# THE MESSAGE
## OF
# THE UPANISADS

*AN EXPOSITION OF THE UPANIṢADS*
*IN THE LIGHT OF*
*MODERN THOUGHT AND MODERN NEEDS*

SWAMI RANGANATHANANDA

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## HINTS ON TRANSLITERATION AND PRONUNCIATION

In the book, Devanāgarī characters are transliterated according to the scheme adopted by the International Congress of Orientalists at Athens in 1912 and since then generally acknowledged to be the only rational and satisfactory one. In it the inconsistency, irregularity, and redundancy of English spelling are ruled out: f, q, w, x, and z are not called to use; one fixed value is given to each letter. According to this scheme:

| | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| a | stands | for | अ | and | sounds | like | o | in | come |
| ā | ,, | ,, | आ | ,, | ,, | ,, | a | ,, | far |
| i | ,, | ,, | इ | ,, | ,, | ,, | i | ,, | bit |
| ī | ,, | ,, | ई | ,, | ,, | ,, | ee | ,, | feel |
| u | ,, | ,, | उ | ,, | ,, | ,, | u | ,, | full |
| ū | ,, | ,, | ऊ | ,, | ,, | ,, | oo | ,, | cool |
| ṛ | ,, | ,, | ऋ | ,, | may be pronounced like ri in ring | | | | |
| e | ,, | ,, | ए | ,, | sounds like | | a | in | cake |
| ai | ,, | ,, | ऐ | ,, | ,, | ,, | i | ,, | mite |
| o | ,, | ,, | ओ | ,, | ,, | ,, | o | ,, | note |
| au | ,, | ,, | औ | ,, | ,, | ,, | ou | ,, | count |
| ṁ | ,, | ,, | अं | (anusvāra) and sounds like m in | | | | | some |
| ḥ | ,, | ,, | अः | (visarga), | | ,, | ,, | soft, half h | |
| ' | (apostrophe) stands for ऽ (elided a (अ) ) | | | | | | | | |
| k | stands | for | क् | and | sounds | like | k | | |
| kh | ,, | ,, | ख् | ,, | ,, | ,, | kh | in silk-hat (uttered quickly together) | |
| g | ,, | ,, | ग् | ,, | ,, | ,, | g | ,, | go |
| gh | ,, | ,, | घ् | ,, | ,, | ,, | gh | ,, | log-hut |
| ṅ | ,, | ,, | ङ | ,, | ,, | ,, | ng | ,, | sing |
| c | ,, | ,, | च् | ,, | ,, | ,, | ch | ,, | church |
| ch | ,, | ,, | छ् | ,, | ,, | ,, | chh | in church-hill | |
| j | stands | for | ज् | and | sounds | like | j | in | jug |
| jh | ,, | ,, | झ् | ,, | ,, | ,, | dgeh | ,, | hedgehog |
| ñ | ,, | ,, | ञ् | ,, | ,, | ,, | n | ,, | singe |
| ṭ | ,, | ,, | ट् | ,, | ,, | ,, | t | ,, | curt |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ṭh | ,, | ,, | ठ् | ,, | ,, | ,, | th | ,, | hot-house |
| ḍ | ,, | ,, | ड् | ,, | ,, | ,, | d | ,, | bird |
| ḍh | ,, | ,, | ढ् | ,, | ,, | ,, | dh | ,, | red-hot |
| ṇ | ,, | ,, | ण् | ,, | ,, | (cerebral n) | | ,, | bond |
| t | ,, | ,, | त् | ,, | ,, | ,, | t soft as in French | | |
| th | ,, | ,, | थ् | ,, | ,, | ,, | th | ,, | thunder |
| d | ,, | ,, | द् | ,, | ,, | ,, | th | ,, | though |
| dh | ,, | ,, | ध् | ,, | ,, | ,, | th | | breathe-hard |
| n | ,, | ,, | न् | ,, | ,, | ,, | n | ,, | pen |
| p | ,, | ,, | प् | ,, | ,, | ,, | p | ,, | pun |
| ph | ,, | ,, | फ् | ,, | ,, | ,, | ph | ,, | top-hat |
| b | ,, | ,, | ब् | ,, | ,, | ,, | b | ,, | bat |
| bh | ,, | ,, | भ् | ,, | ,, | ,, | bh | ,, | abhor |
| m | ,, | ,, | म् | ,, | ,, | ,, | m | ,, | man |
| y | ,, | ,, | य् | ,, | ,, | ,, | y | ,, | young |
| r | ,, | ,, | र् | ,, | ,, | ,, | r | ,, | rust |
| l | ,, | ,, | ल् | ,, | ,, | ,, | l | ,, | lump |
| v | ,, | ,, | व् | ,, | ,, | ,, | v | ,, | levy |
| ś | ,, | ,, | श् | ,, | ,, | ,, | (palatal s) | | ship |
| ṣ | ,, | ,, | ष् | ,, | ,, | ,, | sh | ,, | should |
| s | ,, | ,, | स् | ,, | ,, | ,, | s | ,, | sun |
| h | ,, | ,, | ह् | ,, | ,, | ,, | h | ,, | home |

*The following points may also be noted:*

(1) All Sanskrit words, except when they are proper nouns, or have come into common use in English, or represent a class of literature, cult, sect, or school of thought, are italicized.

(2) Anglicized Sanskrit words like 'kārmic', 'saṁsāric', 'Arhathood', etc. are romanized.

(3) Current geographical names, except in cases where their Sanskrit forms are given, or in special cases where the context requires it, and all modern names from the commencement of the nineteenth century are given in their usual spelling and without diacritical marks.

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# INTRODUCTION

## THE CHARM AND POWER OF THE UPANISADS

*The Message of the Upaniṣads* is a study, verse by verse, of three of the principal Upanisads, namely, *Īśā, Kena,* and *Kaṭha.* The first contains eighteen, the second thirty-five, and the third one hundred and nineteen verses. Though constituting a small portion of the total Upaniṣadic literature, they yet contain a lucid exposition of all the essential ideas of this immortal literature.

Scholars are divided as to the date of the composition of the Upaniṣads. Many of them are agreed, however, that most of the principal Upanisads belong to the period prior to the advent of Buddha in the seventh century before Christ. There are over two hundred Upanisads, many of them sectarian in character and palpably post-Buddhistic and even post-Saṅkarācārya.

### *The Principal Upaniṣads*

The principal Upanisads are accepted to be those which Saṅkarācārya (A.D. 788-820) chose to comment upon; they are ten in number and are enumerated in the Indian tradition as follows: *Īśā, Kena, Kaṭha, Praśna, Muṇḍaka, Māṇḍūkya, Taittirīya, Aitareya, Chāndogya,* and *Bṛhadāraṇyaka.*

According to some scholars, Saṅkara also commented on an eleventh Upaniṣad, the *Svetāśvatara.* In his commentary on the *Brahma-Sūtra,* he refers to four more, namely, *Kauṣītakī, Jābāla, Mahānārāyaṇa,* and *Paiṅgala.*

The *Īśā Upaniṣad* embodies in its very opening verse the central theme of all the Upaniṣads, namely, the spiritual unity and solidarity of all existence.

The *Kena* illumines the nature of knowledge by pointing out the eternal knower behind all acts of knowing, and purifies man's concept of ultimate reality of all touch of finitude and relativity by revealing its character as the eternal Self of man and the Self of the universe.

The *Kaṭha* holds a special fascination for all students of the Upanisads for its happy blend of charming poetry, deep mysticism, and profound philosophy; it contains a more unified exposition of

Vedānta than any other single Upaniṣad; its charm is heightened by the two characters of its dialogue, namely, old Yama, the teacher, and young Naciketā, the student.

The *Praśna*, as its name implies, is an Upaniṣad of questions; each of its six chapters comprises a question asked by each of a group of six inquiring students on various aspects of Vedānta, and the answers given by their teacher, the sage Pippalāda.

The *Muṇḍaka*, after classifying all knowledge into *parā*, higher, and *aparā*, lower, and describing all science, art, literature, politics, and economics—in fact, all positive knowledge, the knowledge of the changeful many—as *aparā*, and boldly including even the holy Vedas and all sacred books in this category, proclaims *that one knowledge* as *parā* 'by which the imperishable changeless reality (of the One behind the many) is realized'. And the Upaniṣad sings in ecstasy the glorious vision of the One in the many.

In the brief compass of its twelve verses of condensed thought, the *Māṇḍūkya* surveys the whole of experience through a study of the three states of waking, dream, and dreamless sleep, and reveals the Ātman, the true Self of man, the *Turīya* or the Fourth, as it puts it, as pure consciousness, eternal and non-dual. It proclaims in its second verse the infinite dimension of man in a pregnant utterance—one of the four *mahāvākyas* or 'great utterances' of the Upaniṣads: *ayam ātmā brahma*—'This Ātman (Self of man) is Brahman.'

The *Taittirīya*, after majestically proclaiming that 'the knower of Brahman attains the Supreme': *Brahmavidāpnoti param*, describes the five *kośas* or sheaths that enclose and hide Brahman, and demonstrates the technique of piercing these sheaths of relativity and finitude with a view to reaching the infinite and the eternal at the core of experience. It also provides a scientific definition of Brahman as 'That from which all these beings are born, by which, after being born, they live, and into which they merge when they cease to be'.

The *Aitareya* establishes the spiritual character of the Absolute through a discussion of the nature of the Self of man, and proclaims this truth in another of the four *mahāvākyas* (V. 3): *Prajñānaṁ brahma*—'Brahman is pure Consciousness.'

The *Chāndogya* introduces us to charming truth-seekers like Satyakāma, Śvetaketu, and Nārada, and outstanding spiritual

teachers like Āruṇi, Sanatkumāra, and Prajāpati. Through several illuminating teacher-student dialogues, the Upaniṣad helps us to discriminate the reality of being from the appearance of becoming. In a brief utterance of deep spiritual and philosophical import, treated as another of the four *mahāvākyas*, it sings in refrain the divinity of man: *tat tvam asi*—'That thou art.' It prescribes a knowledge of this innate divinity of man as the one remedy for the deeper ills of life (VI. 8. 7): *tarati śokam ātmavit*—'The knower of the Ātman crosses all sorrow.' In its profoundly human episode of the discipleship of Indra under Prajāpati, it instructs us in the true nature and technique of man's spiritual quest and the blessings that flow from spirituality. It is an impressive account of man's spiritual education, his growth from worldliness to spirituality. It points out the limitations of materialism as a philosophy of life and the evils that flow from it.

The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka*, the longest of the Upaniṣads, is, as its name implies, a big (*bṛhat*) forest (*araṇya*) of philosophical thought and spiritual inspiration. Four outstanding personalities illumine its pages—two men and two women—Janaka, the philosopher-king, Yājñavalkya, the philosopher-sage, Maitreyī, the deeply spiritual wife of Yājñavalkya, and Gārgī, the *vācaknavī*, the 'gifted woman speaker and philosopher', who is foremost among the questioners of Yājñavalkya in philosophical debate. The Upaniṣad majestically expounds, through its fascinating dialogues conducted by these outstanding and other lesser personalities, the central theme of all the Upaniṣads, namely, the divinity of man and the spiritual solidarity of the whole universe in Brahman. It contains another of the four *mahāvākyas* (I.4.10), namely, *ahaṁ brahmāsmi*—'I am Brahman', besides the *ayam ātmā brahma* of the *Māṇḍūkya* already referred to. It dares to characterize Brahman as 'the fearless', and presents its realization by man as the attainment, *here* and *now*, of the state of absolute fearlessness and fullness of delight.

### *From Obscurity to Prominence*

It goes to the eternal credit of Śaṅkara that, through his masterly commentaries on the principal Upaniṣads, he brought out of obscurity this immortal literature, as also the great *Bhagavad-Gītā*, and made them accessible and intelligible to a wider audience; and that audience has been steadily widening ever since, aided by the contributions of subsequent commentators, thinkers, and sages,

until, in the present age, thanks to the techniques of modern western civilization, the whole world has become its actual or potential audience. Apart from the great western orientalists, whose translations and expositions brought this and other books of the Indian tradition to the attention of scholars in East and West, it was from Swami Vivekananda, the most authentic voice of Vedānta in the modern age, that vast masses of men and women in both the hemispheres became drawn to the spiritual charm and rational strength of this literature and to a recognition of its relevance to man in the modern age. In his lecture on 'Vedānta and Its Application to Indian Life', the Swami says (*Complete Works*, Vol. III, Eighth Edition, pp. 237-38):

'Strength, strength is what the Upaniṣads speak to me from every page. This is the one great thing to remember, it has been the one great lesson I have been taught in my life. Strength, it says, strength, O man, be not weak. Are there no human weaknesses?—says man. There are, say the Upaniṣads, but will more weakness heal them, would you try to wash dirt with dirt? Will sin cure sin, weakness cure weakness.... Ay, it is the only literature in the world where you find the word *abhīḥ* 'fearless', used again and again; in no other scripture in the world is this adjective applied either to God or to man.... And the Upaniṣads are the great mine of strength. Therein lies strength enough to invigorate the whole world. The whole world can be vivified, made strong, energized through them. They will call with trumpet voice upon the weak, the miserable, and the down-trodden of all races, all creeds, all sects, to stand on their feet and be free. Freedom—physical freedom, mental freedom, and spiritual freedom—are the watchwords of the Upaniṣads.'

Śaṅkara's commentaries on these Upaniṣads, especially on those of their passages pregnant with philosophical and spiritual import, are masterpieces of philosophical discussion illumined by deep spiritual insights. His masterly handling of the Sanskrit language in these commentaries gives us a prose which is marked by brevity and vigour, simplicity and poetic charm.

### *What the Upaniṣads Contain*

In the Upaniṣads, we get an intelligible body of verified and verifiable spiritual insights mixed with a mass of myths and legends and cosmological speculations relating to the nature and origin of the universe. While the former has universal validity, and has a claim on human intelligence in all ages, the latter forswears all such claim. All positivistic knowledge contained in any

literature, including religious literature, is limited and conditioned by the level of contemporary scientific knowledge. Modification, and even scrapping, of much of this knowledge due to subsequent advances has affected the truth-validity of much of man's literary heritage, including his religious and philosophical ones.

The spiritual insights of the Upaniṣads, however, are an exception to this tyranny of time. Subsequent scientific advances have not only not affected their truth-value but have, on the contrary, only helped to reveal the rational basis of their insights and enhance their spiritual appeal. This is no wonder, because these insights are the products of an equally scientific investigation into a different field of experience, namely, the world of man's inner life.

### *Satyasya Satyam*

By sheer speculation on the meaning of the facts of the external world, the Vedic thinkers had earlier arrived at a unitary conception of the universe, at a materialistic monism, through their concepts of *avyakta*, indeterminate nature, or *prāṇa*, cosmic energy. But the culminating point of their discoveries was the spiritual unification of all experience in the Ātman or Brahman: *Brahmaivedaṁ visvamidaṁ variṣṭham*—'All this manifested universe is verily Brahman the Supreme' (*Muṇḍaka*, II. 2. 12); *idaṁ sarvaṁ yadayam ātmā*—'All this (manifested universe) is this Ātman' (*Bṛhadāranyaka*, II. 4. 6); and *tat etat brahma apūrvam anaparam anantaram abāhyam, ayam ātmā brahma sarvānubhūḥ*—'This Brahman is without a prior or a posterior, without interior or exterior, this Ātman is Brahman, the experiencer of everything' (*ibid.*, II. 5. 19).

If everything is the Atman or Brahman, the universe of name and form cannot be an illusion. The Upanisads consider it as *māyā*; but this does not mean illusion. *Māyā* is a mere statement of fact, what we are and what we see around us. It refers to the inner contradictions involved in our experience of the world and in our knowledge of it. These contradictions will remain, say the Upaniṣads, so long as we remain at the sensate level, so long as we fail to take into account the Atman, the Self behind the not-Self, the One behind the many. Yet, all our experiences and knowledge in the sphere of *māyā* are experiences and knowledge of the Atman, coming through the sense-organs. Hence they are not illusory, but true. Man travels, says Swami Vivekananda, not from error to

truth, but from truth to truth, from truth that is lower to truth that is higher. Hence the Upaniṣads describe the world of the not-Self as 'truth' and the Self or Ātman as 'The Truth of truth'. This is conveyed in a significant passage of the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* (II. 1. 20):

*Tasyopaniṣat satyasya satyamiti; prāṇā vai satyaṁ; teṣām eṣa satyam*—'Its (Ātman's) intimate name is "the Truth of truth"; the cosmic energy (*prāṇa*) is, verily, truth; and This (the Ātman) is the truth of that.'

Elucidating this Vedāntic idea, Swami Vivekananda says (*Complete Works*, Vol. V, Seventh Edition, p. 272):

'There is really no difference between matter, mind, and Spirit. They are only different phases of experiencing the One. This very world is seen by the five senses as matter, by the very wicked as hell, by the good as heaven, and by the perfect as God.'

*Inquiry into the 'Within' of Nature*

Pointing out the reason for this change in the field of search from the external to the internal, which occurred in ancient India, and its significance for human thought, Swami Vivekananda says (*ibid.*, Vol. III, Eighth Edition, pp. 330-31):

'Just as the Greek mind, or the modern European mind, wants to find the solution of life and of all the sacred problems of being by searching into the external world, so also did our forefathers; and just as the Europeans failed, they failed also. But the western people never made a move more, they remained there; they failed in the search for the solution of the great problems of life and death in the external world, and there they remained stranded. Our forefathers also found it impossible, but were bolder in declaring the utter helplessness of the senses to find the solution. Nowhere else was the answer better put than in the Upaniṣads: *yato vāco nivartante aprāpya manasā saha*—"From whence words, unable to reach, come back reflected, together with the mind" (*Taittirīya*, II. 4); *na tatra cakṣurgacchati na vāggacchati*—"There the eye cannot go, nor can speech reach" (*Kena*, I. 3). There are various sentences which declare the utter helplessness of the senses, but they did not stop there; they fell back upon the internal nature of man, they went to get the answer from their own soul, they became introspective; they gave up external nature as a failure, as nothing could be done there, as no hope, no answer, could be found; they discovered that dull, dead matter would not give them truth, and they fell back upon the shining soul of man, and there the answer was found.'

Posing the question how the West, which has undoubtedly been in the forefront of advance in several fields of knowledge from the time of the Greeks, could lag behind India in this field of in-

quiry these thousands of years, Professor Max Müller answers (*Three Lectures on the Vedānta Philosophy, London,* 1894, p. 7):

'But if it seems strange to you that the old Indian philosophers should have known more about the soul than Greek or medieval or modern philosophers, let us remember that however much the telescopes for observing the stars of heaven have been improved, the observatories of the soul have remained much the same.'

*Science and Religion*

All science is the search for unity. Vedānta discovered this unity in the Ātman; it followed its own method relevant to this field of inquiry. But it illustrated its conclusions with whatever positive knowledge was available at the time. In recent centuries this knowledge has been advanced radically and vastly by modern science, the impact of which on Vedānta, however, has been most wholesome. In fact, Vedānta hopes for and welcomes further radical advances in modern science by which its own spiritual vision of the One in the many may be corroborated by positive scientific knowledge, so that the spirituality of science and the spirituality of religion may flow as a united stream to fertilize all aspects of human life. Referring to this fact and hope in his 'Paper on Hinduism' read at the Chicago Parliament of Religions on 19 September 1893, Swami Vivekananda says (*Complete Works,* Vol. I, Eleventh Edition, p. 15):

'All science is bound to come to this conclusion in the long run. Manifestation, and not creation, is the word of science today, and the Hindu is only glad that what he has been cherishing in his bosom for ages is going to be taught in more forcible language and with further light from the latest conclusions of science.'

Vedānta is thus both religion and philosophy. As religion, it discovers the truths of the inner world, and fosters the same discovery by others; and as philosophy, it synthesizes this science of the inner world with the other sciences of the outer world, to present a unified vision of total reality, and to impart to human life and character depth of faith and vision along with breadth of outlook and sympathy.

Religion, according to Vedānta, is supersensual knowledge; it is not supernatural, but only supersensual. Vedānta does not speak of any supernatural revelation. What lies within the sphere of the senses is not the concern of religion; nor has it the competence for it, says Vedānta, for that is the field of the positive sciences,

the verdict of which will always hold in this field in preference to the verdict of religion. 'Not even by a hundred statements of the Śruti (body of supersensual knowledge, or scripture), can fire become cold', says Śaṅkara, because it goes against what has been ascertained by sense experience and positive knowledge. On the other hand, the positive sciences have no authority in the supersensual field of experience. They overreach themselves when they pronounce judgements on subjects like soul and God; they may, and often are, competent to provide hints and suggestions; but the inquiry itself is the concern of another science, the science of religion. Clarifying the position of these two types of sciences, Swami Vivekananda says (*Complete Works*, Vol. VI, Sixth Edition, p. 81):

'Religion deals with the truths of the metaphysical world just as chemistry and the other natural sciences deal with the truth of the physical world. The book one must read to learn chemistry is the book of (external) nature. The book from which to learn religion is your own mind and heart. The sage is often ignorant of physical science because he reads the wrong book—the book within; and the scientist is too often ignorant of religion, because he, too, reads the wrong book—the book without.'

### *Śruti versus Smṛti*

The Upaniṣads are an impressive record of this 'reading of the book within'. The scriptures of every religion are such records. But all of them, except the Upaniṣads, contain also a good bit of extraneous matter, not only myths and legends and cosmological theories, which the Upaniṣads also contain, but also a large number of rules and regulations, with their do's and don'ts, to guide the individual and collective conduct and behaviour of their respective followers. The significance of these latter being merely local and temporary, they are not capable of universal application and are not relevant for all time; the fundamental message of all religions, however, derive from their central core of essential spiritual truths which are universal and for all time. *The Upaniṣads are the only sacred books which addressed themselves exclusively to the discovery of these essential spiritual truths and to leading man, irrespective of creed and race, to their realization in his own life.* Indian tradition refers to the Upaniṣads, therefore, as Śruti, as contrasted with another class of religious literature known as Smṛti, including the *Dharma Śāstra*, to which it wisely left the work of forging social rules and regulations in the past, as it would leave it to the political constitutions and social consciences today. To the category of the

Smṛti also belong the sacred books of all the *historical* religions, which derive their origin and authority from a personal founder. Thus, among India's sacred books, the *Gītā*, the *Mahābhārata*, the *Rāmāyaṇa*, and all the Purāṇas are classed as Smṛtis, besides *Manu-smṛti*, *Yājñavalkya-smṛti*, and similar other books of Hindu law. Excepting the Upaniṣads, all other scriptures of religions, in India and outside, contain a mixture of Śruti and Smṛti contents in varying proportions. That is why the Upaniṣads are treated as *the* one Śruti *par excellence*.

*The Sanātana Dharma: Its Uniqueness*

This explains the very high authority and prestige of the Śruti in the Indian tradition; it derives from the verified and verifiable character of its truths and their universality. Accordingly, the Smṛti is always subordinate to the Śruti in spiritual matters. Smṛtis come and go; they change age after age; but the Śruti, according to the penetrating analysis of Śaṅkara (commentary on the *Brahma-Sūtra*, I.1.2), contains *vastutantrajñāna*, 'knowledge of reality as it is', whereas Smṛti contains *puruṣatantrajñāna*, 'knowledge depending on the person', which 'can be modified or altered by human effort': *kartum akartum anyathākartuṁ śakyate*. A Smṛti that sustained society in one age may choke it in another age. As socio-economic conditions change, laws and regulations need to be recast and reinterpreted. Otherwise, they result in strangling the social organism. If the bark that protects the tree fails to grow and expand along with the growth of the tree, it will choke the tree; and if it is a living tree, it will shed that bark and grow a new living bark for itself. Regarding all Smṛtis in general, Ramakrishna's pithy utterance correctly conveys the Indian idea: 'Mughal coins have no *currency* under the (East India) Company's rule.'

Much of the irrelevance of the world's religious traditions today proceeds from their inability to separate the Śruti, or the essential, from the Smṛti, or the obsolete, contents, the *eternal* spiritual *truths* from the *historical* socio-political *dogmas*, in these traditions, and their unwillingness to throw overboard the latter which have ceased to have *any currency value* in the changed conditions, and their incapacity to forge new Smṛtis in response to the new demands. Referring to this, the mathematician-philosopher, A.N. Whitehead says (*Science in the Modern World*, p. 234):

'Religion will not regain its old power until it can face change in the same spirit as does science. Its principles may be eternal,

but the expression of those principles requires continual development.'

Historian Arnold Toynbee also stresses this point in his book, *An Historian's Approach to Religion* (pp. 262-64):

'Thus, in our society in our time, the task of winnowing the chaff away from the grain in mankind's religious heritage is being forced upon us by a conjunction of social and spiritual circumstances....

'In the life of all higher religions, the task of winnowing is a perennial one because their historic harvest is not pure grain. In the heritage of each of the higher religions, we are aware of the presence of two kinds of ingredients. There are essential counsels and truths, and there are non-essential practices and propositions.

'The essential counsels and truths are valid at all times and places, as far as we can see through the dark glass of mankind's experience up to date....

'But at the same time these same higher religions are historical institutions; and they have been making a transit through space-time in which, at every point-moment in their trajectory, they have been encountering the local and temporary circumstances of human life....

'These accidental accretions are the price that the permanently and universally valid essence of a higher religion has to pay for communicating its message to the members of a particular society in a particular stage of this society's history.'

The philosophy and religion that India developed out of the Śruti bears, therefore, a significant title, namely, *sanātana dharma*, 'Eternal Religion'. It derives its authority from its truth-character and not from any person, be he a saint or even an incarnation; and the truth-character of a teaching demands that it be verifiable by all, irrespective of dogma, creed, and race, and at all times. It has, however, a high place for saints and incarnations as exemplars and teachers of the eternal truths of religion, and for the promulgators of social laws and regulations, be they holy or gifted individuals, as in the past, or institutions like the national legislatures or international organizations, as in the present.

Throwing light on this unique characteristic of the *Sanātana Dharma* as derived from the Upaniṣads, Swami Vivekananda says in his lecture on 'The Sages of India' (*Complete Works*, Vol. III, pp. 248-51):

'Two ideals of truth are in our scriptures; the one is what we call the eternal, and the other is not so authoritative, yet binding

under particular circumstances, times, and places. The eternal relations between souls and God are embodied in what we call the Śrutis, the Vedas. The next set of truths is what we call the Smṛtis, as embodied in the words of Manu, Yājñavalkya, and other writers, and also in the Purāṇas, down to the Tantras....

'Another peculiarity is that these Śrutis have many sages as the recorders of the truths in them, mostly men, even some women. Very little is known of their personalities, the dates of their birth, and so forth, but their best thoughts, their best discoveries, I should say, are preserved there, embodied in the sacred literature of our country, the Vedas. In the Smṛtis, on the other hand, personalities are more in evidence. Startling, gigantic, impressive, world-moving persons stand before us, as it were, for the first time, sometimes of more magnitude even than their teachings.

'This is a peculiarity which we have to understand—that our religion preaches an Impersonal-Personal God. It preaches any amount of impersonal laws plus any amount of personality; but the very fountain-head of our religion is in the Śrutis, the Vedas, which are perfectly impersonal; the persons all come in the Smṛtis and Purāṇas—the great *avatāras*, incarnations of God, prophets, and so forth. And this ought also to be observed that, except our religion, every other religion in the world depends upon the life or lives of some personal founder or founders. Christianity is built upon the life of Jesus Christ, Mohammedanism upon Mohammed, Buddhism upon Buddha, Jainism upon the *Jinas*, and so on. It naturally follows that there must be in all these religions a good deal of fight about what they call the *historical* evidences of these great personalities. If at any time the historical evidences about the existence of these personages in ancient times become weak, the whole building of the religion tumbles down and is broken to pieces. We escaped this fate, because our religion is not based on persons but principles. That you obey your religion is not because it came through the authority of a sage, no, not even of an incarnation. Kṛṣṇa is not the authority of the Vedas, but the Vedas are the authority of Kṛṣṇa himself. His glory is that he is the greatest preacher of the Vedas that ever existed. So with the other incarnations; so with all our sages.'

By Śruti is generally meant the Vedas; specifically, it means the Upaniṣads, they being the Vedānta, the *anta*, literally the end or concluding portion, but in a deeper sense, the very *gist* or *essence*, of the Vedas. The Vedas or Śrutis expound *sanātana dharma*, which means eternal religion. Indian spiritual tradition holds the Vedas as *anādi*, beginningless. Clarifying this idea in his address at the Parliament of Religions, Chicago, Swami Vivekananda says (*ibid.*, Vol. I, pp. 6-7):

'It may sound ludicrous to this audience how a book can be without beginning or end. But by the Vedas no books are meant.

They mean the accumulated treasury of spiritual laws discovered by different persons in different times. Just as the law of gravitation existed before its discovery, and would exist if all humanity forgot it, so is it with the laws that govern the spiritual world. The moral, ethical, and spiritual relations between soul and soul, and between individual spirits and the father of all spirits, were there before their discovery, and would remain even if we forgot them.

'The discoverers of these laws are called *ṛṣis* (sages), and we honour them as perfected beings. I am glad to tell this audience that some of the very greatest of them were women.'

*Meaning of the Term 'Upaniṣad'*

That this is the traditional view is evident from what Śaṅkara says on the etymology of the term 'Upaniṣad'. The term means knowledge received by the student 'sitting close to' the teacher. Explaining the derivation of the term in the introduction to his commentary on the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, Śaṅkara says:

*Kena punararthayogena upaniṣacchabdena vidyā ucyate, ityucyate. Ye mumukṣavo dṛṣṭānuśravikaviṣayavitṛṣṇāḥ santaḥ upaniṣacchabdavācyāṁ vakṣyamāṇalakṣaṇāṁ vidyāṁ upasadya, upagamya, tanniṣṭhatayā niścayena śīlayanti, teṣāṁ avidyādeḥ saṁsārabījasya viśaraṇāt, hiṁsanāt, vināśanāt ityanena arthayogena vidyā upaniṣadityucyate—*

'By what etymological process does the term *upaniṣad* denote knowledge? This is now explained. Those who seek liberation, being endowed with the spirit of dispassion towards all sense objects, seen or heard of, and, *approaching* this knowledge indicated by the term *upaniṣad* presently to be explained, devote themselves to it with one-pointed determination—of such people, this knowledge *removes, shatters,* or *destroys* the *avidyā* (ignorance or spiritual blindness), which is the seed of all relative existence or worldliness. By these etymological connexions, *upaniṣad* is said to mean knowledge.'

And anticipating a possible objection, Śaṅkara continues:

*Nanu ca upaniṣacchabdena adhyetāro granthamapi abhilapanti, upaniṣadam adhīmahe, upaniṣadam adhyāpayāma iti ca. Naiṣa doṣaḥ; avidyādisaṁsārahetuviśaraṇādeḥ sadidhātvarthasya granthamātre asaṁbhavāt, vidyāyāṁ ca saṁbhavāt, granthasyāpi tādarthyena tachhabdatvopapatteḥ, āyurvai ghṛtam ityādivat. Tasmāt*

*vidyāyāṁ mukhyayā vṛttyā upaniṣacchabdo vartate, granthe tu bhaktyā iti*—

It may be urged that students use the term "upaniṣad" even to denote a book, as when they say "We shall study the Upaniṣad", "We shall teach the Upaniṣad". This is no fault; since the destruction etc. of the seed of worldliness, which is the meaning of the root *sad* (in *upa-ni-sad*), cannot be had from a mere book, but can be had from knowledge, even the book may also be denoted by that term, because it serves the same purpose (indirectly), as when we say that "clarified butter is verily life". Therefore, the term "upaniṣad" primarily refers to knowledge, and only secondarily to a book.'

Education involving the student 'sitting close to' the teacher means the most intimate student-teacher communion. The higher the knowledge sought, greater is this communion and greater the silence accompanying the knowledge-communication. These values reach their maximum when the knowledge that is sought and imparted is of the highest kind, namely, *ātmajñāna* or *brahmajñāna*, knowledge of the Ātman or Brahman, which, as Śaṅkara points out in his commentary on the *Brahma-Sūtra* (I. 1. 2): *anubhavāvasānatvāt bhūtavastuviṣayatvāt ca brahmajñānasya*—'finds its consummation in *experience* (or realization), since the knowledge of Brahman relates to a reality which is already existing'.

*Truth versus Opinion*

One of the fascinating features of the Upaniṣads is love of truth and its fearless quest. Referring to this, Robert Ernest Hume says in his book *The Thirteen Principal Upaniṣads* (p. 30, footnote):

'The earnestness of the search for truth is one of the delightful and commendable features of the Upaniṣads.'

In them we are always in the company of earnest students and teachers who discuss the central problems of all philosophy and religion with a sincerity and thoroughness, objectivity and detachment, rare in the history of philosophic thought. The Upaniṣads discovered very early in history what Thomas Huxley refers to as the difference between opinion and truth, between 'I believe such and such' and 'I believe such and such *to be true*.' Says Huxley (quoted by J. Arthur Thomson in his *Introduction to Science*, p. 22):

'The longer I live, the more obvious it is to me that the most sacred act of a man's life is to say and feel, "I believe such and

such to be true". All the greatest rewards and all the heaviest penalties of existence cling about that act.'

A belief is true if it has stood, and can always stand, the test of experience, and not because it has been said by a man or written in a book. The essential Vedāntic truths belong to this category; they possess universal validity as they are verifiable by all men. This is forcefully brought out by Śaṅkara in a remarkable passage of his commentary on the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* dealing with the validity of scriptural statements (I.4.7):

*Na vākyasya vastvanvākhyānaṁ kriyānvākhyānaṁ vā prāmāṇyāprāmāṇyakāraṇam. Kiṁ tarhi? Niścitaphalavat vijñānotpādakatvam. Tat yatra asti, tat pramāṇaṁ vākyam; yatra nāsti, tat apramāṇam—*

'The test of the validity of a sentence is not that it just states something about a thing or about an act. What (is it) then? (It is) its capacity to generate certain and fruitful knowledge. A sentence that has this is valid; while one that lacks it is invalid.'

Such truths are far different from the private beliefs of an individual or a group, a sect or a church, held with all emotional intensity and projected for other people's acceptance with equal fervour. Such beliefs cannot claim 'the greatest reward' because they have not paid 'the heaviest penalty' involved in being subjected to the rigorous scrutiny of reason and being thrown open to universal verification. Referring to this unique characteristic of Vedānta, Romain Rolland says (*The Life of Vivekananda and the Universal Gospel*, Third Impression, 1947, p. 196):

'The true Vedāntic spirit does not start out with a system of preconceived ideas. It possesses absolute liberty and unrivalled courage among religions with regard to the facts to be observed and the diverse hypotheses it has laid down for their co-ordination. Never having been hampered by a priestly order, each man has been entirely free to search wherever he pleased for the spiritual explanation of the spectacle of the universe.'

### *The Mental Climate of the Upaniṣads*

I have referred before to the fearless quest of truth characteristic of these Upaniṣads. Any reader of this literature cannot also escape being struck by the rational bent and speculative daring of these sages of ancient India.

