

**DISCOURSES**  
**ON**  
**KATHOPANISHAD**

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**SWAMI CHINMAYANANDA**

## MESSAGE DIVINE

(TWO WORDS ON KATHOPANISHAD)

SADGURU SREE SWAMI THEAPOVANJI MAHARAJ

*Kathopanishad* is perhaps the clearest of all the ten classical *Upanishads*. *Upanishad* means *Brahma Vidya*, that is, the knowledge of Brahman. *Katha* explains *Brahma Vidya* most clearly, most vividly, and repeats the essentials without making the subject complicated—by unconsciously mixing up *Upasanas* with it—as almost all the other *Upanishads* do. It goes on adding colour after colour in its descriptions of the Pure Atman, which is Brahman, the only Reality. The root cause of all the miseries and calamities of this world is ignorance (*Avidya*). By instinct or by intellect a man thinks that he is the body. This is ignorance. “Body cannot be the meaning of ‘I’. I am *Atman*—ever-shining, ever-lasting, eternal, pure consciousness.” To understand *Atman* in such a way by intellectual thinking and discrimination, and to experience it by clear perception and realisation, is called Knowledge. This Atmic Knowledge—this *Atma Vidya*-- was demanded by Nachiketas, and Yamaraja explained It in a simple style, adopting different methods. This constitutes the whole text. “स मोदते मोदनीयं हि लब्ध्वा” ---“Having attained the blissful *Atman*, he becomes happy.” *Atman* is of the nature of Eternal Bliss. The only source of happiness is *Atman*. And that *Atman* is one’s Own Self. It is already attained. Therefore, its attainment is nothing but to *know* it. It is not to be attained or enjoyed as an object, like a mango or an apple. *Atman*, the pure *Chaitanya*, is ever-luminous in all its glory in this body. Man of ignorance does not know it though he is doing all his actions by that *Chaitanya*. Therefore, Mother Sruthi says with wonder and sorrow :—

“उत्तिष्ठत ! जाग्रत प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत !”

“Arise, Awake ! Sitting at the feet of Mahatmas, the realised souls, *know* it ! *realise* it !” This Knowledge of

*Atman*, the destroyer of ignorance, is being discussed again and again, in the *Kathopanishad* and can be easily understood and fully realised by an intelligent and faithful aspirant who is hearing and studying it. The knowledge "I am eternal and ever-blissful Brahman . . . . I am beyond this body, senses and mind" which a man acquires by simply hearing the *Upanishad*, cannot be perfect and, therefore, would produce no great result. Incessant flow of *Atmic* remembrance in mind that "I am pure, blissful, birthless and deathless *Atman*", like the continuous flow of the Ganges is called Perfect Knowledge (*Gnana*) which alone can destroy Ignorance (*Avidya*) and give perpetual peace.

Even an Ekka-driver who attends some Vedantic lecture on the roadside can have the knowledge of the *Atman* for a moment. Though he hears that he is *Atman*, he cannot think of it again for himself, as his mind is so deeply rooted in his body and body-idea. *Atmic*-idea or Self-knowledge has no place in his mind. His greedy and lustful mind with hundreds of desires, hatreds, ambitions and anxieties cannot think of the *Atman* continuously even for a few moments without having the body-consciousness, "I-ness and mine-ness". It burns and boils in the waters of his clinging attachments (*Trishna*). *Atman* can be thought of, realised and remembered only by a calm, quiet and concentrated mind and not by a greedy, anxious and wavering mind.

If those who hear the discourses on the *Kathopanishad* are intelligent, they can have an idea of the Self, that is, they can acquire an intellectual estimate of the *Atman* in their understanding. But one cannot be an *Atma-vith*—a realised soul—by such a "Knowledge of" the Self. Because that knowledge is not perfect; it is only a conditioned "knowledge of" *Atman*. If the mind of the hearer is faithful, pure, concentrated and calm, then only it can realise and get established in pure Knowledge (*Gnana*) by continuous remembrance of the *Atman*. Therefore, the hearers of Vedanta who want to acquire perfect *Gnana*, which alone can eliminate ignorance and give eternal peace and happiness, must have a pure, calm and concentrated mind. Hence the *Mantra* definitely advises :—

“ नाविरतो दुश्चरितात् नाशान्तो नासमाहितः ।  
नाशान्तमानसो वापि प्रज्ञानेनैव माप्नुयात् ॥ ”

“ One who is indulged always in vicious actions, and desirous of various sensual enjoyments, and who has got no concentrated mind cannot attain *Atman* through Knowledge.” This is the reason why renunciation (*Vairagya*) is considered as an unavoidable *sadhana* for *Brahma Gnana*, everywhere in Vedanta. *Vairagya* can destroy all sorts of desire-dirts and make the mind pure. No other *Upanishad* has so clearly described the full and true nature of healthy *Vairagya* as *Kathopanishad* has done. Nachiketas, the glorious student of *Brahma Vidya* in *Kathopanishad*, was an embodiment of *Vairagya*.

