*)—Again, this also brings out the contrast. Here, in ignorance we live now atleast in "visible" darkness. There, in the Heaven, due to the extreme enjoyments freely available

for longer periods of time, it may be considered as living in "blinding" darkness.

Here there is a clear hint at the theory of re-incarnation accepted by the great religions of the East. Re-incarnation of the 'soul' is unquestionably recognised in the western Bibles. Here the scripture clearly hints at the life of the 'soul' after death of *its* present body.

The ego-centric equipment that leaves the physical body at the moment of death is goaded thereafter by its own motive-force, loaned out to it by the impulses in its own past accumulated impressions. The mind gains its direction to move forward from its impressions gathered by itself from its own previous experiences. Thus, if an entity were to live a life of slumber and sloth, neither getting into the subtler activities of meditation nor the grosser activities of worldly contentions, it degenerates itself into an animal existence.

Such a mind when released from the body, motivated and whipped by its own impulses, dives into the lower strata of existence in the world-of-animals or the world-of-vegetation or the world-of-stone-life. These layers of beings and things are comparatively *Sunless* because they belong to a strata of non-intelligence. The sun stands for illumination : the intelligence. In short, even when an individual thus ignores both the Path of Spirituality and the secular activities, such an idler will be unconsciously decaying himself. As an individual would decay, so would the History be when the nation or the community as a whole comes to live the same kind of life.

People (*Janah*)—Those who destroy their-Self in them, meaning, "those who cloud Its brilliancy by the mental agitations and consequent false-values of life",

are called *Atmahanah*. The Self is Immortal, Blissful, Perfect. In not identifying with this Divine Centre in us, we hug on to the body-mind-intellect vehicle, and come to experience ourselves to be mortal, pain-ridden, imperfect. Such “egos” as a result of their *Vasanas*, again and again, take up forms and come to be born in different environments, where they seek satisfaction through sense-gratification, happiness through desire-fulfilment, security through wealth, and glory through popularity. Suffering failures, sorrows, dejection and despairs the man (*Jana*) again dies, to be reborn again in other environments, with the required vehicles, to fulfil his life and its inner urges. Those who thus are caught in the wheel of life-death-and-life-again are called *Janah*.

With this mantra, the *third* “wave-of-thought” in the Upanishad has ended. Here follows the *fourth* “wave-of-thought”<sup>1</sup>, in which we find a beautiful description of the Self, the goal to be reached. Where alone is the divine sense of Eternal fulfilment.

#### IV

अनेजदेकं मनसो जवेयो  
नैनद्देवा आप्नुवन्पूर्वमर्षत् ।  
तद्धावतोऽन्यानत्येति तिष्ठ  
तस्मिन्नपो मातरिश्वा दधाति ॥

*Anejadekam manaso javeeyo  
nainaddeva apnuvan-poorvamarsath  
Taddhavatho-anyan-athyaethi thistat  
thasmin apo mathariswa dadhathi*

<sup>1</sup> This fourth wave-of-thought is expressed in Mantras IV—VIII.

The Self is motionless, one swifter than the mind. The Devas could not overtake ; It ran before them. Sitting, It goes faster than those who run after It. By It Matarisvan supports the activity of all living beings (the Element Water).

From this stanza onwards we have in four continuous *mantras* the description of the Supreme indicated in terms of Its qualities—and these stanzas together is one *Vakya*, representing the fourth wave-of-thought. Though the Eternal has no quality of Its own, since the language can explain only in terms of *Gunas* or experiences, the qualities of the Self are indicated here which are not to be taken literally. Certainly, it is a futile attempt to try to explain the Infinite in terms of a finite language. The inability of the language to express the Inexpressible is found enlarged and clearly expressed in the very language in which the *Upanishad* is trying to explain the Self in these four stanzas.

“ *The Atman or the Self is motionless* ”, says the Upanishad. When it says that it is motionless, it is not to be understood as explaining the inability or the impotency of the Supreme. The word ‘ *motionless* ’ is only an indication of the All-Pervasiveness of the Supreme Reality. Motion is a change in time and space.<sup>1</sup> I can go from this chair to another chair ; in the other chair I am not at present sitting. A thing can move to another spot only when it is not already occupying that indicated spot. When I am sitting in this chair, I cannot move myself into this very chair ; for I am already filling with myself this entire chair.

<sup>1</sup> If an object O is at a place P at a time T, and if O is found at a different place P<sup>1</sup>, at a different time T<sup>1</sup> then movement is OPT becoming OP<sup>1</sup> T<sup>1</sup>. This is possible only, when O is conditioned by PT and P<sup>1</sup> T<sup>1</sup>.

Similarly, the Atman cannot move because it is All-pervading. An All-pervading Reality cannot and need not move anywhere because there is no spot wherein it is not already existing. This idea is indicated in the epithet 'motionless' used here by the Great Rishis.

The term *Anejat* (motionless, steady, changeless) used here is in perfect contrast with *Jagath* (moving, running, changing) which is our constant experience. So too, the Upanishad indicates Truth as the One (*Ekam*) as a contrast with the many (*Anekam*) that we experience. Thus the Truth has been here defined through the indications contained in these terms as something other than our "known" experiences. It is the One in the many, the constant factor that sustains in and through all changes : as the ocean does inspite of the calamities of the waves ! The Seekers strive to realise this Unity in the diversity, this unifying chord of love and joy, existence and power, that strings them all together.<sup>1</sup>

The Upanishad asserts that the Self is swifter than the mind. By denying motion it is not denying the speed which is its rate of motion. The mind is the fastest thing in the Universe. But the Self runs faster, because the mind before it could reach the spot of its contemplation, in the form of "existence" the Reality is already there where the mind has reached. You could see at this moment in thought any distant place which you might have visited earlier. The thought can certainly move to that place of previous experience in almost no time, but by the time the thought has reached the spot, the spot seems to have been already blessed by the quality or the Principle of Existence. Thus, Reality seems to have already reached the places

<sup>1</sup> " *Sūtrāṇi Manigataḥ Eva.*"—Geeta

where the mind could in its arrow flight land at any time.

In short, the Self is now discussed here as All-pervading and it is explained in terms of two of the ways in which we understand a thing in the world-of-objects. We understand motion, we understand speed. By denying the former and asserting the latter, the Rishis are explaining to us that Consciousness, or the Self is a Factor which in Itself is "motionless speed". It is certainly a scientific fact, but it reads as a contradiction in terms. And it is the only method by which our fact-hunting intellect and observation-thirsty understanding can be shocked to realise the magnitude and implications of the simple term "All-pervading". Since the Consciousness is All-pervading, it cannot move and nothing that moves in the Universe can ever move except in a medium of Consciousness. This idea is emphasised in the first line of the stanza.

"*That Devas could not overtake It ; It ran before them*"—This is a statement which must necessarily confuse even an intelligent reader of ordinary education. It is such statements which when an unprepared student tries to understand literally, make him despair at his inability to understand the great Scriptures. The scriptures being the science of religion, there is a method of studying it and its language is extremely technical.

The word "Devas", in its etymological derivation has risen from a root indicating 'illumination'. Thus, the word 'Deva' indicates that which illuminates. Therefore in the context here *Devas* mean the 'sense-organs'. In the scriptural literature the word is very often used in this sense.

It can also mean, perhaps, that we are ordinarily in our life worshipping our sense-organs as though

they are the Gods. Ordinary men are devoted seekers striving diligently to propitiate the sense-organs for their blessings.

With a knowledge of this background of the word *Devas* when we re-read the stanza, its meaning becomes amply clear. The sense-organs cannot overtake the Self, since the sense-organs can only perceive their object, and the objects themselves can remain and function only in a medium of the Reality. Wherever the sense-organs could perceive their objects, they could function only in a field of Consciousness. Take away the Consciousness and the sense organs should declare their inability to act or function.

“ *Sitting, it goes faster than those who run after it* ”— Here is another epithet by which the brilliant word-painters of the *Upanishads* have tried to capture the ever-eluding concept of the Self in a network of their irreplaceable words. The ‘motionless’ is thus not a dull inert entity which has no activity at all. In fact, it is beyond both activity and inactivity. This idea is conveyed by stating that the Self, though seemingly inactive in its own Real Nature, seems to be most active. The steam in the railway engine can be described as motionless *in its own real nature*. The water evaporates to create the steam and the steam moves the train. Of course, the train is being pulled by the dynamism of the steam. The steam can be therefore explained as that which “ *goes faster than those who runs after it* ”— the bogies.

The cause permeates the effects. The cup cannot run away from the mud.<sup>1</sup> The sense-organs and the

<sup>1</sup> A beautiful Sanskrit Stanza says : “ Even if one flies for millions of years with the wings of Garuda (Mind) even if one is gifted with the speed swifter than the mind, one cannot get to the end of the cause (*Karana*). ”



sense-objects spring from and exist in the Self, and so they cannot in their functions ever remain totally away from the Self, the medium of their existence, the field of all their activities.

The Self, thus, is not only All-pervading, but it is the very substance and dynamism in all movements and the very force behind everything which causes the activity in life. Presided over by the Self alone can all the transactions of life take place. It is Life, without It everything is dead and non-existent.

This idea has never been more vividly brought out as in the closing line of the stanza, when the Rishis declare that *Matariswa* (Lord of the atmosphere—Air) supports the activities of the life because it derives its Life-force and vigour from this Great and All-pervading Reality. Consciousness and life is together a whole ; it is equally distributed everywhere ; it is All-pervading.