The spirit of inquiry which possessed them led them to question experience, to question the environing world; it also led them to fearlessly question their gods and the tenets of their traditional faiths. In this latter field, they showed their uniqueness in contrast to the other gifted people of the ancient world, namely, the Greeks, who did not experience the same urge to subject their religions to that rational investigation which they so diligently and passionately applied to social and political phenomena, and in which their contributions were to become unique and lasting. The Upaniṣadic, and earlier, even the Vedic, sages did not also fear to doubt when rational, certain knowledge was difficult to come by. They illustrate the truth of the creative role of scepticism; in the pursuit of truth, such scepticism is but the prelude to rational faith.

When they sought for the truth of the external universe, they found it baffling; inquiry only deepened the mystery. The *Nāsadīya-sūkta* of the *Ṛg-Veda* records the impact of this mystery on the ancient Indian mind in language at once fascinating and provoking. That mind discovered early, as modern thinkers are slowly discovering today, that the mystery of the external world will only deepen and not diminish, in spite of advancing knowledge, if the mystery of the inner world of man is not tackled. For a complete philosophy of reality, there is need to have data from both the fields of experience, the outer and the inner.

Modern science has become aware of the influence of the datum of the observer on the knowledge of the observed data. If the self as knower is inextricably involved in the knowledge of the not-self, of the known, an inquiry into the nature of the self and the nature of knowledge becomes not only a valid but also an indispensable and integral part of the scientific investigation into the nature of reality. As remarked by Sir Arthur Eddington (*Philosophy of Physical Science*, p. 5):

'We have discovered that it is actually an aid in the search for knowledge to understand the nature of the knowledge which we seek.'

The Upaniṣads, therefore, were far in advance of human thought when they decided to dedicate themselves to the tackling of the inner world. *By their emphasis on inner penetration, by their whole-hearted advocacy of what the Greeks centuries later promulgated in the dictum 'Man, know thyself', but at which they*

*themselves stopped half-way, the Upaniṣads not only gave a permanent orientation to Indian culture and thought, but also blazed a trail for all subsequent philsophy in East and West.*

The Upaniṣads do not disclose any details as to the personal histories of their thinkers; but they provide us with a glimpse of the working of their minds; we can study in this literature the graceful conflict of thought with thought, the emergence of newer and newer thought more satisfactory to reason and more in accord with experience at deeper levels, and the rejection of the less adequate ones without a tear. Hypotheses are advanced and rejected on the touchstone of experience and reason, and not at the dictate of a creed. Thus thought forges ahead to unravel the mystery of man and the universe in which he finds himself; and we can watch this developmental movement of thought and, if we are sensitive enough, also experience, in the words of the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* (III. 2. 8), this onward march of being carried along in its current to the one ocean of truth and beauty and delight, and realize our oneness with the One behind the many:

*Yathā nadyaḥ syandamānā samudre*
*astaṁ gacchanti nāmarūpe vihāya;*
*Tathā vidvān nāmarūpāt vimuktaḥ*
*parātparaṁ puruṣamupaiti divyam—*

'Just as rivers, as they flow, merge in the ocean giving up their (separate) names and forms, so the knowing one, freed from (separateness arising from) name and form, attains the luminous supreme Self, which is beyond (even) the (other) supreme (namely, nature in its undifferentiated state).'

The Upaniṣads reveal an age characterized by a remarkable ferment, intellectual and spiritual. It is one of those rare ages in human history which have registered distinct break-throughs in man's quest for truth and meaning and which have held far-reaching consequences for all subsequent ages. The mental climate of the Upaniṣads is saturated with a passion for truth and a similar passion for human happiness and welfare. Their thinkers were 'undisturbed by the thought of there being a public to please or critics to appease', as Max Müller puts it (*Three Lectures on Vedānta Philosophy*, p. 39). They considered no sacrifice too heavy in their quest for truth, including not only earthly pleasures and heavenly delights, but also what is most difficult to achieve and what every truth-seeker is called upon to achieve, namely, the

sacrificing of pet opinions and pleasing prejudices. Referring to this characteristic of the Upaniṣads in his book *Six Systems of Indian Philosophy*, Max Müller says (p. 182):

'It is surely astounding that such a system as the Vedānta should have been slowly elaborated by the indefatigable and intrepid thinkers of India thousands of years ago, a system that even now makes us feel giddy, as in mounting the last steps of the swaying spire of a Gothic cathedral. None of our philosophers, not excepting Heraclitus, Plato, Kant, or Hegel, has ventured to erect such a spire, never frightened by storms or lightnings. Stone follows on stone after regular succession after once the first step has been made, after once it has been clearly seen that in the beginning there can have been but one, as there will be but one in the end, whether we call it Ātman or Brahman.'

An impressive procession of students and teachers, earnest and sincere; a moving record of their animated discussions and graceful thought conflicts here in small groups and there in large assemblies; a flight of thought now and then into sublime heights of experience-recorded in songs of freedom and delight, graceful and direct; an effective use of beautiful metaphors and telling imageries serving as feathers to its arrows of thought in flight; a singular absence of an atmosphere of coercion, open or veiled, secular or sacred, inhibiting the free pursuit of truth or its communication; the constant summons to man to verify for himself the truths placed before him for his acceptance; and the treatment of man as man and not as cut up into creeds, races, and sex—these and other varied features invest the Upaniṣads with the enduring greatness and strength of a perennial philosophy and the beauty and charm of an immortal literature.

Unlike philosophies elsewhere and other systems here, Vedānta is a living philosophy; and from the time it was first expounded in that dim antiquity down to our own times, it has been the spiritual inspiration behind the vast and varied Indian cultural experiment.

### *The Upaniṣads and Indian Culture*

Without understanding the Upaniṣads, it is impossible to get an insight into Indian history and culture. Every subsequent development of philosophy and religion in India has drawn heavily on the Upaniṣads. The path of *bhakti* or devotion to a personal God, the path of *karma* or detached action, and the synthesis of all spiritual paths in a comprehensive spirituality, expounded by the *Gītā*, are

all derived from the Upaniṣads. The *Gītā* is described as *brahma-vidyāntargata yogaśāstra*—'the science (and technique) of *yoga* derived from the science of Brahman'. Emphasizing this pervasive influence of the Upaniṣads on Indian religions, Swami Vivekananda says (*Complete Works*, Vol. III. pp. 230-31):

'In the Upaniṣads, also, we find all the subsequent development of Indian religious thought. Sometimes it has been urged without any grounds whatsoever that there is no ideal of *bhakti* in the Upaniṣads. Those that have been students of the Upaniṣads know that that is not true. There is enough of *bhakti* in every Upaniṣad, if you will only seek for it; but many of these ideas which are found so fully developed in later times in the Purāṇas and other Smṛtis are only in the germ in the Upaniṣads. The sketch, the skeleton, was there, as it were. It was filled in in some of the Purāṇas. But there is not one full-grown Indian ideal that cannot be traced back to the same source—the Upaniṣads.'

In the words of Bloomfield (*The Religion of the Veda*, p. 51):

'There is no important form of Hindu thought, heterodox Buddhism included, which is not rooted in the Upaniṣads.'

Every creative period in India's long history has behind it the impact of this Vedāntic inspiration in a concentrated measure. The drying up of this fount of inspiration, similarly, has always seen the setting in of the low tide of her culture and life. The ages of the *Gītā*, Buddha, and Śaṅkara in the past, and of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda in the present, are such landmarks in India's ancient and modern history. It is the energy of this strengthening and purifying philosophy of Vedānta, coupled with the energy of modern science and technology, that Swami Vivekananda has released for recreating India in the modern age. That Vedāntic energy could not be confined to India only, but has flowed out, first to the West, and later to the East as well, to recreate the life of modern man.

The Upaniṣads are thus the perennial spring of strength and creativity. This creativity and strength derive from their vision of man as the Ātman,the eternal, infinite dimension of the human personality. Their theme is freedom of the human spirit and their message is fearlessness and love and service. They summon men and women everywhere to this mighty adventure of freedom and fearlessness, love and service, and to the realization, by each man or woman, of his or her essential spiritual nature, and the transcendence of the limitations of finitude. They explain every great move-

ment—social, political, or religious—nay, the phenomena of life itself, as an expression of the urge to freedom inherent in every organism—the struggle of the Infinite caught up in a cell or in a body, in a social scheme or a political system, in a religious dogma or a philosophical creed, in a texture of relations or the network of relativity itself. Hence their constant summons to man is to wake up and march on: 'Arise! Awake! and stop not till the goal is reached!', as conveyed by Swami Vivekananda, adapting the powerful words of the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*: *Uttiṣṭhata jāgrata prāpya varān nibodhata*.

To the Upaniṣads India owes almost all the brighter sides of her life and culture. To them she owes her impressive record of active toleration within her borders and the uniformly peaceful and benevolent nature of her foreign relations in the field of religion. To them she owes the singular absence of aggressive political and military policies and programmes on her part towards other nations, during her millennia of history. To them she owes the periodical renewal of her national springs of life when they seem all but choked and about to dry up. To them also she owes the absence of the heavy hand of an all-powerful church and the tentacles of an inescapable dogma on the national life and mind, allowing for the emergence and unhampered functioning, in succeeding periods, of free, creative, and universal spirits who came to purify and reactivate the dormant spirit of the people, who were received by the Indian people and given divine honours, unlike the hostility and persecution with which spiritual innovators were, and still are, received in all Semitic religions in the absence of the blessing of the impersonal background which the Upaniṣads had provided for the Indian religions, and whose procession down the ages is an impressive feature of India's long history.

And today she is on the threshold of another such creative era of history in the wake of an unprecedented new manifestation of the Vedāntic spirit and energy in Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda—

Sri Ramakrishna, of whom Rabindranath Tagore, in a tribute paid during Sri Ramakrishna birth centenary in 1937, sang in his charming Bengali:

*Bahu sādhaker bahu sādhanār dhārā*
*dhyāne tomār milita hoyeche tārā;*

*Tomār jīvane asīmer līlāpathe*
*nūtan tīrtha rūp nilo e jagate;*
*Deśvideśer praṇām ānila ṭāni,*
*sethāi amār praṇati dilām āni—*

'The diverse courses of spiritual seeking of millions of spiritual seekers—they have all mingled in your meditation;

The limitless expanse of your blessed life has assumed the form of a new *tīrtha*, place of pilgrimage, in this world;

Which draws the salutations (of seekers) from India and abroad,

To which I add my own salutation';

of whom Kazi Nazrul Islam, Bengal's revolutionary Muslim poet, sang:

*Mandire masjide girjāy*
*pūjile brahme samaśraddhāy;*
*tava nām mākhā prem niketane*
*bhariyāche tāi trisaṁsār—*

'Thou didst worship God with equal fervour in temple, mosque, and church, for which reason the whole world is filled with the reservoir of Love that Thou art';

and Swami Vivekananda, about whom Rabindranath Tagore said (*Prabāsī*, Vol. 28, p. 286):

*Ādhunik kāle bhāratavarṣe Vivekananda i ekṭi mahat vāṇī pracār karechilen, seṭi kono ācāra-gata nai. Tini deśer sakalke ḍeke bolechilen, tomāder sakaleri madhye brahmer śakti; daridrer madhye devatā tomāder sevā cān. Ei kathāṭi yuvakder cittake samagrabhāve jāgiyeche. Tāi ei vāṇīr phal deśer sevāi āj vicitra-bhāve vicitratyāge phaleche. Tār vāṇī mānuṣke jakhani sammān diyeche, takhani śakti diyeche—*

'In recent times in India, it was Vivekananda alone who preached a great message which is not tied to any do's and don'ts. Addressing one and all in the nation, he said: In every one of you there is the power of Brahman (God); the God in the poor desires you to serve (Him). This message has roused the heart of the youths in a pervasive way. That is why this message has borne fruit in the service of the nation in diverse ways and in diverse

forms of renunciation. His message has, at one and the same time, imparted dignity and respect to man along with energy and power';

and of whom Kazi Nazrul Islam sang:

*Nava bhārate ānile tumi nava ved,*
*mūche dile jātidharmer bhed;*
*jīve īśvare abhed ātmā jānāile uccāri—*

'You brought to New India a new Veda, and washed away her stain of separateness of religions and castes by proclaiming from the house-tops the inherent divinity of man.'

Romain Rolland calls Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda *Pater Seraphicus* and Jove the Thunderer, whose beneficent impact is already being felt by the spiritual seekers of all religions.

*The Upaniṣads and Western Christianity*

Christianity in the West is already experiencing, under the impact of the modern challenge, an unprecedented ferment and questioning, resulting in a sincere quest, on the part of the various Christian denominations, for the universal spiritual content of the Christian religion underlying its denominational specialities and exaggerations, and forging thereby an oecumenical Christian unity. The success of this noble quest will entirely depend on increasing emphasis on the Śruti aspects of Christianity and the soft-pedalling of its Smṛti elements. And this is what is being done by the denominations concerned, and with very hopeful results. It is difficult to isolate, from among the complex factors, the Vedāntic contribution to this healthy development. If its content derives from the inescapable world conditions created by modern science and technology, its stimulus and direction can largely be traced to the silent but powerful influences proceeding from the spread of Vedāntic ideas in the West in the wake of the tumultuous ovation that greeted Swami Vivekananda when he addressed the historic Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893. Said he in that memorable address (*Complete Works*, Vol. I, p. 18):

'To the Hindu, then, the whole world of religions is only a travelling, a coming up, of different men and women, through various conditions and circumstances, to the same goal. Every religion is only evolving a God out of the material man, and the same God is the inspirer of all of them. Why, then, are there so many contradictions? They are only apparent, says the Hindu. The

contradictions come from the same truth adapting itself to the varying circumstances of different natures.

'It is the same light coming through glasses of different colours. And these little variations are necessary for purposes of adaptation. But in the heart of everything the same truth reigns. The Lord has declared to the Hindu in his incarnation as Kṛṣṇa: "I am in every religion as the thread through a string of pearls. Wherever thou seest extraordinary holiness and extraordinary power raising and purifying humanity, know thou that I am there".'

No clearer and more authentic pronouncement on the nature and scope of the spiritual core of religions, on their Śruti aspects, has ever been uttered. And giving us an insight into the shape of things to come, he said later in that address (*ibid.*, p. 19):

'If there is ever to be a universal religion, it must be one which will have no location in place or time; which will be infinite like the God it will preach, and whose sun will shine upon the followers of Kṛṣṇa and of Christ, on saints and sinners alike; which will not be Brāhmaṇic or Buddhistic, Christian or Mohammedan, but the sum total of all these, and still have infinite space for development; which, in its catholicity, will embrace in its infinite arms, and find a place for, every human being, from the lowest grovelling savage not far removed from the brute, to the highest man towering by the virtues of his head and heart almost above humanity, making society stand in awe of him and doubt his human nature. It will be a religion which will have no place for persecution or intolerance in its polity, which will recognize divinity in every man and woman, and whose whole scope, whose whole force, will be centred in aiding humanity to realize its own true, divine nature.'

And addressing the final session of the Parliament, he uttered these prophetic words in conclusion (*ibid.*, p. 20):

'If the Parliament of Religions has shown anything to the world it is this: It has proved to the world that holiness, purity, and charity are not the exclusive possession of any church in the world, and that every system has produced men and women of the most exalted character. In the face of this evidence, if anybody dreams of the exclusive survival of his own religion and the destruction of the others, I pity him from the bottom of my heart, and point out to him that upon the banner of every religion will soon be written, in spite of resistance: "Help and not Fight", "Assimilation and not Destruction", "Harmony and Peace and not Dissension".'

'His words are great music', remarks Romain Rolland about Vivekananda's utterances (*The Life of Vivekananda*, p. 162). Vivekananda set to music the tune that was haunting the ears of

millions in the modern world, the tune of human unity and equality, tolerance and love, the tune of the divine in the heart of man.

*The Life of Swami Vivekananda* by his Eastern and Western Disciples quotes the following contribution from Mrs. Ella Wheeler Wilcox, one of the foremost poetesses and writers of America, to the *New York American* of 26 May 1907, giving her impressions of Swami Vivekananda; though a bit long, it bears reproduction in this context, as it provides a glimpse of the impact of the message of Vedānta on thinking people in the West (pp. 394-95):

'Twelve years ago I chanced one evening to hear that a certain teacher of philosophy from India, a man named Vivekananda, was to lecture a block from my home in New York.

'We went out of curiosity (the man whose name I bear and I), and before we had been ten minutes in the audience, we felt ourselves lifted up into an atmosphere so rarified, so vital, so wonderful, that we sat spell-bound and almost breathless, to the end of the lecture.

'When it was over we went out with new courage, new hope, new strength, new faith, to meet life's daily vicissitudes. "This is the Philosophy, this is the idea of God, the religion, which I have been seeking", said the man. And for months afterwards he went with me to hear Swami Vivekananda explain the old religion and to gather from his wonderful mind jewels of truth and thoughts of helpfulness and strength. It was that terrible winter of financial disasters, when banks failed and stocks went down like broken balloons and businessmen walked through the dark valleys of despair and the whole world seemed topsy-turvy—just such an era as we are again approaching. Sometimes after sleepless nights of worry and anxiety, the man would go with me to hear the Swami lecture, and then he would come out into the winter gloom and walk down the street smiling and say: "It is all right. There is nothing to worry over." And I would go back to my own duties and pleasures with the same uplifted sense of soul and enlarged vision.

'When any philosophy, any religion, can do this for human beings in this age of stress and strain, and when, added to that, it intensifies their faith in God and increases their sympathies for their kind and gives them a confident joy in the thought of other lives to come, it is a good and great religion. . . .

'We need to learn the greatness of the philosophy of India. We need to enlarge our narrow creeds with the wisdom religious. But we want to imbue them with our own modern spirit of progress, and to apply them practically, lovingly, and patiently to human needs. Vivekananda came to us with a message. . . "I do not come to convert you to a new belief", he said. "I want you to keep your own belief; I want to make the Methodist a better

Methodist; the Presbyterian a better Presbyterian; the Unitarian a better Unitarian. I want to teach you to live the truth, to reveal the light within your own soul." He gave the message that strengthened the man of business, that caused the frivolous society woman to pause and think; that gave the artist new aspirations; that imbued the wife and mother, the husband and father, with a larger and holier comprehension of duty.'

The contemporary approach of Christianity to inter-denominational unity reveals itself to be a Vedāntic approach not traceable to Christianity's own two-thousand year history. Accordingly, this approach is destined to find its consummation not only in inter-Christian unity, but in Christian-non-Christian unity as well. *It will be a great event in human history when the spiritual energies of the world's religions, so long working in isolation or at cross purposes, become entirely positive and co-operative, and function as an integrated spiritual grid to redeem man from the depth of worldliness and restore him to his true spiritual dimension.* This is the true line of human evolutionary advance; and its nursery and stimulus are to be sought in the spiritual core of the world's religions.

### *Upaniṣads and Indian Christianity*

Christianity in India is practically coeval with Christian history itself. Indian Christian tradition traces the origin of the Christians of Kerala, the south-west state of India, to a visit of St. Thomas, a direct disciple of Jesus Christ, in the first century of the Christian era. From then to this day, Christianity in India, as also Judaism, which also reached Kerala about the same time, followed by Zoroastrianism, which reached western India eight centuries later, have been protected, cherished, and nourished by the *mother-heart* of Hinduism under the inspiration of the spiritual vision of the Vedāntic sages.

Western Christian penetration in India, both in its Catholic and Protestant forms, began from the sixteenth century under the most un-Christian auspices of western imperialism and colonialism. After four centuries of co-existence of a dogmatic and intolerant Christianity with an all-inclusive and tolerant Hinduism, during which a silent give-and-take process was going on all the time, Indian Christianity has succeeded in finding its own soul and has begun to assert its *Indian* character. A glorious future for Indian Christianity is assured thereby, not only as a national, but also as an international, spiritual force.

Christianity in India today is experiencing a thought-ferment from the impact of Vedānta, whose scientific terminology in the field of religion is steadily invading its exposition and presentation in sermons and books. This is resulting in a steady release of Indian Christianity from its rigid Smṛti elements—the dogmatic and creda[1] limitations which had kept it ever in conflict with its sister religions and among its own denominations—and its steady conversion into a wholly positive spiritual force proceeding from its Śruti nucleus, keen to respond to the positive spiritual forces of her sister faiths with a view to meeting the spiritual challenges of the industrial age into which modern India is deliberately plunging at a fast pace. As early as 1913, the Christian journal, *Indian Interpreter*, published a significantly titled article 'Christian Vedāntism' by R. Gordon Milburn, in which the writer highlights the need for Christianity to open itself to the influences of Vedānta (quoted by S. Radhakrishnan in his *The Principal Upaniṣads*, p. 19, 'Introduction', footnote):

'Christianity in India needs the Vedānta. We missionaries have not realized this with half the clearness that we should. We cannot move freely and joyfully in our own religion, because we have not sufficient terms and modes of expression wherewith to express the more immanental aspects of Christianity. A very useful step would be the recognition of certain books or passages in the literature of Vedānta as constituting what might be called an Ethnic Old Testament. The permission of ecclesiastical authorities could then be asked for reading passages found in such a canon of Ethnic Old Testament at divine service along with passages from the New Testament as alternative to the Old Testament lessons.'

In the 'Introduction' to his book, *Christianity as Bhakti Mārga*, published as early as 1926 by The Christian Literature Society for India, as the first book of its 'Indian Studies Series', the author, A.J. Appasamy, M.A. (Harvard), D.Phil. (Oxon), an eminent Indian Christian, writes:

'In attempting to understand how Christianity is likely to relate itself in the coming years to Indian thought and become a living force in the country, I am inclined to think that it will lay much emphasis on mystic experience.'

Emphasizing that this mystic orientation of Indian Christianity will be of the *bhakti* type, the author says further on:

'When we speak of interpreting Christianity in its relation to the spirit of India's religious genius, we have to remember that India's religious genius has expressed itself in systems of philosophy, religious practices, and sacred books often most diverse.

The immediate task which lies before Indian Christians anxious to make clear to themselves and to others the relation between the real spirit of Christianity and the real spirit of India's religious life is that of choice. We have to decide what particular form of religious life in India is best suited for this purpose. As there are many types of religious thought in India, an inevitable consequence of the attempts of Christian thinkers to adjust the expression of their religious experience to the terms and ideas familiar to India would be the development of many types of Indian Christianity.'

*The Upaniṣads and Indian Islam*

The influence of the Upaniṣads on Indian Islam has not been very profound in the past. Even though Sufism, the mystical offshoot of Islam, owes much to the Upaniṣads, Islam as a whole, which has been generally hostile to its own offshoot as to all non-Islamic faiths, has remained largely unaffected.

Prophet Mohammed was a deep lover of God and man. And he has breathed this double love into the Koran. Below are given a few verses taken from the English translation of the Koran by Al-Haj Hafiz Ghulam Sarwar.

The following three verses singing the glory of God can be found repeated in any number of verses in the Vedas and the Upaniṣads. The opening verses of the Koran possess rare spiritual majesty and beauty:

(We commence) with the name of God,
The most Merciful (to begin with),
The most Merciful (to the end)

All praise belongs to God,
Lord of all the worlds,
The most Merciful (to begin with),
The most Merciful (to the end).

Master of the day of Judgment.
Thee alone do we serve,
And Thee alone do we ask for help.

Guide us on the right path,
The path of those upon whom be Thy blessings,
Not of those upon whom be (Thy) wrath,
Nor of those who are lost.

In verse 255 of Chapter 2, we read about the power and glory of God:

God!
There is no deity but He,
The Ever-living,
The All-sustaining:
Slumber overtakes Him not,
Nor sleep.
To Him belongs
What is in the heavens,
And what is in the earth.
Who is there to second anyone before Him
Except with His authority?
He knows what is in front of them,
And what is behind them;
And they encompass nothing of His knowledge
Except what He pleases;
And His power extends over the heavens and the earth;
And the guardianship of these tires Him not,
And He is
The Uppermost,
The Highest.

Verse 25 of Chapter 3 sings the majesty of God:

Say, 'O God! Master of the kingdom,
Thou givest the kingdom to whom Thou pleasest,
And Thou snatchest the kingdom from whom Thou pleasest;
And Thou exaltest whom Thou pleasest;
And Thou abasest whom Thou pleasest;
In Thy hand is all good:
Thou art capable of doing all Thou pleasest'.

The Koran contains specific mention that salvation is not the monopoly of the Muslims. Verse 62 of Chapter 2 says:

As to those who believe (in the Quran),
And the Jews,
And the Christians,
And the Sabians—
Whoever believes in God
And the future day
And does good,

For such, then, there is a reward with their Lord,
And there shall be no fear on them,
Nor shall they grieve.

The Koran insists that the only condition to be fulfilled to obtain divine mercy is good life and good deeds and not subscription to a creed (*ibid.*, 2, 177):

There is no virtue in your turning your faces
Towards the East or the West,
But virtuous is he who believes in God,
And (in) the future day,
And (in) the messenger-spirits,
And the Book,
And the Prophets,
And he who gives his wealth, in spite of his love for it,
To the near of kin,
And the orphans,
And the needy,
And the wayfarer,
And the beggars,
And in ransoming the slaves,
And who keeps up the prayer,
And pays the stated alms;
And those who fulfil their covenants when they covenant;
And the persevering ones
In hardship,
And injury,
And in time of war;
These are the truthful,
And these! They are the reverent.

The prophet had set a high example of tolerance and respect in his dealings with non-Muslims. Verse 256 of Chapter 2 of the Koran upholds religious toleration and fellowship:

Let there be no compulsion in religion,
The right path has surely been made distinct from the wrong,
Then whoever disbelieves in the transgressor,
And believes in God,
He has, then, got hold of the firm handle,
No breaking therefore:
And God is Hearing, Knowing.

Verse 135 of Chapter 4 (also verse 8 of Chapter 5) emphasizes justice and equity in inter-personal relations:

O ye who believe!
Be maintainers of justice,
Witnesses for the sake of God,
And though it be against yourselves,
Or your parents,
And your relations.
Whether a person be rich or poor,
Then God is nearer to them (than you),
Therefore follow not (your) low desires
Lest you do not do justice.
And if you distort (the evidence),
Or keep away,
Then, surely, God knows well what you do.

These and other similar verses of the Koran proclaim truths which are eternal and universal; they constitute, in the language of Indian spiritual tradition, the Śruti content of Islam. This is Islam as a path to God. There is also another aspect of Islam as a way of life in society. This constitutes the large Smṛti content in the Koran, the group of ideas and values which the prophet gave to his people to weld them into an Arab nation. This is of limited application, as it constitutes its personal laws and social rules and regulations—all those elements that form the socio-political content of a religion. No scripture can legislate on these for all time and for all peoples. *The laws that were beneficial to the Arabs of the seventh century* A.D. *may not be beneficial to the Indians or Indonesians, Europeans or Americans, and strangely enough, even to the Arabs themselves of the twentieth century.* Progressive Arab states today are wisely modifying them in response to the demands of the modern age.

But the *spiritual* message of the Koran, its teaching which shows man a path to spiritual realization, is eternal and universal. In periods of dynamic social changes, every religion needs to be subjected to a reinterpretation process, 'a winnowing process', in the words of Toynbee referred to earlier, with emphasis on its spirit and a softpedalling of its letter, a greater stress on the *eternal* and less on the *historical*, so that it may emerge reconstructed to meet the challenge of the new age; for 'the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life', as the New Testament puts it. If this is not

done, the religion concerned becomes a procrustean bed, twisting the personalities of its followers.

The Sufi movement in Islam, arising from the contact of Islam with Christian mysticism and pre-Islamic Iranian spiritual traditions, sought to emphasize its Śruti content, its *non-historical* elements, its *eternal spiritual* core; here Islam as a path to spiritual realization shines most. It found a welcome soil first in Mesopotamia and Iran, then in India, where it became powerfully influenced by Vedānta. But everywhere it had to face fierce opposition and persecution from orthodox Islam, which was centred in a rigid allegiance to its Smṛti contents, including its parochial socio-political ideology and programmes initiated, more often, by ambitious rulers and ruthless military adventurers. Socio-political ideologies uninspired by high moral and spiritual values tend to nourish the lower self of man from which proceed selfishness and intolerance, violence and war. The first object of every religion is to check and discipline this lower self of man. But instead of that, instead of religion elevating the socio-political ideology to its own level, it is itself brought down to the level of the other, and functions as its handmaid. This phenomenon afflicted Islam from too close an association with *real-politiks*, as it also afflicted Christianity after Constantine. The saints of Islam, the lovers of God and man, became muted and the voice of Islam was sounded by ignorant zealots, and by war-minded conquerors, un-Islamic and worldly to the core, in search of loot and power and pleasure, who used and abused the name of Islam to cover their own worldly propensities.

Indian contact with Islam was through Muslim Arab merchants and missionaries during the first four centuries after the birth of Islam. This phase represented the normal form of inter-religious and international contact resulting in mutual benefit from a peaceful give-and-take process. It was also the period when Islam reached the height of its power and glory, with the Arab national mind keen for the acquisition of, and warmly hospitable to, new ideas, and taking freely from Greco-Roman, Iranian, and Indian cultures.

But from early thirteenth century, all this changed. Dissensions and corruption set in in the wake of imperial power and luxury, which overwhelmed the simple desert Arab; and the Mongol invasions in the middle of that century finally destroyed the hegemony of Arab Islam. Islamic learning and culture suffered a terrible eclipse, which was to continue for centuries together. The

conquerors, and other central Asian groups in their wake, adopted Islam or, rather *adapted* Islam to their own low cultural standards and purposes. When reason and love of truth were dethroned, the 'letter of the law' triumphed, and reactionary orthodoxy entered into unholy alliance with military adventurers, blessing their violent deeds and converting them into a succession of holy wars and jehads with the seal of religious approval.

This was the second phase of Islamic contact experienced by India from about the twelfth century onwards, when India and its religions were systematically battered in the name of that religion which had, during the preceding centuries, nourished a culture an a political state which had freely learnt from Indian knowledge and wisdom and had been the torch-bearer of science and humanism. *The history of India and the character of Indian Islam and Hindu society would have been different if Islam had come to India in this second phase as in that first phase, as a friend and in peace.* This is one of the crucial might-have-beens of human history. It would then have contributed its equalitarian social gospel to the purification of the caste-ridden social edifice of Hinduism. Hinduism would have gladly learnt these lessons from it, while imparting its own Vedāntic outlook and tolerance to the sister faith. But the fact that Islam in its most effective forms came to India through ignorant zealots and militant conquerors, through what Nietzsche terms 'violence of deed and demeanour', made Islam an eyesore to the Hindu mind. *It is one of those sad chapters in inter-cultural contacts which yielded bitter fruits, but which, in a different form, would have been fruitful of great results for the religion and culture of mankind.*

This second phase, therefore, has written a sad chapter in the history of India, whose far-reaching evil effects constitute the most serious challenge to Indian wisdom today. And India is facing this stupendous task with the strength and dynamism, far-sight and foresight of her Upaniṣadic heritage.

All the lofty ideas of love of God and man, justice and equity in human relations, equality between man and man, and toleration and respect for other faiths—in short, all the Śruti aspects of Islam, which are the nurseries of the progressive trends of a religion, became submerged in successive waves of bigotry and intolerance. Hindus and their saints were not the only victims of this reactionary Islam; Muslims themselves, including some of Islam's

lovable saints, holding progressive spiritual views or upholding rational socio-political ideas and programmes, became subjected to persecution, torture, and death. And yet, much give and take and cross-fertilization of the two cultures did take place; and mystics and saints did not fail to arise from time to time during this period, as witnesses to the eternal and universal values embedded in the Islamic religion, thus demonstrating the vitality of its Sruti aspect. The period also saw the occasional appearance of a king or an emperor, with forward-looking state policies, such as the early Mughals and Sher Shah. Such saints and rulers have always responded to the spiritual beauty and depth of Indian wisdom as expressed in Vedānta.

Hindu tolerance continued in the midst of Muslim intolerance because that tolerance was the product of a spiritual vision and philosophical conviction bequeathed by the Upaniṣads, which had become an inseparable part of the Indian outlook and way of life. There is a uniqueness about Indian toleration in that it has always been the product of religious faith, unlike the toleration developed by the modern West resulting from its waning of faith in religion. Explaining this Indian approach, Dr. S. Radhakrishnan says (*Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, p. 317):

'Toleration is the homage which the finite mind pays to the inexhaustibility of the Infinite.'

Muslim chroniclers themselves have noted this strange phenomenon of Hindu tolerance in the midst of Muslim intolerance. Dr. Radhakrishnan quotes (*ibid.*, p. 312) the following passage from Murray's *Discoveries and Travels in Asia* (Vol. II, p. 20) in which the author gives the remarks of a Muslim ambassador from Persia to the court of the Hindu ruler of Calicut in Kerala:

'The people (of Calicut) are infidels; consequently I (Abdul Razak Berni, Ambassador from the court of Persia about the middle of the fifteenth century) consider myself in an enemy's country, as the Mohammadans consider everyone who has not received the Koran. Yet I admit that I meet with perfect toleration, and even favour; we have two mosques and are allowed to pray in public.'

Even the bigoted Muslim chronicler of Aurangzeb's reign, Khafi Khan, felt compelled to give high tributes to Shivaji, the Hindu ruler of the South, who cherished Hindus and Muslims alike and cared for their holy places with equal solicitude, even while resisting tooth and nail the policy of systematic oppression of the

Hindus zealously practised by the Moghul Emperor Aurangzeb. The same cultured attitude and policy were adopted by Guru Govind Singh in the Punjab during his relentless struggle against the intolerance and oppression of this emperor who saw at his death in 1707 the dismemberment of the mighty Moghul empire due to his own follies. Says historian S. N. Sen in his *The Military System of the Marathas* (p. 18):

'In India religious intolerance has been very rare and Shivaji's conception of a Hindu empire was in no way identified with religious persecution. He enlisted in his army seven hundred (Muslim) Pathan deserters from Bijapur, at least three of his naval commanders were Muslims by faith, and he venerated the Muhammadan saint Sheikh Muhammad as he venerated the Hindu saints Tukaram and Ramdas. He granted *inām* lands for "the illumination of and food offerings to, the shrines of Muhammadan saints, and Muslim mosques were maintained by state allowance". Only once in his eventful career did he fail to respect the asylum given by a Muhammadan saint to some fugitives, but he never failed to show due respect to the holy scriptures of the Muslims. And Khafi Khan, who delights in showering the most opprobrious epithets ... on him, is yet constrained to admit that "he made it a rule that whenever his followers went plundering, they should do no harm to the mosques, the Book of God, or the women of anyone. Whenever a copy of the sacred Koran came into his hands, he treated it with respect, and gave it to some of his Mussalman followers. When the women of any Hindu or Muhammadan were taken prisoners by his men, and they had no friend to protect them, he watched over them until their relations came with a suitable ransom to buy their liberty." (Elliot and Dawson, *History of India*, Vol. II, pp. 254, 256, 262, and 269).'