No such great *Adhikari* for *Brahma Vidya* is exhaustively narrated anywhere in the whole *Upanishad literature*. “ तत्रैव वाहा स्तव नृत्यगीते ” “ You may keep If these carriages, these singing and dancing girls,” this prompt and immediate reply to his Acharya, Lord Deval, when these things of sensual enjoyment were offered to him. Yamaraja utterly failed in his attempt to make Nachiketas covetous. By *Vairagya*, and by practising meditation, one's mind becomes slowly concentrated. Concentration of mind is absolutely necessary for the direct perception and realisation of the Self.

By attaining *Yoga*, the concentration of mind, one can realise the *Paramatman* and get established in the Eternal Bliss the Absolute Perfection, beyond all pleasure and pain. What is the nature of the *Yoga* which is described here, as the unavoidable *sadhana* for the *Brahma Gnana* ? *Sruthi* very clearly says :—

“ यदा पञ्चावतिष्ठन्ते ज्ञानानि मनसा सह  
बुद्धिश्चन विचेष्टति तामाहुः परमां गतिं  
तां योगमिति मन्यन्ते स्थिरामिन्द्रियधारणाम् ॥ ”

“ When the five senses and mind becomes controlled and the intellect also becomes steady, then that stage is the highest, and that is called ‘yoga’ by the great Yogis of the past.” Though ancient *Rishis* called this—“ स्थिरामिन्द्रियधारणाम् ”—

the control of the outer senses and the inner mind—as *Yoga* and though this is real *Yoga* which leads us to the self-realisation, perfection and eternal bliss, the word *Yoga* is now-a-days greatly misunderstood by the Eastern and the Western book-readers. They think that *Yoga* means some occult powers and super-human strength of the body and the senses. The exaggerated descriptions of the power of *Kundalini* and its awakening in the books on *Yoga*, make them eager to become a *Yogi*. They want no realisation of the Self. They never practise *Yoga* for *Atmic* realisation. Real *Yoga* is concentration of mind, according to the *Upanishads*, and that is to be practised and attained by a spiritual aspirant.

As there is no possibility of realising the *Atman* without *Vairagya*, and without concentration of mind, every aspirant must try to acquire these two at any cost. This is what the above *Mantra* in *Kathopanishad* means to say. Therefore, first of all, be good, do good actions as the worship of God, meditation upon His form, constant remembrance of Him, etc., and thus purify the mind. Practise *Upasana* also ; that is, do *Japa* and meditation upon the form and qualities of a personal God. By practising selfless service and *Upasana*, the wavering state of mind will end, and the mind will become gradually purified. Then you will be able to realise undoubtedly the *Atman*, and thereafter come to live on the *Atman* which you have intellectually understood by attending to the discourses on *Kathopanishad*.

Never be satisfied by simply attending and hearing the Vedantic discourses. Intellectual knowledge of the *Atman* is only the first stage. Do not think that it is the last and the final stage. Many ladders you have to climb on after the acquisition of this intellectual knowledge, if you must have the bright vision and the blissful experience of the *Atman*. That is the supreme *Brahma Vidya* which the *Kathopanishad* teaches us. Try to reach that final stage by performing continuously severe spiritual *sadhana*s. Never feel contented with the preliminary intellectual knowledge of the Supreme Self in you. Strive to become and be.

## PUBLISHER'S NOTE

*Upanishads* constitute the Bible of Hinduism ; and it is strange that the community of Hindus still continues to be called so, even though for thousands of years, the majority of them were ignorant of what their Bible was. Any other culture would have been extinct in half a period of ignorance ; and Hinduism still holds its sway over us because the fundamentals of our Philosophy are so beautifully interwoven into the very texture of our living. Day to day consciously or unconsciously we are made to live and talk, nay, even think in terms of the great Upanishadic declaration that the Supreme is One-without-a-second.

Of the main ten *Upanishads*, *Kathopanishad* is, though not the oldest or the profoundest, the most popular because of its brevity, its clearness and its tight scheme in which a vivid development of its thoughts is slowly unveiled. Also this *Upanishad* arrests the attention of any student by its purely artistic beauty and its essentially dramatic appeal. Thus we have more editions and translations of *Kathopanishad* in the various languages of the world than of any other *Upanishad*.

There are some (*Vishishtā-Advaitins*) who claim the *Kathopanishad* as the most central text-book for the development of the Hindu theism. Superficially, though this claim can be at places made to seem justified, it is indeed very difficult to establish this affirmation, if we delve deeper into the suggestions of the text.

Sree Ramanuja has not directly commented upon the *Kathopanishad* although he profusely quotes from it in his *Sree Bhashya*. Madhwa's commentary of the *Upanishad* is definitely sectarian.

No student of the scriptures can deny *Kathopanishad* of its importance in the history of the development of the Indian spiritual thought. But our attempt shall not be to fulfil the work of a historian. We shall not feel satisfied merely because we discover that the ideas in this *Upanishad* subscribed themselves to add to the glory of the Indian Philosophical thoughts. Ours is an era of contentions and confusions, and we shall consider our studies of the scriptures fruitful only if we can find in them

a solution for our day's problems. Unless a religion can come to our help in all the problems of our life, that religion is false and deserves to be condemned as such. Our study of the *Upanishad* shall not ignore to discover whether this ancient scripture has any living meaning today.