“The Element, Water” (*Matariswa*)—The atmospheric air, no doubt, supports the Element Water, in the sense it is grosser than Air. But the beauty is in the suggestiveness thrown in, due to the use of the term “*Matariswa*”. The word “*Mata*” means space (*Akasa*). Air itself is supported by *Akas*, which is the cause for the Air. Now Air in its turn is the cause for the waters, which sustains all life—all forms.<sup>1</sup> From the Self the very *Akas* has emerged out: and all the rest are playing the game of cause-effect, therefore, only in the Self.<sup>2</sup>

According to Sri Sankara *Matariswa* refers to the individuality (*Jiva*) and water (*Apah*) here means *Karma*.

<sup>1</sup> Dehydration removes the water-of-crystallisation, and all solids become shapeless powder. Water gives shape to all forms.

<sup>2</sup> “As the air supported by the *Akas* is constantly moving everywhere within it only, so are all *Bhutas* within Me, moving ever supported by Me”  
—Geeta IX—6.

Then it would mean that all activities of all individualised personalities are always within the Self.

Wherever life is sustained, it is because of the will of the organism to live Self-conscious. As such the Supreme is the very source from which air takes its potency, by which it gains its miraculous capacity to sustain, nourish and maintain the life in the forms. The same idea is much more vividly brought out in the following stanza.

## V

तदेजति तन्नेजति  
तद्दूरे तद्वन्तिके ।  
तदन्तरस्य सर्वस्य  
तदु सर्वस्यास्य बाह्यतः ॥

*Tadejathi tanneijathi*  
*tadoorae tadwanthikae*  
*Tadandarasya sarvasya*  
*tadu sarvasyasya bahyathaha*

The Atman moves and It moves not ; It is far and It is near ; It is within all this, and It is also outside all this.

The idea of the last stanza is repeated here to make it more elaborately clear. As I said earlier, the attempt of the master is only to make his students understand the vital fact that the Supreme Consciousness is "All-pervading". It is to introduce us to the entire significance of the term 'All-Pervading' and to facilitate us in experiencing the pregnant import of the term, that the teacher is repeatedly giving different phrases to convey the same idea.

“ *It moves* ”—Yes ; the ‘ ghost ’ shows signs with its wizardly hands and with its horrid face grins at the deluded ; but the ‘ post ’ which is the reality behind the ‘ ghost-vision ’ of the dusk, “ *That moves not* ”. The Pure Awareness or Consciousness, the Life Principle in all beings, in Its All-pervading essential nature, neither moves nor acts. Established in Its own glory It revels in Its own existence. But matter, vibrant with the touch of Life, flutters and trembles, sighs and sobs, moves and acts, accomplishes and enjoys.

With reference to the waves, the ocean is termed as surging, seething, heaving, roaring, etc. But in its own true nature, the ocean is not the waves alone, and it is tranquil and peaceful, motionless and majestic in its own depthless calmness and serenity. So too with Life as such, the Atman, in its All-pervading nature, is motionless, and It neither acts nor works. With reference to the matter-envelopments around It, life can be defined as thinking, feeling or acting. The boat moves ; but never the lake.

Sitting in a train that is halting at a station, the traveller looks out through the window to a moving train on parallel lines, and feels that his own train is moving. With reference to a moving factor, the motionless would look as though moving, though self is motionless and still. When viewed from the deck of a moving boat the trees on the banks are seen moving. Perceptions are always relative. Similarly viewing the motionless Spirit of Life, from and through the world of agitations in matter, the Spirit *Itself* looks as though It moves, and yet, in Its real nature *moves not*.

“ *It is distant and it is near* ”—This also can be the definition of the All-pervading. *Indi*<sup>is</sup> not only *here*, nor in Delhi nor Calcutta alone,<sup>t</sup> *is there* in

Cape Comorin and Bombay also. The State called India is All-pervading, as far as the frontiers of this country defines it. Similarly, the Pure Consciousness, the Supreme Reality, being All-pervading, It is at once near and the most distant.

For those who have the qualifications of both the head and the heart, necessary for the correct discrimination between matter and spirit, and for those who have the necessary spiritual thirst and divine energy to pursue the path of seeking through tireless meditation, to them the *Self is the nearest*, occupying the centre of their own individualised personality. Nothing is in fact so near to us as our own Self. But to others the Reality is indeed very far from their realisation !!

The Self is not only to be realised in the centre of our own individual life, but it is to be experienced as the same everywhere. Pure Consciousness is homogeneous and All-pervading and as such the Self cognized *here* is the same as the Self experienced as revelling *there*.

This idea is again more clearly brought out in the expression : "*It is within all this and it is without all this*". Not only is the Atman the central core of the spirituo-physical personality in the seeker, but the same Consciousness is the very substratum for the entire perception of the Universe. To consider this Self to be only within and thus to live a life of pure introversion is a negation of Truth and it is condemned from the Hindu scriptural standpoint. Thus, those who know the scriptures will not dare accuse Hinduism of being a religion of inward gazing *only*.

In fact, the whole *Isavasya Upanishad*, it will be revealed, is a cry to the true Hindu to desist from becoming merely self-centred, to the utter neglect of his life in the outer world and in his relationships with

the comunity of nations and happenings around him. If this were not the kernel of the Vedanta, Vyasa would be a criminal saboteur of Hindu Culture when he gave such noble personality as Shree Parthasarathy, as the ideal personality in a true Hindu nation. He acted vigorously in a field of activity facing his own individual, domestic, communal, national and international situations. He never ran away from life ; nor did he court life. But, when life approached him, he never shirked his responsibilities<sup>1</sup> but acted truly, diligently and fully and out of those situations of disturbance, chaos and confusion, he fashioned out a harmonious melody of enduring success.

You will find in the *Upanishad* a call to the individual to act in the field of plurality (*Avidya*), as a means to the greater fulfilment (*Vidya*), and after having gained the Self (*Vidya*) to fulfil himself and his life in the world of service and activity (*Avidya*). We will come to it again as we proceed on to those *mantras*.<sup>2</sup>

## VI

यस्तु सर्वाणि भूतानि  
आत्मन्येवानुपश्यति ।  
सर्वभूतेषु चात्मानं  
ततो न विजुगुप्सते ॥

*Yasthu sarvani bhoothani  
atmanyevanupasyathi  
Sarvabhootheshu ca-atmanam  
tatho na vijugupsathe*

<sup>1</sup> Read Introduction to The Geeta Discourses by Swami Chinmayananda.

<sup>2</sup> Refer *Ibid* Mantra XI.

He who constantly sees everywhere all existence in the Self and the Self in all beings and forms, thereafter shrinks not from anything.

As said in the previous stanzas, if there be an Atman, so difficult to explain, and naturally so difficult to understand, why should an individual after all strive to contact this Self or to realise It. What would be the benefit accrued to an individual by realising this Uniform and All-pervading Reality behind the multiplicity and plurality that we cognize around and about us. This stanza explains more vividly than ever in any other *Upanishad* about the state of perfect tranquility gained by a self-realised sage and as such this stanza has been oft-quoted and repeated in books and heard from platforms.

It is certainly worthwhile to all seekers to remember constantly this stanza with all its implications and import in their mind. I would suggest that even those who do not know much of Sanskrit, would somehow or other memorise this stanza maintaining an association of the meaning with the sounds and would keep it as a ready antidote for all the inner poisons of mental agitations and intellectual unrest.

Self-realisation is never complete by a mere recognition of the intrinsic divinity or perfection in the Self, within which exclude the self expressing in the pluralistic world. To realise one's own Self is to realise at once Its oneness with the All-Self. To realise the nature of a wave is to realise not only the nature of all the waves, but the very nature of the ocean. Life being one and unbroken, to experience the Life Centre within us, is to experience at once the Life Centre everywhere.

A man who has thus fully and completely

experienced the Life Principle, the Self, within him, which is the one that is All-pervading, such an individual's realisation alone is true wisdom, Eternal, Immortal and True. The one who has thus realised the core of all beings, as the core in himself, and his own Self as the Self in every name and form, he is a sage, a prophet, a God-man, a true leader of the people and a guiding power in the Universe.

In realising thus, the individual gets permanently divorced from all his mental ideas of repulsion, shrinking, dislike, fear, hatred and such other perversions of feeling. These arise from the sense of division and plurality and consequent personal sense of opposition to other beings or objects around us. When all the hatred (*Jugupsa*) has dried away from the mind, the individual experiences an unbroken state of tranquillity thereafter in all types of circumstances, favourable or unfavourable, in the language of the world.

The same state of mind has been described in the Geeta also by its terms *Samatva*. Sri Aurobindo in his *Isa Upanishad*, in a foot-note explains this idea very vividly. He says, "*Jugupsa* is the feeling of repulsion caused by a sense of want of harmony between one's own limited self-formation and the contacts of the external with a consequent recoil of grief, fear, hatred, discomfort and suffering. It is the opposite of attraction which is the source of desire and attachment. Repulsion and attraction removed, we have *Samatva*."

The human individual is proving himself inefficient and ineffectual in this world of contentions mainly because of his own agitations. A tranquil mind is as potent as God, the more we gain this inward tranquillity (*Samatva*), the more joyous and effective our lives become. But the enemy to this tranquillity is our own

*Jugupsa* and, therefore, one can easily understand how much one can rehabilitate one's own Godly personality if one were to pursue the technique of spiritualism and eradicate from one's mental constitution this canker of *Jugupsa*.