Islamic intolerance, as we have seen, is not the fruit of Islam as such, but of its fundamentalist interpretation, of its mixing up of religion with parochial and exclusive tribalism and political nationalism. Islam, as history shows, has also exhibited, in its progressive variety, the finest tolerance in the lives of several of its saints and laymen, kings and states. In the context of the modern world, the mind and face of that fundamentalist Islam wear the look of a long-vanished age. But there is also the mind and face of this progressive Islam which is today struggling to work out a new Islamic *yugadharma*, the *dharma* for this *yuga* or age, as Indian thought puts it. This latter Islam has already begun to move the minds and hearts of millions in several Arab states. The conflict between the two types of Islam shows itself essentially as a conflict between reactionary and progressive forces, between

rigid backward-looking and resilient forward-looking ideologies, the former viewing Islam as a *finished* and final Smṛti, exclusive and intolerant of all other Smṛtis, and the latter viewing it in the light of its Śruti elements and the scientific and humanistic thought of the modern age, and striving to forge a new Islamic Smṛti in tune with what is eternal in Islam and with the spirit of modern enlightenment.

Modern Indian Islam, except in small groups here and there, has so far escaped this conflict in any serious form due, among other things, to the encouragement and support given by the foreign British government, in the interest of its own self-perpetuation, to all reactionary forces in Indian Islam, and to the frenzied upheaval which preceded and led to the partition of India in 1947; these abnormal circumstances helped to nourish and sustain the ideology of that backward-looking Islam. But the conflict between the progressive and the reactionary is bound to invade Indian Islam also as it has already invaded Arab Islam. Due to the exigencies of its birth, Pakistani Islam may experience it somewhat later. *Earlier or later, no religion or society today, be it Muslim, Christian, or Hindu, can escape the inquisitive, and often irreverent, questioning and peering by increasing sections of its intelligent youths, both girls and boys, educated and nurtured in modern thought.* The searchlight of critical thought will soon be systematically directed by thoughtful Indian Muslims on their religious traditions with a view to finding out what is essential, and separating what is obsolete, in them, as it was directed earlier by free-minded Christians on Christianity and free-minded Hindus on Hinduism.

When this becomes a barrage, either of two things may result: the onset of a reforming zeal which, for want of insight into, and faith in, the higher spiritual dimensions of religion, will begin to secularize Islam by reforming its obsolete elements, and end in *reforming away* Islam itself, and converting it into a mere social reform programme, into a mere worldly ideology, as has happened in the case of protestant Christianity; or else, the setting in of a process of creative adjustment in which the eternal and universal spiritual message of Islam will be increasingly liberated, the forces of which tending to align with the kindred forces of her sister faiths with a view to providing the *bread* of religion to the spiritually hungry modern Muslim youth who refuses to be fed on the *stones* of exclusive and outworn dogmas and creeds.

This search for the essential and casting away of the non-essential is a hoary tradition in Islamic spirituality. Dr. Bhagawan Das refers (*Essential Unity of All Religions*, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan Edition, 1960, p. 100) to the verse in the famous *Masnavi*, which is accepted in the Muslim world generally as next only to the Koran in holiness, in which the author, Maulānā Jalāl-Ud-din Rūmi describes in beautiful Persian the purpose of his work as precisely this:

*Man ze Qurān maghz rā bardāštam,*
*Ustukhān peše sagān andakhtam—*
'The marrow from the Koran have I drawn,
And the dry bones unto the dogs have cast.'.

When this is done with regard to the Koran today, the scope of the Smṛti aspect of Islam, such as personal laws and social rules relating to marriage, inheritance, etc., will be subjected to rational scrutiny, and become wisely relegated to the care of political constitutions and parliamentary social legislations and to the enlightened social consciences of the respective nations, on the one hand, and of the various legislative organs of the international community, on the other.

The two courses above enumerated mean either the *secularization* of religion or the *spiritualization* of the secular life of man; the latter will meet the contemporary demand for the toning up of the secular life of man in terms of the essential core of spiritual truths imbedded in religion.

Whatever may be the future course of Islam in other countries with respect to these two alternatives, the course of Indian Islam will be determined not only by the spiritual forces arising from within itself, but also by its environing forces, the forces proceeding from the total Indian social situation, conditioned, among other things, by the hoary Indian culture with a spiritual base and a spiritual direction. And these forces, so far as religion is concerned, are the forces arising from the strengthening, purifying, and unifying philosophy and vision of the Upaniṣads. Many scholars and thinkers of Islam and Hinduism, past and present, have expressed the conviction that the spiritual core of Islam is perfectly in tune with this philosophy and vision, and that some of the practical achievements of Islam, such as social equality, are more so than similar achievements of Hinduism itself. The closer alignment now of these two kindred spiritual forces will help not only

in the evolution of a progressive modern Indian national society, free, equalitarian, and spiritually oriented, but will also result in the evolution of a distinctively Indian Islam stamped with the Indian spiritual genius, and in the development of Islamic democracy into human democracy.

The revivalist movements in Indian Islam have so far been *politically* inspired and motivated, backward-looking, and productive of bitter fruits. They have done everything to suppress the redeeming forces of the spirituality of Islam and its close kinship with Hindu and Christian spirituality. But Indian Islam cannot long escape the modern impact; it is bound, before long, to pass through a process of inner ferment and questioning under the stimulus of expanding modern education and the nourishment provided by the free atmosphere of Indian democracy. *These two circumstances offer the supreme opportunity to every Indian religion to bring the highest and best out of itself.* When Indian Islam begins to avail of this opportunity, it will capture a forward-looking mood and temper and that dynamic capacity for assimilation of new ideas which it manifested in the Middle East in the heyday of its glory under the Caliphate. This is bound to bring the higher mind of Islam under the spell of Vedānta, and of its dynamic modern expression in Ramakrishna and Vivekananda, as it fell under the spell of classical Greek thought and higher pre-Islamic Persian thought in that earlier period. It will then experience a pervasive revival and reconstruction of a truly *spiritual* character in tune with the enlightenment and progressive spirit and demands of the modern age. It can be predicted that such a reconstruction of Indian Islam will see the appearance of new commentaries and other types of studies on the Koran in the light of the Upaniṣads. Vivekananda believed that the modern renaissance in India will result in a happy synthesis of the spiritual streams of Vedānta and Islam, a consummation which was fervently wished for, and achieved in a small way, by the saints and laymen of both the religions even during the unpropitious times of the Middle Ages. This is the glorious future before Indian Islam today.

### *The Upaniṣads and Indian Secularism*

The Cross and the Crescent have always been at loggerheads with each other all over the world. This is in for a profound change in the Indian context today. When Indian Christianity and Indian Islam will achieve their spiritual self-discovery, they will

issue forth as distinct national and international spiritual forces, in harmony with each other and with the other world religions. To India herself, this will be the consummation of that process which Vivekananda refers to as 'the union of her scattered spiritual forces'. The Indian Constitution and the Indian state are passionately wedded to the ideal of freedom—freedom of thought and conscience and freedom to profess and practise the faith of one's choice, and *even freedom to live without a faith.* And freedom is the one condition of growth, says Swami Vivekananda. In the passionate words which he uttered in the course of his lectures on 'Practi. .l Vedānta' delivered in London in 1896 (*Complete Works*, Vol. II, p. 336):

'We should, therefore, follow reason and also sympathize with those who do not come to any sort of belief, following reason. For it is better that mankind should become atheist by following reason than blindly believe...on the authority of anybody. What we want is progress, development, realization. No theories ever made men higher. No amount of books can help us to become purer. The only power is in realization and that lies in ourselves and comes from thinking. Let men think. A clod of earth never thinks; but it remains only a lump of earth. The glory of man is that he is a thinking being. It is the nature of man to think and therein he differs from animals. I believe in reason and follow reason having seen enough of the evils of authority, for I was born in a country where they have gone to the extreme of authority.'

The freedoms granted and guaranteed by the Indian state are meant to ensure the all-round growth of the Indian people through stimulation of their thinking and initiative. They seek to convert India into a vast laboratory of human development for a seventh of the human race, in a *milieu* of freedom and equality and the sacredness of the human personality.

This is the meaning of India declaring herself a secular state. The vast majority of those who met in the Constituent Assembly in Delhi and voted the Indian constitution in 1949 were religious and not irreligious. And yet, they adopted the principles and policies of a secular constitution for their deeply religious country. We should not fail to note the significance of this. In the words of Dr. Radhakrishnan (*Recovery of Faith*, p. 202):

'Though faith in the Supreme is the basic principle of the Indian tradition, the Indian state will not identify itself with or be controlled by any particular religion....This view of religious impartiality, of comprehension and forbearance, has a prophetic role to play within the national and the international life....The religious impartiality of the Indian state is not to be confused with

secularism or atheism. Secularism as here defined is in accordance with the ancient religious tradition of India. It tries to build up a fellowship of believers, not by subordinating individual qualities to the group mind but by bringing them into harmony with each other. This dynamic fellowship is based on the principle of diversity in unity which alone has the quality of creativeness.'

A secular state so conceived, one that is not wedded either to religious indifference or anti-religious atheism, but impartially promotes all religions, believing in the spiritual dimension of the human personality over and above his sensate nature, is a unique phenomenon 'with a prophetic role to play', as remarked by Dr. Radhakrishnan. *It is more appropriately termed the Vedāntic state, for the inspiration behind it is the tolerant all-embracing Upaniṣadic tradition.* No such secular state has existed in history, ancient or modern, either in the East or in the West, including India. In Indian history, we come across great states dedicated, no doubt, to toleration and inter-religious fellowship, but also committed to one particular faith. In western history, on the other hand, we come across states which hold the scales even between its diverse faiths, itself uninterested in all of them, except politically. This is specially true of the Roman Empire, the various cults and religions of which, in the cynical remark of Gibbon, 'were all considered by the people as equally true, by the philosophers as equally false, and by the magistrates as equally useful'. The United States of America comes closest to the Indian conception, where the separation of church and state co-exists with a general commitment to God and religion. But the American political philosophy does not claim any insight into, and is unconcerned with, the faith of the individual as such, but is concerned only with its social expression in his or her conduct and behaviour. *It is the presence of this insight and its integration with man's external life that makes Vedānta a complete philosophy which has the courage and capacity to see life steadily and see it as a whole.*

The New Testament dictum, 'Give unto Caesar that which is Caesar's and unto God that which is God's', is only a working principle at its best. It leaves man as a denizen of two unreconciled worlds, either of which may encroach, or be encroached by, the other, to the detriment of human progress and well-being. Both have happened in history. Whatever be the justification for this dualism of God and Caesar in the past, it is utterly irrelevant in the modern age with its unprecedented enlightenment and prog-

ress, when no aspect of human experience is left out of the scrutiny of reason, and when there is a growing international integration of the human communities. The philosophy of 'Caesar and his dues' and the philosophy of 'God and His dues' need to be comprehended in an integral philosophy of total experience, in a unifying vision of man and nature. We need a philosophy which bridges the gulf between action and contemplation, work and worship, the secular and the sacred. This is Vedānta, which Swami Vivekananda preached in East and West alike at the end of the last century. Highlighting its unifying vision, Sister Nivedita (Miss Margaret Noble) writes ('Introduction: Our Master and His Message', *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. I, p. xv):

'The many and the One are the same Reality, perceived by the mind at different times and in different attitudes.

'It is this which adds its crowning significance to our Master's life, for here he becomes the meeting-point, not only of East and West, but also of past and future. If the many and the One be indeed the same Reality, then it is not all modes of worship alone, but equally all modes of work, all modes of struggle, all modes of creation, which are paths of realization. No distinction, henceforth, between sacred and secular. To labour is to pray. To conquer is to renounce. Life is itself religion. To have and to hold is as stern a trust as to quit and to avoid.

'This is the realization which makes Vivekananda the great preacher of *karma* (detached action), not as divorced from, but as expressing *jñāna* (Self-knowledge) and *bhakti* (love of God). To him, the workshop, the study, the farmyard, and the field are as true and fit scenes for the meeting of God with man as the cell of the monk or the door of the temple. To him, there is no difference between service of man and worship of God, between manliness and faith, between true righteousness and spirituality.'

The search for such a philosophy will become insistent day by day; and it will draw all thinking people, be they Hindus, Christians, or Muslims, or others, within India or abroad, into the orbit of Indian thought and to the charms of the philosophy and spirituality of its undying source, the Upaniṣads.

### *The Upaniṣads and the Ideological Struggle*

The modern world is in the grip of various ideologies, of which the most effective ones are those which are most narrow and exclusive. Up to the modern period, religion, especially those of the Semitic family—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, were the nurseries of these exclusive and narrow ideologies. But in the modern

period, as religions are wisely shedding this vice of narrowness and exclusiveness, it has moved over to the socio-political fields. The eclipse of liberal ideologies in these fields is one of the more glaring features of the twentieth century. Calm and clear reason has all but disappeared from vast segments of man's socio-political ideologies; they seem to be under the grip of the blind attachments, fears, and hatreds of his collective unconscious. It is a heartening sign of the second half of this century that man's collective reason, organized in international groups and associations, is waging a slow but successful struggle to tame the blind forces of his collective unreason in these fields. Setbacks there may be; but nothing can thwart permanently the onward march of this struggle; for it is the manifestation of the time spirit. Behind it is the dynamic energy of that scientific reason and enlightenment of the modern age whose impact is already evident in the field of religion, for which it provided the *milieu* and the stimulus to struggle to liberate itself from the blind forces of man's collective unreason, and make it function in the light of reason.

Scientific deliberations are generally conducted in a calm atmosphere, and differences of opinion are tolerated. This was absent in the field of religion due to the very initial divorce of reason from religion. This is changing fast. Encounters between religions are increasingly taking place today in an atmosphere of decreasing emotional temperatures. This dawn of sanity in inter-religious relationships is a priceless gift of reason as expressed in Vedānta and modern thought. It is reasonable to expect that the light of reason will eventually succeed in conquering unreason, and in introducing sanity, in the socio-political fields as well. It may take longer, as these fields are the arenas of man's search for power and pleasure, largely at the dictates of the blind forces of his lower sensate nature. When reason succeeds in establishing a measure of sanity in this field, democracy, which upholds human dignity and equality, and which has been under constant threat from these underground forces of human nature, will become firmly established as the best political and social value and technique. The struggle for sanity will continue till the position with respect to ideologies will become reversed, so that, unlike now, the most effective ones will be those which are most broad and inclusive.

But this needs the ministrations not only of scientific reason, but also of Vedāntic reason; for the latter alone has the capacity

to purify the emotional springs of man's energies, centred in his worldly and religious aspirations, of all their narrowness and exclusiveness, *retaining intact, at the same time, their intensity and dynamism*. This our scientific reason is unable to do by itself; when it eliminates narrowness, it tends to destroy also the energy of the emotions in the process.

Hence the contribution of the Upaniṣads in bringing about this great consummation is going to be vital and pervasive. Ideals and ideologies are vital to human life and achievement; they give direction to powerful human emotions. Without their help, man becomes flabby and ineffective, and often blunders all along. If a man with ideals commits a thousand mistakes, says Vivekananda, a man without ideals will commit ten thousand mistakes. Hence the dictum of Vivekananda: Let sects multiply; but sectarianism must go. Narrowly conceived ideals have done as much harm as good in religion and politics. Intensity was obtained at the cost of extensity; extensity, on the other hand, has always resulted in a reduction of intensity. The current flows fast in a narrow stream. When the river broadens, the current loses in intensity.

This has been the dual choice before man with respect to ideologies. The modern age is in search of ideologies which yield the fruit of maximum character. This signifies, according to Vedānta, the simultaneous presence of intensity and extensity. *Vivekananda presented Vedānta as a fearless philosophy of life which helps man to frame ideologies for himself combining, to use his own words, 'the intensity of the fanatic with the extensity of the materialist'*. It derives its intensity from its inward spiritual penetration and its extensity from its outward human concern, in both of which it upholds reason as the guide. Such an ideology gives, in the words of Vivekananda, a character 'deep as the ocean and broad as the skies'. Vedānta considers this as the true line of human evolutionary advance. And it has given to the modern age the example of such a character in Sri Ramakrishna, who was not only the very personification of the intensity of religion, but also encompassed, in his infinite sympathy, atheists and agnostics along with believers belonging to the world's diverse and often mutually hostile religions.

### *The Upaniṣads and the Modern Crisis*

The modern world is experiencing a far-reaching re-assessment in all aspects of human life and thought. Initiated and sustained

by the positive sciences and modern technology, this process began as an intellectual movement but soon developed into a dynamic socio-political force. In its methods and results, it was as much a destructive force as a constructive one. It lifted man from many fears and uncertainties of his primitive past and landed him in new and more gnawing fears and uncertainties. It destroyed many a fable and myth and superstition imbedded in his past traditions, and challenged, and continues to challenge, the credentials of every one of his beliefs and practices in the moral, religious, socio-economic, and other fields of his life.

These are solid gains; but they are not enough; they have 'lengthened the ropes' without, however, 'strengthening the stakes' as the Bible puts it. The tree of life has branched wide without correspondingly rooting deep. In the modern achievement, the sciences of nature have far outstripped the sciences of man, leaving man puny and unstable, with his centre of gravity always outside of himself. Moral and spiritual values emerge only from the sciences of man. Referring to this imbalance, *the bitter fruits of which are found in the shallowness and sterility of much of modern intellectualism and in the widespread cynicism among the intellectuals,* Bertrand Russell says (*The Scientific Outlook,* pp. 278-79):

'Man has been disciplined hitherto by his subjection to nature. Having emancipated himself from this subjection, he is showing something of the defects of slave-turned-master. A new moral outlook is called for in which submission to the powers of nature is replaced by respect for what is best in man. It is where this respect is lacking that scientific technique is dangerous. So long as it is present, science, having delivered man from bondage to nature, can proceed to deliver him from bondage to the slavish part of himself.'

This 'respect for what is best in man', and the science which will 'proceed to deliver man from bondage to the slavish part of himself', is what the Upaniṣads developed ages ago in India in her *adhyātma vidyā,* in her science of the inner world of man, in her 'science of human possibilities', in the words of Julian Huxley. *The intellect on which the light of the Ātman shines is far different from the intellect which is in thrall to the sense-organs.* These two groups of sciences—the sciences of outer nature and the sciences of inner nature—need to pool their resources together to advance man on the evolutionary path of total fulfilment. 'Take religion away from human society and what remains is a forest of brutes',

says Swami Vivekananda. Echoing this conviction in the concluding portion of his *Autobiography*, astro-physicist R.A. Millikan says:

'It seems to me that the two great pillars upon which all human well-being and human progress rest are, first, the spirit of religion, and, second, the spirit of science—or knowledge. Neither can attain its largest effectiveness without support from the other. To promote the latter, we have universities and research institutions. But the supreme opportunity for everyone with no exception lies in the first.'

Without the spiritual nourishment coming from religion, the phenomenal progress of the modern age has become wobbly in its movement and blind in its course.

### *Lead Kindly Light*

The 'wheel of modern progress' revolves faster and faster decade after decade, and man everywhere is feeling dazed and unable to find his bearings. He finds himself deep in a situation where his past is unrecoverable, his present uncertain, and his future an interrogation. Is this the twilight of a day of hope and cheer ahead, or of a night holding gloom and sorrow in store? Never in human history has man experienced so much darkness within him in the midst of all-round enlightenment outside of him, so much inner poverty in the context of measureless enrichment without, and so much loneliness in the midst of an environing crowd. The modern crisis is thus essentially a spiritual crisis, and modern man is seeking for light to lead him out of the encircling gloom His heart today is crying for truth, for light, and for life. *All these facts indicate that the whole of the modern world is in the throes of a silent spiritual revolution.* The sentiments of the ancient Vedic prayer are echoed in the silent murmurings, deep searchings, and unspoken prayers of the heart of modern man (*Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, I. 3. 28):

*Asato mā sadgamaya;*
*Tamaso mā jyotirgamaya;*
*Mṛtyor mā amṛtaṁ gamaya—*

'From the unreal lead me to the Real;
From darkness lead me to Light;
From death lead me to Immortality.'

To convert this twilight into a twilight of dawn and of a brighter day is the challenge facing human knowledge and human wisdom

today. Great thinkers of the past and present have held fast to the conviction that the eternal soul of India has preserved, through the ups and downs of her long history, a perennial message of hope and cheer to all humanity.

In the preface to his book, *The World as Will and Idea* (Vol. I, Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., London, 1957, pp. XII-XIII), Schopenhauer, writing in the middle of the nineteenth century, has referred to the impact which the Vedānta will in due course have on the West. After stating that the West's acquaintance with the Vedas,

'the access to which, opened to us through the Upaniṣads, is in my eyes the greatest advantage which this still young century enjoys over previous ones',

he predicted:

'I believe that the influence of the Sanskrit literature will penetrate not less deeply than did the revival of Greek literature in the fifteenth century.'

Concluding his treatment of India in *Our Oriental Heritage* (written in 1935), the first volume of his series on *The Story of Civilization*, the American philosopher and historian, Will Durant, says (p. 633):

'One cannot conclude the history of India as one can conclude the history of Egypt, or Babylonia, or Assyria; for that history is still being made, that civilization is still creating....

'It is true that even across the Himalayan barrier India has sent to us such questionable gifts as grammar and logic, philosophy, and fables, hypnotism and chess, and above all, our numerals and our decimal system. But these are not the essence of her spirit; they are trifles compared to what we may learn from her in the future. As invention, industry, and trade bind the continents together, or as they fling us into conflict with Asia, we shall study its civilizations more closely, and shall absorb, even in enmity, some of its ways and thoughts. Perhaps, in return for conquest, arrogance, and spoliation, India will teach us the tolerance and gentleness of the mature mind, the quiet content of the unacquisitive soul, the calm of the understanding spirit, and a unifying, pacifying love for all living things.'

Swami Vivekananda considered this to be India's distinctive contribution to the sum total of human progress. In a letter written from America in 1894, the Swami says (*Complete Works*, Vol. V, p. 43):

'The whole world requires Light. It is expectant! India alone has that Light, not in magic, mummeries, and charlatanism, but in

the teaching of the glories of the spirit of real religion—of the highest spiritual truth. That is why the Lord has preserved the race through all its vicissitudes unto the present day. Now the time has come.'

This conviction of Vivekananda and other thinkers derives its guarantee from the Upaniṣads, and the living spiritual tradition, intellectually strong, scientific, and therefore universal, flowing from them and getting periodically enriched by spiritual giants like Buddha and Śaṅkara, Ramakrishna and Vivekananda. The following pages of *The Message of the Upaniṣads* will, I hope, enable the reader to test for himself or herself the strength and relevance of this conviction and its guarantee.

ONE

# OUR SPIRITUAL HERITAGE

This evening I come before you in a capacity differing somewhat from that of previous occasions when I have lectured at this Institute of Culture. On those occasions I was a guest, but now I am a host, and I am extremely happy to be here in Calcutta, after nearly thirteen years in New Delhi, to work as Secretary in this important branch of the Ramakrishna Mission.

The subject of my talk to you this evening, and this talk will be the first of a series of studies of the great spiritual literature of India comprised in the Upaniṣads and the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, is one which is in the very spirit of this Institute—'Our Spiritual Heritage' This Institute seeks to assimilate the spiritual legacy of humanity, of both East and West. And part of that legacy of humanity is the eternal legacy of India which is spiritual through and through. The visions which have been embodied in the immortal literature of this country, particularly in the Upaniṣads and the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, have something eternal about them. They are the visions of the seers, sages, and thinkers of ancient India. These visions were embodied in a cultural experiment which involved a seventh of the human race. The continuity down the ages, right down to our own time, of this vision of the sages is one of the most impressive features of world history. Other things in world history may come and go, but the visions of the sages of the Upaniṣads remain for ever.

So we find that this theme, India's spiritual heritage, is one that is dear to the hearts of men and women in both East and West. In my travels in various countries, this is the thing that impressed me most—this response of the human mind everywhere to India's spiritual heritage. Going beyond all other considerations, whether of geography, history, or political and economic systems, is the appeal of this Indian message to the human heart. There is one India which, like other nations, has its political, social, economic, and other limitations; there is, however, another India, unlimited in range and scope, which has borne witness to the reality of the highest in man and nature, which has bequeathed to the world visions of human glory and greatness. It is these visions

which can well form the sheet anchor of man's collective and individual existence in the modern world.

The tremendous response which Swami Vivekananda's utterances roused in the West was not an isolated or freakish event in history. The modern world has been in search of universal values for some centuries. There are today the world over, including the communist countries, as I myself experienced, an increasing number of people, including young people, who respond to the philosophical and spiritual heritage of India when they get a chance to hear or know about it. This message of India has nothing credal, nothing dogmatic or sectarian about it, for it speaks in terms of man's development, his progress, his achievement of the highest excellence. It is just this that the world is waiting for. In Czechoslovakia, people told me that their inherited idea of religion and philosophy had been quite different, and that they had felt greatly impressed with the way the Vedānta expressed the idea of man's development of total excellence. This idea has nothing parochial about it; it is not tied down to any particular credal or social or political expression, but is universal and human. They were very much impressed with these ideas, and their response was immediate.

It is my sad experience that the world knows very little of this aspect of Indian thought. In fact, even in India itself, people do not yet realize what treasures there are in their own heritage. Yet we do not speak of our spiritual heritage merely as a national heritage, as a matter of national glory. When we speak of these things it is the glory of man as man that becomes the theme. Man in India has achieved certain greatnesses, he has scaled great heights of experience, and he has left these as a legacy for the rest of humanity. We do not claim a copyright for them, for the great achievements of man in one place are the achievements of man everywhere. Today we hear much about man climbing Mount Everest and other high peaks. India has climbed the heights of experience and of greatness, and this is her legacy to the whole world, a legacy which has nothing parochial or narrow about it, but which speaks of the highest attainments of the human mind, of human thought, of man's total excellence.

### *The Challenge of Human Experience*

The long line of evolution through which life has passed has revealed to man great visions of beauty, of strength,

of power, of greatness. India carried these forward to their highest levels of expression. India asked, ages ago, 'What is the highest excellence of man?' This question was tackled by her with a thoroughness which is very impressive. Man, endowed with a body, with the senses, with various capacities, has yet to rise to the point of his highest excellence, which he has in a small measure even in his very childhood. The achievement of this highest excellence is the product of a converging life endeavour; it is education and religion in one. India tackled this fundamental problem very early in her cultural history through a creative minority of sages and thinkers. The results of their investigations into this problem have come down to us in that immortal literature, the Upaniṣads. This literature is immortal because its theme is immortal. Man's supreme excellence, say the Upaniṣads, consists in transcending his limitations of the senses. We have transcended many things. Our animal ancestry we have transcended to some extent in this human psycho-physical organism, but this is not the last, nor the highest, achievement. Even man's technical achievements up to date do not touch a fringe of his total possibilities; in spite of these intellectual developments, he has still about him and in him much of the primeval evolutionary slime; he has to shed much of his animal ancestry. He represents a great advance in evolution, but evolution has still greater heights to scale in him and through him. The present state is only a passing phase; man is not yet; he has to surpass himself and achieve still higher levels of expression.

The Upaniṣads took up this challenge, the challenge of human evolution, of deeper levels of human experience, and they forged ahead to scale the peaks of thought and experience. They gave us visions of man's true excellence as consisting in the realization of his immortal divine nature. This is the theme of the Upaniṣads, and this theme they have imparted to a whole cultural experiment, for it became the theme of Indian culture as well. In our time, this theme found glorious expression in Sri Ramakrishna. There is a continuity from the Upaniṣads to Sri Ramakrishna, and that continuity is one of the most impressive aspects of world history. No culture can be continuous in historical expression unless it has kept alive within itself the vision of the eternal and the imperishable. Only when a culture raises its edifice on the rock bottom

of experience, when it has seen and touched the fundamentals of life, only then does it succeed in ensuring its unity and continuity; then it becomes a beacon light, inspiring human life age after age.

This is how we view the history of India; India tackled life from various angles. Many people have a wrong notion that Indian thought tackled only the idea of man as a religious aspirant, searching for the secret of other-worldly or transcendental values. But that is not correct. We find that the Indian nation experimented with and developed all aspects of life, individual and collective: social organization, political systems, positive sciences, arts and literature, and various forms of happy, joyous living. The history of India reveals that there was no lack of emphasis on a life of joy; the life of the citizen is to be a happy one from every point of view.

But along with this, another development of thought took place which, starting as a critique of all relativistic views of man and the universe, reached its development in the vision of the One *behind* the many, and its consummation in the vision of the One *in* the many, the One *as* the many. Having achieved a modicum of security and welfare in the social field, the creative minds of the community began to forge ahead, asking more and more fundamental questions. Is this psycho-social individual, the psycho-physical being, the last stage in evolution? Or can it evolve into something higher still? Of course, these questions were the product of the creative thinking of a few people only, those who had the capacity, the flair, for this type of adventure. It is only a few gifted minds who, in any given society, participate in the quest for fundamental truth; and these may belong to any strata of society. As we turn the pages of the Upaniṣads, we come across, among its creative thinkers, men, women, and children, intellectuals, kings, and common men. What impresses us is the persistence with which these thinkers ask this one question: What is perfection? What is the highest level of human existence? Endowed with clarity of mind and purity of living, these thinkers achieved the answer to this question through a life of self-discipline and meditation; and in beautiful expositions, impressive dialogues, and fine snatches of poetry they bequeathed it to posterity. This is what has made this literature immortal.

### *The True Nature of Man*

Romain Rolland, in his book, *The Life of Ramakrishna,* writes (Sixth Edition, p. 13):

'The man whose image I here evoke was the consummation of two thousand years spiritual life of three hundred million people.'

That a man like Sri Ramakrishna (A.D. 1836-1886) could appear in our time and live such a glorious life is entirely due to the fact of this continuity of India's spiritual tradition. It is a perennial river, flowing down the ages. Many of us, perhaps, do not know it. Many of us, perhaps, have not been able to take advantage of it. For some it is too lofty a theme. But all who hear about it look up to it in wonder and in admiration. There is a verse in the *Bhagavad-Gītā* (II. 29) which says:

*Āścaryavat paśyati kaścidenam*
*āścaryavat vadati tathaiva cānyaḥ;*
*Āścaryavat cainam anyaḥ śṛṇoti*
*śrutvāpyenaṁ vēda na caiva kaścit—*

'Some look upon this Ātman as a wonder, some speak of it as a wonder, some hear of it as a wonder, but, in spite of all this, few truly know this Truth, the eternal glory of man!'

What, then, is this 'eternal glory of man'? It is his inborn divine nature, birthless, deathless, pure, and holy. He is not the body, nor the senses; these are but the instruments of his manifestation and action in the spatio-temporal world. He is the limitless One expressing itself through the little finite forms of body and mind. This is the true nature of man. This is not a mere philosophical concept, but a realized fact. All sensitive minds are inspired by these ideas. They inspired people at the time when the Upaniṣads were composed; they inspired people a thousand years later; and today, after three or four thousand years, they still inspire us. Neither the phenomenal progress of science and technology, nor the wealth and power of the modern world, has been able to reduce the relevancy of these ideas of the Upaniṣads; they have only increased it. The world is seeking for precisely this spiritual growth for man; it is the only means of breaking through the stagnation which has come upon the human mind. 'The human mind has lost its bearings in the delusion of wealth and power', *pramādyantaṁ vittamohena mūḍham (Kaṭha Upaniṣad,* II. 6). Continued stagnation means death. So the Upaniṣads give us their gospel of hope for man through their grand theme: Man

shall have wealth; man shall have power; man shall have all this; but he shall not get lost in any one of these. These are the means, not the end; he shall break through the crust of experience, and realize the Ātman, his divine Self, which is Sat-Cit-Ānanda, Existence-Knowledge-Bliss. Thus do the Upaniṣads show us the way to creative living and life fulfilment.

Creative living is a beautiful term, but what is 'creative'? Merely doing the same things over and over again does not indicate creativity. The body, the senses, the nervous system, their recurring excitements and titillations, do not make for creative living. Some time or other we have to break through the prison wall of body and mind. Then we reach true creativity, and it is this type of creativity that the Upaniṣads represent. That is why the Upaniṣads are inspiring to the modern man and woman.

Those who are modern fall into two categories. First, there are those who are modern simply because they use modern amenities. That is the ordinary meaning of the word 'modern'. But there is another meaning, a more profound meaning, to this word. In this second meaning the modern man is he who is nourished on the spirit of science, who is alert of mind and on the track of truth, who has the capacity to question, 'to seek, ask, and knock' as Jesus expresses it. That man is modern who is inquisitive, who has a passion for truth and the power of rational investigation, who never takes things for granted but always strives to get at the heart of things; his heart constantly asks, 'What next? What next?' Such a modern mind is the mind that is closest to the spirit of the Upaniṣads. For in the Upaniṣads too there is this atmosphere of alertness, this mood of constant seeking, a deep passion for truth, a constant desire to forge ahead and not take things for granted in a complacent spirit. It is here that you find the close kinship between the Upaniṣads and the modern spirit.

So we find today that scientific thinkers, those who continually seek for deeper vistas of truth, those who strive to take life to higher levels of expression, when they become acquainted with the literature of the Upaniṣads, they become charmed, fascinated. Swami Vivekananda (A.D. 1863-1902), referring to the Upaniṣads, said (*Complete Works*, Vol. III, Eighth Edition, p. 110):

'If there is one word in the English language to express the effect which the literature of India produces upon mankind, it is this one word *fascination*.'

The reason for that fascination is precisely that they draw the mind up to something higher, purer, loftier. The Upaniṣads send out a clarion call to lead us ever upward and onward. In the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* (III. 14) we read: *Uttiṣṭhata! Jāgrata! Prāpya varān nibodhata!* 'Arise! Awake! And enlighten yourself by approaching the great ones!'

*The Moving Power of the Spirit*

This is the clarion call which the modern man needs to carry him forward out of the present stagnation. This fact of stagnation is a recurring phenomenon in world history. Civilizations sometimes get stuck up in the mud of finite values, and become stagnant; and history tells us that there is only one way by which to overcome the deadlock. No political methods, nor social, economic, or financial manipulations can help to redeem man from such crises; these can be temporary palliatives at best; but they cannot raise a culture or a civilization from its stagnation and impart to it creative dynamism. The malady is a spiritual malady; its remedy also lies in the spiritual sphere. There is only one method of effecting a remedy, and that is to bring the power of the indwelling spirit to bear upon the psycho-physical organism, as also upon the psycho-social organism, the machine of our collective life.

This is what India did again and again. Repeatedly in Indian history we get evidence of the expressions of this power of the spirit to move a static world and make it dynamic. In the *Bhagavad-Gītā* (IV. 8), for example, Śrī Kṛṣṇa says: *Dharmasaṁsthāpanārthāya saṁbhavāmi yuge yuge*—'I come age after age to establish righteousness in the world.' When life becomes static, and moves in the narrowest circle possible, then God, the indwelling Spirit in man and nature, comes once again and imparts a new dynamism to the social process which then develops a new assimilative power and manifests fresh energy of movement.