This *Upanishad* belongs to the *Black-Yajurveda-School* of *Kathakas* and was almost certainly compiled, some research scholars say, in the original home of that School, the *Kuru-Panchala Desha*—the Agra-Delhi Districts. The *Upanishad* as it stands now has two chapters of three *Vallis* each. There is a group of critics who believe that the second chapter is a later addition to the original which contains only the first chapter. Though technically we may accept the arguments raised by these objectors, we, of the present era, should not only accept both, but must feel grateful if any more of such worthy additions can be made to the text-book.

There is an overwhelming evidence at hand to fix the time of *Kathopanishad* at 500 B.C. and that of *Gita* at 250 B.C. ; both fixed according to the Western methods of research and arguments. While questioning the very basis of their calculations, we can very easily conclude one thing from their conclusions, *viz.*, the *Gita* quotes profusely from *Kathopanishad*. Shree Swamiji has during his discourses exhaustively dealt with all such portions and has pointed out their particular references.

175, Rasappa Chetty St.  
Madras-3  
July 1, 1963

Publisher.

## SCIENTISTS OF LIFE

Religion and Science have a great mission and both of them are striving for the same goal of bringing more and more happiness to life. In fact, every piece of knowledge courted and gained is a stepping-stone to a greater possibility for happiness in life. Without becoming a competitive force working against Science, the great thinkers of the past, in their own inward methods, tried to solve the problem of sorrow in life and came to the discovery of the inner Self. Their approach was logical, and their methods scientific. There is nothing mysterious in religion, nothing stupendous, nothing meaningless ; and yet, a modern man of our times, when he thinks in terms of religion, is rather confused. This is true even in the simpler religions of the world, and much more, naturally, it is so in Hinduism.

The modern generation would be only too glad to accept a declaration that Hinduism is a dead religion. This is because our observation of Hinduism is rather superficial. A modern critic compares Hinduism to a tree. Seeing a big, giant tree standing, bereft of leaves, flowers and fruits, in the still wintry morn, one is apt to conclude that the tree is dead. But, if we were to approach the tree for a closer observation and if we discover upon the trunk of the tree at least living parasites, we need not then cut down the tree to find out if the sap is still running. Parasites can thrive only on the sap of a living tree. Similarly, when we find that our religion is seemingly dead, yielding no foliage, smiling forth into no blossoms, giving us no fruits and yet, if our religion provides a thriving field for the weeds of superstition, mystery, magic and foul deceit, to grow upon its structure, we can conclude that it is *not yet* dead.

Just as we would revive such a tree by clearing off the parasites and by feeding the tree with proper manure and water, so too we can revive Hinduism if we know how to remove the overgrowths of superstition and deceits, and then feed the revered old tree with the healthy food of sincerity, faithful alliance and intelligent understanding. Blind faith saves none ; a mere blind faith cannot lead us to any enduring philosophy which will serve us as a true basis for a vital, living culture.



One gets confused to the maximum, especially in Hinduism, because never was this sacred religion confined to a fixed revelation. Compared with other Religions that are now available in the world, Hinduism cannot be even termed as a religion. Hinduism can be at best classified as a progressive, ever-growing tradition which has recognised complete freedom for the individuals to grow as best as they can in a healthy atmosphere of moral life and ethical perfections. The ancient Scientists of life seem to have recognised the fact that by kicking a rose bush we cannot get flowers out of it. But if we allow it to grow fully and freely according to its natural inner calls, within a favourable atmosphere, the flowers blush forth of their own accord.

The religion of a people cannot be fully understood without studying the age and the history of the people who lived it. The great Aryan stock, from across the frontiers of India *via* Afghanistan and the North-Western Frontier, slowly walked in to occupy the area watered by the Indus, and the *Hindu* was in fact a name by which the foreigners indicated the society that lived in the Indus Valley. To that extent, we may even consider Hinduism as a name indicating the geographical area where a certain community of people lived their life, thought their thoughts.

The Aryans, with their Vedic culture, in time swept down across the Deccan to reach the Gangetic Valley. In their procession, they never carried the sword of destruction or the weapons of tyranny. But, on the other hand, they always met brother people in love to teach them and in their turn to learn from them. There were in those days, apart from the Dravidians, many different tribal people. The Aryan visitors met each one of these cultural units and as time went on they absorbed the best they found in the land of their adoption and themselves gave much of their highly developed ideas and philosophy to the then natives of this country.

Thus, in the novel Aryan-way, the Vedic generation tried to solve the problem of the races ; not by the modern methods of elimination, destruction or extermination, but by the peaceful methods of absorption and sublimation. When they found that a local God or ideal was too low to contain within it any

higher inspiration, they never condemned the people for their concept of God or their methods of worship but by supplying them with a greater significance they raised the entire concept into the very pedestal of the Vedic Truths. These are all historical facts accepted, recognised and declared by the great research scholars working on India's ancient civilisation.