Repulsion, hatred, shrinking, dislike and fear, etc., can come not with oneself, but with *another*. The intellectual-‘I’ may dislike or fear or hate the mental-‘I’ at a given time and place ; but here also there is a pluralistic concept. ‘The other’ is always necessary for one to entertain *Jugupsa*, but when we have realised and are experiencing the Oneness of the Self and when we have got more and more established in that experience where can there be ‘the other’ excepting the Self?

When ‘the other’ has retreated, the mental perversion of *Jugupsa* also disappears from the mind. This is the great Goal of Perfection pointed out by the Great Rishis, and we may add here that in no other religion of the world has this Scientific Truth been so vividly explained as in Vedanta. The Rishis understand that this idea, so subtle and unusual, may not be correctly understood by the students easily and the following stanza is again dedicated to explain much more vividly the same Truth.

## VII

यस्मिन्सर्वाणि सूतानि  
 आत्मैवाभूद्विजानतः ।  
 तत्र को मोहः कः शोकः  
 एकत्वमनुपश्यतः ॥



*Yasmin sarvani bhoothani  
atmaivabhooth vijanatah  
Tatra ko moha ka soka  
ekatwa-manupasyatah*

When to the knower, all beings have become one in his own Atman, how shall he feel deluded thereafter? What grief can there be to him who sees everywhere oneness?

In the previous stanza the Rishis explained to us the glory of Self-realisation in a language of negative assertions and not in the language of a positive declarations. We were only told that the individual will have no more any repulsion against or hatred for anything in life. But here, in this stanza, the same idea has been explained to us by the Rishis with more emphasis and practical assertions.

Not only that a man of Self-realisation has understood in his own vital experience that he is not a separate individual living as opposed to others, but in his essential nature, he is nothing but the harmony or unity that underlies all seeming discord or plurality, which are perceived as a scum upon the Reality. He who has thus realised his oneness with the entire can no longer have the ordinary tossings of the mind arising out of the ordinary psychological tensions created through delusion (*Moha*), or through grief (*Soka*).

Grief (*Soka*) is the language of delusion. The amount of grief in an individual's life is directly proportional to the amount of delusion in him. In his essential Nature he is All-bliss. Unity or harmony is Bliss. But in delusion when he cognizes plurality and discord, there arises in him the experience of grief. This delusion creates grief and the more the delusion, more

the grief.

To get away from grief is the goal of life that is sought by every living creature, whether man or animal. *Moksha* or liberation is the transcendence of the individual beyond the frontiers of sorrow. Here the stanza indicates that beyond the shores of sighs and sobs lies the land of realisation wherein the knower experiences in his own Self the entire Universe to be one, which is nothing but his own Real Nature.

The pot-space can discard all its sense of limitations, imperfections and sorrows, only when it rediscovers itself to be nothing but the Universal Space. Each individual wave will have its own sorrows of birth, growth, decay and death, only when it considers itself separate from others ; but on its realisation that it is nothing but the ocean in its essential nature, all its sorrows end and no more shall it have its own delusory idea that it is separate from others. Where there is no delusion there is no grief ; grief is the expression of delusion.

Thus, a saint of realisation, experiencing his own Self-shining out through every name and form expressing its own dynamism through every circumstance, happy or sorrowful, is eternally in unison with harmony and rhythm amidst the discordant noise of life. To him is the greatest potencies, the greatest joys and the amplest successes in life. Even the heaviest sorrow cannot shake him even a wee-bit.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Geeta says : "Yasmin sthitho na dukhena gurunapi vicalyatbae"—Wherein established he is not shaken even by the heaviest sorrow—Discourses on Geeta VI—22.

## VIII

स पर्यगाच्छुक्रमकायमवृमण  
 मस्नाविरं शुद्धमपापविद्धम् ।  
 कविर्मनीषी परिभूः स्वयंसू  
 र्यथातथ्यतोऽर्थान् व्यदधाच्छाश्वतीभ्यः समान्यः ॥

*Sa paryagathchukramakayamavrana-  
 asnavaragam suddhamapapaviddham  
 Kavir-manzeesi paribhu swayambhu  
 yadhathadhyatho arthan vyadhath-saswa-theebhya  
 samabhyah*

He, the Atman, is All-pervading, bright, bodiless, scatheless, without muscles, pure, unpierced by evils, wise, omniscient, transcendent, and self-existing. He alone allotted to the various Eternal Creators their respective functions.

Here is a stanza typical of the *Upanishadic* literature which attempts at a complete and exhaustive definition, so as to give to the readers, if not a word-painting of the Eternal, at least a sufficient amount of data to give a sincere student an intuitive understanding of the all-comprehensive Factor called the Life or Atman. The great commentator, Shankara, has himself more than once used this stanza and the expressions therein in his commentaries to indicate the Self in us.

In Sanskrit when adjectives are used, unlike any other language in the world, it is done with a particular eye on giving us a deep significance in the very *order* in which the qualifications are grouped. Here also we have the same technique used by the Rishis.

The word *Paryagat* means “gone abroad or went round” Thus, the stanza opens with an idea that the

Self went out to spread itself everywhere—together it means that the Self is All-pervading. It extends beyond all limitations. The next expression declares the Self to be *bright* in the sense that it is the very light-giving Principle in our intelligence.

*A-kayam* (bodiless)—Self or Pure Life is indicated here by saying that it is bodiless. Here it means that it has no connection with the matter envelopments, in general, constituted, of the five great sheaths as explained and pointed out by us in our introductory lectures. It is no more a prisoner in the body ; all Its identifications have ended for ever.

The expressions '*Scatheless and without muscles*' clearly point out that it has no physical body at all. Ulcers can come only on the physical body. Where there is no body, there no disease can come. The same idea is being more forcefully emphasised when the Self is described as that which has no muscles. The term '*Suddha*' (pure) indicates that the Atman has no causal body since it is *untouched by sin*. The greatest sin in us is our own ignorance of our real nature, which in its turn creates all the animal passions in us, goading us to more and more inhuman and animalistic actions. The Self in Immaculate (*Apapavidham*).

So far the Self has been indicated by the Rishis in the language of negation 'Not this, not this'. There are two methods by which we can explain the 'post' to a deluded man who is suffering under his own delusions caused by the vision of the 'ghost'. He can be shown that the ghost is a delusion, and he can also be positively guided to the recognition of the 'post'. With the deluded friend of ours we can only start in the language-of-negation. Similarly, here the great Rishi addressing us, starts with the language of negation.

He negates all other possibilities of our misunderstanding of the Atman. Without correct training and guidance one is apt to consider that the Self is the body or the intellect. The above expressions have, in their very grouping, indicated for the student that the Atman is neither the physical nor the subtle nor the causal body. Transcending them all is the Self, Eternal and Perfect.

But the seeker knows no entity beyond the physical, the subtle and the causal structures, and, therefore, he is apt to misunderstand the Self to be a complete negative idea with no positive qualities of existence in it. In order to remove the idea that when the "three bodies" are removed, the Self, in its essential nature, would become a zero or a non-entity, and to assert that it is a Positive Factor with all the dynamic qualities of Life as such, we have here a series of phrases to declare the Eternal nature of the Self.

*The Self is the Seer* : It is a declaration that the Life Spark in us is the real vitality behind the eyes that see, the ears that hear, the nose that smells, the tongue that tastes and the skin that feels. In fact, if the Life Principle is removed from the sense organs, they in themselves are impotent to register any impression of their objects. To experience the world-of-objects, we need, not only the sense-organs, but it is equally necessary that the sense-organs must function, presided over by the grace of the Self. Thus, the Self or the Atman is the Seer (*Kavi*) in all the sense-organs, the Mind and the Intellect. None of the activities of perception, feeling or thinking can be experienced by us, if we are not 'charged' by the Life Principle in us.

*Omniscient*—If the Self be thus the Knowing Principle in the individual, then, the Self being the same Life Principle in all living beings, the Knowing Principle

in all beings is the same Self only. Thus, the Self is considered as Omniscient, All-knowing (*Maneeshi*). Every little bit of knowledge that is gained in the world, and every one of its transactions are but “known” by the same Self and hence the Self in us as the one Consciousness is the Eternal “knower” in all bosoms. *Maneeshi* also means “one who has perfect control over his mind”.

This Atman is certainly transcendent. Atman is a state of *unexperienceable* experience, that lies beyond the realms of the finite. Transcending the finite lies the domain of that Transcendent Self.

Self-sprung (*Swayambhu*)—We, the finite creatures, as human beings can struggle and strive to understand the Reality behind the world of perceived plurality only through the intervention of our instrument of thinking and feeling. Our intellect can function only in three definite fields of activity called time, space and causality. Cause-hunting is the great avocation of the intellect. Whenever we see a thing in this world over which we want to make a research and an enquiry, our enquiry should naturally dive itself into the quest of its cause. Thus Mr. Z is better understood when we understand that he is the son of Mr. Y. But if the enquiry is still carried on, we will have to come to a statement that Mr. Y is the son of X, X the son of W and in the same strain we can arrive at a point when we shall understand that Mr. B is the son of Mr. A. But still there is scope to enquire who is the father of A. Similarly, in the world also, the causation-hunting-intellect will have to be check-mated at a particular point by a great grand supposition only to stem the tide of its own wasteful flow.