Another illustration of the power of the spirit to make the world dynamic may be seen in the example and words of Buddha (563-483 B.C.), who appeared about a thousand years after Śrī Kṛṣṇa. At Sarnath, in his first discourse after his enlightenment, Buddha spoke of his mission as the 'setting in motion of the wheel of *dharma*'. The very title of the discourse is significant: *Dharmacakrapravartana Sūtra*—Discourse on the setting in motion

of the wheel of *dharma*. *Dharma* is conceived as a wheel, and human life, collective as well as individual. is conceived as a cart on wheels. A wheel gets stuck in a muddy road and will not move until a strong shoulder comes and pushes it. So a society or an individual may get stuck in the little things and trivial enjoyments of the body and the senses. History tells us that the Roman society decayed and fell for just this reason, and we find similar periods in our own history also. Lost in enjoyment and pleasure, and losing sight of the higher values of life, society stagnates and dies. So Buddha, in his discourse at Sarnath, said: 'Come, let us put our shoulders to the wheel, and make it move.' The very concept of the wheel implies something in motion. Buddha said: 'I have come to set the wheel of *dharma* in motion.' Śrī Kṛṣṇa said: 'I have come to set in motion the power of *dharma*.' And it is just this that has happened again and again in Indian history. What did Sri Ramakrishna do in our time? Apparently he did nothing; he lived a quiet life, outside the political and social movements of his time. But the energies that he created and released from his inner life powerfully influenced men and movements around him, and bid fair, at the not too distant future, to transform the modern world itself. He lived the life of the spirit in all its intensity and extensity, and showed the authenticity of man's spiritual life. He demonstrated the true purpose and function of religion, and the harmony between the different religions, and showed that there is no need to quarrel and fight in the name of religion. Quarrelling and fighting make of religion a sham. But religion is not a sham. It invites man to the highest adventure in life, the realization of his true freedom, which is the freedom of the spirit.

Physically and socially, man is not free; he is conditioned by external and internal factors. Freedom is in our spiritual nature. That is our true nature, immortal and divine, and we must realize it in life. This alone is true progress, development; this alone is true religion. This great idea Sri Ramakrishna lived, and, in so living, imparted such a power to it that, when other people received this idea, they received that power as well. They became convinced of the authenticity of this idea because Sri Ramakrishna had actually lived it.

This is the way by which a static society becomes dynamic and is made to move again. As blood flows through a healthy body, so through the body politic must flow the blood of spiritual

life. A great teacher comes, and with him comes great power, a new influx of energy. We start moving once again, and the stagnation begins to vanish. Once more man begins to seek the higher values of life. In the wake of the great teacher come creative individuals who ask deep questions, and strive to discover the answers for themselves: What is the true nature of man? How can man realize it? What is his destiny and how can he achieve it? Is spirituality the prerogative of only a few, select, gifted individuals? Or is it the prerogative of everyone?

The Upaniṣads boldly proclaim that spirituality is the prerogative of every individual. This Ātman, the divine, the immortal, is the Self of every man and woman and child. It is the true nature of man It is also the true nature of all animals, but animals cannot realize it. It is only man with his unique psycho-physical system, aided by the psycho-social environment created by himself in the course of his evolution, that has the capacity to realize this truth. *Man is specially fitted for this great adventure.* He has certain advantages, and when he starts using these advantages he is able to rise to the highest level of spiritual life. The Upaniṣads tell us that wealth and power are not the highest glory of man. The Upaniṣads do not condemn man's pursuit of worldly wealth and power; they never condemn any values pursued by man. Only they say, 'There is something better and higher than these'. The Upaniṣads ever urge us to go on to the realization of this something better within us. Sri Ramakrishna, in one of his parables, tells the story of a woodcutter who, going into the forest to cut wood, was told by a holy man to go forward. Following this advice, in due course the woodcutter came across, first, a sandalwood forest, then, a silver mine, then, a gold mine, and, going deeper still into the forest, he found at last a diamond mine, and became exceedingly rich. Telling this story, Sri Ramakrishna said, 'Therefore I say that, in whatever stage of life you may be, you will realize better and purer things if only you go deeper and deeper into yourself'.

### *The Need for Broad-based Education*

If Indian culture is strong today, even in this highly advanced age of science and technology, it is because India has not forgotten this teaching. The way forward for India today is the assimilation into her own ancient culture of the best that is in modern western culture. But India can do this only if she is conscious of her own

heritage, if she has become inspired and strengthened by that heritage. The source of this heritage, so far as literature goes, is the Upaniṣads, and a study of the Upaniṣads is one of the most rewarding studies for man today, in both East and West.

As far as India is concerned, this study will bring to her children an acquaintance with those basic values which have shaped their history and which are sustaining them even today. We, perhaps, are inclined to take those values for granted, just like the air we breathe. But culture is not like that. It requires education; it requires assimilation. It is this education in and assimilation of their own cultural values that will give to Indian men and women of this age the power to handle the forces of the modern world, to tame and harness them in the service of human happiness and welfare within India and outside. And so the need for every educated citizen of this country is to understand and assimilate the Upaniṣads and the *Bhagavad-Gītā*; not merely to study them as literature, or even as philosophy, but to enter into their spirit and to breathe in unison with their breath.

When we become strong in our own inheritance, we shall feel the strength to take in also the legacy which the West, from the time of the Greeks to the modern age, has left for us. For today, legacies are not parochial. Today, every cultural legacy is a human legacy for the whole world. The world has become so small that all provincial barriers are anachronisms today. Every achievement in any part of the world becomes a legacy for the whole world. So the whole human heritage has to become the subject of education for every individual today. A boy or girl going to school and college in India today studies the western heritage through science, sociology, and various other subjects; thus our boys and girls become the recipients of the best thought of the western world. In the same way, the education of the western boy or girl must be broadened to include the rich cultural heritage of India. It is broad-based education of this kind that will solve the problems of the modern world. Provincialism, which has done so much harm to the world in the past, will thus be completely eliminated, and the world turned in the direction of global unity.

As far as India is concerned, we have been fortunate to have had thinkers, and some of the greatest of them appeared in this modern age, who have placed before us this broad objective. From Raja Rammohun Roy (A.D. 1774-1833) to Swami Vivekananda,

each one of these modern thinkers has been proud of India's heritage and yet has told us, in all humility, to sit at the feet of other nations of the modern world and learn the legacy which is theirs to give.

These great leaders of modern India will not permit us to be parochial. They did not ask us to be proud only of our own heritage; they asked us to open our minds to receive the best that the world has to give. They also told us that *the capacity to assimilate modern western culture is directly proportionate to our prior assimilation of our own culture.* Without a proper understanding of our own culture, we shall never be able to enter the soul of another culture, nor profit from it. This is, unfortunately, what we see happening today. Our capacity to assimilate the best of western culture is very little, because most of us, through our faulty education, did not get the opportunity to understand our own culture, to be acquainted with the great thoughts behind our own culture. Our education is largely cut off from the currents of our own cultural inheritance. The nation is trying to remedy this; but it is a fact that an educated citizen of India today is mostly ignorant of the fundamentals of his own culture, of his own traditions. I found this to be true of large numbers of Indian students I came across in foreign countries, and I have heard from several western friends, and I have also read in newspaper articles written by western well-wishers of India, that Indian students and Indian diplomatic personnel in countries abroad are most inadequately equipped in their knowledge of India and her culture. In the absence of the strength which comes from an assimilation of one's cultural inheritance, when we try to take in western culture, what is taken in proves to be only the cheaper side of that culture, and not the strength that is behind that culture. *That strength we can touch only on the basis of our own strength.*

This defect in our education must be remedied. As far as our schools and colleges are concerned, it will take some time for us to remedy it. But the general citizen can remedy this defect for himself by opening his mind and heart to the rich legacy which is his in his own literary and artistic inheritance. If the Upaniṣads had not been written, if the sages had simply thought these thoughts and passed away, it is probable that the atmosphere of India would still have contained those thoughts, but most of us would not have been able to come into touch with them. A gifted

soul like Sri Ramakrishna is able to open his mind to the wonderful vibrations of thought which the seers have left behind, but ordinary people cannot do that. Fortunately for us, and for all humanity, the mighty thoughts of these sages were written down, enabling you and me to receive this communication from them. The inheritance of culture comes through communication, through the language of symbols, literary and artistic. Man can communicate his experience to coming generations, and this is how he acquires culture, the cummulative effect of inherited tradition. Through communication and transmission, a culture goes on growing and developing, getting richer and richer in the process. Today we have the opportunity to live in the atmosphere in which the sages lived by studying the great literature which they have left as a legacy to us. Reading the Upaniṣads today, we also may have an experience of 'sitting close to those teachers', which is the literal meaning of the term *upaniṣad*.

### *A Message of Fearlessness*

The Upaniṣads stand in a class by themselves. They are immortal literature, and so we call them the Śrutis, the truths realized in transcendental experience beyond the reach of the senses and the sense-bound mind, but realizable by the pure mind. These truths are universal and perennial and will always inspire humanity. Today, the opportunity has come through modern means of communication, modern methods of transmitting ideas, to effect the widest diffusion of this immense fund of inspiration. Before Swami Vivekananda's time, very few people knew about the Vedānta, about the philosophy of the Upaniṣads. He took it upon himself to proclaim these truths from the housetops, both in the East and in the West (*Complete Works*, Vol. III, *ibid.*, p. 238):

'Let me tell you that we want strength, strength, and every time strength. And the Upaniṣads are the great mine of strength. Therein lies strength enough to invigorate the whole world; the whole world can be vivified, made strong, energized through them. They will call with trumpet voice upon the weak, the miserable, and the downtrodden of all races, all creeds, and all sects, to stand on their own feet and be free. Freedom, physical freedom, mental freedom, and spiritual freedom are the watchwords of the Upaniṣads.'

Śaṅkarācārya (A.D. 788-820) was the first teacher in historic times to make the Upaniṣads popular in this country. Before that, only a few select people, largely of the monastic community, knew the glory of the Upaniṣads. But Śaṅkarācārya opened up these

treasures to householders and to all citizens. It will do them good, he said. But still the Upaniṣads reached only a small minority. Today, however, thanks largely to the work of Swami Vivekananda, they are the property of one and all. They are there, in almost every Indian language, as also in English and several other foreign languages, for all who care to take them and be nourished by them. Proclaims Vivekananda (*ibid.*, p. 225):

'The truths of the Upaniṣads are before you. Take them up, live up to them, and the salvation of India will be at hand.'

The Upaniṣads, however, require close study. A newspaper is also a kind of literature; but it is read in the morning and thrown away in the evening, and thus stands at the lowest level of the literary spectrum. The Upaniṣads are not like that; they stand at the highest end of that spectrum. They must be read again and again; every step in growth of mental maturity and clearness brings us closer and closer to the heart of this great literature. The more we read them, the more we get out of them, because their words come from the depths of the heart. 'Where words come out from the depth of truth', says Tagore in his *Gītāñjali*. The words of the Upaniṣads come out from the depth of truth. The sages experienced Truth; they *saw* something profound in man and nature, and they tried to capture and communicate this vision in snatches of poetry. The sublime poetry of the Upaniṣads has moved the hearts of thinkers and poets from ancient times to the present. Take this verse from the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* (II. ii. 7):

*Yaḥ sarvajñaḥ sarvavid yasyaiṣa mahimā bhuvi*—

'He, the all-knowing One, the all-seeing One, whose glory is this universe.'

But is His glory confined only to nature outside, nature spread out in space and time? No, says the Upaniṣad; His glory is specially manifest in man himself, in the profound depths of his being:

*Divye brahmapure hyeṣa vyomnyātmā pratiṣṭhitaḥ*—

'This Ātman, the Self of man, is established in the luminous city of Brahman, which is the heart of man.'

His presence is felt through speech and mind and thought:

*Manomayaḥ prāṇaśarīraneṭā pratiṣṭhito'nne hṛdayaṁ sannidhāya*—
'He manifests as mind and thought; the psychic and vital energy in

the human system functions in and through Him; and, present in the heart, He animates the physical body of man.'

Then the verse concludes with a beautiful, joyous note:

*Tadvijñānena paripaśyanti dhīrā*
*ānandarūpam amṛtaṁ yadvibhāti*—

'The wise ones realize Him everywhere, inside as well as outside, Him whose form is bliss and immortality and whose glory overflows as the visible universe.'

The word *dhīra* in the text means 'the wise one' and indicates a combination of intelligence and courage. The Upaniṣads speak of man's greatness in two forms: first, his intelligence by which he understands the facts of the outer and inner worlds; second, his courage, heroism, by which he not merely knows but also achieves truth and excellence. Mere intelligence is not enough; courage is also necessary. Their combination makes for the highest character where the power of knowledge becomes transmuted into the energy of vision.

The capacity to scale the Everest of experience, to scale the highest peak of truth, comes to intelligence only when it blazons forth as courage. He is the *dhīra*, the wise one; he alone is entitled to realize the Ātman. What is the form of that realization? *Paripaśyanti*, 'he realizes Him everywhere', inside as well as outside, in man as well as in nature. The whole of nature becomes ablaze with divinity to his purified vision. He realizes Him as *ānandarūpam amṛtaṁ yadvibhāti*, 'of the form of bliss and immortality which has overflown as nature, as the visible universe'. The universe becomes transformed into waves and waves of bliss; into waves of bliss, *ānandalaharī*, and waves of beauty, *saundaryalaharī*, as expressed by Śaṅkarācārya. The Ātman shines in man and nature, in the sun and moon and stars, in every particle of dust. Now here is a vision captured in a snatch of poetry. This is just a sample; there are scores of such in the Upaniṣads.

This beautiful poetry of the Upaniṣads is the vehicle of the most profound thought. That thought cannot be penetrated easily. A superficial reading will not suffice; constant study and constant probing are required. In this study we are not studying a bit of nature outside of ourselves, like physics or chemistry. We are studying nature as expressed in our personality, and searching for the very core of that personality; our study relates to something

very closely connected with ourselves, our development, fulfilment, our total realization. Every sentence in the Upaniṣads has something corresponding to the deep-felt urges in ourselves. Śaṅkarācārya tells us in his *Brahma-Sūtra bhāṣya* that Brahman, the Absolute, which is the theme of the Upaniṣads and the starting point of the *Brahma-Sūtras*, is not an abstract truth remote from us and from our daily lives, but is a given datum of experience as the inner Self of all.

So there is great need for us to study this legacy, to understand it. The whole country will become galvanized with a new energy, a new resolve, a new discipline, even if only a little of the wisdom of the Upaniṣads can come into our lives. We read in the *Bhagavad-Gītā* (II. 40): *Svalpamapyasya dharmasya trāyate mahato bhayāt*—'Even a little of this *dharma* will save us from great fear.' Here is the message of fearlessness, of strength, of growth, development, and realization. Man must rise higher and higher and reach out towards perfection which is the unity of all-encompassing love and knowledge. This is the message, the clarion call, of the Upaniṣads—a call to dynamic action in the pursuit of Truth and total excellence, a call to carry forward evolution to the level of total life fulfilment through spiritual realization. What a hopeful message it is!

### *Universal Man*

The Upaniṣads summon man to a constant struggle to gain the highest, the struggle to achieve the eternal, the permanent, the immortal imbedded in life and experience. Other races and other cultures have spoken of man as a dominator of external nature, as a creator of values in the context of man's collective life. In Greek thought, for example, we have the concept of the Promethean spirit, the power of the human spirit to overcome external obstacles and establish man's supremacy over the forces of nature and, if necessary, over the forces of other human beings as well. The great defect in this line of thought, when pursued by itself, is that it does not carry all humanity together. It is based on the concept of man dominating everything external to himself; it does not stress the need to chasten and overcome the ego which results from such domination of his external environment. Man dominating his environment is a valid concept; it is a form of human excellence. The West has carried it to the highest level of expression; and we in India stand in great need of education in this excel-

lence on a nation-wide scale. But this is not the highest that man is capable of; Indian thought will not accord it the highest point in the scale of human excellence. That point involves the transcendence of the ego and the emergence of the universal within man. When man achieves supreme self-transcendence he finds that there is nobody to dominate. He finds that he is one with all, for he has realized the Self in all.

In other words, he discovers himself as the Universal Man, integrated within and without, and himself pulsating in the heart of man and nature. The liberation of this Universal Man out of the common men and women that we are is the aim of the Upaniṣads. It is this that makes the Upaniṣads of such contemporary interest and importance today. Universal Man is the theme of all progressive thinking today, and so the Upaniṣads stand in the forefront of all progressive thought in the modern world. Man, who has been completely submerged in nationalistic, racial, sectarian, or various other forms of limiting *milieus*, needs to be redeemed. Swami Vivekananda shared with modern man the glory of this Vedāntic message and showed what blessings it could confer on modern society. He also taught how to make this philosophy practical in workaday life. So a study of this profound literature, the Upaniṣads and the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, an intelligent study of the philosophy imbedded in it—the Vedānta—in relation to contemporary thought and needs, will prove a rewarding experience for men and women everywhere.

TWO

# ĪŚĀ UPANIṢAD—1

The *Īśā Upaniṣad*, which is always regarded as first among the Upaniṣads, has special significance. This is that the very first verse of this Upaniṣad is, as it were, a proposition, or statement, that is substantiated and authenticated by every other Upaniṣad. Moreover, the philosophy contained in this great declaration of the opening verse became, later, the philosophic background of the great synthesis which found expression in the *Bhagavad-Gītā*. There is, in fact, a very close spiritual kinship between the *Īśā Upaniṣad* and the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, which was, in turn, described by Śaṅkarācārya in the beautiful introduction with which he prefaces his commentary on the *Gītā*, as 'the collected essence of the meaning of all the Vedas', *samastavedārtha-sāra-saṅgraha-bhūtam*. The *Bhagavad-Gītā* itself proclaims through the colophon at the end of each of its chapters that it seeks to bring out the ethical and spiritual implications of the profound metaphysics of the Upaniṣads.

All the great thinkers of India, ancient and modern, have received inspiration from the *Īśā Upaniṣad*. So we shall study this Upaniṣad first and then take the second, the *Kena Upaniṣad*, and later the third, the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, before taking up the study of the *Bhagavad-Gītā*. But our main study will be the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, because, as Swami Vivekananda points out, it is the book that contains the philosophy for this age. It does not expound any exclusive creed or dogma, it does not plead for a sectarian view, but it gives an insight into life, into all aspects of man's experience, and teaches the technique by which life can be lived at its highest and best. It breathes the spirit of tolerance and universality. A study of the *Bhagavad-Gītā* is therefore of the utmost practical significance, and all, whether of the East or the West, who seek will receive from it the highest spiritual benefit. The understanding of the *Bhagavad-Gītā* will become easier when we know its spiritual and philosophical background in the Upaniṣads.

When we remember how ancient the Upaniṣads are, it strikes us as remarkable that they have not lost their appeal to the human mind, in spite of all the changes that have taken place in human society, in its views, attitudes, and values during these three or more millennia of history. The reason for this is that the Upani-

ṣads deal with fundamental matters, those things that affect life most profoundly. Indeed, the Upaniṣads seem to have touched the very mainspring of life and experience, and they have set in motion a thought energy which has the power to transform human life in any epoch. The words of the Upaniṣads are great music, the tunes of which have the power to fascinate the hearts of all sensitive people, century after century. Every one who studies the Upaniṣads reverently, and in a seeking mood, will realize for himself or herself the charm of their deep, profound utterances couched in language, direct and deep, poetic and sublime. A spiritual seeker who reads the Upaniṣads will feel that he is dealing with a theme that is very close to his life and destiny, a reality which is in himself as well as in the world outside. The deep pulsations of that reality have been caught up in the beautiful music of the Upaniṣads.

*What is this World?*

*Pūrṇamadaḥ pūrṇamidaṁ*
*pūrṇāt pūrṇamudacyate;*
*Pūrṇasya pūrṇamādāya*
*pūrṇamevāvaśiṣyate.*

*Om śāntiḥ, śāntiḥ, śāntiḥ—*

'The invisible (Brahman) is the Full; the visible (the world) too is the Full. From the Full (Brahman), the Full (the visible universe) has come. The Full (Brahman) remains the same, even after the Full (the visible universe) has come out of the Full (Brahman).'

The Sanskrit verse which I recited just now is the 'Peace Invocation' which precedes the *Īśā* and other Upaniṣads belonging to the *Śukla Yajur-Veda*. This verse is very profound in meaning and significance: it concentrates within a few lines the entire thought of the Upaniṣads. It reveals at once the grasp, the sweep, the scope of that thought: *Pūrṇamadaḥ pūrṇamidam*—'That is the Full or Whole; this is the Full or Whole.' In the technical language of Vedānta, the words 'that' and 'this' have special meanings. *Idam*, this, is a demonstrative pronoun, involving an effort to point out something which is within the grasp of sense experience. It stands for this manifested universe of space and time and change. As soon as the human mind becomes aware of the world around it, it becomes also seized with the question as to what is the world that so surrounds it. What is this world that impinges on us all the time? The human mind constantly receives information about it

through the five senses; it is intrigued with these data and wants to know all about them; and it formulates to itself the question, lispingly or clearly, What is this world of our everyday experience?

This question marks the beginning of all knowledge. In the words of William James, to a new-born baby the world is 'a buzzing booming confusion'. It is this 'buzzing booming confusion' that the child tries to understand, little by little, first in a rudimentary way and, later, as a youth and a man, in a clearer way, by logical and scientific analysis and synthesis. This totality of the external world in its impact upon the human mind is what is meant by the word *idam*.

How, then, shall we answer this questioning of the mind? Philosophical thought as developed in the East and the West provides various answers to the question, answers which come from various levels of thought. Some of the answers found in the Upaniṣads are echoed today in modern scientific thought. Suppose we answer the question by the word 'nature'. We may say that this world is a transformation of nature, of some primordial energy constituting nature, or, as the British astronomer Fred Hoyle tells us, of some cosmic dust. These very answers are to be found in the Upaniṣads also. But the Upaniṣads treat them as preliminary answers, or, better still, as limited answers, *prādeśamātram*, given purely from a limited point of view, namely, the external. This was the prevalent nineteenth-century view and is still patronized by several scientists, in spite of the revolutionary advances of twentieth-century scientific thought.

The other answer to the question comes from a deeper level, and involves another point of view, namely, the internal. Twentieth-century science is slowly becoming acquainted with this point of view through the contributions of a few outstanding physicists, astronomers, and biologists. Among these, I would like to refer to the conclusions of the palaeontologist Pierre Teilhard de Chardin.

Chardin asks (*The Phenomenon of Man*, with an Introduction by Julian Huxley, Collins, London, p. 52):

'Up to now has science ever troubled to look at the world other than from *without*?'

And he proceeds (*ibid.*, p. 55):

'In the eyes of the physicist, nothing exists legitimately, at least up to now, except the *without* of things. The same intellectual attitude is still permissible in the bacteriologist, whose cultures (apart from substantial difficulties) are treated as laboratory

reagents. But it is still more difficult in the realm of plants. It tends to become a gamble in the case of a biologist studying the behaviour of insects or coelenterates. It seems merely futile with regard to the vertebrates. Finally, it breaks down completely with man, in whom the existence of a *within* can no longer be evaded, because it is the object of a direct intuition and the substance of all knowledge.'

Teilhard de Chardin continues (*ibid.*, p. 56):

'It is impossible to deny that, deep within ourselves, an "interior" appears at the heart of beings, as it were seen through a rent. This is enough to ensure that, in one degree or another, this "interior" should obtrude itself as existing everywhere in nature from all time. Since the stuff of the universe has an inner aspect at one point of itself, there is necessarily a *double aspect to its structure*, that is to say in every region of space and time—in the same way, for instance, as it is granular: *co-extensive with their Without, there is a Within to things.*'

Both Indian thought and modern scientific thought accept a fundamental unity behind the world of variety. That basic unitary reality evolves into all that we see around us in the world This view is a few thousand years old in India; we find it in the Sāṁkhyan and Vedāntic schools of Indian thought; and they expound it very much on the lines followed by modern thought. In his address to the Chicago Parliament of Religions in 1893, Swami Vivekananda said (*Complete Works*, Vol. I, Eleventh Edition, p. 13):

'All science is bound to come to this conclusion in the long run. Manifestation, and not creation, is the word of science today, and the Hindu is only glad that what he has been cherishing in his bosom for ages is going to be taught in more forcible language, and with further light from the latest conclusions of science.'

The Sāṁkhya school uses two terms to represent Nature or Pradhāna: Prakṛti denoting Nature in its unmodified state, and Vikṛti denoting Nature in its modified state. The Vedānta similarly speaks of Brahman as the inactive state, and Māyā or Śakti as the active state of one and the same primordial non-dual reality. The Brahman of the Vedānta is the unity of both the spiritual and the non-spiritual, the non-physical and the physical aspects of the universe, unlike Nature in modern scientific thought which is only the unity of the physical aspects of the universe. So, as the first answer to the question, What is the world? We get the child's answer in his growing knowledge of the discrete entities and events of the outer world and their hazy inter-connections. The second

answer is the product of scientific thought, which gives us the knowledge of the one behind the many. All the entities and events of the world are but the modifications or evolutions of one primordial basic reality, be it nature, space-time, or cosmic dust.

Although modern scientific thought does not yet have a place for any spiritual reality or principle, scientists like Chardin and Julian Huxley are trying to find a proper place for the experience of the spiritual in the scientific picture of the universe. When this is achieved, the scientific picture, which is close to Vedānta already, will become closer still, and the synthesis of the knowledge of the 'without' and the 'within' of things will give us the total view of the universe. This is wisdom according to Vedānta, whereas all partial views are just pieces of knowledge or information.

*Beyond Time and Space*

The Upaniṣads deal with this 'within' of things. Theirs, in fact, is the most outstanding contribution on this subject in the human cultural legacy. They term this aspect of the reality of things *pratyak caitanya* or *pratyak ātman* or *pratyak tattva*; and they contain the fascinating account of the stages by which the human mind rose from crude beginnings to clear, wholly spiritual heights in the realization of this reality. The Upaniṣads also synthesized the knowledge of the 'within' with the knowledge of the 'without', in a total comprehension of reality.

It is this total vision that finds expression in this verse. How does the world look when we view it from the outside? We seek an answer from the physical sciences. How does it look when we view it from the inside? We seek an answer from the non-physical sciences, including the science of religion. And philosophy, as understood in the Upaniṣadic tradition, is the synthesis of these two answers: *Brahmavidyā* is *sarvavidyāpratiṣṭhā*, as the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* puts it, or *kṣetrakṣetrajñayor jñānaṁ yat tat jñānaṁ mataṁ mama*—'The unified knowledge of the "without" and the "within" of things is true knowledge according to Me', as Kṛṣṇa says in the *Gītā*.

From this total viewpoint there is neither inside nor outside; they are relative concepts depending upon some sort of a reference point, e.g. the body; as such, they move within the framework of relativity. Reality knows neither 'outside' nor 'inside'; it is ever

full. These relative concepts are helpful in our approach to the understanding of the total reality.

Thus we find that our knowledge of the manifold of experience, the *idam*, also involves something else, namely, the unity behind the manifold. This unity behind the manifold, which is not perceptible to the senses, is indicated by the term *adaḥ* meaning 'that', indicating something far away, unlike the 'this' of sense experience. 'This' is the correlative of 'that'; 'this' is the changeable aspect of reality; 'that' is its unchangeable aspect. If 'this' refers to something given in sense experience, 'that' refers to something transcendental, beyond the experience of the senses. To say 'this' therefore also implies at the same time something that is beyond 'this'. 'This' is an effect; as such, it is visible and palpable; behind and beyond it lies the cause, the invisible and the impalpable. *Adaḥ*, 'that', represents the invisible behind the visible, the transcendental behind the empirical, a something that is beyond time and space. In religion, this something is called 'God'. In philosophy, it is called *Tat* or *adaḥ*, That, Brahman, the ultimate Reality, the cause, the ground, and the goal of the universe.

So, this verse first tells us that beyond and behind the manifested universe is the reality of Brahman, which is the fullness of pure Being; it then tells us about this world of becoming which, being nothing but Brahman, is also the 'Full'. From the point of view of the total Reality, it is all 'fullness' everywhere, in space-time as well as beyond space-time. Then the verse adds:

*Pūrṇasya pūrṇamādāya pūrṇamevāvaśiṣyate*—'From the Fullness of Brahman has come the Fullness of the universe, leaving Fullness alone as the remainder.'

What, then, is the point of view or level from which the sentiments of this verse proceed? It is that of the total Reality, the Absolute and the Infinite, in which as I said earlier, the 'within' and 'without' of things merge. The Upaniṣads call it the ocean of *saccidānanda*, the unity of absolute existence, absolute awareness, and absolute bliss. Itself beyond all distinctions of time and space, it yet manifests itself through all such distinctions. To the purified vision of the Upaniṣadic sages, this whole universe appeared as the fullness of Being, which was, which is, and which shall ever be. In the *Bhagavad-Gītā* (VII. 26) Kṛṣṇa says:

***Vedāhaṁ samatītāni vartamānāni cārjuna;***
***Bhaviṣyāṇi ca bhūtāni māṁ tu veda na kaścana—***

'I, O Arjuna, know the beings that are of the past, that are of the present, and that are to come in the future; but Me no one knows.'

That fullness of the true Me, says Kṛṣṇa, is beyond all these limited categories, such as space and time, cause and effect, and substance and attribute.

*Striving for Fulfilment*

That is the nature of Brahman; and the theme of the Upaniṣads is this Brahman. It is also the true nature of man; and a second theme of the Upaniṣads is therefore the achievement by man of his true nature, the fullness of his being, *pūrṇatā*. The word *pūrṇatā*, fullness, has a tremendous hold on the human mind. To speak of 'fullness' is to speak of fulfilment, integrality, wholeness; and these are words which express the deep aspirations of the human heart, aspirations which cannot be long suppressed. Every pulse of the human heart, every struggle of life in general, is towards fulfilment. Every step that we take in life has fulfilment for its goal, the urge to wholeness for its motive. This is a general feature of the universe; the drop strives to join the ocean; the fraction finds its wholeness in the integer; and man finds his fulfilment in God.

This interpretation of the whole phenomenon of existence finds powerful endorsement in the views of some of the most advanced biologists of today. In his opening essay on 'The Emergence of Darwinism' contributed to the first volume of the three volume publication entitled *Evolution after Darwin*, containing the proceedings of the Darwin Centennial Celebration Conference of Scientists held at the Chicago University in November 1959, Julian Huxley writes (*The Evolution of Life: Its Origin, History, and Future*, Vol. I of *Evolution after Darwin*, Edited by Sol Tax, University of Chicago Press, p. 21):

'In the light of our present knowledge, man's most comprehensive aim is seen not as mere survival, not as numerical increase, not as increased complexity of organization or increased control over his environment, but as greater fulfilment—the fuller realization of more possibilities by the human species collectively and more of its component members individually.'

Again, in his address to the final session of the Conference,

speaking on 'The Evolutionary Vision', he said (*Issues in Evolution*, Vol. III of *Evolution after Darwin*, pp. 251-59):

'Man's evolution is not biological but psychosocial; it operates by the mechanism of cultural tradition, which involves the cumulative self-reproduction and self-variation of mental activities and their products. Accordingly, major steps in the human phase of evolution are achieved by break-throughs to new dominant patterns of mental organization, of knowledge, ideas, and beliefs—ideological instead of physiological or biological organization. . . .

'All dominant thought organizations are concerned with the ultimate, as well as with the immediate problems of existence or, I should rather say, with the most ultimate problems that the thought of the time is capable of formulating or even envisaging. They are all concerned with giving some interpretation of man, of the world which he is to live in, and of his place and role in that world—in other words, some comprehensible picture of human destiny and significance. . . .

'Once we truly believe that man's destiny is to make possible greater fulfilment for more human beings and fuller achievement by human societies, utility in the customary sense becomes subordinate. Quantity of material production is, of course, necessary as the basis for the satisfaction of elementary human needs—but only up to a certain degree. More than a certain number of calories or cocktails or TV sets or washing machines per person is not merely unnecessary but bad. Quantity of material production is a means to a further end, not an end in itself.'

The achievement of human destiny cannot be left to be worked out by the blind and wasteful evolutionary processes of nature. Nature has taken half a billion years to achieve our present state; at this rate, evolution will take a few more billion years to evolve the perfect man, the fulfilled man. We shall have to wait, in the language of Tennyson, for that

'. . .far-off divine event,
To which the whole creation moves.'

Shall we, then, wait that long? Or shall we achieve it now? Shall we just float with the current of nature and achieve fulfilment as and when nature achieves it for us? Or shall we take our destiny from the hands of nature into our own and achieve it *here* and *now*? Julian Huxley tells us that man, with his intelligence and imagination, has the capacity to direct his evolution and quicken its pace in himself and in his environment. Says he (*ibid.*, p. 252):

'It is only through possessing a mind that he has become the dominant portion of this planet and the agent responsible for its

future evolution; and it will be only by the right use of that mind that he will be able to exercise that responsibility rightly. He could all too readily be a failure in the job; he will succeed only if he faces it consciously and if he uses all his mental resources —of knowledge and reason, of imagination, sensitivity, and moral effort.'

These ideas are perfectly in tune with the temper and thought of the Upaniṣads. And the Upaniṣads hold a vital human legacy for the enrichment of modern thought and for the quickening of man's evolutionary pace towards total fulfilment. *It is unfortunate that most modern scientists, including Huxley, are ignorant of this Indian legacy.* They know the negative elements of that lagacy, not the positive ones. In his lecture referred to above, Huxley refers twice to the Indian legacy, but in both cases it is only to refer to what he learnt, during his travel in India, of a Hindu who killed his child at the altar of Kālī in order to propitiate that goddess. With the steady advance of Vedānta in the West, western scientists of a generation or two ahead may well become better acquainted with the lofty philosophic and spiritual thought of India; the West will then realize the depth of that legacy, its close kinship with modern thought, and its significance for the modern world.

Modern thought, as represented by men like Huxley, affirms, like Vedānta, the supremacy of mind over physical environment, of spirit over matter. This is the meaning of the biologists' assertion that from now onward man is the agent of evolution. But in this onward march of human evolution, the emphasis in modern thought is excessively on the manipulation of the *external* environment. Emphasis on the manipulation of the *inner* environment, which assumes greater importance in the higher stages of psycho-social evolution, is feeble and meagre; knowledge of the science and technique of the manipulation of this inner environment, which is the meaning of religion as understood in Indian thought, is elementary. Huxley acknowledges this when he says (*ibid.*, 259-60):

'Although it is to his mind that man owes both his present dominant position in evolution, and any advances he may have made during his tenure of that position, he is still strangely ignorant and even superstitious about it. The exploration of the mind has barely begun. It must be one of the main tasks of the coming era, just as was the exploration of the world's surface a few centuries ago. Psychological exploration will doubtless reveal as many surprises as did geographical exploration and will make available to our descendants all kinds of new possibilities of fuller and richer living.'