What I want to emphasize with these statements is the fact that Hinduism, as it stands today, may be too much of a baffling contradiction for many of those who have reached today the Yagnasala. We have not come here in the blind faith of the old but we have reached here in an active intellectual admiration, ready to question, and never ready to accept any declaration as such simply because it is ancient. Simple faith cannot save us now ; therefore, I must request you all not to enter this Yagnasala in an innocent faith that dullens the intellect but reach here in a burning spirit of research and scholarship, in a gushing spirit of seeking and discovery, to know, to question and to understand.

In thus trying to understand the Great Rishis, if we may have to adopt new traditions, we must do so and accommodate the new social demands of our present era. We shall certainly do so and such an act shall not be considered as a blind revolt. The entire history of Hinduism is a story of repeated revolutions wherein, according to the demands of the society, it had been always growing into fresh traditions from time to time and from place to place. In all these differences which are in fact only superficial, there has ever been a chord of unity. What I say is fully upheld by the sheer fact that the Hindu culture is distinctly separate from all others and notably the perfect when compared with that of any other country or people in the world. The readiness to accept the new tradition according to the demands of the age is the healthiest sign that guaranteed Hinduism such a long historical existence.

Even today, when this religion has come to the very low depths of its disastrous decadence, we can say that it still lives, for in spite of the organised and sincere missionary work, supported often officially and always unofficially by the mighty powers of the world, no substantial conversions have taken

place in India. This is a fact which even the Christian and Muslim missionaries should accept with regret in their softer moments of honest confessions.

If there is thus a compelling charm about Hinduism which binds us to it even when we are quite unconscious of it, what can be the secret of this irresistible unity and sustaining energy? This question has been answered by even the worst critics by their notable and honest observations that Hinduism still holds on to its place in the field of religion simply because its vital truths are so beautifully intertwined with a 'way of living' that the true seekers can, not only in the spiritual field, but also in the material day-to-day life, carve out a greater share of happiness and earn deeper joy of perfection. To consider that religion is divorced from life is to hoot high our ignorance of religion. The sapless activities of temple-going, flower-throwing, money-giving or pundit-feeding, which have come to be called religion today, may not have a direct connection with life but if we rightly understand our religion by a direct study of our very Bibles—the *Upanishads*—we shall certainly come to appreciate this great truth.

All true religions spring from life, exist in life, and their fulfilment is in life. A religion which is divorced of life is no religion at all for the living, and since we are all living, that religion alone can save us, thrill us, help us, which has an implicit connection with life.

As I said in the beginning, the Great Rishis—the Scientists of life—without quarrelling with the material sciences, delved themselves into the very stuff called Life and tried to discover what would bring more and more happiness into the ordinary man's daily existence. It seems that they worked out their details as scientists; argued quite cogently and concluded quite reasonably. Life is constituted of experiences and experiences can be gained only when the individuals come in contact with the external world and react with it. Merely because we hear of a beautiful spot in Germany, we cannot experience its beauty; we can do so only when we come in contact and experience it ourselves.

The Scientists are, we all know, trying to increase the

happiness in life by reordering and controlling the world of objects ; while these Scientists of life—the Great Rishis—living in retirement and perfect detachment, experimenting with man as he lives his life, came to take up the individual as their field of enquiry. This is quite reasonable too, perhaps, more reasonable than the material scientists ; for, however, elaborately and wonderfully well we may organise our little world, unless we, who are to live in it, know ourselves—organise ourselves—we cannot, out of that arrangement of things, gain to ourselves any happy and satisfactory experience.

In thus enquiring into the constitution of the individual with reference to his experience, they came to perceive that though physically each one of us is considered as a unit, when we come in contact with the objects and react with them, we do so not as a single individual but, as if we are four distinct entities in ourselves. Thus, when I demand from life my happiness and in my understanding I interpret happiness as that which is available when I have a palatial building with modern furniture and up-to-date fittings, I shall go on struggling hard in my life to fulfil that plan. In fulfilling my desire, supposing I, through means unfair, earn my wealth, build my building and complete my dream ; when I walk into that well-fitted fulfilment of my ambition and try to enjoy it, I start having a gnawing sensation deep within me. My sinful acts rebound and storm my mental poise and I feel disturbed although physically I have got my dreams satisfied.

Supposing, I could satisfy my ambition not only physically but even mentally then I suffer from intellectual disturbances. For example, I have my political convictions, by study, by faith and belief ; say, I am a socialist. Unfortunately, in my country, there is a regime which is neither capitalistic nor communistic. I have my own desires of living a life of respect and plenty, and the Government offers me a big job to serve them, say, in one of the extravagant diplomatic posts. My physical ambition, my mental dreams have all been satisfied, but, then, unfortunately, there is disturbance from the level of the intellect since my intellectual conviction is against what I have to do every day as my duty in supporting the policy of a

Government which believes in another political philosophy of life contrary to my faith.