Thus, philosophically we have to accept that

there was a *first cause*, which in its never-ending flow of changes has brought out the entire world of plurality as it is seen today. But that Ultimate Cause must in itself, be *uncaused by any other cause other than itself*. This is the idea that is expressed here when the Self is discussed as *Swayambhu*, meaning Self-sprung.

It is not born out of "a something" but It is Self-born. In fact philosophically the idea expressed in this simple looking phrase is that the Self is the *first cause* which is untouched by any effect and that It is not in Itself the effect of any cause. All effects are perishable, since they are born. The Self is imperishable and so It must be unborn. And if the intellect should ask for Its cause, then to answer it, we must say that It is the "uncaused cause" or the "Self-born". Though this may look as an unsatisfactory explanation *for the intellect*, those who understand the Self to be that which is beyond the intellect can very well come to appreciate this term as echoing nothing but the ineffectual flutterings of an exhausted and self-founded intellect.

After indicating thus, the Supreme Reality with terms, negating that which It is not, and with terms positively directing our gaze to Its manifested glories, the Rishi still feels dissatisfied and restless and so continues the stanza, *even though the metre has ended*. The Rishi seems to draw the stanza into even an ugly length because he feels as it were a fatiguing dissatisfaction that he has not said all that can be said, nor has he led the student to the very portals of the Truth.

The terms employed in the first-half of the mantra such as *Sukram A-kayam*, *A-vrinam*, *A-snaviram*, *Suddham* and *A-papvidham*—can all be considered as adverbs modifying *Paryagat*. The same set of terms can also be

considered as referring to *Isa*, in which case the mantra would paint the idea of the seeker wholly becoming<sup>1</sup> one with the Pure, Bodiless, Luminous, Incorporeal, Immaculate Brahman, the Eternal Reality.

Thus, he cries that it is this Self or Pure Consciousness that is the Power and the Strength behind the laws of all natural phenomena. If the movement of the planets, the regularity of the seasons, the harmony in nature, the rhythm in reproduction are all strictly followed without exception all round the globe for millions of years now, it is because of the unquestionable authority behind the Law-giver and His Law. That authority, might, or power, belongs to the Supreme Reality, the Self.

## IX

अन्धन्तमः प्रविशन्ति  
येऽविद्यामुपासते ।  
ततो भूय इव ते तमो  
य उ विद्यायां रताः ॥

*Andhantamah pravisanthi  
ye-avidyam-upasathae  
Thatho Bhonya iva thae thamo  
ya u vidyayam rathah*

They who worship Avidya alone fall into blind darkness, and they who worship Vidya alone fall as though into an even greater darkness.

In the opening of this *Upanishad* in our introductory lectures we found that this *Upanishad* is an answer to the eternal doubt as to whether *a life of action* or *a life of*

<sup>1</sup> *Mundukopanishad* beautifully describes this state. III—ii—5.



*meditation* is the ideal way of living. "Knowledge versus action" has been the eternal problem with every generation of thinkers that had come to observe life closely as a theme for their scientific investigation. Even today we find, off and on, controversies over "the religious versus the secular", etc., which are all nothing but new epithets used in expressing this eternal problem in the mind of every generation.

In this stanza the Rishi has opened up the problem and he is to summarise his conclusions in the following three *mantras*.

The terms used by the Rishi in defining this problem of outward activity versus inward contemplation are *Avidya* and *Vidya*. These two terms have been so much loosely used in the time of the Rishis themselves that, perhaps, the students of that age needed a correct restatement of their philosophical implications. *Vidya* and *Avidya* have been used also to connote *Upasana* (*Vidya*) and *Karma* (*Avidya*). In that general sense of the term those who are keeping themselves engaged exclusively in a field of ritualistic activities, certainly find themselves reaching thicker delusions. Ritualism (*Karma*) can be undertaken only when the individual is whipped by desire for the fruits thereof, and when the *Yagnas* and *Yagas*, the ritualistic portion of the Vedas, are performed with an ardent desire for living the joys of greater kingdoms of ampler sensuousness, naturally, from the absolute standpoint of the Rishis that individual is spiritually falling into "*blinding darkness*". Those who are following the Path of *Upasana* or introvert life, meditate deeply, seeking nothing but the All-pervading Reality; and they seem to fall *as though* into a still greater darkness, because such hasty and unprepared meditators may overdo the negation-aspect of the

technique of meditation and reach a destination of blind non-existence ! In this connection the term “ *as though* a greater darkness ” is very significant ; it is not really darkness.

According to Sri Sankara Bhagawatpada, *Vidya* means *Devatagnana* leading to the Abode of the *Devata* so propitiated, and *Avidya* as ritualistic *Karma*. To Sankara *Karma* means desire-prompted rituals, which lead one to the joys of the Heaven (*Pitriloka*). As we admit *Avidya* to be *Karma* it would be more natural to accept it as “ all *Saddhanas* that lead the seeker nearer to the Goal ”. Also the meaning, that “ by *Karma* one would reach *Pitriloka* and by *Upasana* of the *Devata* one would attain the *Devaloka* ”, is not quite an appropriate theme in the Upanishads, as these topics have been already exhausted in the earlier part of the Veda-Test-book, in its *Karmakhanda* portions. At the same time, we cannot also emphatically say that these topics are totally absent in the *Upanishads*.

However, the context here would demand that we take *Vidya* to be the “ higher meditation ”, and *Avidya* to be “ all *Sadhanas* ” that prepares one, by exhausting one’s existing *Vasanas*, to have a peaceful mind that can readily be brought to the seat of meditation. This we are not doing to suite our purpose here.

The negative prefix “ A ” in Sanskrit can mean either a mere “ negation ” or “ a negation and assertion ”, emphasising something similar to, but really different from, the thing negated. Therefore, *Avidya* can mean “ not *Vidya* but something like *Vidya*, though different from it ”. Since in Vedanta it is accepted that selfless service will purify the personality and prepare it for contemplation and meditation, *Avidya*

<sup>1</sup> Known as *Prasanga pratisheda*.

here should be understood as selfless dedicated action.<sup>1</sup>  
This is the theme in the Geeta too.

## X

अन्यदेवाहविद्यया  
अन्यदाहुरविद्यया ।  
इति शुश्रुम धीराणां  
ये नस्तद्विचक्षिरे ॥

*Annyadevahur-vidyaya*  
*annyadahuravidyaya*  
*Iti shushruma dheeranam*  
*ye nasthad-vicakshirae*

One thing, they say, is verily obtained from Vidya,  
another thing, they say, from Avidya ; thus have we heard  
from the wise who explained that to us.

Having said in general what he has to say about  
*Vidya* and *Avidya*, not only in accordance with the  
popular belief of the time, which can claim no doubt  
a crude sastric support, the Great Rishi is trying to  
elaborate the idea and give it a new touch of orientation  
and a revolutionary restatement. In doing so, he too  
has to quote his authority. Thus we find in this stanza  
a statement in which the Rishi declares that the popular  
notion is not all the truth. He says the results of *Vidya*

<sup>1</sup> Sri Madhwacharya has a strange meaning for these terms. According to him in the tenth mantra, "cultivation of the right knowledge of Brahman" is *Vidya*, and "wrong notions of Brahman" is *Avidya*. Thereafter he goes to say that those who having the right knowledge, do not condemn the "wrong notions" stands to suffer more than those who entertain the "wrong notions" of Brahman. In the 9th.....*Avidya* for Madhwa is "wrong notions" and in 10th and 11th mantras to him *Avidya* is "condemnation of wrong notions" This is queer indeed.

and *Avidya* are different from each other and they are not to be construed in terms of the known general belief. Each of them serve a definite purpose.

Having stated this much, the Rishi immediately adds that this opinion is not a product of his own intellect, spun out by his own individual mind, but that this is what he has “*heard from the wise who explained that to us*”. This is a very significant statement, inasmuch as Hinduism does not accept as a philosophy any purely intellectual idea just because some revered saint or sage happened to declare it. However great the individual may be, nobody has been given the authority or the prerogative to declare a philosophical truth and thrust it down the understanding and appreciation of the layman. Even if anybody declares a truth, it is not immediately accepted, as it is the fashion in the West, but we accept it only when it has stood the test of time and the repeated subjective experience of generations of sages.

Hinduism thus is not the product of a single prophet but it is the wisdom-declarations, rising from the experienced bosom of realised masters, which have been relived by generations of disciple-class. A truth that has been tested and found fit upon the touchstone of life by repeated generations alone is accepted by the Aryan devotees.

Both *Vidya* and *Avidya* in fact are bondages. Knowledge is certainly a release from the shackles of ignorance but the knowledge itself is a painful limitation upon the Absolute. One may get over the confusions of ignorance with knowledge but in itself this will find us only chained by the limitations of knowledge. To transcend both is to reach the stage of Absolute Perfection.

In the following stanza we have got a correct indication of the exact import and the mutual relationship that is to be maintained between *Vidya* and *Avidya*.

## XI

विद्यां चाविद्यां च  
यस्तद्वेदोभयं सह ।  
अविद्यया मृत्युं तीर्त्वा  
विद्ययामृतमश्नुते ॥

*Vidyam ca-avidyam ca  
yasthadvedobhayam saha  
Avidyaya mrityum theertwa  
vidyayamrutamashnute*

He who knows at the same time both *Vidya* and *Avidya* overcomes death by *Avidya* and obtains immortality by *Vidya*.