This scientific exploration of the inner world has been the special activity of India during the millennia of her long history. The sages of the Upaniṣads, Kṛṣṇa, Buddha, Śaṅkara, and a galaxy of lesser spiritual stars in the past, and Ramakrishna and Vivekananda in our own day, are explorers, experimenters, and compassionate teachers of man in this very field. They are teachers of freedom—freedom from all bonds of nature, external or internal. They teach man how to fulfil himself through spiritual realization. They see freedom as the watchword of the cosmic process and the evolutionary drama: the spirit ever struggling to be free from the tentacles of matter, first by transforming it and later by transcending it. In the ringing words of Swami Vivekananda (Lecture on 'Maya and Freedom', *Complete Works*, Vol. II, Ninth Edition, p. 125):

'One curious fact present in the midst of all our joys and sorrows, difficulties and struggles, is that we are surely journeying towards freedom. The question was practically this: "What is this universe? From what does it arise? Into what does it go?" And the answer was: "In freedom it rises, in freedom it rests, and into freedom it melts away."'

Man is the only creature who is aware of himself and of the vast energies lying within him. At the same time, he is also keenly aware of a sense of limitation within himself; he struggles to overcome this limitation, thus turning his inner being into a battlefield, into a veritable *Kurukṣetra*. It is this conflict between the sense of bondage and the sense of freedom that makes for all the charm and zest of life, its tragedies and comedies, its dreams and visions. In fact, it is the very meaning of life at the human level. But this conflict is not eternal, and man is not perpetually doomed to be bogged down in the mire of this unequal conflict. For in the course of this very conflict which, in the light and under the guidance of a spiritual philosophy, becomes also a school for his ethical and spiritual education, man gains in spiritual strength, in will and purpose and clarity of vision, and eventually achieves true freedom and bliss through the realization of his spiritual nature. Freedom is his birthright, and he now regains it after passing through the long travail of the evolutionary process.

### *The Dangers of Stagnation*

Organisms other than human do not know this; they have not the organic capacity to formulate the problem for themselves, much

less to find a solution; they have to depend entirely on mother nature for it. Man alone has the capacity to experience bondage in a consistent manner and to struggle to overcome it. An animal cannot feel the pangs of emotional tensions, of joy and sorrow, elation and depression, love and hate, except as fleeting experiences. But man feels all these; he also asks questions about these through his developed reason, disciplines them through his will, and forges from them a rich and stable character and personality. And Vedānta tells us that herein lies the glory of man; he can surpass himself; and this *in this very life*, in this very person, and not at the end of nature's evolutionary process. Says the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* (III. vii. 17):

*Yaśca mūḍhatamo loke*
*yaśca buddheḥ paraṁ gataḥ;*
*Tāvubhau sukhamedhete*
*kliśyatyantarito janaḥ—*

'Only two kinds of people are happy and free from tension, the utter fool and the one who has surpassed himself, gone beyond his mind (and attained the state of a *paramahaṁsa*). All people in between are in varying stages of tension and sorrow.'

These two opposites do not suffer tension, but all others, the vast majority of people, understand the nature of life to be tension. This tension, says Vedānta, is the organism's struggle for freedom; in the case of man, it is this tension that carries him forward. Awareness of bondage is the first step towards freedom. In politics, we see that, as long as a subject nation is unaware of its bondage, it is comparatively peaceful and free from inner tension; but it is also unaware of the joy of freedom. But a time comes when that subject nation feels that it is better to die than to be a slave, and from that moment it begins both its life of tension and its march towards freedom. We have seen this happen in the recent history of India.

In spiritual life, exactly the same thing happens. Many people are not even aware that they are bound. They are quite happy with the little pleasures they get in the sense world. There is pain too, but if they have even a little pleasure, that is compensation enough. Vedānta calls them *saṁsārins*, 'stagnant souls'. Sri Ramakrishna asks us to beware of this stagnation in one of his beautiful parables by playing on the word *saṁsāra*, which means the world as well as worldliness. Every one of us is in *saṁsāra*,

the world of name and form, says Sri Ramakrishna; even God, when He incarnates as man, lives in *saṁsāra*. But, says Sri Ramakrishna, we may be in *saṁsāra*, but *saṁsāra* should not be in us. The boat should be in water, but water should not be in the boat. Being in *saṁsāra* does not make one a *saṁsārin*. It is when *saṁsāra* or worldliness gets into us, when we look upon the world of name and form as an end in itself, it is then that we become stagnant and refuse to develop and progress. That is the standing danger in human life, and it has to be avoided at all costs. Spiritual earnestness and alertness are our best safeguards.

It is those who are entirely engrossed in this sense world who do not strive; Vedānta calls it the state of spiritual blindness. They live in darkness, and they are pleased with it. They are in bondage, and they feel at home in it. But the call of Vedānta is to effort and struggle, a constant probing of life for deeper values, for higher levels of life expression. 'Arise, awake, and stop not till the goal is reached', says the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* as freely paraphrased by Swami Vivekananda.

This is the clarion call of the Upaniṣads to the human spirit. Do not rest content; the best is yet to be. You may have achieved something by way of wealth or power or knowledge; even to have achieved this human birth is a great thing in the march of evolution. But do not be satisfied with the mere achievement of human birth; for much of that man is still animal; much primeval evolutionary slime clings to him yet. There is a Sanskrit saying which expresses this modern idea: *Manuṣyarūpeṇa mṛgāḥ caranti*—'Moving about in the form of man, but with the animal still within'. We have constantly to remember that it was the dynamic urge of the spirit within that took us through all the past stages of evolution and brought us up to the present level of man. Our privilege is to continue that march, to intensify the pace of that evolutionary struggle guided by far-sight and foresight, and avoid, through alertness and will, all chances of getting stranded. Intense dissatisfaction with the present and keen desire to scale further heights are the true marks of moral and spiritual greatness. Wherever they are found, there the true Vedāntic spirit and temper are present.

Our limited vision sees but the finite aspect of things; but the fullness of Being is *an ever-present fact*. It is only when we shed this limited vision, when we see with our inner eyes open, with *adhyātmadṛṣṭi*, as Vedānta puts it, that we see this ever-pre-

sent Fullness. We then realize it as our true nature. We now consider ourselves as little specks of dust, creatures of circumstances, little beggars ever craving for a little pleasure, a little happiness from outside. Man, born heir to the Infinite, the Immortal, and the Full, behaves like a beggar picking up bits of pleasure and happiness from the debris of experience. That is the tragedy of man revealed by the evolutionary vision of Vedānta; a prince who has forgotten his princely heritage and goes begging in the streets. This is human nature as we find it in each one of us; and this has to be transformed. Man must be educated in the knowledge of his own divine nature. This is *ātmajñāna*, Self-knowledge, the knowledge not of our own separate ego-natures, but of the one Self which is the Self of all; 'in Him we live and move and have our being'. This is the knowledge that will restore to us the freedom which is our birthright. We do not get this freedom as a gift from nature; we do not get it as a gift from anyone. We simply *realize* it as having been ours all the time, but withheld from us through our organic deficiencies. Vedānta explains evolution as the gradual removal of these organic deficiencies making for the progressive manifestation of the spirit's inherent purity and perfection.

### *Seek and Ye Shall Find*

But how to realize it? We have forgotten our true nature. We have lost our way in the tangle of the world. Who will show us the way? We ourselves. The purer the mind the more easily it is controlled and disciplined; and a pure and disciplined mind finds its way to God. Says Sri Ramakrishna: A rat enters the trap of death lured by pleasing food, but finds itself caught and struggles to get away. The way is open for it to get away, but it does not realize it. Similarly, the way out to freedom is available for bound man; but few see it. They need guidance from outside at the initial stages. It is such guidance that the Upaniṣads provide. This saving knowledge of the Self dawned in the pure and disciplined hearts of the sages of ancient India. They, out of love and compassion for man, left it as a continuing legacy for posterity, as a tradition of hope and strength, as a perennial sacred *Gaṅgā* of wisdom.

This is the secret of the perennial inspiration of the Upaniṣads to humanity; they communicate to man the profound truths of his inner being which he is ever in search of. That is what makes

it the *sanātana dharma*, the eternal philosophy, or, in the language of Aldous Huxley, 'the perennial philosophy'. And here, in the beautiful 'Peace Invocation' of the *Īśā Upaniṣad*, we have the assurance that man's seeking is not in vain, that what the sages realized by purified vision, we, too, shall realize when our vision becomes pure.

The *Bhagavad-Gītā* also refers to this state of the fullness of being; it compares it to the ocean, brimful and majestic; mighty rivers flow into it without disturbing its stability and majesty. The man who realizes the Self, says the *Gītā* (II. 70), becomes just like that ocean; he remains full and steady, in spite of his own or other people's desires entering into him. But the un-Self-realized man, being a small receptacle, becomes easily shaken by every passing wind of desire.

The attainment of this fullness marks the summit of spiritual life and the discarding of the spiritual crutches of rituals, ceremonies, and forms. Sri Ramakrishna emphasizes this feature of man's spiritual evolution. One of the songs which he loved to sing reads:

'Why should one want to go on pilgrimage to Gayā, Gaṅgā, Prabhāsa, Kāśi, or Kāñci if all the time the heart repeats the Divine Mother's name?'

Thus we find that the whole process of spiritual and ethical discipline leads to the awareness of the spiritual reality behind man and nature. Through the senses we become aware of differences, but through spiritual knowledge we become aware of the unity behind these differences. Just as science discovers the laws which link the different aspects of sense experience, philosophy unravels the law of the perfect unity of being behind nature, without and within. That unity is termed 'Brahman', which is defined in the Upaniṣads thus (*Taittirīya Upaniṣad*, III. 1):

*Yato vā imāni bhūtāni jāyante,*
*yena jātāni jīvanti,*
*Yat prayantyabhisaṁviśanti;*
*tat vijijñāsasva; tat brahmeti—*

'That from which all these entities and beings are born,
That in which, being born, they live,
That unto which, in the end, they enter;
know That; That is Brahman.'

It is obvious that this spiritual knowledge cannot come to us unless we seek it earnestly. In the New Testament (Matthew, vii. 7-8), Jesus expresses the same truth:

'Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.'

The Upaniṣads, too, demand an inquiring, seeking mind. The seeker must have a questioning mind, the Upaniṣads say. *Jijñāsā*, inquiry, is the term used in the Upaniṣads for this frame of mind. The Upaniṣads will help all such inquiring minds in their pursuit of truth and excellence. What is needed is earnestness. We cannot saunter into truth-seeking; the leisurely attitude which flings questions about God and truth at random, not even waiting for the answer, will not do. Such an approach will not help to open up the profound meaning of the words of the Upaniṣads. In the words of one of the Upaniṣads, butter is present in milk, but it needs churning to bring it out; so is the truth hidden in experience; it has to be churned out by inquiry and deep meditation. This is why, in the beginning, the Upaniṣads were described as *rahasya*, secret. It was thought that only a select few could study the Upaniṣads; the *sannyāsins* but not the householders. But in the eighth century A.D. the great philosopher Śaṅkarācārya came, and he was the first person to open the doorway of this knowledge to householders, to the general public. He wrote his famous commentaries, which helped to bring before humanity the profundity and depth of the *Brahmavidyā* and the *Ātmajñāna* of the Upaniṣads. But, even in spite of Śaṅkarācārya, the tradition of secrecy continued strong, keeping the Upaniṣads as sealed literature for millions of people. In fact, so strong has been this tradition of secrecy that, even about thirty years ago, I saw in the Mysore Sanskrit College that, when the Upaniṣads were being taught, the students, during the hour of study, put the ends of their robes over their heads, simulating the way of the *sannyāsins*.

It was Swami Vivekananda who came at the end of the last century, who succeeded in throwing open the study of the Upaniṣads to all people, not only of this country but of all countries. Swami Vivekananda said that anyone, who wanted rationally to understand life and build the structure of a broad and deep character on enduring spiritual foundations, could study the Upaniṣads and derive immense benefit out of them. The greatest work that

Swami Vivekananda did was to expound the teachings of the Upaniṣads in the simplest language possible, broadcast them to people in East and West, show their practical bearing in every department of life, and demonstrate their capacity to solve the problems of modern man in East and West.

Nevertheless, there is some meaning in describing the Upaniṣads as *rahasya*, mystery. The Upaniṣads are profound, and only the seeker who is prepared to study them very seriously and intently can derive benefit from them. They are *rahasya* in this sense. Anybody and everybody cannot get the meaning out of them. The deep philosophy of the Upaniṣads is not revealed to the casual questioner; it is only revealed to the earnest inquirer who, with a ceaselessly questioning mind, is capable of penetrating the inmost depths of his being.

### *The Technique of Enjoyment*

With our minds thus prepared, the *Īśā Upaniṣad*, in its first verse, takes us at once to these secret depths of Truth:

*Īśāvāsyamidaṁ sarvaṁ yatkiñca jagatyāṁ jagat;*
*Tena tyaktena bhuñjīthāḥ, mā gṛdhaḥ kasya svid dhanam—*

'Whatever there is changeful in this ephemeral world, all that must be enveloped by the Lord. By this renunciation, support yourself. Do not covet the wealth of anyone.'

This is a very profound utterance, unequivocal, and yet extremely simple. The whole universe, it tells us, is filled with the spirit of God. And our experience of the manifold, of the sense world, must be seen in the light of this abiding truth. A bubble rises on a sheet of water, plays for an instant on the surface, and disappears. Whence did it come, what was it, and where did it go? From water it came; having come, it is water still; and unto water it returns at the end. The real nature of that momentary existence, the bubble, is water. Similarly, Brahman is the real nature of this world. Realize that; do not lose sight of that, caught up in the trivial waves of passing sense experience, says the verse. Change is here, death is here, in every phase of life; there is no steady base here on which we can safely erect the structure of our life; but look deeper, says the Upaniṣad, and you will see the deathless in the midst of death, the changeless in the midst of the changing, the one in the midst of the many. This is the one great message of the Upaniṣads, the message of the immortal and imperishable

Self behind the mortal and the perishable. Says the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* (V. 13):

*Nityo'nityānāṁ cetanaścetanānāṁ*
*eko bahūnāṁ yo vidadhāti kāmān;*
*Tamātmastham ye'nupaśyanti dhīrāḥ*
*teṣāṁ śāntiḥ śāśvatī netareṣām—*

'He is the eternal in the midst of the non-eternals, the principle of intelligence in all that are intelligent. He is One, yet fulfils the desires of the many. Those wise men who perceive Him as existing within their own self, to them belongs eternal peace, and to none else.'

If, then, we can see 'the eternal in the midst of the non-eternals', if we can envelop everything with the Lord, we shall understand the real nature of the universe. After that, the next step is, as this first verse of the *Īśā Upaniṣad* tells us, renunciation of whatever is not real. In the language of Vedānta, there must be both a negation and an affirmation, if we are to enjoy this world. *Tena tyaktena bhuñjīthā*, 'by this renunciation, support yourself', says this verse. What supports us is not what we renounce, but what we possess and enjoy; and this verse tells us to enjoy the world through possessing God. This world is worth enjoying, and we should enjoy it with zest. Zest in life is expounded throughout the *Bhagavad-Gītā* and the Upaniṣads. The great teachers who discovered these truths were not kill-joys; they were sweet and lovable men. Sri Ramakrishna was full of joy and Śrī Kṛṣṇa was full of joy. Jesus, too, was really a man of joy, although later dogma made him a man of sorrows.

Before we can enjoy this world, however, we have to learn the *technique* of enjoyment. This technique is described in detail in the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, but here, in this first verse of the *Īśā Upaniṣad*, the technique is summed up in that one word 'renunciation'. When Swami Vivekananda was in America, he met Professor Ingersoll, a man who was the terror of the theologians of the time; he was an agnostic and a great scholar and orator. In his 'Inspired Talks', Swami Vivekananda describes a conversation he had with Ingersoll (*Complete Works*, Vol. VII, Fifth Edition, p. 77):

'Ingersoll once said to me: "I believe in making the most out of this world, in squeezing the orange dry, because this world is all we are sure of." I replied: "I know a better way to squeeze the orange of this world than you do, and I get more out of it. I *know* I cannot die, so I am not in a hurry; I know there is no

fear, so I enjoy the squeezing. I have no duty, no bondage of wife and children and property. I can love all men and women. Everyone is God to me. Think of the joy of loving man as God! Squeeze your orange this way and get ten thousandfold more out of it. Get every single drop."'

This, then, is the technique of enjoying life which this Upaniṣad proposed, leaving it to the *Bhagavad-Gītā* to develop all its practical implications. Says the *Bhagavad-Gītā* (II. 49):

*Dūreṇa hyavaraṁ karma buddhiyogāddhanañjaya;*
*Buddhau śaraṇam anviccha kṛpaṇāḥ phalahetavaḥ—*

'Work (done with selfish desire) is far inferior, O Arjuna, to that done with a detached reason. Take refuge in this detached reason. Small-minded are they who are motivated by selfish results.'

Renunciation is an eternal maxim in ethics as well as in spirituality. There is no true enjoyment except what is purified by renunciation. In our daily lives, in inter-personal relationships, we observe that we achieve the greatest joy not when we affirm ourselves, but when we deny ourselves. And in this teaching of the Upaniṣads, we have the explanation of this great truth. Through renunciation and detachment, we become identified with the immortal and divine Brahman which is the Self of all. We see, with our eyes and mind purified, this universe as that Brahman and renounce what our small separatist ego had conjured up. Thus, this renunciation is not a mere negation; it is a negation leading to a larger affirmation. The dialectics of the higher life, like the dialectics of evolution itself, proceeds through a series of negations and affirmations. It is the affirmative elements in this dialectic movement that constitute the positive content of joy in ethical and spiritual life.

Finally, this first verse of the *Īśā Upaniṣad* says: *mā gṛdhaḥ kasya svid dhanam*—'Do not covet the wealth of another.' That is a very plain statement, but it involves a number of ethical and spiritual values. Whatever you have gained by your honest labour, say all moral and spiritual teachers, that alone belongs to you; enjoy life with that, and do not covet what belongs to others. Śaṅkarācārya, in one of his beautiful hymns, addressing man, says:

*Mūḍha jahihi dhanāgama tṛṣṇām*
*kuru sadbuddhiṁ manasi vitṛṣṇām;*
*Yallabhase nijakarmopāttam*
*vittaṁ tena vinodaya cittam—*

'O fool, give up this excessive desire for wealth; yoke your mind to the good and the true, and cultivate detachment. Whatever wealth you obtain by your own honest labour, with that learn to delight your mind and heart.'

Our hearts will ask: Is wealth evil? Are we to become mendicants? No, replies Śaṅkarācārya, and adds: But yoke your mind to righteousness and cultivate dispassion. Take the mind away from what does not belong to you, what you have not earned yourself. Enjoy life with zest, with the fruits of your own honest labour; avoid covetousness, for it will lead to exploitation, which will destroy the moral life of both the exploiter and the exploited. Exploitation in any and every form must be avoided if you want to develop your spiritual nature, your ethical nature, which is the true aim of life. Remembering that it is by the dialectics of negation and affirmation that true joy in life is achieved, we approach wealth in a spirit of dedication, by negating the ego and its evaluations and affirming the universal value of Brahman. It is only when we become free from all spirit of selfish exploitation that we can truly enjoy life. The world is nothing but the blissful Brahman; and we are here to enjoy it. It is only when our eyes are purified by renunciation that the world will appear to us in its true form, as consisting of waves and waves of the bliss of Brahman. This is the true joy of life; it is growth, it is development, it is realization for man. It is fulfilment, *pūrṇatā*, the goal of evolution itself.

THREE

# ĪSĀ UPANISAD—2

The first verse of the *Īśā Upaniṣad*, as we have seen, gives us the fruit of the greatest and loftiest vision of the sages of the Upaniṣads—the presence of the divine in man and nature, the truth of the spiritual character of the universe. The second verse, which we are to study now, provides the corollary of that vision. For if this vision be true, if the universe be spiritual through and through, the question arises, how shall I live my life here in this world? This is answered by the second verse which reads thus:

*Kurvanneveha karmāṇi jijīviṣet śataṁ samāḥ;*
*Evaṁ tvayi nānyatheto'sti na karma lipyate nare—*

'In this world, one should desire to live a hundred years, but only by performing actions. Thus, and in no other way, can man be free from the taint of actions.'

In these words, the *Īśā Upaniṣad* gives us immediately the assurance that this life on earth has meaning and significance. We need not despair of this life, nor seek to cut it short, nor weep and wail our lives out. Having understood the meaning and significance of life, we must try to live our lives to the full span, and the full span of human life, according to the Vedas, is one hundred years: *Śatāyur vai puruṣaḥ*. Says Śaṅkarācārya in his commentary: *tāvad hi puruṣasya paramāyuḥ nirūpitam*—'That long, verily, has been determined to be the length of human life.' This determination was the product of a close study of human life. The sages came to the conclusion that if an individual lived a healthy life, physically and mentally, he would live a hundred years; they also saw that if an individual lived an unhealthy life, if his diet was poor, sanitation unsatisfactory, and his way of life faulty, his span of life would be reduced to lower and lower levels. India's average life expectancy was reduced to as low as twenty-nine in the beginning of this century; but now, as a result of the vigorous implementation of sanitary and health measures, it is rising and is somewhere in the region of fifty. If we can raise it to seventy-five or eighty, as in other advanced countries, it will come close to the ancient Vedic standard; India will then understand the Vedic ideal of the worth of human life and learn to invest it with joy and zest.

This idea of a hundred years' life span is the accepted tradition in India. In the *brahmacarya* ceremony, for instance, at the time of the investiture with the holy thread, the boy is blessed with the words: 'May you live a hundred years!' After the marriage ceremony, the husband and wife pray together: 'May we live a hundred autumns!' But it must not be supposed that this tradition implies merely length of life. India discovered very early in her history that a long life, in itself, had no meaning. That was merely quantity; but quality emerges as the more dominant factor in the higher levels of human life.

So life must be not only long in years, but also rich in quality, in knowledge and joy: this is the product of disciplined life and action. And this is the significance of this second verse. The Upaniṣads tell us that we must try to live a hundred years, the full span, but that it must be lived with joy and zest. Imparting of this quality to life is possible only through self-knowledge, through an increasing awareness, in the midst of life and action, of our inherent divine nature. Unless we can do this we shall be 'enjoying' only darkness all the time; and the longer our lives the denser will be that darkness, the feeling of loneliness and frustration which, in the industrial civilization in which we now live, is one of the most predominant characteristics of advancing age.

So the *Īśā Upaniṣad* gives us at once two basic ideas which together constitute the totality of the Vedāntic outlook, the outlook which developed later as a comprehensive spirituality in the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, and which, in our own time, found still further and fuller expression in the message of Swami Vivekananda. These two basic ideas ask us to live the full span of life, to work with zest and joy and with a deep interest in life and its affairs, but to do all this with a new outlook, an outlook based on true understanding of the real nature of man and the universe, seeing all as 'enveloped by the Lord'. Overcoming laziness and indifference, we must work, we must fill our long lives with good, useful actions, but all that work must be done in the light of the divine, and man the mortal must become man the immortal in this very life.

The heart of the seeker asks: If God is true, if He is the Self of all, how shall I conduct this little life of mine? Put God in everything, says this Upaniṣad; conduct your life, enjoy your life, in and through God; for He is the truth of all and everything. Life

and its achievements become trivial when this truth of God does not shine through them. The trivialities of life are only trivial when taken by themselves. Renounce this faulty method, says this Upaniṣad, and affirm the truth of God and watch how even the most trivial aspects of life become aglow with purpose and significance. In the beautiful words of Sri Ramakrishna, the zero by itself has no value; we may add zero to zero and make a whole string of zeros, but yet they will have no value. But if we put the digit one before it, the zero immediately becomes significant; and every addition of a fresh zero makes the figure progressively significant. That one is God, according to Vedānta, the Self of all, in whom we live and move and have our being. Sings the English poet Shelley ('Adonais', LII):

> The One remains, the many change and pass;
> Heaven's light for ever shines, Earth's shadows fly.

Nevertheless, in order to understand this truth, which alone can make possible a life full of zest and joy, a spirit of inquiry is required. The greatest truths do not lie on the surface of life, but in its depths. The shells float on the surface of the ocean, but the pearls lie in its depths, says Sri Ramakrishna. Investigation is, therefore, necessary to understand this fundamental truth of the divinity of life. The surface aspects of life, taken by themselves, do not disclose this truth. But there have been people who had the courage and capacity to dive to life's depths and bring to the surface gaze the precious pearls of the truth of God, of the spiritual life. The Upaniṣads are a storehouse of these pearls. Enlightened by this knowledge of God, the sages of the Upaniṣads tell us that life, including life at the surface, is an inherent good, that we should live with joy and zest, and that we should, in the process, also seek to find the true source of this zest and joy. When so planned, life becomes unified and meaningful. And length of life becomes length of time and opportunity to dive to the depths and get at the pearls that are there.

This is the positive outlook we find in Vedānta, in the philosophy of the Upaniṣads and the *Bhagavad-Gītā*. There is no weeping and wailing in this philosophy. The conception of life as a vale of tears came to India a little later, and we hugged it to our bosom more and more as the nation began increasingly to lose its vigour. Summoning India to this Vedāntic heritage, Swami Vivekananda

said (Lecture on 'Vedānta and Its Application to Indian Life', *Complete Works*, Vol. III, p. 238):

'And the more I read the Upaniṣads, my friends, my countrymen, the more I weep for you, for therein is the great practical application. Strength, strength for us. What we need is strength, who will give us strength? There are thousands to weaken us, and of stories we have had enough. Every one of our Purāṇas if you press it, gives out stories enough to fill three-fourths of the libraries of the world. Everything that can weaken us as a race we have had for the last thousand years. . . . Therefore, my friends, as one of your blood, as one that lives and dies with you, let me tell you that we want strength, strength, and every time strength. And the Upaniṣads are the great mine of strength. Therein lies strength enough to invigorate the whole world; the whole world can be vivified, made strong, energized through them. They will call with trumpet voice upon the weak, the miserable, and the downtrodden of all races, all creeds, and all sects, to stand on their feet and be free; freedom, physical freedom, mental freedom, and spiritual freedom, are the watchwords of the Upaniṣads.'

True religion suffers when it falls into the hands of weak people. Śaṅkarācārya refers to this in his commentary on the *Bhagavad-Gītā*. In the *Gītā*, Kṛṣṇa says that, this yoga, which was honoured and practised by a succession of great people in the past, from Vivasvat to Manu and from Manu to Ikṣvāku, in the course of centuries, became diluted and was lost (IV.1-2). Commenting on this brief statement of Kṛṣṇa, Śaṅkarācārya adds that this great science and art of spiritual life became diluted and lost by falling into the hands of people with mind and body weak and sense organs undisciplined. Similarly, Swami Vivekananda attributed the prevalence of easy-going forms of religion, bereft of the heroic elements, to the general weakness of the Indian people. So he taught the people once again the Vedāntic message of strength and fearlessness and exhorted them to develop strength of will and character through the service of man, before trying to understand and scale the spiritual heights revealed in the Upaniṣads. How often did he call upon our people to be strong (*ibid.*, p. 242):

'Be strong, my young friends; that is my advice to you. You will be nearer to heaven through football than through the study of the *Gītā*. These are bold words, but I have to say them, for I love you. . . . You will understand the *Gītā* better with your biceps, your muscles, a little stronger. You will understand the mighty genius and the mighty strength of Kṛṣṇa better with a little of strong blood in you. You will understand the Upaniṣads better and the glory of the Ātman, when your body stands firm upon your feet, and you feel yourselves as men.'

### *Zest in Life*

These words of Swami Vivekananda bring to us the atmosphere of the Upaniṣads, an atmosphere of positive thinking, of freshness, of vigour, of zest. There are any number of passages in the Upaniṣads where you will find this atmosphere of zest and joy and vigour. The outlook of the Upaniṣads is characterized by joy and cheer, by what William James called 'healthy-mindedness'. God's name itself is joy, in the Upaniṣads. What a beautiful exposition of divine nature is found in the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* (II.7):

> *Raso vai saḥ;*
> *rasaṁ hyevāyaṁ labdhvānandī bhavati;*
> *Ko hyevānyāt kaḥ prāṇyāt,*
> *yadeṣa ākāśa ānando na syāt—*

'He is, verily, bliss; man, verily, is blissful by getting this bliss. Who would have lived, who would have breathed, if this infinite expanse of bliss were not there?'

This Upaniṣad says that the nature of God is bliss itself, and the little joys that we experience in life, even in the sense life, are but particles of that infinite bliss of God.

The *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* further discusses the nature of human joy. After a majestic preparatory utterance: *Saiṣānandasya mīmāṁsā bhavati*—'Now begins an investigation into the nature of *ānanda*, joy, bliss, or happiness', it begins to give what may be termed a calculus of happiness. It is instructive to note that, unlike the usual run of theologies, the Upaniṣad does not begin its calculus with the bliss of heaven as its unit; on the contrary, it finds its unit in what seems to be, theologically speaking, the most unlikely place —a young man! And it reveals thereby its refreshing positive outlook. Says the Upaniṣad (II. 8):

> *Yuvā syāt sādhuyuvā adhyāyakaḥ;*
> *āśiṣṭho dṛḍhiṣṭho baliṣṭhaḥ;*
> *Tasyeyaṁ pṛthivī sarvā vittasya pūrṇā syāt;*
> *sa eko mānuṣa ānandaḥ—*

'Let us take a youth, a good-mannered youth, well-educated; full of hope, firm in mind, and strong in body; let him have dominion over the full wealth of this earth; that is the unit of human bliss.'

Having fixed the unit, the Upaniṣad proceeds to measure and fix every other form of happiness, human and divine, in terms of this

unit, as multiples of the happiness of a youth. But we find that, in commencing with a youth as the unit of human happiness, the Upaniṣad will not accept any and every youth. Any youth, simply because he or she is young, cannot serve as the unit. Looking about us today we see plenty of young people who cannot certainly be taken as units of human happiness; many of them are jaded and haggard, even though they are young in body; they are old even before they have started being young! So they cannot serve as units of human happiness. Besides youth, the Upaniṣad enumerates six other constituents. Goodness comes second, a good disposition; the third is education, the stimulation and expansion of creative intelligence; the fourth is hope and aspiration, the joyous beckoning of the future; the fifth is firmness of mind and purpose, a disciplined will; and the sixth is strength of body, general physical health and well-being. The Upaniṣad is not satisfied with these six, and adds a seventh—wealth; youth, goodness, education, hope, and strength of mind and body will ever remain a fraction, thinks the Upaniṣad, without the addition of wealth; to complete his happiness, the young man must have command over wealth to make his way in the world.

Now, then, having at last defined its unit of human happiness, the Upaniṣad proceeds to estimate all other forms of happiness in terms of multiples of a hundred of this one; in this ascending series comes the happiness of angels and gods and all orders of higher beings, reaching up to Prajāpati, the Cosmic Person. *But equal to the happiness of each one of these, from the youth up to Prajāpati*, says the Upaniṣad, *is the happiness of a man who has realized Brahman, God, the Self of all, and has ceased to be a slave of his senses and his sense-bound mind.* Spiritual realization confers immeasurable happiness, as it connects one with Brahman, God, which is the ocean of all bliss, of which all others are but particles. And every youth is heir to this attainment, in virtue of which he ranks higher than even the angels or gods. This is the highest excellence of man, say the Upaniṣads.

Think for a moment of the happiness experienced by Sri Ramakrishna, or Jesus, or Buddha. What in the world can compare with their happiness? They are as happy as the angels and gods in heaven, and they are equally as happy as a youth on earth. A youth would feel humble before such a man; he, having realized

the Self in all, is the equal of all, but none is his equal. This is how Śaṅkarācārya expresses it (*Vivekacūḍāmaṇi:* verse 543):

*Nirdhano'pi sadā tuṣṭopyasahāyo mahābalaḥ;*
*Nityatṛptopyabhuñjānopyasamaḥ samadarśanaḥ—*

'Ever-satisfied, though without riches; infinitely strong, though without help or support; ever-content, though not enjoying sense pleasures; and without an equal, though looking on all as his equal—(such is a man of Self-realization)'

None is superior, none is inferior, for the same Ātman is in all, and he has realized this truth. But *we* look upon him as a spiritual giant among men, so tall, so great is he. Sri Ramakrishna behaved with each one just like a friend and equal, but everyone realized how far above them all he was. This is the eternal glory of a knower of Brahman, say the Upaniṣads. It is the acme of happiness and blessedness for man.

Man in the Indian context is yet far far away from that elementary unit of human happiness delineated in the Upaniṣads; he has yet to achieve the virtues and graces, joys and delights, of social existence through economic and social amelioration measures, and an efficient system of education designed, in the words of Vivekananda, to bring out the perfection already within man. This, according to him, is the early phase of the spiritual training of man, man-making, as he termed it. Religion, the realization of the Ātman within, achievement of the bliss of God, comes only after this. *Godliness is the fulfilment of manliness and not its negation.* Man must first achieve human happiness before running after divine happiness; otherwise, religion will be cheap, and the happiness achieved through it will be a sham. Hence, Vivekananda exhorted his countrymen (*Complete Works,* Vol. V, Seventh Edition, pp. 10-11):

'Come, be men! Come out of your narrow holes and have a look abroad. See how nations are on the march! Do you love man? Do you love your country? Then come, let us struggle for higher and better things;...Sympathy for the poor—and bread to their hungry mouths—enlightenment to the people at large—and struggle unto death to make men of them who have been brought to the level of beasts by the tyranny of your forefathers.'

This positive, cheerful, sunny attitude to life and religion is what modern man will learn from the Upaniṣads. Religion is associated by the spiritually blind, be they scholars or ordinary

people, with all sorts of abnormalities; they experience or come across a pathological condition and christen it religion. But the Upaniṣads, as we have seen, treat spiritual bliss as the fulfilment and completion of the joys of a perfect youth.

Youth has zest in life; much of religion as taught in society is designed to take away that zest without putting in any new focus of zest. Religion so understood has the effect of contracting a man's personality, narrowing his interests, and making him self-centred. True religion does not destroy zest, but purifies, expands, and heightens it. The earlier zest was based on self-interest, and derived its force from physical vitality and mental ambition. This is purified and transformed by the new vision of life brought by religion with its intimations of the immortal and the divine within, and its sense of oneness with all outside. The moment I realize myself as one with all, a new zest comes to me, more intense, more pervasive, and more pure. To make others happy is my happiness, to serve others and help them to achieve their life's fulfilment is my fulfilment. This is the essential teaching of the Upaniṣads and the *Bhagavad-Gītā;* this is the basis, the metaphysical foundation, of all ethics and religion.

### *Joyful Old Age*

In the light of the above, we get a clearer perception of the significance of the second verse of the *Īśā Upaniṣad*: 'In this world one should desire to live a hundred years, but only by performing actions.' Man must use his body, as an instrument, to work and, through work, to create beauty, wealth, and welfare outside, and moral and spiritual development within. It can help us to attain the highest spiritual experience. In the Upaniṣads we find the human body described as the most valuable instrument that man can have. The best of music can be produced from this instrument, provided it is tuned correctly, disciplined and trained properly. There is a verse in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (XI. xxix. 22) in which God speaks to man thus:

*Eṣā buddhimatāṁ buddhiḥ manīṣā ca manīṣiṇām;*
*Yat satyam anṛteneha martyenāpnoti mā amṛtam—*

'This is the intelligence of the intelligent, the wisdom of the wise, that a man attains Me, the Immortal One, here (in this very life), by means of the unreal and mortal—his psycho-physical organism.'