Even when—and how rare are they—a few of us can satisfy the physical, the mental and the intellectual entities, there is still a possibility of dissatisfaction and disturbance. The story of prince Siddhartha is a *lofty example, worthy of being stated here*. He had wealth, status, people to love and adore him, himself was highly educated and had scholars around him, and yet there was *deep* within him a dissatisfaction which compelled him to run away from all other circumstances and seek the highest satisfaction for the innermost spirit.

The tragedy of life is the tragedy of this incessant tussle among these four inner personalities. When they are dis-integrated, each one pulls in a direction opposite to the other and they shatter the individual's poise and equilibrium so that in no given set of circumstances can it find a complete joy. From these observations, the conclusions of the Rishis were not far away. They declared that happiness is possible only in proportion to the amount of integration that the individual has gained within himself.

If there is any technique by which these four distinct factors in us can be harmonised, developed and kept under control so that all the four can together in consonance act as an united individual under any given set of circumstances, we can earn an unbroken life of inspired joy and peace. Any scheme that thrills even the body shall at once be able to satisfy all the four factors. This was the logic with which the Great Rishis started their enquiry after the Self.

To declare, "if the sun were  $1\frac{1}{2}$  feet farther away from us, India would have been much cooler place to live in" is no declaration at all if our demand is for an immediate solace from the tyranny of the summer. By merely declaring a philosophy, however idealistic it may be, it cannot bring into our life happiness immediately unless we can transcribe and translate that philosophy into the vitals of our life. The Great Rishis of old not only declared the philosophy but also prescribed a certain technique by applying which the above-described integration of personality was possible. The declarations of

the Science of Life and the descriptions of the technique of living together constitute the contents of the Upanishads. There is no Upanishad which does not contain both these vital aspects : the " statement of the goal " and the " description of the way ". The *Upanishad* that we have chosen—KATHOPANISHAD—also gives us a complete statement regarding both the ' goal ' and the ' way '.

### THE PATHS

All practices in *Yoga* are a training consciously given by the seeker to his mind so that it may learn to control the production, the quality, quantity, and the nature of the flow of the thoughts in it. Unlike other religions of the world, Hinduism does not preach one beaten-out narrow foot-path. We have, to the ample Halls of the one Temple, four distinct routes laid out and everyone of them leads to the same sanctum of Truth.

The Paths treading which the integration of personality can be effectively brought about are called : (i) the Path of Devotion, (ii) the Path of Knowledge, (iii) the Path of *Karma*, and (iv) the Path of Mysticism. An unprejudiced scientific study of the literature discussing these seemingly different techniques, in a spirit of impartial research and enquiry, shall reveal to anyone of us that the goal reached by all these Paths is one and the same and the main scientific theory working in all techniques is also the same. Even in the rules of life laid out for the practitioner there is uniformity everywhere.

If they are all one and the same, why have they given us such a variety ? Different Paths are given to us only to accommodate the different temperaments and moods in us. All men are not of the same character or temperament. Each one of us has our own tastes. In order to satisfy all of them, the Great Masters of old divided the entire humanity into four groups : (a) Men of heart, (b) Men of head, (c) Men of head and heart and (d) those who do not fall in any one of these above three categories : in short, men with not a fully developed head and heart. These types, to an extent, in terms of the modern psychology fall in the groups termed as (i) the emotional, (ii) the

intellectual, (iii) the active and (iv) the mystical.

To the emotional is advised the Path of Devotion. The devotee, temperamentally an individual rich in love, is advised to love the Lord through constant remembrance and meditation. To a love-heart, there is no greater vocation than to live brooding over the beloved. Thus, the mind is constantly made to revel with the form, glory and divine nature of its beloved. In direct proportion to the intensity of its love, it becomes single-pointed, ruled by one unbroken thought. At that stage of single-pointed mental integration, the devotee experiences the Lord of his heart everywhere around him, about him. In an ecstasy of joy-madness, the devotee roams about in the love gardens of his mind which is sweetly scented by an all-pervading spirit of love. This stage is called *Para Bhakti*, Supreme Love.

A devotee in the *Para Bhakti* stage, at the culminating point of his *Prem* comes to ask a question unto himself : " *All round I see the all-pervading Lord. I am his love. He, my beloved. I see nothing else, I see only Him, I see Him everywhere, but, then who am I ?* "

This is the flame that comes to be applied to the prepared pile of emotions and in a blinding flash of illumination—Supreme the entire bundle of *Maya* disturbances and *Maya* equipments gets once for ever blasted into nothingness. With this supreme question, the devotee looks within. At that stage of devotion-prepared-intensity he can see nothing but the Lord whether inside or outside and in that inward gaze, he meets Himself, his own devoted beloved : he the devotee ends in the conflagration—the Lord alone thereafter exists, as Eternally Full as ever—that rises with this Divine experience.