In explaining the great theory of 'action in in-action' the Rishis have given this pregnant *mantra* to their Aryan generations. In the first stanza of this section they condemned both *Vidya* and *Avidya* as guiding us only to a dark-age when an individual (or a generation) pursues each one of this pair exclusive of the other. Thereafter quoting the greater Rishis of the earlier periods, the Seer of the *Isavasya Upanishad* is now summarising how they are to be pursued in a happy synthesis. When they are not to be done individually the next possibility that would suggest itself to any student would be that both *Vidya* and *Avidya* are to be pursued in a synthesis. Synthesis of material activity (*karma*) and spiritual knowledge (*Gyana*)

has been very often advocated by modern teachers of synthesis. But the exact technique of it has not been fully made clear. Here in the *Upanishad*, it has been explained beyond all doubts and the expressions are as perfect and complete as a scientific statement. It is said that he who combines in himself both *Vidya* and *Avidya* together, would overcome "death by *Avidya*" and obtain "Immortality by *Vidya*".

Here Acharya Sankara has to quarrell with Bhaskara since he is one who believes (*Samuchaya-Vada*) that *Vidya* and *Avidya* are of equal importance as practices for a seeker, and each works independently of the other, with neither of them subordinate to the other. This is not necessary : we need not consider both *Vidya* and *Avidya* as independent of each other with neither of them subordinate to the other. It is sufficient if we consider them as integral whole with a mutual relationship as *Anga* and *Angi*.

They must be considered as serially connected : Selfless dedicated work (*Avidya*) prepares one for contemplation, and when through contemplation *Vidya* is fulfilled in the direct apprehension of the Self, thereafter the Perfect One undertakes *Karma* as a sacred satisfying fulfilment of his realisation and spiritual experience.

When such great souls—Buddha, Christ, Vivekananda and others—work, the joy of life, the beauty of existence, the very values of life in the society are revitalised and reorientated. Thus cultural revival takes place.

These are days of feverish activity—social, communal, national and international. Many are the blind advocates of activity. Every other man is a leader and he who is not a leader now is but a budding

leader waiting for his chance to bluish out to be one at least in his own conception of himself ! But in spite of all these leaders, and their leadings, the world as such is gasping forward from confusion to despair, and steadily and systematically tottering from despair to disaster ! These are days when even the educated have started wondering why it is all so ! The diagnosis and the cure are contained in the secret depths of this very pregnant *mantra*.

Without *Vidya* to act in the outer world of *Avidya* is almost impossible ; it is certainly unprofitable. Without knowing the rhythm and harmony of the entire cosmos, which unite together the plurality, to act in the world of multiplicity would be only to bring about more and more confusion into the world. Leaders and workers are striving to bring about unity, harmony, peace, and joy in the world, while they themselves have not realised any one of these in themselves ! With an ill-adjusted instrument of disharmony and discord, no musician, however great and willing he may be, can strike out even a single note of perfect beauty or mastery !!

The stanza says that certainly the experienced knowledge of the Self (*Atma-Gyan*) would give us Eternal Liberation and Immortal Existence ; for, thereby we shall discover that we are not the body-mind-intellect equipment, to which belongs the irreparable change called death. Mortality is the tragic fate of matter ; Immortality is the blissful nature of the Spirit.

But having gained *Vidya* in this very life there is a period when we are to live in this world as a liberated soul, a prophet, a God-man. His duty is not thereafter to run away incognito into some secret cave of contemplation, there to enjoy the serener joys of his

own realisation. On the other hand, he has to fulfil his Self-realisation in and through his activities in the world outside. Earlier we have seen in stanzas six and seven that Self-realisation is not only in the experience that one's own Self is divine, but this realisation can be complete only when one realises that his own Self is the Self in all. Unless we include and incorporate in our Self-experience the pluralistic world of imperfections also, the realisation cannot be called complete. Rooted in the Knowledge of our own Self, the Self-realised sage or seer becomes the most potent factor in the world to carve out for it a destiny of unquestionable brilliance and success.

An individual, who has thus worked in the world in organising humanity and in rehabilitating his generation in the greater values of life, eternally comes to live in the memory of the world. Carved out upon the memory of a grateful generation these men of wisdom, who work in the field of humanity, remain as it were eternally on the surface of the globe. We have thus Buddha, Christ, Sankara, Mohammed or Zoroaster as examples of mortals who have given no easy walk-over to Death, the consumer of everyone. These great masters, having worked for the upliftment of Society, have entered so much into the warp and woof of the social fabric of the generations that are to follow them, that posterity could not willingly let die their memories.

Apart from this historical immortality of living in the memories of the grateful generations that follow the masters, these great men of realisation "*overcome death*" that is caused by Ignorance (*Avidya*) because of their own knowledge-experience (*Vidya*). Death has a poignancy, and is a threat, only in terms of the



tear we have for it. If once a great soul has realised its own real nature, it has, thereafter, no fear or dread for this phenomenon of change happening in the province of matter which is generally called death. Death can frighten only him who misunderstands himself to be the body. To him who has realised that he is the Atman, death is only one of the meaningless delusory changes in his body-zone with which he maintained a sense of possessiveness during his days of ignorance.

“*And obtains immortality by Vidya*”—Mortality is, we have already seen, the fate of matter and not the destiny of the Spirit. The pot may break and destroy the pot-space ; but the ‘space’ in the pot is neither broken nor ever made : it is the all-pervading space—ever the same. Similarly, birth and death, decay and disease, bondage and liberation, sorrow and joy, success and failure, etc., are all experiences available only to the ego-centre, and by themselves they are but delusion-created appearances. This is realised when the Pure Awareness comes to flash out as it were, through the matter envelopments. The ego ends where “Godhead-experience” starts.

The mortal minus his ego is the Immortal Truth. As such, when a seeker after surrendering his entire ego-concept—in other words, when he through meditation transcends all his identifications with his body, mind and intellect—he comes to rediscover himself to be the Pure Atman<sup>1</sup> and to him, thereafter, there can be no rebirth nor the chain of *Karmic* effects to bind him down to the wheel of *Samsar*. Naturally, he gains, in the language of our experience of mortality, the State of Immortality.

<sup>1</sup> Refer *Ibid.* stanzas 4, 5 & 8.

## XII

अन्धं तमः प्रविशन्ति  
 येऽसम्भूतिमुपासते ।  
 ततो भूय इव ते तमो  
 ये उ सम्भूत्या रताः ॥

*Andham tamah pravisanthi  
 ye-asambhoothim upasathae  
 Tatho bhooya iva thae thamo  
 ya u sambhoothyam rathah*

They fall into blind darkness who worship the un-  
 manifest. They fall as though into greater darkness  
 who devote themselves to the manifest.

Stanzas 12, 13 and 14 are again another triple stanzas in which the same idea described<sup>1</sup> earlier has been brought out for purposes of better clarification. The kind teacher understands perhaps that the idea expressed in the last three stanzas is too subtle to be understood by the student at the very first hearing ; and it is so very important that it is necessary for every Vedantic seeker to understand correctly what is the exact relationship between *Vidya* and *Avidya*.

In the earlier stanzas it has already been said that *Vidya* and *Avidya* are not 'mutually contradictory or conflicting ideas, each a sure death-knell to the other, and that they are not to be mixed indiscriminately into a rough synthesis. It has been said that they are complementary to each other, and they are to be undertaken in an intelligent sequence. First, action (*Avidya*) as dictated by our desires, in order to bring us

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* stanzas 9, 10 & 11.

out of our inertia (*Tamas*) into an active mentality of sprightly enthusiasm (*Rajas*), and thereafter, through a pursuit of desireless activity, one can gain purification of one's mind and intellect which is a preparation for meditation. Later on, through steady and diligent meditation the seeker gains the fulfilment of Knowledge (*Vidya*). This same idea is being described here using another set of words to represent *Vidya* and *Avidya*.

The pair of words used in this section is Unmanifest (*Asambhoothi*) and Manifest (*Sambhoothi*). The Unmanifest would be easier for you all to understand as the Impersonal-God and the Manifest as the Personal-God. Among the devotee class there always had been, and there is, a lot of controversy upon the relative merits of worshipping or meditating upon the Personal and the Impersonal-God. Even in the Vedic period, there were the personal Gods like *Vayu*, *Agni*, *Varuna*, just as we have today the Puranic Gods as *Rama*, *Krishna*, *Shiva*, *Devi*, *Ganesh*, etc.

This controversy has now come down to our own times ; in its practical application in life it expresses itself as the great controversy on whether *Gyana* or *Bhakti* is supreme. The *Upanishad* here is giving us enough thoughts in its truth-declarations to make us understand that our controversy is meaningless and baseless. Just as we have seen that there is no controversy between *Vidya* and *Avidya* and that they are complementary to each other, so too *Gyana* and *Bhakti* are not contradictory. In fact each in the lap of the other grows stronger and more established.

## XIII

अन्यदेवाहुः सम्भवा  
 दन्यदाहुरसम्भवात् ।  
 इति शुश्रुम धीराणां  
 ये नस्तद्विचचक्षिरे ॥

*Annyadevahuh-sambhavath  
 annyadahurasambhavath  
 Ithi sushruma dheeranam ye  
 nasthad-vicacakshirae*

One thing, they say, is verily obtained from the worship of the manifest. Another thing, they say, from the worship of the unmanifest ; thus have we heard from the wise who have explained that to us.