This is the technique of religion; hence its insistence on the proper care of the body and of the mental functions that derive from it. The health of the psycho-physical organism is necessary for all achievement, worldly or religious. Properly trained and disciplined, this organism will eventually land us on the other shore of life—on the shore of illumination and immortality.

This was the positive, refreshing outlook imparted by the Upaniṣads and the *Bhagavad-Gītā*. But after long centuries, it gave place to weakening and negative attitudes, first in religion, and, later, in all aspects of our national life. The spirit of effort and struggle gave way to ease and complaisance. Unwilling and unable to pay the price, the nation sought for cheap, easy, and quick successes, in religion as much as in worldly life. The search for the highest and best, which makes for character in any field of endeavour, became weaker and feebler. The joy that characterizes all healthy search after higher values, like the joy of mountain-climbing felt by a healthy youth, gradually vanished from life, and sadness invaded its sacred precincts; happiness began to be sought not in action but in inaction; instead of the Upaniṣadic ideal of life in death, it became death in life. The following lines of a modern poet appear to be an exact description of this weakened Indian outlook:

Sweet is sleep, death is better;
But it is best never to have been born.

It is amazing to reflect that this weak, defeatist attitude could pervade the Indian atmosphere for centuries, entertained not only by the ignorant but even by the learned; and that, too, in spite of the fearless, sunny, outlook of the Upaniṣads. But now, listening once again to the stirring words of the Upaniṣads, India is gradually overcoming this attitude and waking to the world of life and light. This is the great contribution of Swami Vivekananda to India and to the world; he was an awakener of souls. He preached in East and West the Vedāntic message of strength and fearlessness, love and service. With the strength that comes from the knowledge of our inherent divine nature, our youths will recapture the spirit of youthfulness, and our aged will continue to be cheerful.

What a great contribution these spiritual ideas can make to enrich human life not only in India, but everywhere today! In spite of its glitter, in spite of its mirth and laughter, modern industrial civilization hides beneath its polished face much sad song.

There is a tremendous moan beneath that civilization. Its fierce competitive *milieu* has no place for the thousands who fail in life; neither has it any honoured place for the old and the infirm who have ceased to be productive individuals. The aged man, on his part, also loses faith in himself even before others lose faith in him. The atmosphere around him whispers to him: You are unwanted. The current of youthful life flows by him, but he is left stranded on the sands. He feels squeezed out and thrown onto the scrap heap, as it were; and sadness, dejection, and utter loneliness descend upon him.

This the Upaniṣads will not allow. Old age is not a thing to be looked down upon; it has its own graces. The young and the old both have the divine within; and that alone can be the locus of true value for man; for it is indestructible and inalienable; physical capacities for work and pleasure cannot be the true criterion of human value. These pass, but the Ātman, the Self of man, remains unaffected by the changes and chances of the body. The Upaniṣads view the young and the old in this light (*Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad*, IV.3):

*Tvaṁ strī tvaṁ pumānasi*
*tvaṁ kumāra uta vā kumārī;*
*Tvaṁ jīrṇo daṇḍena vañcasi*
*tvaṁ jāto bhavasi viśvatomukhaḥ—*

'Thou art the woman, Thou art the man; Thou art the youth and the maiden too; Thou art the old man tottering on his stick. Thou art born in diverse forms.'

A healthy society is one that brings the awareness of this divine nature to more and more of its young and old. There are two major problems plaguing modern civilization. One is the problem of old age, the other is the problem of leisure. Vedānta, with its message of the divine in the heart of man, and its further message that the object of life is to realize this divine, contains a gospel of hope for modern man. Vedānta would not have asked man to desire to live the full span of a hundred years if such life were to be lived by him in ennui and frustration. Nothing else can be expected of a philosophy in which life and leisure mean only a round of three 'e's, namely, entertainment, excitement, and exhaustion! Vedānta holds before man another ideal: growth, development, and realization, in the light of which both labour and leisure become creative and educative. 'Enjoy through renunciation', says this *Īśā Upaniṣad*; and adds, 'that is the only way by which our actions

may not pile more bonds on us, by which we become truly free.' Given this spiritual purpose and direction, life gains in richness with every passing year. And leisure becomes the means of deepening life and giving it purer joys and delights. Thus, getting the utmost out of life is a policy common to materialism and Vedānta. But in what is so gained, there is the utmost divergence between the two.

*Coming to Grips with Life*

There is another point to notice while considering the second verse of the *Īśā Upaniṣad*, another reason why we should direct our energies to get the utmost out of life. This is that the Upaniṣads say that truth can be realized only in and through the human body. We may go to heaven and enjoy the pleasures there as one of the gods, but shall never be able to realize Truth there. The merit that took us there, in the language of economics, becomes a vanishing quantity, like an unearned increment; and it does not last. Sooner or later it will be exhausted; we do not produce new merit there; and we shall, in due course, have to come back to the human world and start once again on our journey towards Truth and perfection. So, say the Upaniṣads, why not strive to realize Truth *here* and *now*? Life is static if it means only a round of pleasures in the world or in a heaven. It becomes creative only if it moves towards Truth, towards prefection. After a long travail has nature evolved the human body, says modern biology. Paying a heavy price of merit has man purchased his psycho-physical equipment, say the Hindu scriptures. The body is an instrument to achieve two things: the delights of social existence—*abhyudaya*, and spiritual emancipation—*niḥśreyasa*. So the Upaniṣad tells us that a long life of a hundred years gives one ample opportunity to see life steadily and see it through, to achieve fulfilment through the realization of the Self.

This, of course, is no easy task; it does not come about without yoking intelligence and will to this high purpose. Śaṅkarācārya, in one of his memorable verses (*Carpaṭapañjarikā Stotra*, 7), says:

*Bālastāvat krīḍāsaktaḥ*
*taruṇastāvat taruṇī saktaḥ;*
*Vṛddhastāvat cintāmagnaḥ*
*pare brahmaṇi ko'pi na raktaḥ—*

'While a child attached to play; while a youth attached to sex; when

aged, getting immersed in various anxieties; there is none, alas, who is attracted to the Supreme Brahman!'

This is life's great tragedy. Time slips away while we give the body and mind up to life's secondary purposes, forgetting and ignoring its primary purpose. The Upaniṣads tell us that there is another way of going through life, a way that will enable us to maintain our youthful zest right through to the end, and, by asking questions, by striving, to come to grips with life, and place ourselves in touch with the abiding reality behind all passing things. This is the great challenge of life to human intelligence. And human intelligence as expressed in the Upaniṣads accepted this challenge and gave to humanity the vision of its highest excellence. Vedānta embodies both this challenge and this vision. Because it is such a significant challenge, ever pleasing to the heart of man, Vedānta stands as a perpetual message, as fresh in this twentieth century as it was when it was first delivered in those far off ages. Verse after verse in this literature brings before us the great joy of living, showing us how to deepen our perceptions so that, each day, we get newer and newer vistas of life's beauty as we grow in years and maturity. In his 'Lines above Tintern Abbey', Wordsworth records a similar thought:

> For I have learned
> To look on nature, not as in the hour
> Of thoughtless youth; but hearing oftentimes
> The still, sad music of humanity,
> Nor harsh nor grating, though of ample power
> To chasten and subdue.

This maturity will come to us, bringing with it a sense of compassion, an out-growing from the chrysalis of our little egos, a sense of identity with the joys and sorrows of others. This is what is called growing spiritually. This is growing old gracefully, vigour and vitality finding expression in the inner man, while the outer man is gradually withering away. Sri Ramakrishna used to compare this with the technique of statue-making. First, the mould is carefully prepared; then molten metal is poured into it; cooling, it sets. When the image is formed inside, the outer mould, having done its work, is cast away without evoking any regret or sadness.

What, then, is the secret of coming to grips with life? The answer this Upaniṣad gives to this question is: Work, but in a

spirit of detachment. This cryptic, aphoristic statement is typical of Upaniṣadic teaching. The Upaniṣads had no time to bring out all the implications of their great message; the hearts of the sages were full, for they had seen visions profound and tremendous, and they wanted to communicate them to man in concise, simple, unequivocal language. Detailed development of their ideas they left to later thinkers. Fundamental to our spiritual progress, says this Upaniṣad, is what we do and how we do it. All our life we are engaged in so many activities; from infancy till death we are constantly engaged in some action or other, and if, at the end of our lives, we take account of these actions, we find that, instead of releasing us from bondage, they have merely helped to increase our bondage. The way to come to grips with life, therefore, is to use every action, every opportunity, as a means of freeing ourselves from that bondage. If we make our actions and our life the venue of an abiding quest for the deep meaning and significance that is hidden in life, then every action will help to destroy that bondage a little and give man a taste of true freedom. This is the impact of philosophic knowledge or wisdom on life. Says the *Bhagavad-Gītā* (IV. 37):

*Yathaidhāṁsi samiddhogniḥ bhasmasāt kurute'rjuna;*
*Jñānāgniḥ sarvakarmāṇi bhasmasāt kurute tathā—*

'As blazing fire reduces to ashes a pile of wood, so, O Arjuna, does the fire of *jñāna* (wisdom) reduce to ashes all actions.'

Philosophy or wisdom does not destroy actions, but only their binding power. Wisdom purifies life and action, says the next verse of the *Bhagavad-Gītā*:

*Na hi jñānena sadṛśaṁ pavitram iha vidyate—*
'There is nothing so purifying as wisdom in this world.'

A rope can bind no more after it is burnt, says Sri Ramakrishna, though it may still retain the appearance of a rope. Similarly, actions bind man; but burn them in the fire of wisdom; then they may retain the appearance of action but will no longer have the power to bind. The energy that found expression as action will be assimilated to knowledge and wisdom, says the *Bhagavad-Gītā* (IV. 33):

*Sarvaṁ karmākhilaṁ pārtha jñāne parisamāpyate—*

'All action in its entirety, O Pārtha, attains its consummation in knowledge (wisdom).'

How, then, are we to create in us that burning fire of knowledge or wisdom in which to burn our actions? The answer lies in the message of Vedānta, in the teachings of the Upaniṣads and the *Bhagavad-Gītā*. If we want the answer, we must face up to the problem. We cannot escape action by running away from action. 'Face the brute', as Swami Vivekananda expressed it in a lecture on Vedānta in London, recalling his experience, during his monastic wanderings in India, of an encounter with a group of monkeys. He first tried to run, but they chased him; just then a passer-by shouted to him not to run away but to face the brutes; he did accordingly. And as soon as he turned and faced them, they fell back. By shutting the eyes or by running, the brute does not vanish; it will stare us in the face when we open our eyes again. Life's problems are not to be avoided; they have to be faced. It is not escapism, therefore, that is taught in the Upaniṣads, but acceptance, the coming to grips with life, meeting the challenge of life with the challenge of philosophy, with the strength of spirituality. Therein lies its intense practical reference. Vedānta is not only profound metaphysics, but also an intensely practical science and art of life—*Brahmavidyā* and *Yoga-śāstra*. If we live even a fraction of its message, we shall achieve much fearlessness, says the *Bhagavad-Gītā* (II. 40):

*Svalpamapyasya dharmasya trāyate mahato bhayāt*—

'Even a little of this *dharma* will save us from great fear.'

Very often we hear people say, 'I do not believe in all this metaphysics and religion. I believe in doing good. That is my philosophy of life.' This is good as far as it goes; but it does not go very far. Doing good often becomes the outward expression of either the fatness of the ego or the emptiness of the heart. Dr. S. Radhakrishnan referring to this school of thought, says in one of his lectures: the modern man and the modern woman do not believe in religion or in God. They believe only in what they call 'going about doing good'. But it is 'more going about than doing good'. The philosophy of 'doing good' is a cheap philosophy. Those who try to base their lives on it will soon find its inadequacy when confronted by the knocks and trials of life. On such occasions the mind often beats a retreat from its 'doing good to the world' position. Such an attitude does not give one that spiritual strength which alone can keep the mind steady in all situations of success or failure, joy or sorrow. The greatest strength comes from the

knowledge of the Ātman, our divine nature; says the *Kena Upaniṣad* (II. 4):

*ātmanā vindate vīryam—*

'Strength comes from (the knowledge of) the Ātman.'

### *A Warning*

The *Īśā Upaniṣad* next proceeds to describe, in five memorable verses, the nature of the Ātman and the fruits of its realization. But before doing so, it deems it necessary to utter a note of warning in its third verse, which reads:

*Asuryā nāma te lokāḥ andhena tamasāvṛtāḥ;*
*Tāṁste pretyābhigacchanti ye ke cātmahano janāḥ—*

'Into the worlds of the *asuras*, enveloped in blinding darkness, verily do they repair after death who are slayers of the Ātman.'

In this verse we are warned as to what happens to us if we forget and neglect the Ātman, if we ignore It, and live merely trivial lives. A deep philosophical truth is couched in mythical, symbolic language. Life lived without the consciousness of our divine nature is trivial; it is a life of darkness and sorrow. The word 'darkness' used in this verse is not physical darkness, but the darkness of ignorance; it is spiritual blindness. The verse compares this darkness to hell. In myths, hell is the abode of the *asuras*, the demons. An alternative reading is *asūryā*, literally 'without sunlight', absolute darkness. Imagine a cavern which has been dark from the beginning of time, a place where the rays of the sun have never penetrated. What would be the condition of a man if he had to spend his whole life in such a cavern? Such is the condition of one who passes through life without the least awareness of his divine nature. It is this awareness that evolves the moral man, the spiritual man, out of the given individual. To ignore this ever-present reality of the Self is to keep away from light and clutch at shadows.

The verse further tells us that those who prefer to live in such spiritual blindness are really killing themselves. *Ātmahana* means 'people who kill themselves'. In ordinary suicide we kill only the body, which is something external to us, but here we kill ourselves, our real Self. The death of the body is not so serious as the death of the soul. By neglecting our true nature, by ignoring

it, by clutching at the shadows of the non-Self all the time, we commit suicide of the most serious kind.

Śaṅkarācārya, in his commentary on this verse, explains the nature of this extraordinary kind of suicide which the world practises on the widest scale. Says he:

*Avidyādoṣena vidyamānasya ātmanaḥ tiraskaraṇāt ātmahana ityucyate—*

'Because a man neglects his ever-present Self through the evil of ignorance (spiritual blindness), he is called "one who commits suicide".'

Clutching at the shadows of sensate experience, taking them to be the whole of reality, man ignores the infinite, immortal dimension of his own personality. This is the meaning of *saṁsāra*, worldliness, where man gets submerged in the objects of his experience, and the subject, his real Self, is enveloped in the darkness of unawareness; this is spiritual suicide. As we have already seen, to live in the world is not the same thing as being 'worldly'. To live in *saṁsāra* is not the same thing as being a *saṁsārin*. As Sri Ramakrishna so beautifully expresses it in his parable, we all live in *saṁsāra*, which means the world. The saint and the sinner, even an incarnation of God, lives in *saṁsāra*. There is no harm in that, assures Sri Ramakrishna, but, he adds, *saṁsāra*, the world, worldliness, should not live in us. A boat should be on water, but water should not be in the boat; for that is dangerous for the boat.

Worldliness is the negation of spiritual awareness. The animal bodies are meant for mere sense-experience; they have no experience of the subject. The world of objects comprises their sphere of awareness and of pleasure and pain. It is only in the human body that subjective awareness emerges, the awareness of self as different from the non-self. But in the early stages, this self is the little self, the ego which is mostly conditioned and constituted by the external world, the non-self. Man at this stage still functions at the animal level; he has, however, the requisite equipment and means to deepen his self-awareness and realize himself as the Ātman, the eternal, pure, luminous, ever-free Self, by controlling and disciplining his psycho-physical personality. But if, in spite of this capacity and opportunity, he fails to do so, and

is content to submerge himself in the world of objects and things, he makes an utter fool of himself in spite of all his worldly success. This is spiritual suicide. Over and over again, the Upaniṣads exhort man to turn his attention to the realization of his true nature by properly using his nature-given equipment of body, senses, and mind. They implore man not to convert his psychophysical organism into a tomb of his soul, but to move forward, to evolve. This is the clear call of the Upaniṣads in one of their most memorable verses (*Katha Upaniṣad*, III. 14), which Swami Vivekananda proclaimed from the housetops in East and West so forcefully in his oft-repeated clarion call: 'Arise! Awake! And stop not till the goal is reached.'

The fate of those who fail to heed this call is described in this third verse of the *Īśā Upaniṣad*. Through spiritual blindness we enter into such forms and ways of life where we cannot get even the slightest inkling of this Ātman, our true Self. There may be some people who do not mind being in darkness: but most people prefer to be in the light. Among those who so prefer, there are varying levels and stages of achievement. Utter worldliness is a rare occurrence; most people do get, in the language of Wordsworth, 'intimations of immortality' at some time or other in their lives.

The experience may last hardly for a second, like a raindrop in a hot sandy waste. So does wisdom come and go; the clouds open for a while, and the sun shines. But once more the clouds close together again and the vision passes. So we go on from day to day. But by utilizing all life's experiences, by spending a little time each day in thinking, evaluating our actions, and giving momentum and direction to our lives, we shall be able to capture, for ever-lengthening periods, that fleeting vision that we have experienced; the 'intimations of immortality' become then a little more constant and steady.

The secret of spiritual progress is therefore to cultivate awareness of the Ātman, our divine nature; to cultivate this constantly in and through all life's experiences. It is this awareness that marks the difference between the worldly man and the spiritual seeker. In *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* we find Sri Ramakrishna recounting the characteristics of the true seeker, and those of the worldly man. In a vivid word-picture, Sri Ramakrishna describes the scene of the death of a worldly man. The old man

is to die in a few minutes. His children and relatives are gathered around him, anxious and waiting. The old man looks around; he finds a lamp in the corner of the room with two wicks burning within it. Finding that more oil is being spent, he tells his son in a feeble voice to put out one of the wicks and save unnecessary expenditure of oil. Throughout his life he has been deeply attached to his wealth and never learned the art of spending it; never liked to part with it. Now death knocks at his door; he has to go, leaving all his wealth behind; but he does not realize it. His worldly infatuation does not allow him to think of God or the higher values of life even at that moment of crisis; he only thinks of saving his hard-earned wealth; wisdom does not dawn on him even as a fleeting experience. What can be more pitiable than this? When we contemplate this scene our mind asks: Is this the picture of human glory? Is this the limit which human intelligence and capacity can reach? The heart sinks at the very idea. If this is the highest that man can achieve, woe unto humanity. But our hearts assure us that such is not the case, and that that life is a failure in spite of its wealth and power. Such a man is a failure because he has not discovered the art of living, has not experienced the joy of living.

Pleasure comes from the contact of the senses with the sense objects; but bliss proceeds from the inner depths of the Self. The eternal spring of bliss lies within the heart of man; its realization is life fulfilment, perfection, which is also wisdom, the fruition of knowledge and experience. The art of living is, therefore, to make this wisdom, and the peace and joy accompanying it, manifest in our lives. Wisdom, like the kingdom of heaven in the parable of Jesus (Luke, xvii. 20-21), is to be found not in some place remote from life, but within life itself:

'And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when th kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation:

'Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, Lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you.'

Sri Ramakrishna spoke of 'churning' wisdom out of life as butter is churned out of milk. 'If you mix milk and water', he said, 'you can separate them again only after much effort. But if you first convert the milk into butter, and keep the butter in water, it will not mix.' This aptly describes the technique of living.

Wisdom must be 'churned' out of life, and, armed with that wisdom, we can mix with the world, engage in any activity, and live in any situation, without getting 'diluted' or lost. This is spiritual freedom, it is perfection. 'Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect', exhorts Jesus (Matthew, v. 48). This perfection is the birthright of every man, woman, and child, says Vedānta.

The nature of the Ātman, the divinity inherent in man, whose realization marks the culmination of the evolutionary process, forms the theme of the next five verses of the *Īśā Upaniṣad* which we shall study next.

FOUR

# ĪŚĀ UPANISAD—3

The third verse of the *Īśā Upaniṣad,* as we have seen, warns the spiritual aspirant of the darkness and sorrow that envelop those who attempt to pass through life in ignorance of the Ātman. In the next five verses the Upaniṣad gives an obverse picture. It describes the nature of the Ātman, that divine Spirit which, as the Self of all, is in you and in me, which envelops everything in this world, even if it does not come within the field of our sense experience or of our awareness. The fourth and fifth verses read:

*Anejadekaṁ manaso javīyo*
*nainaddevā āpnuvan pūrvamarṣat;*
*Taddhāvato'nyān atyeti tiṣṭhat*
*tasmin apo mātariśvā dadhāti—*

'The Self is one. It is unmoving; yet It is faster than the mind. Thus moving faster, It is beyond the reach of the senses. Ever steady, It outstrips all that run. By Its mere presence, the cosmic energy is enabled to sustain the activities of living beings.'

*Tadejati tannaijati taddūre tadvantike;*
*Tadantarasya sarvasya tadu sarvasyāsya bāhyataḥ—*

'It moves; It moves not. It is far; It is verily near. It is inside all this; It is verily outside all this.'

What profound ideas are contained in these and the next three verses! The more profound an experience the more indescribable it becomes; language fails; thought also fails. What remain are mere hints and suggestions. These verses are, therefore, a little difficult to understand. They are enigmatic and also paradoxical. Yet it is here, in these profound ideas, that we get those intimations of immortality that guide us onwards towards truth.

The Ātman or Self is one, says this verse. The Upaniṣads proclaim, here, and in many other passages, that the ultimate reality in man and nature is one, not two. The Ātman is infinite, immortal, it is that which has no limitation. How, then, can it be expressed? A thing which we experience with the senses can be described by certain references. We can refer to its length,

breadth, height, weight, colour, and so on. All definition is limitation, for by defining a thing we limit it; by stating that a thing is of such and such quality, we imply also that it is not of such and such other quality. So an unlimited thing cannot be defined at all because we cannot say where it ends and thus becomes demarcated from other things.

This is the nature of whatever is claimed to be infinite; but in the absence of definition, it is difficult of comprehension. If the Ātman is the infinite reality, how to comprehend it? There is one thing in experience which can come to our assistance in understanding the Ātman, and that is the idea of *ākāśa*, space. When we try to define space, however, we also face difficulties; it implies vastness, immensity. But we cannot give it any kind of location, space is, on the contrary, the very basis of the concept of location. Space is here as well as there, it is inside as well as outside. In Vedāntic language, therefore, space or *ākāśa* is taken as the nearest symbol of the Infinite and the Absolute, Brahman or Ātman.

*Space-Time Continuum*

In the last century, scientific thought used the word 'ether' to describe the content of space, and it was considered an essential concept in science. But when the scientists tried to understand just what ether was, they came up against so many difficulties that finally they banished it altogether from scientific vocabulary. In the twentieth century, however, we find that the ether concept has come back in a new garb and with extended meanings. In place of the indefinable reality invoked by nineteenth-century science to explain phenomena such as action at a distance, twentieth-century science reduces space into one of the two components of its new reality—the continuum—of which time becomes the other component. In this new concept of a space-time continuum we have the nearest approach in modern scientific thought to the infinite, indefinable, and immortal Self of Vedānta. The Self or Ātman, of course, is not space-time continuum, but this scientific concept can be taken as the nearest and best symbol of the Ātman. In fact, the *ākāśa* or space concept was used by Vedāntic thinkers as the best symbol of Brahman or Ātman precisely because of its unlimited, ever-pure, and indestructible characteristics.

The human mind defines objects and events of the world of experience in terms of space and time. But what exactly are

space and time? Modern scientific thought tells us that space and time have no absolute reality in themselves; they are relative concepts. It is only when they are welded together and become space-time that they become a useful concept for the purposes of twentieth-century science. Says Sir James Jeans (*The New Background of Science*, Second Edition, p. 104):

'Nature knows nothing of space and time separately, being concerned only with the four-dimensional continuum in which space and time are welded inseparably together into the product we may designate as "space-time". Our human spectacles divide this into space and time, and introduce a spurious differentiation between them, just as an astigmatic pair of spectacles divides the field of vision of a normal man into horizontal and vertical, and introduces a spurious differentiation between these directions. With astigmatic spectacles on, we incline our head and see the scene in front of us rearrange itself. Yet we know that nothing has happened to the objects in the scene. These are objective; our view of them through our spectacles is subjective.'

To define a thing or event in our experience means, in this view, to define it in terms of the space-time continuum, in which all objects and entities are melted into events. And an event, in the language of science today, is but a configuration of space-time. Space and time which were separate reference points in the definition of real objects and real events, now become the only reality as space-time, reducing all beings, objects, and events to its own passing configurations.

Thus it is this concept of space-time that comes closest to our idea of that which is eternal, spiritual, and infinite, in and beyond all finite entities and events. Space-time itself is described by modern science in much the same language that describes the Ātman in these verses of the *Īśā Upaniṣad*. It is inside everything, It is outside everything. It moves, and It moves not. It is one and indivisible, but It appears to be divided by the passing events of the world of sense experience.

### *Faster than the Mind*

The theme of the Upaniṣads, clearly stated in these two verses, is that the Ātman is one and that It is everywhere. It is the One behind the many, sustaining the many. It is not that you have an Ātman and I have an Ātman and every individual has a separate Ātman. This is of course our commonsense view; but

it cannot stand philosophical scrutiny, say the Upaniṣads. And Buddha also said the same. When closely scrutinized, all the separate selves become reduced to mere notions, and, as such, into non-selves, revealing the Self as one. It appears as many when viewed through the limitations of the body and the senses. Being infinite and all-pervasive, It does not move; but It appears to move through association with the moving mind and the senses, through being viewed through the 'human spectacles', as Jeans expresses it. Then It is *manaso javīyo*, 'faster than the mind'. 'It is motionless, and yet It is faster than the mind.'

Some of us, perhaps, would dismiss that statement as contradictory, and therefore nonsense. To say that a thing is motionless and yet is faster than the mind sounds completely illogical. But nature is such that, as we proceed to its depths, such illogicalities reveal themselves more and more. Logic is, in fact, a very poor instrument to help us understand the depths of truth. Logic can put two and two together—but first we must get two and two! First fact, then logic; and if fact does not fit into logic, it is logic that has to go. Logic is a good servant, and that, too, for a restricted special job, but it is a bad master. It deals with and through laws of thought, laws such as identity, non-contradiction, causality, etc. These laws help us to order the world of our sense experience; but they break down at the deeper levels of experience. Even at the level of the electrons and protons of the physical universe they break down. It is no wonder that they become mostly inapplicable at the level of mind, and absolutely so at the level of Ātman.

This idea is expressed by this verse in a picturesque way by saying that neither the senses nor the mind could catch up with the Ātman, Itself being faster than both. We are in the presence of a profound paradox here, similar to those which atomic physics is familiarizing us with today, for example, the description of an electron both as a particle and as a wave. The Ātman is motionless, ever steady, yet It outstrips all that run. This language reminds us of *Alice in Wonderland*. Alice and the Queen were running hand in hand, and running faster and faster, so fast that they seemed to skim through the air. Yet when they stopped, breathless, Alice was surprised to find that they were still at the place wherefrom they had started. And the Red Queen's explanation was: 'Here, you see, it takes all the running you can do to keep in the same place.'

So the Ātman is faster than the mind, and yet it is motionless, steady. The senses move fast, and yet they cannot reach It. The senses, as we now know, move in terms of nerve impulse. In the physical universe, light is said to be the fastest thing that moves. The theory of relativity considers the speed of light as the ultimate limit of speed in physical nature. And yet mind or thought is faster than light. The senses, too, are known to travel very fast. When any part of the body such as the leg comes in contact with an external object, an impulse is transmitted from the point of contact to the brain. There is a little time-lag of about .01 second between the moment of contact and the moment when the information is received by the brain about six feet away. But this is not a very fast speed; it is slower than the speed of a jet plane. But thought is a force subtler than a nerve impulse, subtler than even light, and faster than both. But the Ātman travels faster than the senses, faster than light, and faster than even the mind. Like the space-time continuum of physical science, of which all motion, fast or slow, is but a configuration, the Self of man is the all-pervasive and infinite background of all the energies of the universe. As pure being and pure awareness, the Ātman is even the forerunner of the affirming and negating mind. Says Śaṅkarācārya in his illuminating comment on this verse:

*Tasmin manasi brahmalokādīn drutaṁ gacchati sati. prathamaprāpta iva ātmacaitanyābhāso gṛhyate; ato manaso javīya ityāha—*

'When the mind moves fast towards the farthest worlds such as the *brahmaloka*, it finds the Ātman, of the nature of pure awareness, already there; hence the statement that It is faster than the mind.'

*Tat Tvam Asi*

In the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* (VI. 8.7 to VI 16.3) the teacher tells the disciple again and again that the whole universe is centred in the Self:

*Sa ya eṣo aṇimā, aitat ātmyamidaṁ sarvaṁ;*
*Tat satyaṁ, sa ātmā, tat tvam asi, śvetaketo—*

'Everything in the universe has this subtle reality for its Self: That is the True, That is the Ātman, and That thou art. O Śvetaketu.'

The fourth and fifth verses of the *Īśā Upaniṣad* bring us the same message. In this Ātman is sustained the entire activity of the cosmos; the cosmic energy in which is unified all the forces of nature, is but an infinitesimal play of the Ātman within Itself. It is the universal constant in nature, controlling all its movements and processes. Again and again the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* says about the Ātman (IV. 9):

*Tad u nātyeti kaścana, etat vai tat*—

'This is That which nothing can surpass or transcend.'

Absolute Existence is also Absolute Awareness, Brahman is Ātman, say the Upaniṣads.

Studying man, the Upaniṣadic sages found that the finite man becomes more and more rarefied as we go deeper into him, revealing at last a transcendental and infinite reality as his true Self. Each one of us presents himself or herself as a finite man to the external world, but behind that finite man is an infinite and eternal man. Behind man the known, is 'man the unknown'. And this 'man the unknown' is a singular, as the 'man the known' is a plural, and man is essentially that singular reality. A mighty rock juts out of the ocean surface and we see only the projecting tip, but the rock itself is a huge mass reaching down to the very bottom of the ocean. So, too, is man—each one of us—a finite presentation on the surface, but infinite in the depths. It is this discovery that is summed up in the powerful language of the Upaniṣads, *Tat tvam asi*—'That thou art'. The Upaniṣads tell man that he is not finite; that he is not the limited, truncated thing he considers himself to be. He seems to be limited because he is viewed, or he views himself, through the limitations of the body and the senses. In his essential nature, however, he is pure being, pure consciousness, and bliss—*sat-cit-ānanda*—and, as such, he is one with all. Pure consciousness cannot be divided; it only appears to be divided by the manifesting media of bodies and minds. But It is ever one and unmoving—*anejat ekam*, as this verse puts it.

Says the great physicist Erwin Schrödinger (*What Is Life?*, Epilogue, pp. 90-91):

'Consciousness is never experienced in the plural, only in the singular. . . . Consciousness is a singular of which the plural is unknown; that there is only one thing and that, what seems to be a

plurality is merely a series of different aspects of this one thing, produced by a deception (the Indian *Māyā*).'

*Entering the Profound*

The next verse of the *Īśā Upaniṣad*, verse five, amplifies this idea: 'It 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 Ātman, this verse says, may be said to move when it is viewed through the aspects of the changeful visible universe; in its own true nature, however, it does not move at all. Energy, in modern scientific thought, is conceived as existing in two forms—bottled-up energy and released energy; observable motion is predicated of the latter. Sri Ramakrishna often referred to these two aspects of Reality. One aspect is Brahman, the Absolute and the Infinite, the immobile and, therefore, the unmanifested. The other aspect is Śakti, Divine Energy, the creative power of the Absolute, expressing as vibration or movement. Sri Ramakrishna used the simile of a serpent. Brahman is the serpent coiled up, motionless; Śakti is the same serpent in motion, its energy released. Thus Brahman and Śakti, God and the universe, are not two separate realities, different from each other, but two aspects of one and the same thing, one reality looked at from two different points of view. Thus it is that, attempting to explain this fact, the Upaniṣad resorts to the most paradoxical language: 'It is far, and It is near, It is within all this, and It is also outside all this.'

And, as we have seen, the use of paradoxical language has invaded twentieth-century science as well. Up to the end of the nineteenth century, science spoke of realities which were finite, and clearly definable in terms of their primary and secondary qualities. In the twentieth century, however, science has broken through the crust of this finitude, through this determinate, predictable universe, and what is revealed then is so far removed from common experience that even the most refined scientific language can no longer express it precisely. For example, in trying to describe the nature of an electron or of a photon of light, twentieth-century scientists find themselves using language which is full of contradictions. A photon, the smallest unit of light, behaves sometimes like a particle and sometimes like a wave. So what is it? Is it a particle or is it a wave? Neither term is an adequate description, so a new name has to be coined. It is therefore known as a 'wavicle'!

That is one example of what happens when science delves deep into nature and reaches layers of experience where current terms and definitions cannot stand at all. The logic of the three dimensional world breaks down in the fourth dimension; or as Vedānta puts it, the logic of the waking state breaks down in the dream state. Science has now touched deeper levels of phenomena in the nuclear field, and these phenomena defy description in logical terms, in the precise mechanistic language of nineteenth-century science. To quote Sir James Jeans (*The New Background of Science*, pp. 2-6):

'The old philosophy ceased to work at the end of the nineteenth century, and the twentieth-century physicist is hammering out a new philosophy for himself. Its essence is that he no longer sees nature as something entirely distinct from himself. Sometimes it is what he himself creates or selects or abstracts; sometimes it is what he destroys.

'...We can only see nature blurred by the clouds of dust we ourselves make....Thus the history of physical science in the twentieth century is one of a progressive emancipation from the purely human angle of vision....

'The physicist who can discard his human spectacles, and can see clearly in the strange new light which then assails his eyes, finds himself living in an unfamiliar world, which even his immediate predecessors would probably fail to recognise.'

This is exactly what happens when we enquire into the nature of man. What is man? Is he a definable entity? When we define any person, we say whether he is a man or a woman, we give his age, his weight, his colour, his educational qualifications, his activities and functions, his nationality, and so on. We can thus define a person by giving as many particulars about him as possible, and yet the question will assail us: Is that all? Has he been exhausted by any one of these definitions, or by all of them put together? Something in our hearts tells us that he has not. There is something of him left over. The definable aspect of him has alone been touched; the indefinable part remains untouched, the mysterious and profound depths of his being. This is infinite in dimension. This infinite man, 'man the unknown' as Alexis Carrel terms it, becomes revealed by a penetrating study of the finite man, 'man the known'.