But to a man of intellect, this method is not available. He has no heart to melt and flow out in an endless gush of love for a Lord with a form and a name. The intellect, as it were, clogs the heart holes. To him, the Great Rishis gave the molten essence of reasoning, that could burn down even mountainous doubts and cut out a trailing road through the deepest jungles of confusions and despairs. Lit by the Light of Knowledge, held aloft at the peaks of the *Srutis*, the adventurer on the uphill path of knowledge moves steadily onward, higher and

higher, from the low animal passions and egoistic values of sense-life. Men of intellect as they are, the devotees of philosophy have carefully valued the life of urges and passions and have discovered for themselves their imperfections and false glitterings. Since they have no desires, their minds are not running away into the world of sense-objects. Thus, even before they reach the portals of philosophy, they have already gained a certain degree of mental integration. And when they are made to contemplate intensively and continuously upon the endless logic and pure reasoning in the pregnant Upanishad formulæ, their minds, lifted to the white-heat of intense meditation, volatilizes, as it were, leaving behind only the gorgeous experience of the Supreme Reality.

There is a great section of men, at all times, in all societies, who are temperamentally ever vacillating between the heart-values and the head-principles. They are at one moment perceptibly emotional and yet in the following moment they prove themselves to be acutely rational. To such men of "mixed temperament" is advised the *Karma Yoga* : the Path of Selfless Action. *Karma Yoga* in fact is a happy blending of the emotional joys of devotion with the intellectual values of Vedanta. When the love element of *Bhakti* gets mixed well with the Non-dual, Eternal-Perfection-idea of Vedanta, we have the perfect technique of selfless *seva*.

*Hatha Yoga* is a method by which, through highly evolved scheme of exercises, the body sheath and the vital-air sheath are so tuned up, that a fully evolved and highly integrated mind is generated within. This prepared mind is directed towards the contemplation of the mystic power ' *Kundalini* ', lying dormant in the seeker. Here again mental development, purification of thoughts, regulation of desires and a final integration of all thoughts are achieved.

It is only the average Hindus' colossal ignorance of the glories of their own religion that makes them freeze into tight sects and classes, schools and creeds, that makes them bicker, quarrel and fight among themselves. The creed of *Bhakti* need not grin at the Philosophy of the Vedanta ; the Vedantin cannot be fit for the perfections promised by the *Sruthis*, but



can be fit only for a lunatic asylum, if he laughs at and condemns the glorious Path of *Devotion*. Swami Vivekananda had powerfully put it : " Vedanta without *Bhakti* is madness, and *Bhakti* without Vedanta is superstition."

The above is but a hasty bundle of digested notes upon a library of works existing on the different *Yogas*. If you think over these ideas, it will become clear to you that no *Yoga* is contradictory to another. In fact every one of them is complementary to all the rest. And yet, we choose to fight between ourselves, not because the *Sastras* sanction it, but because we have not curbed our animalism, and as animals we ought to fight.

Though the four Paths look to be different they are only different in their early stages of application. In fact, all the four Paths meet at one and the same junction, technically called as *Pratyahara*. *Pratyahara* is a stage wherein the seekers, treading the different Paths, gain for themselves mental capacity to withdraw the whole mind from its wanderings and to apply the entire mental energy at a single thought or a line of thoughts which the seeker has chosen for the mind to play upon. Having reached this stage of mental dexterity in its withdrawal and application, all the students of every *Yoga* thereafter walk hand in hand in the spiritual path covering the same stages in their pilgrimage known as *Dharana* (concentration), *Dhyana* (meditation) and *Samadhi* (the final realisation).

*Pratyahara* is the beginning point of personality-integration in man. A man is what his thoughts make him to be, and this has been fully explained in modern psychology too when it is declared ' thought is the man '. If there be an individual whose thoughts are running through disintegrated channels and are getting lost in a wandering maze of negative thinking, he becomes an impotent man with no dynamism at all in life. To rehabilitate such a man, to discover in him the full potency and strength, is the essential function of Vedanta. Though, according to Vedanta, " man is divine in his Self " with no limitations upon him, we find that he is in his thoughts, as available in this work-a-day world, an insignificant creature, perverted and crooked.

To persuade such an individual to give up his false values

and to supply him with the right attitude of living, to help him to discover in himself the energies required to live those new values, to encourage him constantly in his endeavour to grow himself thus--this constitutes the entire scheme of all religions by whatever name you may call them, in whatever clime they may flourish. These are accomplished in the above Paths already described ; each one of them is a method which directly helps man to rediscover himself.

These ideas, as expressed in the above assertion, may become too mouthful for the modern students of science to swallow down. This spirit of enquiry is no bane upon our generation. The inimitable *Rishis* of the *Upanishads* too have provided enough logic in their discussions to convince even the best of us. The seers of the *Upanishads*, when they took the individual man, as I said earlier, in their enquiries after the fundamental in life, they had to dissect the individual personality and discover within man the Great Life. Just as a Botanist examines a specimen flower by stripping its petals and observes each part very carefully and systematically, so too, the great master of the *Taittiriya Upanishad* pursued his observations on man. It is the only *Upanishad* wherein we get a complete attempt at an analysis of man as he lives in life. The man of the Physiologist is only a "combustion engine" having a fleshy form which almost functions according to the fuel supplied ! But to the *Rishis*, man has, besides his body, a life of thoughts and a noble mission with his ideas. On analysis man is found that, in the silent moments of physical, mental and intellectual satisfactions he has yet a deeper personality full of impatience and urges, cravings and demands, too deep for words to express, and yet, too poignant to be ignored. These silent calls from the depth of man to achieve, to fulfil, to identify with the entire life is called the cry of the spirit.