Just as in the second stanza of the earlier triplet, here also the *Rishi* is trying to explain to us that what we generally understand by the terms *Manifest* and *Unmanifest* are not exactly what they connote in the technique of Self-perfection, but that they have some special significance. This new orientation of the idea is again vouchsafed here as not merely a whiff of the *Rishi*'s own personal opinion but that it has the sanction of the entire hierarchy of experienced masters and their worthy disciples.

## XIV

सम्भूतिं च विनाशं च  
 यस्तद्वेदोभयं सह ।  
 विनाशेन मृत्युं तीर्त्वा  
 सम्भूत्यामृतमश्नुते ॥

*Sambhoothim ca-vinasam ca  
yasthadvedobhayam saha  
Vinasena mrithyum theerttwa  
sambhoothya amritamasnuthae*

He who worships the Impersonal God-head and the Personal God together overcomes death through the worship of the personal and obtains immortality through the worship of the impersonal.

Here Sri Sanakara takes *Sambhuti* to mean the "Premordeal Matter" (*Mahat Tattwam*) which we may call as *Prakriti* or Nature, which is not in its expression as an effect but as the very cause for the entire manifested *Prakriti*. By the term *Asambhuthi* Sankara understands as the *Karya* (effects), the Saguna Brahman : the conditioned Reality. We need not go into this philosophical hair-splitting and exhaust ourselves at present.

Just as in the last stanza of the earlier triplet, we can also say that here, the same ideas are expressed, only with the terms changed. Instead of *Vidya* and *Avidya* here we have the "personal" and the "impersonal" God used. This particular stanza under discussion certainly implies the meaning already expressed in the earlier *mantra* and over and above it, it has got its own pregnant extra suggestions.

The controversy between *Bhakti* and *Gyana* is perfectly proved to be empty and hollow by the suggestion contained in the *mantra*. It is suggested here that these two are not contradictory but they are complementary and they are to be practised in a serial. Devotion to a personal God with a form and name is as much important for the higher meditation, since continuous and intense meditation upon the formless Reality is

necessary for the greater realisation of the Self. In this intelligent synthesis of *Bhakti* and *Gyana* together the result would be, in the Rishi's own words, that we will be able to get over the sorrows of death, meaning the sorrows of finitude, because of our faith and devotion to the Lord with a form, while our evolution would be fulfilled completely as a result of our higher meditations upon the formless Reality. A mere meditation upon the Absolute in itself, though it can give a subjective experience of the Self, the *Jivan-Mukta* state cannot be peaceful and tranquil without the firm hold on the life-belt of a staunch and unshakable *Prem* for the Lord of the Heart.

A mere Vedantic perfection does not make a man fit to live in the community of men and work in the field of *Avidya* to redeem his generation from the mental and intellectual dustbin into which it has fallen. In the contention of a cultural renaissance the great master will have to face different types of challenges in which he can easily find his equilibrium and poise only when he is efficiently guided and continuously renovated by his limitless devotion to the Lord of his heart.

Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa's might and glory was his experience of the Self, but his life's poise and equanimity were the special blessings of his beloved Mother Kali of Dakshineswar. Sankara, the Redeemer of Hinduism, shall eternally shine out through the clouds of time and space because of his super-human perfection and experience of his Self, and yet, he could face his opponents as he did in his time, along the length and breadth of India, and carve out of a decadent Hinduism, a nascent India crowned with the best of its culture, because of his staunch and unquestionable faith in the Goddess of Learning, Mother Sharada.

Sri Sankara takes *Vinasa* to refer to “Karya Brahman” which was described in the earlier mantras as *Sambhuthi* and *Sambhava*. But in this Mantra the Rishi says *Sambhuthi* and *Vinasa* as one and the same. Therefore, *Sambhuthi* in all these three mantras must be the same. The terms *Sambhuthi* in the first-half and *Sambhutya* in the second-half must somehow be made to mean *Prakriti*.....but already *Asambhuthi* and *Asambhava* were explained as *Prakriti*. How can this be accomplished?

Sri Sankara achieves this by taking recourse to the grammatical licence permissible to the declarations in and the style of the Vedas. Says Sankara, “Read the letter ‘A’ before each of the words, *Sambhuthi* and *Vinasa*; and take that the letter ‘A’ denoting negation as having been found dropped in the original..... permissible by the Vedic-grammar (*Chandasam*).” This is again an instance where philosophers enter into un-productive arguments.

One very satisfying explanation I had heard was from my Gurudev, Sri Swami Thapovanji Maharaj. It beautifully reconciles this confusing contradiction. He suggested to us to recognise *Sambhuthi* and *Sambhava* as meaning the “birth of a new spiritual life,” and *Asambhuthi* and *Vinasam* as referring to “the cessation and destruction”—cessation of the creation of new *Vasanas* and the total destruction of the entire existing *Vasanas*.

In this sense *Asambhuthi*, *Asambhava* and *Vinasam* are all pointing to the same spiritual condition. They mean the annihilation of all material wants and the consequent absence of rebirth into this mortal-plane in order to exhaust the existing *Vasanas*. This explanation of Sri Gurudev—*Sambhuthi*, the choosing and,

therefore, the becoming of a Life Divine ; and the *Asambhuthi*, the cessation of all undivine activities pursued when living as a helpless slave to a thousand mad passions—beautifully reconciles the seeming contradiction in this mantra. We need not haul in the support of grammar and take shelter behind *Chandasam* ; nor, need we import new meaning to these terms, which have been already defined in a different way in the previous stanzas.

The experience of the Brahman and Its Infinite Freedom are described in the *Chandogyopanishad*, more than once, and at that occasion the Rishi uses the terms “ *Abhi-Sambhuthi* ” and “ *Abhi-Sambhava* ”. In the *Brihadaranyakopanishad* also Rishi Yagnavalkya, in his teachings to Maitreyi, says : “ The Mukta attains to *Vinasa* and there is no other name for liberation ”. It is obvious that here the destruction (*Vinasa*) is of the *Vasanas* that maintained and gave a tone to the ego-centric personality (*Jiva*) of the seeker.

Here in this stanza the word “ death ” is to be understood in all its amplest significances as including and incorporating in its purview the entire principle of finitude in this mortal world of ours. A *Gyani* who has the devotion of a Radha alone can live the life of a true *Parthasarathy* and guide the chariot of his era to a sure success and victory over the demoniac forces of decadence and stupor into which the history has fallen.

Now we have come to the sixth wave-of-thought in the entire Upanishad which to many of its critics is even an interpolation !

To eminent commentators like Sankara and others, “ it is a prayer of a *dying man* on his death-bed ” Orthodox Hindu families repeat these stanzas in the ears of the dying persons. But very few of them seem



to correctly understand the true import and implications of these stanzas.

That in the very first<sup>1</sup> of the *Upanishads* we have three noble stanzas of prayer is itself a hooting satire at the thoughtlessness of those who criticise Vedanta as opposed to *Bhakti*. These three stanzas are an inner evidence in the very *Upanishad* to show that the *Upanishad* Seers were not in any sense of the term opposed to the belief, faith and devoted pursuit of a Personal God.

In the Vedic period there were none of those Puranic Gods to be worshipped since they are of a later addition to the wealth of the Hindu spiritual literature. Therefore we find that in this *Upanishad* the prayer is to the Lord Sun who was to the shrewd intellect of the Aryan folk, the clearest symbol of the mighty Creator, Sustainer and Destroyer of the Universe. In the modern times, with all our scientific knowledge, it must be certainly easy to appreciate this great belief of the Vedic period. The Universe minus Sun-God would be a chaos and not a cosmos ; Life in the planets would have been impossible but for the blessing of this mighty Lord of Energy and Power.

Again, before we start this section I must warn you that to understand this prayer as a mere out-burst of emotion would be to under-estimate the sacred wisdom of the Rishis. It has got a very deep significance of pregnant suggestions to a Vedantic Seeker. We shall try to discover it as we open up each of these *mantras* to inspect its precious contents.

Personally I would suggest that true seekers should memorise these three stanzas along with their meaning

<sup>1</sup> Of the total 108 *Upanishads* the first eleven are serially counted as follows : Isa, Kena, Katha, Prasna, Mundaka, Mandokya, Aitreya, Taittiriya, Chandogya, Brihadaranyaka and Svetasvatara.

and should repeat them which would be an ideal prayer for a Selfless Seeker.

## XV

हिरण्मयेन पात्रेण  
सत्यस्यापिहितं मुखम् ।  
तत्त्वं पूषन्नपावृणु  
सत्यधर्माय दृष्टये ॥

*Hiranmayena patrena  
sathyasyapikhitam mukham  
Thatvam pooshannapavrinu  
satyadharmaya dhrishtayae*

The face of Truth is covered by a golden lid ; remove, Oh Sun, the covering for me, the practitioner of Truth so that I may behold It.

On the face of it this is a prayer raised to Lord Sun invoking his grace and blessing so that the seeker may have the strength to remove the golden veil that hides the vision of Truth. And this is the prayer of the dying personality on its death-bed—the meditation-seat.