The Upaniṣads are the supreme literature that deals with this deepest level of experience. Their theme is the infinite in man,

the infinite in nature, and the unity between the two. *Ahaṁ brahmāsmi*—'I am Brahman (the spiritual Absolute, the All)'; *sarvaṁ khalu idaṁ brahma*—'All this universe is verily Brahman'. The supreme aim of the Upaniṣads is to help man in his struggle to probe this mystery and gain an awareness of his infinite nature. Through the pages of the Upaniṣads man is introduced to a wisdom which lifts him above the pettiness and trivialities of his life, above the finite self presiding over the routine of his humdrum existence. Like a dweller in a dark and narrow lane of one of our cities transported in a jet plane to the freedom and joy of unobstructed movement in the infinite expanse of the sky, so is the finite man taken up by the Upaniṣads from the limitations of his sense-bound life to the true freedom and delight of the infinitude of his being.

It is at this point, as described in the next two verses, verses six and seven, that the *Īśā Upaniṣad* raises us to the highest pinnacle of human wisdom:

*Yastu sarvāṇi bhūtāni ātmanyevānupaśyati;*

*Sarvabhūteṣu cātmānaṁ tato na vijugupsate—*

'The wise man, who realizes all beings as not distinct from his own Self, and his own Self as the Self of all beings, does not, by virtue of that perception, hate anyone.'

*Yasmin sarvāṇi bhūtāni ātmaivābhūt vijānataḥ;*

*Tatra ko mohaḥ kaḥ śokaḥ ekatvam anupaśyataḥ—*

'What delusion, what sorrow can there be for that wise man who realizes the unity of all existence by perceiving all beings as his own Self?'

The Upaniṣad now confronts the aspirant with the consequences of the idea that the infinite Ātman is his true nature, the true nature of every man and woman. The man who realizes himself as the Ātman perceives also that he is one with all beings, that none is separate from him. Then who can hate whom? He, the Knower, the Self, is one with all; the only life-expression of this vision is universal love and service free; love is a binding force, whereas hatred proceeds from a sense of separateness. This realization, according to Indian thought, modern as well as ancient, marks the highest point of human excellence. These two verses convey a message of the highest spirituality, where the highest vision becomes embodied as the highest character. All the great ones of

India have reacted to these two verses with a whole-hearted response. The saints and sages, intellectuals and devotees, of our country accord the highest place to this spiritual attainment. Through this realization man realizes his basic oneness with all men, with all beings; through this he achieves life fulfilment.

*Tato na vijugupsate*—'thereby he ceases to hate any one'. *Vijugupsā* means hatred; it also means narrow-mindedness and secretiveness. Narrow-mindedness, secretiveness, and hatred spring always from a sense of separateness. The sense of separateness gives rise to all kinds of selfish desires: the desire to hide one's thoughts and possessions from others, the desire to exploit or overcome somebody else, and so on. But when this sense of separateness vanishes, such calculations also vanish, leaving in their place a feeling of universal friendship and benevolence towards other beings, and blessedness and peace within oneself. Hence the seventh verse ends with the question:

*Tatra ko mohaḥ kaḥ śokaḥ ekatvam anupaśyataḥ*—

'What delusion, what sorrow can there be for that seer who realizes this unity?'

### *Correcting the Error of Separateness*

Grief and delusion come to us as a result of identifying ourselves with this limited body and mind. Thus identifying ourselves with the not-self aspect of our personality, we feel weak, helpless, limited, cut off from others; and in that state of weakness we make all sorts of mistakes, experience all kinds of tensions and griefs, and commit all types of sins. All these proceed directly from the delusion of separateness. All morality, all ethics and spirituality, tell us that we are one, basically one. Jesus says: 'Love thy neighbour as thyself.' The Upaniṣads add: 'For you *are* your neighbour.' It is philosophy that proves to us that the sense of separateness is not true; it imparts to us the knowledge of oneness; and with this knowledge comes also morality and ethics, and we discover our true kinship with every man and woman, and with the whole of nature. 'Knowledge leads to unity and ignorance to diversity', says Sri Ramakrishna. So the purpose of spiritual knowledge is to destroy this delusion of separateness, this 'original sin' of ignorance, which cuts us off from the main stream of life. A river cut off from its main stream must be-

come stagnant; and the man cut off from the main stream of life stagnates and degenerates, and falls into error and grief and delusion. The seventh verse sings the glory of him who has overcome error and grief and delusion through his realization of unity:

*Yasmin sarvāṇi bhūtāni ātmaivābhūt vijānataḥ—*

'The knowing one who has realized all beings as his own Self.'

The capacity to realize this sameness comes to the human mind by discipline in social awareness as a citizen, and by discipline in inwardness as a spiritual seeker. This total discipline is religion, according to Vedānta: *Nirdoṣaṁ hi samaṁ brahma*—'Free from all evil and same-in-all is Brahman', says the *Gītā* (V. 19), and sings in several of its verses the glory of this same-sightedness as the finest fruit of the tree of human life and action. The wise man, according to the Upaniṣads, lives constantly in the awareness of this basic unity of existence, and consequently he cannot hate anyone, being free from the delusion of separateness.

Throughout the Upaniṣadic literature, and, indeed, in all the spiritual literature of India, there is this condemnation of the idea of separateness; the sense of man's spiritual kinship with all creation is emphasized over and over again. This basic oneness, this non-separateness, is the theme of modern scientific thought as well. The greatest discovery of science, in physics as well as in biology, is this sense of oneness between things and forces in nature, and between nature and man. Physics discovers inter-connections between terrestrial and celestial phenomena. Biology discovers linkages between living organisms, and between these and their natural environments. One organism is linked with another in a life-continuum. Where the surface view sees differences, the deeper scientific view discovers linkages. The theory of evolution, starting as a theory in biology, has become today cosmic in scope, and presents the grand design of all science. Says Lincoln Barnett (*The Universe and Dr. Einstein*, Mentor Edition, pp. 120-22):

'Through the centuries, the varied currents of discovery, theory, research, and reason have steadily converged, mingled, and flowed onward into ever widening and deepening channels. The first long advance was the reduction of the world's multifarious substances into 92 natural elements. Then these elements were reduced to a few fundamental particles. Concurrently the various "forces" in the world came to be recognized one by one as varying manifestations of electromagnetic force, and all the different kinds of radi-

ation in the universe—light, heat, X-rays, radio waves, gamma rays—as nothing more than electromagnetic waves of varying wave length and frequency. Ultimately the features of the universe distilled down to a few basic quantities—space, time, matter, energy, and gravitation. But in Special Relativity, Einstein demonstrated the equivalence of matter and energy, and in General Relativity he showed the indivisibility of the space-time continuum. The Unified Field Theory now culminates and climaxes this coalescing process. For from its august perspective the entire universe is revealed as one elemental field in which each star, each atom, each wandering comet and slow-wheeling galaxy and flying electron is seen to be but a ripple or tumescence in the underlying space-time unity. And so a profound simplicity supplants the surface complexity of nature. The distinctions between gravitational force and electromagnetic force, matter and energy, electric charge and field, space and time, all fade in the light of their revealed relationships and resolve into configurations of the four-dimensional continuum which is the universe. Thus all man's perceptions of the world and all his abstract intuitions of reality merge finally into one, and the deep underlying unity of the universe is laid bare.'

In countless ways every department of science today is extending the bounds of man's knowledge of cosmic unity. The Upaniṣads discovered this basic unity through the study of mind, and through inward meditation. Modern science started with the exploration of the mysteries of external nature; but at the farthest end of this exploration, it finds itself face to face with the mystery of man and his mind, the deepest mystery of all. It is here that we can discern the steady convergence of two of the greatest human disciplines—ancient Vedānta and modern science. This has been the faith of Vedānta, the faith that unity in variety is the plan of nature and that man can approach this unity from the outside as well as from the inside. From the point of view of twentieth-century physics or biology, man himself emerges as the greatest mystery of nature. To quote Barnett again (*ibid.*, pp. 126-27):

'In the evolution of scientific thought one fact has become impressively clear: there is no mystery of the physical world which does not point to a mystery beyond itself. All highroads of intellect, all byways of theory and conjecture lead ultimately to an abyss that human ingenuity can never span. For man is enchained by the very condition of his being, his finiteness and involvement in nature. The farther he extends his horizons, the more vividly he recognizes the fact that, as the physicist Niels Bohr puts it, "we are both spectators and actors in the great drama of existence". Man is thus his own greatest mystery. He does not understand

the vast veiled universe into which he has been cast for the reason that he does not understand himself.'

The study of the sciences of nature leads but to the study of the science of man in whom nature, after millions of years of blind evolution, has become self-aware and free. The study of this focus of awareness in man is beginning to attract serious scientific attention today. Says Eddington (*The Philosophy of Physical Science*, p. 5):

'We have discovered *that it is actually an aid in the search for knowledge to understand the nature of the knowledge which we seek.*'

Quoting the following passage from Blaise Pascal, 'In space, the universe engulfs me and reduces me to a pin-point; through thought, I understand the universe', Prince Louis de Broglie, an authority on quantum theory and wave mechanics, comments thus in his article on 'The Poetry of Science' contributed to the international monthly of London, *Mirror*, (No. 17):

'In that sublime pun lies the beauty, the poetry of pure science, and its high intellectual worth.'

Concluding his book *Space, Time, and Gravitation*, Eddington writes about the emergence of the mystery of man from the study of the mystery of nature:

'The theory of relativity has passed in review the whole subject-matter of physics. It has unified the great laws, which by the precision of their formulation and the exactness of their application have won the proud place in human knowledge which physical science holds today. And yet, in regard to the nature of things, this knowledge is only an empty shell—a form of symbols. It is knowledge of structural form, and not knowledge of content. All through the physical world runs that unknown content which must surely be the stuff of our consciousness. Here is a hint of aspects deep within the world of physics, and yet unattainable by the methods of physics. And, moreover, we have found that where science has progressed the farthest, the mind has but regained from nature that which the mind has put into nature. We have found a strange footprint on the shores of the unknown. We have devised profound theories, one after another, to account for its origin. At last, we have succeeded in reconstructing the creature that made the footprint. And lo! it is our own.'

The Vedāntic study of the mystery of man has all the qualities of a scientific study, including the most important one of verifi-

ability. It is also systematic and thorough, leading the enquirer through the various outer shells or sheaths or *kośas*, of personality, to the abiding innermost being of man, the Ātman, which is also the innermost being of the universe, Brahman. *Brahmajñāna* (wisdom) is *sarvātmabhāva*, realization of the Ātman as the Self of all. This is the supreme source of strength for man: *Ātmanā vindate vīryam*—'man gains energy through the knowledge of the Ātman', says the *Kena Upaniṣad*. The unique quality of this strength, of this energy, is that it is entirely constructive and beneficent, for it is the strength of love.

*Practical Application*

This is the wisdom of the Upaniṣads, and these two verses, the sixth and seventh of the *Īśā*, express this wisdom most clearly. The *Bhagavad-Gītā*, some centuries later, built its science of practical spirituality on this vision of equality. The modern world has been experimenting with political, economic, and other forms of equality during these three hundred years. Equality still remains an unsolved problem in human thought. The only equality that will not militate against reason and the wisdom of history is the spiritual one. It is through the intensification of man's spiritual awareness, through the knowledge that he is the Ātman, that equality will become a social fact. Socio-political measures to establish an equalitarian social environment are worthwhile and necessary; but their scope is limited, as history is teaching man every day. Under such methods, every increase of human equality has meant a corresponding decrease of human freedom. This social paradox can be cleared only if along with socio-political measures there is increasing education of man in what Vedānta calls *ātmajñāna*, the knowledge of man's true Self. This was what Swami Vivekananda taught in East and West. Dealing with the social bearing of this realization, Swami Vivekananda says (Lecture in New York on 'The Real and the Apparent Man', *Complete Works*, Vol. II, pp. 286-87):

'People are afraid that when they attain to it, when they realize that there is but One, the fountains of love will be dried up....People never stop to think that those who bestowed the least thought on their own individualities have been the greatest workers in the world. Then alone a man loves when he finds that the object of his love is not any low, little, mortal thing. Then alone a man loves when he finds that the object of his love is not

a clod of earth, but is the veritable God Himself. The wife will love the husband the more when she thinks that the husband is God Himself. The husband will love the wife the more when he knows that the wife is God Himself. That mother will love the children more, who thinks that the children are God Himself. That man will love his greatest enemy who knows that that very enemy is God Himself. That man will love a holy man who knows that the holy man is God Himself, and that very man will also love the unholiest of men because he knows the background of that unholiest of men is even He, the Lord.

'Such a man becomes a world-mover for whom his little self is dead and God stands in its place. The whole universe will become transfigured to him....Instead of being a prison house, where we every day struggle and fight and compete for a morsel of bread, this universe will then be to us a playground. Beautiful will be this universe then! Such a man alone has the right to stand up and say, "How beautiful is this world!" He alone has the right to say that it is all good. This will be the great good to the world resulting from such realization, that instead of this world going on with all its friction and clashing, if all mankind today realize only a bit of that great truth, the aspect of the whole world will be changed, and in place of fighting and quarrelling, there would be a reign of peace.

'If one-millionth part of the men and women who live in this world simply sit down and for a few minutes say, "You are all God, O ye men, and O ye animals, and living beings, you are all the manifestations of the one living Deity!" the whole world will be changed in half an hour. Instead of throwing tremendous bombshells of hatred into every corner, instead of projecting currents of jealousy and of evil thought, in every country people will think that it is all He.'

In spite of being the home of Vedānta, India has nursed the delusion of human separateness more than any other country, and she has paid a heavy price for this in centuries of slavery. Swami Vivekananda was deeply pained at this, and he worked energetically to end this state of affairs. His scheme of Practical Vedānta had this end in view. In his lecture on 'Vedānta' delivered in 1897 in Lahore, he said (*ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 427):

'Believe, therefore, in yourselves; and if you want material wealth, work it out; it will come to you. If you want to be intellectual, work it out on the intellectual plane, and intellectual giants you shall be. And if you want to attain to freedom, work it out on the spiritual plane, and free you shall be, and shall enter into *Nirvāṇa*, eternal Bliss.

'But one defect which lay in the Advaita (philosophy of non-duality) was its being worked out so long on the spiritual plane only, and nowhere else; now the time has come when you have to make it practical. It shall no more be a *rahasya*, a secret, it shall no more live with monks in caves and forests, and in the Himalayas; it must come down to the daily everyday life of the people; it shall be worked out in the palace of the king, in the cave of the recluse, it shall be worked out in the cottage of the poor, by the beggar in the street, everywhere, anywhere it can be worked out.

'Therefore, do not fear whether you are a woman or a śūdra, for this religion is so great, says Lord Kṛṣṇa, that even a little of it brings a great amount of good. Therefore, children of the Āryas, do not sit idle. Awake, arise, and stop not till the goal is reached. The time has come when this Advaita has to be worked out practically. Let us bring it down from heaven unto the earth. This is the present dispensation.'

Underlying the outer differences between man and man is the unity of his inborn spiritual nature; and that has to be emphasized in the education of the individual. Vedānta does not deny the differences; they are there, but they belong to the surface. Deep down is unity. Whatever work he may do, whatever his position in life, every one has within himself an integral value which is not measured in terms of the money he earns or the social function he performs. That integral value is a spiritual value and proceeds from the Ātman. As the inalienable part of his nature, it is the basis of his true dignity and self-respect. The cobbler and the sweeper, the fisherman and the artisan are doing essential functions of society as the professor or the doctor, the lawyer or the administrator. These are various social functions which do not constitute the true measure of a man; that true measure is his innate spiritual nature, his true being, the Ātman, in which he has his infinite dimension. The measure of a man as a social functionary is the field for the play of the forces of inequality. These forces can be held in check and made harmless only by spiritual education. Such education will impart to every individual, high or low in the social view, a sense of his own integral worth and dignity, a sense which springs from an awareness of himself as the Ātman.

Without this spiritual education, modern industrial civilization, in spite of the claims made on behalf of modern democracy, will merely accentuate the differences between man and man, differences arising from knowledge, talents, wealth, and power; and

this will further serve to increase the sense of smallness in millions of men who already feel small by the side of the gigantic machines created by their science and technology. Without such education, the exploitation of man by man will only increase; all sorts of subtle exploitations will develop, more insidious than the old economic exploitation. The ideal of general human happiness and welfare will recede further and further, due to the coarsening of human nature, in spite of greater and greater technical efficiency and increasing wealth and comfort. Without spiritual education man will not get the capacity to enjoy life as a master; he will be its slave. In the words of Manu (*Manusmṛti*, VI. 82):

*Nâhyanadhyātmavit kaścit kriyāphalam upāśnute*—

'The man bereft of the knowledge of the Self cannot enjoy the fruits of his labour.'

The more advanced a society in material wealth and social welfare, the more unhappy it is; man's suffering does not decrease with the increase of wealth, it merely changes its form, becoming more and more subtle, and consequently more and more unbearable. Sixty years ago, Swami Vivekananda warned the western world that this would happen, that it must happen, so long as man remains ignorant of his spiritual nature.

There are not wanting thinkers in the West who are aware of the dangers of this objectification of human nature, the danger of man's ignoring his subjectivity. One of these thinkers writes in the *Reader's Digest* ('The Art of Being Nobody', by Eric Manners, May 1953):

'There is a dangerous threat in the air these days—the threat of our being thought for, ruled, regulated, pushed around, made into Things. There is only one weapon against that. The weapon is the Self—the unique and incalculable reality that is a human soul.'

'What is the truth about ourselves?', asked Eddington in a talk on the B.B.C., and proceeded to reply: 'We may incline to various answers: We are a bit of star gone wrong. We are complicated physical machinery—puppets that strut and talk and laugh and die as the hand of time turns the handle beneath. But let us remember that there is one elementary inescapable answer: We are that which asks the question.'

*We are that which asks the question*—what a profound observation! Expressed in the Vedāntic language, it means that we are the *dṛk*, the seer, and not the *dṛśyam*, the seen; the subject, not the object; the Self, not the non-Self.

If we want to avoid the sufferings and sorrows arising from nervous diseases and mental tensions, we have to educate ourselves to the fact that we are not the body, nor the senses, nor the mind, nor the intellect, but that we are the Ātman, the eternally pure, eternally awakened, and eternally free Self—*nitya-śuddha-buddha-mukta-svabhāva paramātman*, as Vedānta expresses it. This knowledge will at once lift us up above the trivialities of sensate existence and confer on us universality of vision and sympathy. This is the great work that Vedānta has set before itself to perform in the modern age.

The next verse of the *Īśā Upaniṣad*, the eighth, gives us another majestic and poetic description of the nature of the ultimate Reality:

> *Sa paryagāt śukram akāyam avraṇam asnāviraṁ śuddhamapāpaviddham;*
>
> *Kavirmanīṣī paribhūḥ svayaṁbhūḥ yāthātathyato arthān vyadadhāt śāśvatībhyaḥ samābhyaḥ—*

'He, the self-existent One, is everywhere—the pure one, without a (subtle) body, without blemish, without muscles (a gross body), holy and without the taint of sin; the all-seeing, the all-knowing, the all-encompassing One is He. He has duly assigned their respective duties to the eternal *Prajāpatis* (cosmic powers).'

The nature of the Ātman is holy and pure, free from the taint of sin. This is India's eternal gospel of universal human redemption; Vedānta does not accept that any particular *historical* event can become the gospel of human redemption acceptable universally. A gospel derived from human nature can alone become a universally acceptable gospel of redemption. This is what Jesus meant when he taught: 'The kingdom of Heaven is within you.'

Here is another beautiful epithet of the Ātman: *Kaviḥ*, the poet, the seer. He is the great poet and the world is his poem, coming out in rhymes and verses. The word *kavi*, poet, means not only one who composes verses, but one who is far-seeing, *krāntadarśī*, as Śaṅkarācārya puts it, one who has insight and can see

and grasp the inner significance of things. The great poets of the world share this virtue with the Ātman. Poetry brings a message from the heart of nature. What to the prosaic and humdrum mind may seem ordinary and insignificant, to the poet will be charged with meaning and significance. This thought has been neatly expressed in an English verse depicting the poetic vision of Shakespeare:

> The poem hangs on the berry bush
> When comes the poet's eye;
> The street begins to masquerade
> When Shakespeare passes by.

Every act, every experience, every situation is full of poetic suggestion to a poet; his sensitive mind sees meaning and significance in them. There is no event or thing in nature which does not ensoul the Soul of the universe; the poet catches the divine pulsations of nature by momentary elevations to kinship with the divine Poet. The ordinary individual, on the contrary, sees only prosaic, discrete facts and events.

This Ātman is the source of the orderliness in nature, says the verse: *Yāthātathyato arthān vyadadhāt śāśvatībhyaḥ samābhyaḥ.* The unalterable laws of the cosmos are an expression of its divine ground. The universe is ruled by law; the sun, the stars, the nebulae, fire, lightning, rain, everything in nature obeys law. It is law that keeps all things within their limits, so that they do not overstep those limits and cause chaos.

Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world, said Shelley. As the poet of poets, God is the greatest law-giver; He gives Himself in His law. Says the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (IV. 4.22):

> *Sa vā eṣa mahānaja ātmā...seturvidharaṇa eṣāṁ lokānām asaṁbhedāya—*

'This, verily, is that great birthless Self...an embankment that serves as the boundary to keep the different worlds apart.'

In the Vedas this concept of law was described as *ṛta*, and *ṛta* means order, rhythm. Within the heart of nature there is orderliness, although on the surface everything may appear disorderly or even chaotic. A boy opening up a machine to see its inside

will find what appears to him to be a chaotic jumble of wires; but to the expert there is order in the arrangement of the wires, and he understands the significance and function of each one of them; through such knowledge he controls their operation as well. Similarly, in nature, everything functions according to law; and this law reveals the presence of the Divine within. This Divine in the heart of nature is not a dualistic concept, a god sitting somewhere above the clouds and ruling the world from there; it is the Ātman, the Self of man and the universe, whose subtle presence the mind of man traces and unveils through the objects and events of the universe and the laws that hold them together.

The *Īśā Upaniṣad* commenced with the declaration that the universe is spiritual through and through: *Īśāvāsyamidaṁ sarvam*. It then taught man to desire to live the full span of human life and to utilize the same to realize this truth and be free; without this realization, it warned, life would be lived in darkness and sorrow, and rendered meaningless and sterile. Then it expounded the nature of this divine presence in man and nature and showed how its realization completely lifts the veil of delusion and sorrow from the heart of man, converting it into an abode of peace and bliss and universal benevolence.

The Upaniṣads called this all-pervading spiritual reality by the name of Ātman; this reality is beyond speech and thought, being the Self of all; but it is also the *idam*, the 'this', the universe, and as such, the object of all speech and thought. It is thus both the 'within' and the 'without' of things, in the language of Teilhard de Chardin, both the transcendent and the immanent reality. But the term 'Ātman' bears the impress of the search for discovering the 'within', the *pratyak tattva*, of the universe, through a penetrating study of the human personality, which is a microcosm in itself. The study of the 'without' of the universe by the Upaniṣads had earlier yielded the concept and term Brahman, the One behind the many. This concept passed through various stages of clarification and enrichment; it meant prayer; it meant a monotheistic god; it meant a logical absolute behind the relative universe. Finally, the Upaniṣads, viewing it from their knowledge of the 'within' of things, the Ātman, discovered the unity of the 'without' and the 'within' in a reality which, as Brahman-Ātman, is both transcendent and immanent, is a *given* fact of experience, and is not a mere concept or logical presupposition. Through the

knowledge of the Ātman, of the 'within' of things, the Upaniṣads converted the concept of Brahman from a monotheistic deity and a logical absolute to a spiritual experience—*anubhava avasānam*—as expressed by Śaṅkarācārya in his *Brahmasūtra Bhāṣya* (I. ii. 2).

Similarly, through a penetrating study of the phenomenon of *cit, jñāna,* or *saṁvit,* awareness, knowledge or consciousness, the Upaniṣads also transformed the Ātman concept from a word meaning a *jīva* or soul, an entity possessing consciousness as a quality, and involving plurality, through a term meaning the *antarātman,* the pure and unattached inner Self of man, also involving plurality, into one meaning the *Paramātman* or *Sarvātman,* the pure and perfect, eternal and non-dual Self of all and Self of the universe. Ātman is pure Being and Awareness; Brahman is pure Being and Awareness; both are one. Awareness and the object of awareness are non-different, as are mind and its presentations. As in physical science, the objects and entities and events in the space-time continuum become merely its passing configurations, space-time continuum alone being real, so also, taking existence as a totality, the world of mind and matter, of souls and bodies, becomes revealed as a mass of pure Awareness or pure Consciousness, *vijñānaghana* or *cidghana,* of which all the objects, entities, and events of the physical and non-physical worlds become passing configurations.

These landmarks in spiritual and philosophical thought are registered in some of the famous passages of the Upaniṣads:

Says the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (II. 4.12):

*Idaṁ mahadbhūtam anantam apāraṁ vijñānaghana eva*—

'This great Being is endless and without any limit. It is a mass of consciousness only.'

Says the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* (VIII. 3.4):

*Etat amṛtam abhayam etat brahmeti*—

'This is Brahman, the Immortal and the Fearless.'

The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (III. 4. 1) proclaims the Absolute as a *given* fact of experience, as the innermost Self of man:

*Yat sākṣāt aparokṣāt brahma ya ātmā sarvāntaraḥ taṁ me vyācakṣva*—

'The Brahman which is immediate and direct, which is the innermost Self of all—expound that Brahman to me.'

The *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* speaks of the realization of the unity of the Self (IV. 15):

*Yathodakaṁ śuddhe śuddhamāsiktaṁ tādṛgeva bhavati;*

*Evaṁ munervijānata ātmā bhavati gautama—*

'As pure water poured into pure water becomes pure water only, so becomes, O Gautama, the Self of the sage who realizes Brahman.'

And the *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad* (verse 2) expounds the spiritual unity of the universe in a majestic equation:

*Sarvaṁ hyetat brahma; ayam ātmā brahma—*

'All this universe is, verily, Brahman; this Ātman is Brahman.'

If Brahman and Ātman are one, if the world is spiritual through and through, then certain consequences follow for the life and destiny of man. It at once unifies the external and the internal, the secular and the spiritual, fields of man's life; it unifies science and religion. The discords and conflicts arising from partial views of reality become resolved in the light of this total view, making possible a comprehensive spirituality in which the believer and the non-believer, the theist and the agnostic, the religious man and the scientist, the contemplative and the worker, become transformed into fellow-seekers of truth.

How the vision of human life and action becomes transformed in the light of this philosophy is expounded by Swami Vivekananda in his lecture on 'The Ideal of a Universal Religion' (*Complete Works*, Vol. II, p. 381):

'Through high philosophy or low, through the most exalted mythology or the grossest, through the most refined ritualism or arrant fetishism, every sect, every soul, every nation, every religion, consciously or unconsciously, is struggling upward, towards God; every vision of truth that man has, is a vision of Him and of none else.'

Expounding the all-inclusiveness of this vision, Swami Vivekananda further says (*ibid.*, pp. 385-86):

'What I want to propagate is a religion that will be equally acceptable to all minds; it must be equally philosophic, equally emotional, equally mystic, and equally conducive to action. If professors from the colleges come, scientific men and physicists,

they will court reason. Let them have it as much as they want. There will be a point beyond which they will think they cannot go, without breaking with reason. ...Similarly, if the mystic comes, we must welcome him, be ready to give him the science of mental analysis, and practically demonstrate it before him. And, if emotional people come, we must sit, laugh, and weep with them in the name of the Lord; we must "drink the cup of love and become mad". If the energetic worker comes, we must work with him, with all the energy that we have. And this combination will be the nearest approach to the ideal of a universal religion. ...To become harmoniously balanced in all these four directions is *my* ideal of religion.'

The next six verses of the *Īśā Upaniṣad*, which we shall take up next, will expound to us the implications of such a philosophy for religion, life, and character. Religion in India, as also elsewhere, has experienced a recurring opposition, often irreconcilable, between the path of the mystic and that of the man of action, between the claims of the beyond and the claims of this world. These verses pointedly seek to resolve this opposition in the light of the synoptic and total vision of reality achieved in Vedānta. But what this Upaniṣad does is only to offer hints and suggestions. It was left to the *Bhagavad-Gītā* of a later age to capture the energy and charm of this vision in a comprehensive statement of practical spirituality.

FIVE

# ĪŚĀ UPNIṢAD—4

In verses four to eight of the *Īśā Upaniṣad*, as we have seen, there is the pronouncement of the Vedāntic vision of life. How does life appear from the point of view of the highest spiritual realization? The Upaniṣad told us that when a man realizes the Ātman, the divine Self within, he sees the same Self in every being and, because of this realization, he does not hate anyone; for there is none separate from him. He achieves equal-mindedness everywhere. As a result of this realization he also becomes free from all delusion and all sorrow. Delusion and sorrow, which afflict a person who sees things in their separateness, cannot afflict him when he realizes the spiritual unity of all existence.

As I said before, the whole philosophical thought of India has this great lesson to teach us—the realization of the One behind the many, the One in the many. The vision of the One is philosophy. Armed with that knowledge we can handle the many in the most consummate manner possible. Sri Ramakrishna tells us: *Advaita jñān āñcale bendhe jā icchā tāi karo*—'Tie the knowledge of Advaita, the knowledge of this Oneness, in the fold of your cloth, and do whatever you please.' Whatever be the field of our activity, whatever be the mode of our life, we shall never miss the goal. This knowledge of the true nature of man is sought to be impressed upon us by these great Upaniṣads. What a ringing declaration is given in the seventh verse: *Yasmin sarvāṇi bhūtāni ātmaivābhūt vijānataḥ; tatra ko mohaḥ kaḥ śokaḥ ekatvam anupaśyatah!*

When we realize this oneness 'how can there be sorrow and delusion?' How can there be hatred which is born out of a sense of separateness? Such things cannot be; their roots consisting of spiritual blindness have been burnt in the fire of spiritual awareness.

### *True Nobility*

Human society will get a new integration as a fruit of this vision. We in India speak of national integration today; but it is integration limited to one nation. But the Vedāntic concept

of integration goes beyond the merely national to embrace the whole of humanity in its sweeping vision of kinship and oneness. It has thus a global reference. The sentiments of these five verses, therefore, are appreciated and honoured by thinkers both in the East and in the West. In Vedānta, however, it is a spiritual vision; it is not a theory, a concept, or a programme of expediency. It is the achievement of universality by individual men and women. Man achieves it when he transcends the barriers which his little ego, with its instrument of the sense-bound mind, has erected around itself. The ego separates, but behind the ego is the Ātman, the true Self of man, which is also the true Self of all.

The transcendence of this ego is the whole purpose of religion morality, and the social process. Vedānta teaches that the universal is a *given* fact of experience. Therein is man's true selfhood. But he in his ignorance cuts it up into exclusive particulars by erecting narrow domestic walls. He cuts it up into finite loyalties of caste and creed, race and sect. Remove these ego-built limitations and the universal in him shines untarnished, pure, and whole. All education, all training, all culture, according to Vedānta, are but the methods by which this ever-present universal is liberated from the temporary limitations of the finite and the particular. The more educated a person and the more cultured, the more he sees this oneness of things; this vision finds expression in life in increase of love, compassion, and service. The sign of true culture is comprehension and compassion. Violence and wickedness, exploitation and egoism, are indications of un-culture, indications of a truncated vision. Vedānta calls these the fruits of a smallness of mind, littleness of character. One of the oft-quoted Sanskrit verses has this for its theme—the littleness and greatness of man:

*Ayaṁ nijaḥ paro veti gaṇanā laghucetasām;*

*Udāracaritānāṁ tu vasudhaiva kuṭumbakam—*

'This is my countryman; that is a foreigner—such a view is entertained only by small-minded people; but to the noble-minded, the whole world becomes his family.'

Where is the limit of man's being? Can the skin be his limitation? Can the body be his limitation? Can his sect and creed and church and nationality be his limitation? Can these ever really limit the dimension of his true nature? Such limitations are

experienced only when we are ignorant of our true nature. But as we overcome our ignorance, we also overcome our limitations and realize ourselves as we truly are—infinite and immortal. This infinite being of man is finding limited expressions through the body and the senses, through political and social systems, through religious sects and creeds. But it can never be exhausted in any one of these. It is in them but it also transcends them. The little man sheds his littleness and realizes himself as the Ātman; he realizes himself as the Infinite, as the Eternal.

This is the teaching of Vedānta on the subject of man. Vedānta seeks to liberate this universal value embedded in each individual; and today the world is in urgent need of this type of education. The whole trend of modern civilization and culture is towards this global unity, towards the emergence of the universal man, and here is the philosophy that stands sponsor to all such effort and struggle. That is why Vedānta holds such a great fascination for thinking minds in all parts of the world. No sentiment of triviality, of limitation, of finitude, of exclusiveness, of separateness, vitiates its language and thought. It speaks in terms of man as such, not as man cut up into creeds and sects and political systems. What a beautiful conception of man this is! It is beautiful because it is true; and therefore it is also good, beneficial. It is, in the Vedāntic language,—*satyam, śivam,* and *sundaram*—true, good, and beautiful. A new vision of man and his greatness is vouchsafed here, leading to an effort steadily to realize that greatness, that dimension of universality, on the part of man everywhere.

### *The 'Universe Souls'*

Two types of minds are there—one the *laghucetas*—the little mind, and the other the *udāracarita*—the great mind. This praise of the *udāracarita* is not confined merely to our literature; but our history has produced a galaxy of great men and women who expressed this value of universality in their lives and characters. The sages of the Upaniṣads, and Kṛṣṇa, Buddha, Śaṅkara, Caitanya, Nānak, Kabīr and a host of lesser known luminaries in the past, and Rammohan Roy, Ramakrishna, Vivekananda, and Gandhi in our own time, were such *udāracaritas*. They always considered themselves as belonging to the world. Thus this noble concept of man did not remain merely a concept in India but it assumed flesh

and blood again and again in the lives of men and women whom the nation adores as its true leaders and exemplars.

When Jesus Christ tells us 'Love thy neighbour as thyself', we are in the presence of a similar enunciation. It is the greatest teaching of ethics and morality. We hear this teaching; it is clear in itself; but the heart of man which receives this teaching is not always clear. On hearing this pronouncement, the human heart whispers a question to itself: Who is my neighbour? And the reply man gets to this question depends on his notion of himself. To the self-centred man the neighbour is practically himself; all others are as one's own satellites, to be exploited in one's own interest. That is the answer of the crude human heart to this question. Here is man in the raw state; he needs to be educated and cultured into that largeness and fullness of attitude where he finds his neighbour in everyone, everywhere, and loves all and serves all. This education is a long process, taking man step by step to an expansion of his neighbour awareness from himself to his family, thence to the clan, tribe, caste, and nation, to reach out eventually to the whole of humanity, nay, to all existence. Breaking down all barriers, the neighbourliness idea marches on to embrace the whole world. Behind this external march of the idea, and sustaining it at every step, is an internal march of the self of man from the finite little ego to the infinite universal Ātman. This unlimited expansion of man's selfhood, resulting in infinite expansion of his understanding and sympathy, is what results in *udāracarita*. When a man achieves that, he achieves a towering personality. He does not remain a citizen of one nation, he becomes a citizen of the whole world; one of the greatest achievements of India has been the production of what Romain Rolland terms 'Universe Souls' (*Life of Ramakrishna*, p. 22, Fourth Impression). He refers to Ramakrishna and Vivekananda as:

'...two men who have won my regard because with incomparable charm and power they have realised this splendid symphony of the Universal Soul' (*ibid.*, p. 8).