In the modern available philosophies of the world we rarely find the thinkers peeping into human existence beyond the outer fringes of the intellect. In fact we find that the modern age has a lot of scientific data to give regarding its observations on the world outside and a fairly good amount of information about the body. No doubt, the thinkers of the modern age

have made some daring attempts to declare their observations regarding the mind ; but even the best of them does not, according to me, seem to have penetrated sufficiently deep to touch even the outer fringes of pure intellectual life. May be, there are some exceptional few ; but, I dare say, the modern thinkers' conclusions are hasty and vague, their arguments weak and incomplete, their declarations uncertain and ill-defined.

After a full study of the modern available literature upon the personality of man, when a serious student turns his gaze to the wealth of details available in the *Upanishads*, he discovers with relief that though the language may be unfamiliar and the style of expression rather tedious, in the descriptions of the *Upanishads*, there is a complete analysis indeed more scientific than a science could ever be. According to his conclusions, he declares man as nothing but a Spiritual Existence, as it were, enveloped with concentric circles of matter with various degrees of intensity. He claims to prove that the innermost layer is the subtlest while the outermost one, the body, is the grossest matter envelopment around the Spirit.

We shall now consider the constitution of this bio-psycho-mechanism of man as described by the *Rishis* of the Scriptures according to their lived experiences in life.

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 saints of the old, goes beyond the themes of the Western biologists. The theory propounded by the Vedantic Seers is diagrammatically represented on page xxii.

It is well known that a 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 flown 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 is not in this Swami, this very moment onwards he should stop all discourses ! 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.

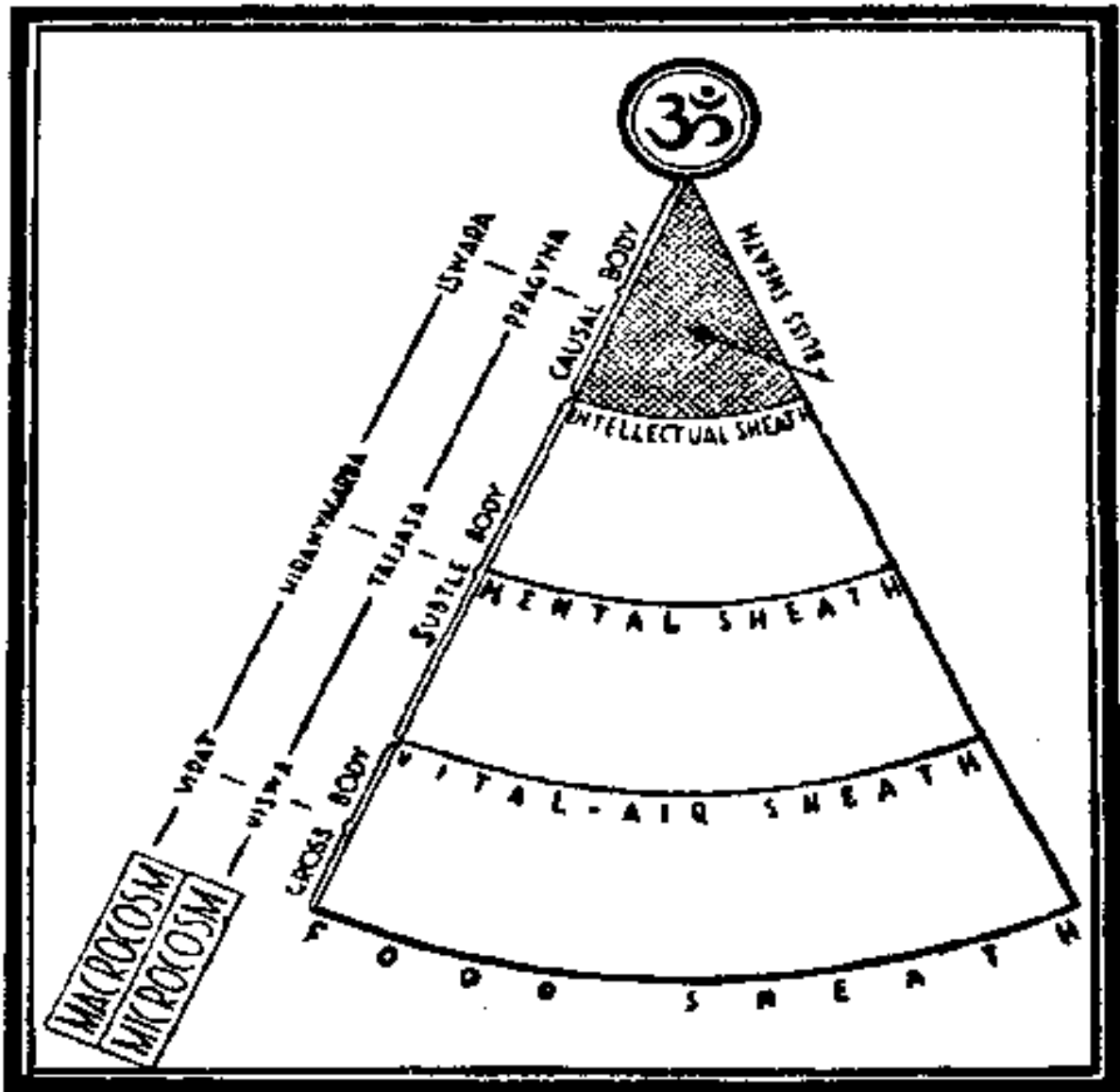
This divine Spark of Life, the Spiritual Centre—called the Atman in Vedanta—is considered to have been enveloped by the various layers of matter of varying degrees of grossness. The outermost shell, the grossest is the body ; and we almost all through our conscious existence go about conceiving ourselves 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 is our Self, our Real Nature, Omnipotent and Omniscient. This Spark of Life has come to be in a sense, enveloped by matter and the various envelopments that are called in Vedanta as Sheaths. The term 'sheath' indicates that just as the sword and the sheath have between them no contact with each other, 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 ; just as the firmness and sharpness of the sword give the status for the sheath.