It is interesting to note that there are two recensions for this Upanishad : the *Kanva* and the *Madhyadina*. According to the later, this is the last mantra, while the Upanishad, as it stands, full with its 18-mantras, is acceptable in the *Kanva* reading.<sup>1</sup> This need not be considered as a confusion, because from this mantra till the end it is the Prayer—thus these can be considered all together as one wave-of-thought (*Vakya*).

To consider this as the last mantra would be

<sup>1</sup> Refer also Introduction, section : the Upanishads, sub-section : "Our Text" para 2.

obeying the well-known Vedantic tradition that "there must be Unity of thought in the beginning and in the end". The Upanishad that started with "clothed by the *Isa* is all this" must end in this Prayer unto the Nourisher, Sustainer, "Oh! Lord unveil the Reality. The world-of-objects and their glittering facinations seem to envelope the Truth. May I pierce through the apparent and reach to recognise and experience the Supreme Immutable Reality."

To understand it literally is to recognise only the superficial beauty of this inimitable prayer. In fact, the more we delve into it, the more we shall recognise the contents of this treasure chamber.

*Prayer* in Vedanta is only an attempt of the ego-centre to attune itself to the Supreme Consciousness in the individual. Addressing the Supreme Consciousness, the ego centre in the individual is chanting this *mantra*. The epithets by which Lord Sun is indicated are chosen with a special dexterity. *Pooshan* is one of the innumerable names for Lord Sun. It means the Nourisher—the Sustainer. The Sun is the centre of the entire universe, itself motionless and inactive, and yet by its very presence it balances the entire movements of the universe around it, and being the nourisher and the source of all energy in the cosmos, it represents in the seeker's inner world the Nourisher and Illuminator, the Atman. The motionless centre, which controls the entire movement of the field is the source of all energy and of matter around It, the Self, the Spirit. The ego-centre is to die when it realises its real nature, the Self.

Thus as Sri Sankara says, it is certainly the last prayer of the *dying individual*; but the individual meant here is the ego-centre. We are not to understand

that it is literally the prayer of a dying old man on his death-bed. It is the last prayer of the active spiritual seeker in his meditation seat when he, in his divine effort, is shaking off his last vesture of ego which is lingering, to veil the Self in him.

The mind-and-intellect-conditioned—AWARENESS (ego), when it tries to understand and grapple with the Pure Awareness behind it, gets itself blinded by the glory and brilliance, and so it declares to the Pure Intelligence to unveil itself for its cognition. When the mind and intellect view out, they can recognise only the world of matter constituted of the names and forms. Preoccupied with these, it becomes impossible for the ego-centre to recognise the Truth beneath it. Thus the world-of-matter becomes a golden lid, brilliant and shining, which veils the Truth behind it. At the doors of Truth as it were now, the seeker is knocking and demanding the Nourisher (*Pooshan*) behind to open the doors-of-matter and reveal Itself in all Its spiritual glory.

But what right has the seeker to demand from the Supreme such an unveiling is explained when the devotee declares that the Truth should reveal Itself unto him for "he is himself a practitioner of Truth."

This is very significant in as much as the seeker's goal is Truth, his path is Truth, and his very path to Truth is laid over with Truth at every step. In religion, *means* are as sacred as the *goal*. Through deceit and animalism there is no path at all, laid for evolution, progress, peace, or perfection.

Continued love and dedicated loyalty gives to the lover a certain secret authority over his beloved. When a devotee has lived sufficiently long, a full life of Divine pursuit, his expanding heart of purity and faith gurgles

up a flood of confidence and assurance in his own inner nobility and in the Lord's Infinite kindness. In this confidence the devotee dares even to command the Supreme to serve Him to dire moments. This power to command comes to him as a privilege of love, in the authority of faith, sanctioned by the moral dignity that comes to him as a result of his chaste life of Tapas : *Satya Dharmaya Drishtayae*.

## XVI

पूषन्नेकर्षे यम सूर्यं प्राजापत्य व्यूहं रश्मीन्समूहं तेजो यत्ते रूपं  
कल्याणतमं तत्ते पश्यामि योऽसावसौ पुरुषः सोऽहमस्मि ॥

*Pusannekarse yama surya prajapatya vyuha rasmin samuha ;  
Tejo yat te rupam kalyanatamam tatte pasyami ; yasavasau  
purushah, so'hamasmi.*

Oh Pushan ' (Sun—Nourisher), Oh sole Seer, Oh Controller of All, Surya, Son of Prajapathi, disperse thy rays and gather up thy burning light . . . . I behold thy glorious form . . . . the Purusha within thee, He am I.

The very epithets of glory used here by the Rishis in addressing the Lord Sun are significant in as much as they declare to us as to whom exactly is the " *dying ego* " addressing. The philosophic import of the prayer is brought into greater relief by the unsaid suggestiveness, that is implied in the various qualifications, which are added to the Lord Sun. They apply equally to the Atman. Nourisher, Sole Seer,<sup>1</sup> the Controller of all, etc. are all amply self-evident that they equally

<sup>1</sup> Refer Stanza VIII—notes on " Omniscient ".

apply to the spiritual centre in man. And according to the prayer, the prayerful ego—the completely integrated inner personality of the individual at meditation when the mind and intellect are transcended—meets Truth in silence to become itself the Truth in its subjective experience.

Also it is to be noted that Lord Sun was the Guru of Seer Yagnavalkya, the compiler of the *Sukla Yajurveda Samhitas*, and *Isavasyopanishad* belongs to it. The *Samhita* itself was taught to him by Lord Sun. The Sun is the greatest nourisher, disinfector, the ‘great filler,’ who fills life with flavour. “By thy grace may I reach nearer the *Isa* who indwells everywhere, including Thee,” seems to be here the cry of the heart at meditation.

The idea that the spirit is not to be seen or felt or understood, but is to be experienced in an intimate subjective *Anubhava*, is clearly brought out by the declaration “*He am I, the Purusha within Thee*”. This is not a declaration made by the Self-realised saint at the moment of his realisation, but later on when he wakes up again to the world of the mind and intellect, he cries that he is not the body-conditioned individual, that he thought he was in his ignorance, but now, that the wisdom has dawned, he realises that he is nothing but that Pure Awareness, “*the One that resides in Him, the Purusha*”.

Before this final experience of oneness “*He am I*”, we have been shown how there is a lower State of realisation that “*I behold Thy glorious form*”, wherein the ego still remains experiencing a divine exaltation. This stage is called *Savikalpa Samadhi*. This precedes the final stage of the total end of the ego when the seeker rediscovers himself to be the sought—the Supreme

Self. This stage of experience of oneness is called the *Nirvikalpa Samadhi*.

“*The knower of Brahman becomes Brahman*” is an oft repeated Upanishadic declaration, the truth of which is repeatedly re-stated in all the *Upanishads*. Man cannot see God but God is not an inexperienceable non-existence. Godhood is a positive state which can be lived and experienced but unfortunately not by man but by God alone. It is because the man who realises Godhood is no more a man but he is a God upon earth walking temporarily in the form of that man. Where ego ends, there in a blaze of perfection the Divine re-incarnates.

“I am the Purusha in Thee”: (*Purushah Ahamasmi*)—Earlier<sup>1</sup> it was said that those who identify with their body-mind vehicles they are “destroyers of the Self” (*Atmahanah*), ever bound to the wheel-of-change (*Janah*). When such an individual, through “dedicated activities” (*Karma*) purifies himself, and through renunciation (*Tena Tyaktena*) comes to enjoy “all this is the Lord” (*Esavasyam—Idam Sarvam*), he must necessarily cry out that I am no more the one who “destroyed the experience of the Self” (*Atmahanah*) and lived in “blinding darkness” (*Andhamtama*), in a “Sunless realm” (*Asurya Lokah*), but “I am, indeed, He, the Self” (*Purushah Ahamasmi*).

The wave that has realised itself understands and experiences the ocean : the ghost that has rediscovered its reality becomes the post. Man experiencing Godhood is himself the immortal God.

Just for the purpose of elucidation and re-emphasise of the most important point here, we must through a repetition again draw the reader's attention to a subtle

<sup>1</sup> In mantra (iii).

truth underlying the very arrangement of thoughts here. First the meditator cried out "I am *seeing* His auspicious nature," and thus he hushes himself into the silence of joy thundering : "He am I". In the earlier the ego lingers and, therefore, it *sees* the experience Divine. But when the ego has ended, the roar is not "I am He"—for, there must be then the lingering I—but it is "He am I". When the ego has ended the experience is that "Universal Reality, Brahman am I".<sup>1</sup>

## XVII

वायुरनिलमभृत  
मथेदं भस्मान्तं शरीरम् ।  
ॐ क्रतो स्मर कृतं स्मर  
क्रतो स्मर कृतं स्मर ॥

*Vayuranilamanṛta*  
*mathedam bhasmantam sarīram*  
*Om krato smara kṛtam smara*  
*krato smara kṛtam smara*

Let my prana merge into the all-pervading air, and let this body be burnt by fire to ashes. Om. Oh mind ! remember, remember what you did ! Oh remember, remember what you did !

After the complete subjective experience of the

<sup>1</sup> Sri Madhwacharya interprets *Aham* as "Not *Heya*" meaning "not to be despised or discarded"; and *Asmi* as "the ever-existing God in all creatures." He also sees in *Asau-asau* a meaning "this Purusha (*Asau*) within the Prana" (in *Asau*=in Prana). Prana is a symbol for God. The struggle is evidently to avoid the Advaitic implication so eloquent in the Rishi-declaration. The Upanishad clearly wants to declare the identity between *Asau*—the Universal, the Transcendental Purusha, the Brahman—and *Aham*, the confused and confounded ego's essential nature as *Atman*.