There are thus five distinct sheaths—the Food Sheath, the outermost, the Vital-Air Sheath lining it internally, the Mental Sheath within, and still interior the Intellectual Sheath and lastly, the subtlest of all, the Bliss Sheath (*Refer the Diagram on page xxii*).

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.

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



PERSONALITY OF MAN

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 envelops all, and none envelops It", say the *Sruthis* : it is All-pervading.

We shall now try to study the compositions 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 in 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 being something that rises from food, exists in food, and goes back to be food, naturally, it 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* (the five Vital-air).

*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, desires and the like, and they constantly maintain 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 had examined so far.

*The Intellectual Sheath.*—In fact, in the Vedantic literature, very often we find that the mind and the intellect are considered

to be one and the same. Intellect is mind when it comes 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 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-consciousness man is experiencing a joyous condition wherein, none of their known experiences is repeated. But all the same, the joy felt is positively known, that is, it is a *nothing* which means No-Thing.

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 as 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 there is 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 to 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 will be the beams of consciousness that shoot out from that individual and the saint or the prophet is one who has the maximum awareness manifest in him; the *Śruti* says "*Brahmavith Brahmaiva*

*Bhavathi*” (knower of the 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 supermanhood.

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.\* Thus, at one moment we are the body : as when we say “ I have grown dark ”, 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 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 outer 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 painful ulcer in his forearm giving him unending tortures to the mind. A doctor approaches him and advises that he must get his arm *amputated*. The patient readily allows his arm to be 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, the revolutionary is ready to suffer any amount of physical discomfort and even mental tortures in order to preserve the convictions of his intellect :

\* The ego that arises in us when we identify with the Physical Body is called the *Visva* ; with the Subtle Body is called the *Tajasa* and with the Causal Body the *Pragna*. More details regarding these can be had in Sree Swamiji’s *Discourses on Mandukya with Karika* published in the Delhi Yagna, by K. Annadhanam, 4, Kashmere Gate, Delhi.



that is to say, when he identifies himself with his intellect, in order to satisfy the inner sheaths, 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 ignored and suffered all their sheaths to be ripped open.

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 who cared not to pay his obeisances to the temporal victor for which the saint was put in jail. Next day, Alexander went to the cage and introducing himself as the victorious emperor, commanded the saint to seek 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 obstruct the sun's light, please move away a little. This is all the boon I ask of thee."

Rediscovery of the Self is not only the ending of all our confusions and sense of imperfections, but also at once an ascent to a state of Supermanhood 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 spiritual ritual in which our false animal values of life are offered as oblations into the well-lit fires of our discrimination. 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 withdraw our identifications with the outer envelopments and turn inward, as it were, in a spirit of self-discovery ; this is accomplished through meditation.\*

\* Read Swamiji's *Meditation and Life*, III Edition, enlarged and improved.

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.*

OM SHANTI--SHANTI--SHANTI

# KATHOPANISHAD

ॐ सह नावतु । सह नो भुनक्तु ।  
सह वीर्यं करवावहै ।  
तेजस्वि नावधीतमस्तु । मा निद्विषावहै ।  
ॐ शान्तिः । शान्तिः । शान्तिः ।

*Om Saha Navatlu.  
Saha No Bhunakthu.  
Saha Veeryamkaravavahai.  
Thejaswinavadheethamasthu.  
Maa Vidvishavahai.*

*Om Shanthihi ! Shanthihi !! Shanthihit !!!*

Let Him protect us both. May He Bless us with the Bliss of Knowledge.  
Let us exert together. May what we study be well studied. May we not  
hate (quarrel with each other).

**OM PEACE ! PEACE !! PEACE !!!**