Reality during meditation, when the individualised ego-centre has come to experience "*He, the Purusha within thee am I*", what would be the condition of such a perfected master at the time of his *death*? When the ego-centre has merged itself in the Supreme Awareness, what would be its attitude towards its possessions—meaning its own other envelopments such as the body, *prana*, mind, intellect, etc.? These questions have been answered by the great Rishi in this stanza.

A man after the realisation of his Self will thereafter face death as happily as he would face life and its changing vicissitudes. Thereafter to him death is not a tragic culmination but in fact it is a joyous beginning of an Immortal Existence. Thus, his only cry would be that his *prana* should merge with the all-pervading air<sup>1</sup> and that his body must go back to the dust from which it had come. As regards his mind, he cries, "*may you remember that you have done in the past*" ..... meaning the Great achievement, the Supreme experience.

In fact to a saint of realisation all that he could remember at that time is the unforgettable experience of the Absolute which he lived at the moment of his own white-heat of meditation. After all, our memory is always about our own most intense experiences. Thus, when the Rishi here says in the *mantra* "*Oh mind, remember, remember*" it only means that even at the moment of departure let not our mind be distracted by any other thought; let us get ourselves established

<sup>1</sup> *Vayu* the opening term in this *mantra* is "the freed spirit", according to some commentators, and *Anilam* means "not (A), housed (Nilam)". Thus it can give the suggestion of "the Self which is no more encased in, or imprisoned by any material vehicle". Let the present body be burnt to ashes (*Bhasmantam Sarsaram*). When it is *Anilam* then it automatically becomes Immortal (*Anritam*)—for, the sense of mortality is due to the destruction of the body.

in the continuous experience of that moment of fulfilment as a human creature.

## XVIII

अग्ने नय सुपथा राये अस्मा-  
 न्विश्वानि देव वयुनानि विद्वान् ।  
 पुयोध्यस्मज्जुहुराणमेनो  
 सूयिष्ठां ते नमउक्ति विधेम ॥

*Agne naya supatha raye asman  
 viswani deva vayunam vidvan  
 Puyudhyasmaj juhuranameno  
 bhuyistam te namauktim vidhema*

Oh, Agni ! Lead us on to ' wealth ' by a good path as Thou knowest, Oh God, all the many ways Remove the crooked attraction of sin from us. We offer Thee our best salutations.

In this concluding stanza of the *Upanishad*, which represents the seventh and the last *wave-of-thought* in it, both the teacher and the taught together pray to their Personal God to guide them by the right path towards " the great goal "—the " wealth ". Putting thus into the mouth of a perfected master, a humble and a meek prayer to a Lord of Personality, the great Seer of the *Upanishad* is indirectly pointing out to the seeker that at the period of *sadhana* every Vedantic seeker must necessarily have, as an important item of his *sadhana*, an unflinching, deep and ardent devotion for a Personal God.

Let *Bhaktas* understand that true Vedanta is no enemy to them ; let true Vedantins come to feel ashamed of themselves when they cry down *Bhakti* in

the name of their sacred faith, the Religion of Vedanta. At the time of the Vedas, *Agni* was the God ; here the prayer is an invocation to *Agni*—God Fire.

Here in this stanza Lord *Agni* has been invoked to lead us to *wealth*. The materialist need not understand that this *wealth* means the sterling or the dollar ! It is not the wealth of the economist that is meant here, but it is “ the riches of the spiritual seeker ”, that is in the mind of the Rishis here. “ Wealth ” is thus to be understood as standing for bliss or mukti or beatitude. The seeker’s death-bed-request is also only for the attainment of the supreme felicity.

*We offer Thee our best salutations* :—Surrender of all the false conceptions in us is the way to cleanse our heart and prepare it for intimations from the Highest. In the ritualistic portion of the Veda we find the mantra for offering the oblations as “ *Agnæ Idam Na Mama* ”, meaning “ Oh ! Fire ! I give myself to Thee..... No more am I mine ”. Thus *Namah*<sup>1</sup> is a voluntary self-offering, total and complete, at the alter of the Higher. *Namaskar* consists not merely in an elaborate demonstration of a physical prostration, nor in a casual oral expression. It is an active dynamic spiritual giving up and a becoming into the new awareness.

ॐ पूर्णमदः पूर्णमिदं पूर्णत्पूर्णमुदच्यते ।  
पूर्णस्य पूर्णमादाय पूर्णमेवावशिष्यते ॥  
॥ ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ॥

OM ! TAT !! SAT !!!

( Meaning and commentary for this mantra : Refer pages 67-72 )

<sup>1</sup> *Namah*=NA+MAMA=not+mine.

# ॥ ईशावास्योपनिषत् ॥

ॐ पूर्णमदः पूर्णमिदं पूर्णात्पूर्णमुदच्यते ।  
पूर्णस्य पूर्णमादाय पूर्णमेवावशिष्यते ॥  
॥ ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ॥

ईशा वास्यमिदं सर्वं  
यत्किं च जगत्यां जगत् ।  
तेन त्यक्तेन भुञ्जीथा  
मा गूधः कस्य स्विद्वनम् ॥ ॥ १ ॥

कुर्वन्नेवेह कर्माणि  
जिजीविषेच्छतः समाः ।  
एवं त्वयि नान्यथेतोऽस्ति  
न कर्म लिप्यते नरे ॥ ॥ २ ॥

असुर्या नाम ते लोका  
अन्धेन तमसा वृताः ।  
तांस्ते प्रेत्याभिगच्छन्ति  
ये के चात्महनो जनाः ॥ ॥ ३ ॥

अनेजदेकं मनसो जवीयो  
नैनद्देवा आप्नुवन्पूर्वमर्षत् ।  
तद्धावतोऽन्यानत्येति तिष्ठ-  
त्तस्मिन्नपो मातरिश्वा वधाति ॥ ॥ ४ ॥

तदेजति तन्नैजति  
 तद्दूरे तद्वन्तिके ।  
 तदन्तरस्य सर्वस्य  
 तदु सर्वस्यास्य बाह्यतः ॥ ५ ॥

यस्तु सर्वाणि भूतानि  
 आत्मन्येवानुपश्यति ।  
 सर्वभूतेषु चात्मानं  
 ततो न विजुगुप्सते ॥ ६ ॥

यस्मिन्सर्वाणि भूतानि  
 आत्मैवाभूद्विजानतः ।  
 तत्र को मोहः कः शोकः  
 एकत्वमनुपश्यतः ॥ ७ ॥

स पर्यगाच्छुक्रमकायमन्न-  
 मस्नाधिरः शुद्धमपापविद्धम् ।  
 कविर्मनीषो परिभूः स्वयंभूर्याथातथ्यतो-  
 ऽर्थान्विदधाच्छाश्वतीभ्यः समाभ्यः ॥ ८ ॥

अन्धं तमः प्रविशन्ति  
 ये अविद्यामुपासते ।  
 ततो भूय इव ते तमो  
 य उ विद्यायाः रताः ॥ ९ ॥

अन्यदेवाहुर्विद्यया  
 अन्यदाहुरविद्यया ।  
 इति शुश्रुम धीराणां  
 ये नस्तद्विचक्षिरे ॥ १० ॥

विद्यां चाविद्यां च  
 यस्तद्वेदोभयं सह ।  
 अविद्याया मृत्युं तीर्त्वा  
 विद्यायामृतमश्नुते ॥ ११ ॥

अन्धं तमः प्रविशन्ति  
 येऽसंभूतिमुपासते ।  
 ततो भूय इव ते तमो  
 ये उ संभूत्याः रताः ॥ १२ ॥

अन्यदेवाहुः संभवा-  
 दन्यबाहुरसंभवात् ।  
 इति शुश्रुम धीराणां  
 ये नस्तद्विचक्षिरे ॥ १३ ॥

संभूतिं च विनाशं च  
 यस्तद्वेदोभयं सह ।  
 विनाशेन मृत्युं तीर्त्वा-  
 संभूत्यामृतमश्नुते ॥ १४ ॥

हिरण्येन पात्रेण  
 सत्यस्यापिहितं मुखम् ।  
 तत्त्वं पृषन्नयावृणु  
 सत्यधर्माय दृष्टये ॥ १५ ॥

पृषन्नेकैर्षे यम सूर्यं प्राजापत्य व्यूह रश्मोन्तमूह तेजो यस्ते रूपं  
 कल्याणतमं तत्ते पश्यामि योऽसावसौ पुरुषः सोऽहमस्मि ॥ १६ ॥

वायुरनिलममृत-

मथेदं भस्मान्तं शरीरम् ।

ॐ क्रतो स्मर कृतं स्मर

क्रतो स्मर कृतं स्मर ॥

॥ १७ ॥

अग्ने नय सुपथा राये अस्मा-

न्विश्वानि देव वयुनानि विद्वान् ।

युयोध्यस्मज्जुहुराणमेनो

भूयिष्ठां ते नमउक्ति विधेम ॥

॥ १८ ॥

ॐ पूर्णमदः पूर्णमिदं पूर्णात्पूर्णमुदच्यते ।

पूर्णस्य पूर्णमादाय पूर्णमेवावशिष्यते ॥

॥ ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ॥

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