When Swami Vivekananda was in America, several saw in him one of themselves. In a letter dated 19 February 1896 one of his American disciples wrote half-humorously to a journal in India thus (*Life of Swami Vivekananda* by His Eastern and Western Disciples, Fourth Edition, p. 393):

'By the way, India had better at once make clear her title to the ownership of the Swami. They are about to write his biography for the national Encyclopaedia of the United States of America, thus making of him an American citizen. The time may come when even as seven cities disputed with each other for the honour of having given birth to Homer, seven countries may claim our Master as theirs, and thus rob India of the honour of producing one of the noblest of her children.'

The great ones of India have impressed this value of the universal into the Indian cultural experiment; and that explains the continued existence and vitality of India. If India had gone in for any of the trivial, narrow attitudes, she would have died long ago. She has given to man the vision of something pure, glorious, eternal, and fearless about the nature and destiny of man. Such an expression of the glory of man was found in our age in Sri Ramakrishna who lived in the Dakshineswar temple, which is hardly four miles to the north of Calcutta. There was enacted, a few decades ago, a mighty drama of the universal, from which proceeded the most creative and powerful ideas capable of composing the distractions of man in the modern age. The literature and thought of the 'Universe Souls' of ancient India which the Upaniṣads are, are, therefore, not of mere academic interest; they carry the bread of life to all men. Modern man has to be nourished on this bread so that he may grow into that largeness and fullness which is his birthright. This is true education, positive, purposive, and perennial. That India bears some impress of such an education from her 'Universe Souls' of past and present times is proved by the fact that no man can aspire to be a leader of the Indian people for long if he speaks in terms of narrow loyalties, of selfish chauvinistic ideas. But if a leader arises expounding broad ideas and large sympathies, people appreciatively and respectfully listen, and try to follow him as best as they can. The nation has been conditioned that way by this philosophy.

### *Theory to Flow into Practice*

We have thus a great philosophy; we have been conditioned by it to some extent these millennia of our history, and we have had also the inestimable privilege of guidance by 'Universe Souls' again and again. But we have to confess that we have failed our philosophy and our guides in many instances. Our weaknesses did not allow us to function long in the rarefied atmosphere of this philosophy. So we paid holy allegiance to it, and went our own less

holy ways to conduct our lives at the easier levels of the little self and the trivial ego. This mis-education has gone so far that today our society contains the largest number of self-centred men and women in all the world. Our homage to these great philosophical ideas has been reduced to lip-homage or homage proceeding from national vainglory. This disparity between high philosophy and low practice or no practice, has been with us for quite a long time. Swami Vivekananda marked it and felt deeply over it. He has referred to it in one of his beautiful epistles written from America to a disciple in India (*Complete Works*, Vol. V, p. 15):

'No religion on earth preaches the dignity of humanity in such a lofty strain as Hinduism and no religion on earth treads upon the necks of the poor and the low in such a fashion as Hinduism.'

We profess the highest philosophy and we indulge in low behaviour. Why? Swami Vivekananda diagnosed this as lack of will power to carry idea into practice. Ideas became short-circuited; practice never got sustenance from the lofty idea. So, on one side was practice untouched by the blessings of idea, and on the other side was idea waiting to express, but unable to express, in action and behaviour, and, therefore, becoming sterile. An idea which does not find expression in practice tends to become sterile. It then becomes an enemy and not a friend, however lofty it may be.

The next six verses of the *Īśā Upaniṣad* deal with this subject of the harmonizing of idea and practice, of the inner and the outer. Where these do not co-operate, life will derive no blessing from either of them. But if they reinforce each other, we shall see the finest flowering of philosophy in perfection of character. We have need to assimilate the ideas of this philosophy and raise the tone of our character. If I accept the truth of this philosophy that we are all basically non-separate from each other, then the only way in which I can express that acceptance is through a life suffused with the spirit of love and service. It is this spirit of love and service that acts as a thread to unite all men and women. The spirit of love pulsating in the heart will always seek expression in little acts of service. The mother's love for the child does not remain merely as a sentiment or as a matter of mere talk, but finds continued expression in acts of service to the child. The same thing applies to all other spheres of human relationship. A

sentiment becomes mere sentimentalism, says psychologist William McDougall, if it has no object to express itself on.

### *Renunciation and Service*

Swami Vivekananda taught us to express our age-old spiritual idealism in forms of love and service to man, to God in man. Says he (*Complete Works*, Vol. V, p. 228):

'Renunciation and service are the twin ideals of India; intensify her in those channels, the rest will take care of itself.'

When we can assimilate these twin ideas of renunciation and service, *tyāga* and *sevā*, we shall achieve the richness and steadiness of the Vedāntic character. *Tyāga*, renunciation, is the theme of the very first verse of this Upaniṣad: *tena tyaktena bhuñjīthā*—'enjoy life through renunciation'. We are asked to rise above our little ego, the grasping self, and express our true Self, the Self that realizes its oneness with all, and gives itself away to all, in sentiments of love and acts of service. When we achieve this, even our little acts become potent means of transforming the human situation into a pattern of beauty. Self-seeking and exploitation are forms of ugliness. Their presence in a man bespeaks of a lack of vision and of a lack of discipline in terms of what is highest and best in him. This ugliness seems to have invaded our social life in an aggressive form after our political liberation. Political independence has tended to liberate our lower self and thwart the expression of our higher self. There is an increase of self-centredness and lack of self-discipline, and a general lack of concern for the other individual. These social maladies have resulted in much social unhappiness and a retreat from the national goal of general welfare and fulfilment. The nation is living on its inherited spiritual assets which, however, are fast dwindling in the absence of continuous replenishments. The dwindling of our foreign exchange resources is a serious matter for our developing economy today; but far more serious is this fast dwindling of our moral and spiritual assets. As our economic and trade policies are energetically tackling the first, our education should vigorously tackle the second.

### *Education as Assimilation of Ideas*

This is the blessing that the Upaniṣads hold for us. They will help us to continually build up our moral and spiritual assets and,

through them, even our material assets. They will enrich man's inner life by helping him to build the structure of his higher personality above his given personality. The latter is the undisciplined ego which is always of a grasping nature, which desires to exploit others for its own benefit, and which is the perpetual focus of tension and sorrow. This little ego must be transcended, making for the manifestation of the true Self. Sri Ramakrishna refers to the first as the *kaccā*, raw, ego, and to the second as the *pakkā*, ripe, ego. The *kaccā* ego must be made to give place to the *pakkā* ego. That is true education and that again is true religion. It is such an education that fits man for a truly civilized, truly cultured, existence. Sings Wordsworth in *The Excursion:*

And that unless above himself he can

Erect himself, how poor a thing is man!

Our society today must bend its energies to get such an education for itself. Man in the Indian context needs to be inspired by the Vedāntic vision of human excellence and the Vedāntic will to realize that excellence in character and conduct as taught by the *Gītā* (Chapter XVIII, verses 20, 30 and 33). The study of the *Gītā* will be a fascinating experience after the study of the Upaniṣads. It is the essence of all the Upaniṣads, of all the Vedas, *Samastavedārtha sārasaṅgrahabhūtam*, as Śaṅkarācārya tells us in the introduction to his commentary on the *Gītā*. It is one thing to have a philosophy, even to read it and master it, and quite a different thing to live it and express it in forms of life, conduct, and behaviour. Whatever may be said of other philosophies, Vedānta shines best not in study and discussion, but in life application. It is so because, in the words of Śaṅkara, (*Brahma-Sūtra Commentary*: I. ii. 2): *anubhava avasānatvāt*—'it finds its consummation in experience'. As Sri Ramakrishna used to put it: Some have heard of milk, some have seen it, some have touched it, and some have drunk it and assimilated it. Among these, the last alone have been benefited by the milk; for they alone were nourished and strengthened by it. Such is Vedānta; its ideas have the power to nourish and strengthen man, but only when taken in and assimilated. They are not meant for mere study or argument, mental ornamentation, or intellectual exercise.

This capacity for *assimilation* of ideas comes to man from self-discipline and self-discipline alone. *Tapasā brahma vijijñāsasva*—

'Seek to know Brahman through *tapas*, self-discipline,' says the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* (III, 2). Where there is lack of this self-discipline, there will also be lack of this capacity to understand, appreciate, and assimilate high ethical and spiritual ideas. Our nation today needs to generate within itself this capacity to assimilate lofty values and ideas. We have the historically developed capacity to grasp and keep ideas. We have developed a love for ideas and a tremendous memory to keep them in our minds. But for lack of will and the humanistic urge, they have remained in our heads static and sterile; they have failed to percolate into the heart and the nervous system, into the bones and the muscles, to find expression in lived experience. That is a different type of experience; and we need to enter into this type of experience to be able to taste the fruit of the Vedāntic character—clear vision, broad sympathies, and intense practicality. Where there is only memory and no assimilation, man becomes merely a storehouse of ideas, and a storehouse is just a storehouse, and nothing more. Swami Vivekananda taught us more than sixty years ago to aim, in our education, at the *assimilation of ideas*, and not to be content to be their storehouse. Says he (Lecture on 'The Future of India'; *Complete Works*, Vol. III, p. 302):

'Education is not the amount of information that is put into your brain and runs riot there, undigested, all your life. We must have life-building, man-making, character-making, assimilation of ideas. If you have assimilated five ideas and made them your life and character, you have more education than any man who has got by heart a whole library. *Yathā kharaścandanabhāravāhī bhārasya vettā na tu candanasya*—"The ass carrying its load of sandalwood knows only the weight and not the value of the sandalwood." If education is identical with information, the libraries are the greatest sages in the world, and encyclopaedias are the *Ṛṣis*.'

To carry ideas in the head and not to know their value is to be an ass carrying sandalwood, says Swami Vivekananda, quoting the famous poet Bhartṛhari. As the English saying goes: The spoon does not know the taste of the soup. Our education today, I am afraid, has such a tendency. A student or a citizen in our country feels the weight of knowledge in his head but knows very little of its value. He has studied history but his behaviour does not express its values or its lessons. History has told him that for want of national unity, for want of broad ideas, in the absence of social justice, his country lost its freedom again and again. It has suffered humiliations and oppressions from many

foreign invasions for a thousand years. Having studied all this, he behaves in public and private in ways calculated to jeopardize the freedom and national unity won after decades of struggle. He did not extract from his study an emotional identification with the good and ill fortune of his people so as to make of his life, conduct, and character, a guarantee of his nation's unity, strength, and progress.

### *Man-making and Character-building Education*

The same situation obtains in other fields of study like logic or law, science or civics, philosophy or religion. To study law and behave lawlessly, to study civics and be innocent of the social sense, to study the sciences and be innocent of the scientific outlook and temper, is a travesty of education. Such an education does not impart dynamism to ideas; it does not result in force of character, richness of personality, and efficiency in life and action. These are the product of *digested* and *assimilated* ideas, just as physical efficiency and physical strength are the product of digested and assimilated food. Undigested food becomes poison and an enemy of the body. Similarly, undigested knowledge also becomes poison and an enemy of the mind. Vanity, cleverness, and other similar mental traits are the poisonous fruits of undigested knowledge. Where there is assimilation of knowledge, there can be no vanity; our literature tells us that *vidyā dadāti vinayam*—'knowledge gives humility'. 'When the corn is ripe', says Sri Ramakrishna, 'it bends down; when it is not ripe it stands erect.' When there is ripeness of knowledge in wisdom, man becomes humble; when that is not achieved, vanity and pride reign. Education must help us to gather knowledge and to digest and assimilate it; even a fraction of this digestion gives us immediate strength. The whole nation will feel the pulsations of a new strength and pure resolve if even a little of this assimilative process finds a place in its education. This was the dream and passion of Swami Vivekananda who taught nation-building through man-making.

When we become men in this sense, we shall feel the galvanic touch of the ideas of our philosophy. They will start moving men, and also the world around men. The opening words of this Upaniṣad that God is in everything, or the words of Kṛṣṇa in the Gītā that He, the Lord, resides in the heart of all beings, will no more remain sacred words and pious sentiments, but will enter into

our blood-stream and our nerve-currents, and make us lovers and servants of the God in man, irrespective of caste or creed, race or sex.

Swami Vivekananda awakened India to an awareness of this great national destiny. He preached this vision of human unity through God everywhere, in East and West alike. He felt that the dark night of human separation with its injustices, sorrows, and sufferings was past and that his country was on the threshold of a great era when Vedāntic ideas will be realized in life and society, both within the country as well as without.

India needs the vision of her Vedānta to canalize the energies of her awakening to constructive channels of human service everywhere. The teachings of the Upaniṣads need to be assimilated by her children so that they may become strong to render this service to themselves and to the world. Vivekananda felt that the great ideas of Vedānta which had till now been in the possession of a minority, realized and re-authenticated by a gifted few in every age, should now become the property of every one in every country, as it so adequately answers to the intellectual and spiritual demands of this scientific age. He held that this was India's gift, as physical science was the gift of the West, to the modern world. So far as India is concerned, Vedānta as expounded by Vivekananda is the philosophy that stands sponsor to the highest aspirations of the Indian mind today, both in its spiritual and secular aspects; for modern science, technology, and social thought are but practical Vedānta according to him. Vedānta does not see any irreconcilable opposition between the sacred and the secular, between faith and reason. The assimilation of the spirit of Vedānta and modern science—Vivekananda placed this at the core of his scheme of Indian education. It is thus that we can ensure man's total welfare, worldly as well as spiritual, social as well as trans-social.

### *The Synthesis of All Experience*

We shall now take up verses 9 to 14 of the *Īśā Upaniṣad*, verses which, through hints and suggestions, seek to resolve the opposition between work and worship, between action and mystical contemplation. The language of these verses is obscure. Great commentators of the past have given us explanations of these verses according to their own lights. But in spite of their high standing

in the spiritual and philosophical world of India, not one of these commentaries does adequate justice to the thought of these verses. The commentators themselves, it must be said, were conscious of this fact. They had the additional disadvantage of having had to view these verses against the background of their own special theological standpoints and contemporary doctrinal controversies. But today we are in an advantageous position to study these verses from an independent standpoint in the context of the general theme and temper of the Upaniṣads. Universality is, as we have seen, the characteristic temper of this literature, and human fulfilment its running theme. The loftiness of its thought proceeds from its synthesis of all experience and spans earth and heaven, man and God, time and eternity. Its conception of religion is infinite, taking in every aspect of human life. It did not itself work out all the implications of its vision; the *Gītā*, as we have noted earlier, did this a few centuries later; but its all-embracing vision stood sponsor to every subsequent development and formulation of thought and action in the sphere of human fulfilment.

It is from the standpoint of this broad vision that these six verses have to be studied. Such a study in its fullness is the *Gītā* which, as I said earlier, has the *Īśā Upaniṣad* for its inspiration. The clarification of these six obscure verses will, therefore, become easier if we take the approach of the *Gītā* as our guide. The first three of the six verses read thus:

*Andhaṁ tamaḥ praviśanti ye'vidyāṁ upāsate;*
*Tato bhūya iva te tamo ya u vidyāyāṁ ratāḥ—*

'They enter into blinding darkness who worship *avidyā;* into still greater darkness, as it were, do they enter who delight in *vidyā.*'

*Anyadevāhurvidyayā anyadāhuravidyayā;*
*Iti śuśruma dhīrāṇāṁ ye nastad vicacakṣire—*

'One result, they say, is obtained by *vidyā,* and another result, they say, is obtained by *avidyā;* thus have we heard from the wise ones who explained it to us.'

*Vidyāṁ cāvidyāṁ ca yastad vedobhayaṁ saha;*
*Avidyayā mṛtyuṁ tīrtvā vidyayā amṛtamaśnute—*

'He who knows both *vidyā* and *avidyā* together, overcomes death through *avidyā* and experiences immortality by means of *vidyā.*'

The words *avidyā* and *vidyā* mean, literally, ignorance and knowledge respectively. Literally taken, the verses are confusing. When a man worships *avidyā* or ignorance, says the verse, he enters into blinding darkness. This is understandable. But how can he get into greater darkness if he worships *vidyā*, knowledge? The two words, therefore, cannot be taken in their literal sense. They have to be taken in a special technical sense. Because the next verse says that one result is obtained through *vidyā* and quite a different one by *avidyā*; and the third one concludes by saying that by resorting to *vidyā* and *avidyā* together, one achieves immortality through *vidyā* after overcoming death by means of *avidyā*.

Not only the words *vidyā* and *avidyā*, but also the words *mṛtyu* (death) and *amṛtam* (immortality) are used in a special technical sense. In several Upaniṣads the world of change, both in its unmanifested and manifested states, is designated *mṛtyu*, death. Says the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (I. ii. 1):

*Naireha kiñcanāgra āsīt,*
*mṛtyunaivedamāvṛtamāsīt aśanāyayā;*
*Aśanāyā hi mṛtyuḥ—*

'There was nothing whatsoever here in the beginning. It was covered only by Death which is Hunger (*Hiraṇyagarbha* or Becoming in its initial stage); for Hunger, verily, is death.'

As opposed to this, the changeless reality behind and beyond the world of change is designated *amṛta*. Says the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* again (II. iii. 1):

*Dve vāva brahmaṇo rūpe, mūrtaṁ caivāmūrtaṁ ca, martyaṁ cāmṛtaṁ ca, sthitaṁ ca yacca, sacca tyacca—*

'Brahman (Reality), indeed has two aspects—with form and the formless, mortal and immortal, limited and unlimited, defined and undefined.'

### *The Self and the Not-Self*

The universe of our experience, according to Vedānta, consists of the two categories of the not-Self and the Self. *Yuṣmadasmatpratyayagocara*, in the words of Śaṅkara (Introduction to *Brahma-Sūtra Commentary*). *Vidyā* or knowledge refers to the knowledge of the Self, the changeless reality, the *amṛtam*, while *avidyā* or ignorance refers to the knowledge of the not-Self, the changeful universe, the *martyam*. The Self and the not-Self are not two,

but one. *Ātmaivedaṁ sarvam*—'The Self alone is all this', says the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* (VII. xxv. 2).

Man is aware, since his birth, of only one of these categories, namely, the world of the not-Self. He plunges into this world, and handles it and gets handled by it, till death takes him away. He handles it in himself, in his daily life, in his education, in his science, and in his social pursuits. He builds up structures of knowledge, scientific and philosophical, to explain to himself its nature and mystery. This knowledge, under the best of circumstances, enables him to steer his life-bark in the ocean of existence with a measure of success, and leaves him, under the worst of circumstances, a wreck in its turbulent waters. In either case, whether in success or in failure, he remains baffled by its mystery and ignorant of its true nature. This is what is referred to in the first line of verse nine:

*Andhaṁ tamaḥ praviśanti ye'vidyāṁ upāsate*—

'He enters into blinding darkness who worships *avidyā*.'

The knowledge of the not-Self which man had laboriously built up turns out in the end to be only a form of learned ignorance. It is only 'knowledge of structural form and not knowledge of content' as expressed in the quotation from Eddington given in my last lecture. It is only knowledge of passing shadows. Says Sir James Jeans (*The New Background of Science*, p. 68):

'Physical science set out to study a world of matter and radiation and finds that it cannot describe or picture the nature of either, even to itself. Photons, electrons, and protons have become as meaningless to the physicist as x, y, z are to a child on its first day of learning algebra. The most we hope for at the moment is to discover ways of manipulating x, y, z without knowing what they are, with the result that the advance of knowledge is at present reduced to what Einstein has described as extracting one incomprehensible from another incomprehensible.'

If this is the condition of advanced scientific knowledge, how much more true it must be with regard to ordinary human knowledge!

There are those who let go this world of change, of death, of the not-Self, in search of the Changeless, of the Beyond, of the world of the Self. This is also a legitimate field of search; and because of its being the arena of awareness, it is termed *vidyā*, knowledge, as opposed to the arena of matter or non-awareness,

which is therefore termed *avidyā*, ignorance. But this *vidyā* is also inadequate, apparently more inadequate, says the second line:

*Tato bhūya iva te tamo ya u vidyāyāṁ ratāḥ*—

'Into greater darkness, as it were, do they enter who delight in *vidyā*.'

The word *iva*, meaning 'as it were', implies that it is not an unqualified condemnation of the pursuit of the beyond; neither is the pursuit of *avidyā* condemned for condemnation's sake by the first line; for the pursuit of the Self is the noblest of pursuits; the pursuit of the not-Self, of the world of change, is also a noble one; the tenth verse affirms this by stating that each leads to a distinct result; each has its reward; but that each by itself is incomplete and inadequate. The Upaniṣad knows that a richer harvest of spirituality can be gathered, a broader and richer character and personality can be achieved, by cultivating both the fields of experience, the fields of the Self and the not-Self, which, according to the vision of the Upaniṣads, are fundamentally one: *Sarvaṁ khalu idaṁ brahma*—'All this is verily Brahman' (*Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, III. xiv. 1). And so the eleventh verse says:

'He who knows both *vidyā* and *avidyā* together, overcomes death through *avidyā* and experiences immortality by means of *vidyā*.'

The study of the not-Self or the world of change is science; this study gives man knowledge of the laws that govern the world of change, and the capacity to control and manipulate it in the interest of his development, in the interest of a richer and fuller life for himself. But if this is done in isolation, if this is attempted without reference to his inner world, the world of the Self, the result will be not life and more life, but death and more death. Hence the exhortation to combine it with the knowledge of the Self, the changeless, deathless reality in man. It is this knowledge of the Self that imparts meaning and significance to man's knowledge of the not-Self. Says Śaṅkarācārya:

*Tadātmanā vinirmuktaḥ jagat asatsampadyate*—

'The world of change becomes divested of reality when isolated from the (changeless) Ātman.'

Sri Ramakrishna compared the world of the not-Self to the zero. The zero has no value in itself; we may add zero after zero

to make a figure, but it will have no value. But put the figure 1 behind them; suddenly they become significant; with every additional zero, the figure grows in significance. Similarly, said Sri Ramakrishna, our activities and processes in the world are but a string of zeros by themselves. They are but 'full of sound and fury' in the words of Shakespeare; and they end in smoke. But when viewed against the background of the Ātman, they become significant; they then cease to be fugitive entities and processes; they become real and meaningful. The world thus is unreal in itself; it is a projection of our ignorance, but it is real as the Ātman. Says the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (I. vi. 1):

*Trayaṁ vā idaṁ, nāma rūpaṁ karma—*

'This (universe) indeed consists of three things: name, form, and action.'

After stating this as the nature of the world of our everyday experience, the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* further states that this world of name, form, and action is truth, it is not illusory, but that the Ātman is the Truth of truth (II. i. 20):

*Tasyopaniṣad, satyasya satyamiti; prāṇā vai satyaṁ, teṣām eṣa satyam—*

'Its mystical name is "the Truth of truth". *Prāṇa* (the cosmic energy) is truth; and It is the Truth of that.'

### *Being and Becoming*

The Upaniṣad expounded its vision of the unity of experience, with its message of perfection and life-fulfilment, in its ninth, tenth, and eleventh verses. This was from the approach of the Self and the not-Self. The same vision and message is now conveyed, in the next three verses, from another approach—that of Brahman and the *Jagat* (world of change), of Being and Becoming. Being and Becoming are one; Becoming apart from Being is zero. Being apart from Becoming tends to become remote and nullified. And so the *Īśā Upaniṣad* again exhorts us in its twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth verses to conduct our life in the light of the ever-present unity of both. Says verse twelve:

*Andhaṁ tamaḥ praviśanti ye'saṁbhūtimupāsate;*

*Tato bhūya iva te tamo ya u saṁbhūtyāṁ ratāḥ—*

'Into deep darkness do they enter who worship the *asaṁbhūti* (the world of Becoming as detached from Being). Into still

greater darkness, as it were, do they enter who delight in *saṁbhūti* (pure Being or Brahman).'

The worship of the self-sufficient world is the way of materialism. This is the product of a shallow philosophy. It has its own relevance; but if followed too consistently and too long, it will lead only to darkness and sorrow.

The pursuit of pure Being, similarly, is fraught with dangerous consequences. The '*via negativa*', or the path of *nivṛtti*, as Vedānta terms it, and the path of inaction which it involves, will land all but the sturdiest of seekers on the shores not of Being, but of non-Being, not of life fulfilment, but of life negation. Man has to reckon with the pull of Becoming; it does not cease to exist and act by being simply ignored.

Each of these paths yields a definite result; but it is limited and uncertain, being based on limited and inadequate views of reality. Says the thirteenth verse:

*Anyadevāhuḥ saṁbhavāt anyadāhurasaṁbhavāt;*

*Iti śuśruma dhīrāṇāṁ ye nastat vicacakṣire—*

'One result is obtained by the path of *Saṁbhava* (pure Being), and quite a different one by that of the *Asaṁbhava* (Becoming). Thus have we heard from the wise ones who taught it to us.'
And so the fourteenth verse concludes:

*Saṁbhūtiṁ ca vināśaṁ ca yastat vedobhayaṁ saha;*

*Vināśena mṛtyuṁ tīrtvā saṁbhūtyā amṛtamaśnute—*

'He who knows *saṁbhūti* (Brahman) and *vināśa* (the perishable world of Becoming) both together, overcomes death through *vināśa*, and achieves immortality through *saṁbhūti*.'

The word *vināśa* means destruction, here it means the destructible, that which is subject to destruction—the world of Becoming, of name, form, and action. The entity denoted by the word *vināśa*, occurring in this verse, refers to the same entity denoted by the word *asaṁbhūti*, occurring in verse twelve. This common reference gives the clue to the meaning of the otherwise obscure word *asaṁbhūti*; its obscurity has baffled all commentators. It usually conveys the meaning of non-manifestation; *saṁbhūti* is manifestion; *a-saṁbhūti* is non-manifestation. But in view of *asaṁbhūti* being equated with *vināśa*, *saṁbhūti* must mean that which is

*a-vināśa, non*-destruction, hence pure Being or Brahman. One of the old commentators, Uvaṭācārya, has explained *saṁbhūti* in this sense; he takes it to mean Brahman. Says Yājñavalkya, addressing his wife Maitreyi (*Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, IV.v.14):

*Avināśī vā are'yamātmā anucchittidharmā—*

'This Ātman, my dear, is verily *a-vināśī* (indestructible) and immutable by nature.'

Says also the *Gītā* (II. 17):

*Avināśi tu tadviddhi yena sarvam idaṁ tatam;*

*Vināśamavyayasyāsya na kaścit kartumarhati—*

'That by which all this (universe) is pervaded, know for certain that That is *a-vināśi*, indestructible. None has the power to destroy this Immutable.'

Every one of our old commentators has been compelled to give arbitrary meanings to certain of the key-words in the above six verses to make them intelligible. Yet, as I said earlier, they do not seem to have done adequate justice to the thought of these verses when viewed in the light of the general theme of this great Upaniṣad, or of the Upaniṣads in general. In the exposition which I have ventured to give, the liberties taken with the words are far less. And it fully fits in with the famous proclamation in the opening verse of this Upaniṣad, a proclamation which provided the fundamental theme of all Upaniṣadic thought, namely, the divinity of man and nature, and the inherent spirituality of life.

### *Worldliness and Other-Worldliness*

These verses seek to resolve the opposition between our outer life and our inner life, between the demand for action and the call of contemplation. The end aimed at is perfection. The human mind has the tendency to oscillate between extremes. The worldly man, after drinking the world to its dregs, experiences ennui; he then curses the world and becomes other-worldly. It is not philosophy that is found as a guide in such cases, but the indisciplined impulses and moods of man. He could as well have used his life in the world to pursue truth and life excellence; but he then had cursed other-worldliness and the inner life; and now he proceeds to curse worldliness. In such a context, God and the world will be always

at loggerheads. Says Swami Vivekananda in his lecture on the theme of the *Īśā Upaniṣad*, delivered in London in 1896 ('God in Everything', *Complete Works*, Vol. II, Ninth Edition, p. 150):

'If a man plunges headlong into foolish luxuries of the world without knowing the truth, he has missed his footing, he cannot reach the goal. And if a man curses the world, goes into a forest, mortifies his flesh, and kills himself little by little, by starvation, makes his heart a barren waste, kills out all feeling, and becomes harsh, stern, and dried up, that man also has missed the way. These are the two extremes, the two mistakes at either end. Both have lost the way, both have missed the goal.'

And referring to the corrective applied by this Upaniṣad, he continues (*ibid.*):

'So work, says Vedānta, putting God in everything, and knowing Him to be in everything. Work incessantly, holding life as something deified, as God Himself.... God is in everything, where else shall we go to find Him? He is already in every work, in every thought, in every feeling. Thus knowing, we must work, this is the only way, there is no other.... We have seen how false desires are the cause of all the misery and evil we suffer, but when they are thus deified, purified, through God, they bring no evil, they bring no misery. Those who have not learnt this secret will have to live in a demoniacal world until they discover it. Many do not know what an infinite mine of bliss is in them, around them, everywhere; they have not yet discovered it. What is a demoniacal world? Vedānta says, Ignorance.'

*Samyagjñāna or The Philosophy of Total Vision*

*Vidyā* and *avidyā*, the Self and the not-Self, as well as *sambhūti* and *asambhūti*, Brahman and the world, are basically one, not two. *Avidyā* affirms the world as a self-sufficient reality. *Vidyā* affirms God as the Other, as a far away reality. When true knowledge arises, says this Upaniṣad, this opposition is overcome.

This true knowledge involves comprehension of the total Reality, of the truth of both Being and Becoming. Philosophic knowledge or vision cannot be complete if it ignores or neglects any aspect of knowledge or experience. Philosophy is the synthesis of all knowledge and experience, according to the Upaniṣads and according also to modern thought. *Brahmavidyā*, philosophy, is *sarvavidyāpratiṣṭhā*, the basis and support of all knowledge, says the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* (I. i. 1). All knowledge, according to that Upaniṣad, can be divided into two distinct categories—the *aparā*,

the lower, and the *parā*, the higher. It boldly relegates all sciences, arts, theologies, and even the holy scriptures of religions, including the Vedas, to the *aparā* category. And that is *parā*, it says, *yayā tadakṣaram adhigamyate*—'by which the imperishable Reality is realized.' (*Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*, I.i.5). The vision of the Totality therefore must include the vision of the *parā* and *aparā* aspects of Reality. If *brahmavidyā*, philosophy, is the *pratiṣṭhā*, support, of *sarvavidyā*, totality of knowledge, it must be a synthesis of both the *aparā* and the *parā* forms of knowledge.

This is endorsed by the *Gītā* in its statement that *jñāna*, philosophy, is the synthesis of the knowledge of the not-Self and the Self (XIII.2):

*Kṣetrakṣetrajñayor jñānaṁ yat tat jñānaṁ mataṁ mama.*

'Philosophy is the interpretation of knowledge through the synthesis of all the sciences', says Durant Drake.

'Philosophy is the survey of all the sciences with the special object of their harmony and of their completion. It brings to this task not only the evidence of the separate sciences but also its own special appeal to concrete experience', says A.N. Whitehead.

'The object of philosophy is to take over the results of the various sciences, to add to them the results of the various religious and ethical experiences of mankind, and then to reflect upon the whole', says C.D. Broad.

'Philosophy is the comprehensive sum total of all true knowledge. The sciences do not exist outside and by the side of it; they are parts of it', says Paulsen.

'Philosophy takes all knowledge for its province', says Bacon.

The synthesis of the knowledge of the not-Self, *avidyā*, which is positive science, with that of the Self, *vidyā*, which is the science of religion, will give us true philosophy, which is knowledge flowering into vision and maturing into wisdom.

This is *pūrṇajñāna*, fullness of knowledge, according to Vedānta. It is *vijñāna*, comprehensive knowledge, as termed by Sri Ramakrishna. The *Gītā* (IX. 1) speaks of this as *jñānaṁ vijñāna-sahitam*—'*jñāna* coupled with *vijñāna*', and proclaims this as the summit of spiritual achievement (VII.19):

*Bahūnāṁ janmanāṁ ante jñānavān māṁ prapadyate;*
*Vāsudevaḥ sarvam iti sa mahātmā sudurlabhaḥ—*

'At the end of many births, the wise man attains Me with the realization that all this (universe) is *Vāsudeva* (the indwelling Self); such a great-souled one is rare to come across.'

*The Nitya and the Līlā*

The Ātman or Brahman is the changeless Reality; It is termed *Nitya*, the Eternal, in Vedānta. The relative world when viewed in the light of this *Nitya* is termed *Līlā*, God's cosmic play. And we then get the equation: the *Nitya* and the *Līlā* are one. It is also expressed in another way: Brahman and Śakti, Being and Its power of Becoming, are one. Some of the most profound utterances of Sri Ramakrishna have this for their theme (*The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, New York Edition, 1942, p. 257):

'A man should reach the *Nitya*, the Absolute, by following the trail of the *Līlā*, the Relative. It is like reaching the roof by the stairs. After realizing the Absolute, he should climb down to the Relative and live on that plane in the company of devotees, charging his mind with the love of God. This is my final and most mature opinion.'

Again (*ibid.*, pp. 477-78):

'If you accept the *Nitya*, you must also accept the *Līlā*. It is the process of negation and affirmation. You realize the *Nitya* by negating the *Līlā*. Then you affirm the *Līlā*, seeing in it the manifestation of the *Nitya*. One attains this state after realizing Reality in both aspects: Personal and Impersonal. The Personal is the embodiment of *Cit*, Consciousness; and the Impersonal is the Indivisible *Saccidānanda*, Existence-Knowledge-Bliss.

'Brahman alone has become everything. Therefore to the *vijñānī* this world is a "mansion of mirth." But to the *jñānī* it is a framework of illusion.'

This is the profound vision that is expressed in the opening Peace chant of this Upaniṣad which we studied in the second discourse:

'That is the Full; This is the Full. From the Full has come the Full. The Full remains the Full, even after the Full has come out of the Full.'

*Perfection Here and Now*

The vision of the unity of the One and the many has tremendous consequences for the life and thought and work of man. It alone ensures man's all-sided growth, makes for the development of his head and heart side by side, and assures the attainment of perfection *here* and *now*. It unifies the paths of *Jñāna*, knowledge, *Karma*, work, and *Bhakti*, love, and makes for a perfect character. The *Gītā* proclaims this message as its central theme; it finds a unique expression in verse eighteen of its fourth chapter:

*Karmaṇyakarma yaḥ paśyet akarmaṇi ca karma yaḥ;*
*Sa buddhimān manuṣyeṣu sa yuktaḥ kṛtsnakarmakṛt—*

'He who sees inaction in action, and action in inaction, he is wise among men, he is a *yogi*, and a doer of all action.'

The story of Sri Ramakrishna's imparting of this total vision of God to his beloved young disciple Naren, as Vivekananda was known in his pre-monastic life, is a fascinating episode. The Master had been educating his disciple in this total vision ever since they first met four years before. Naren had already realized the philosophical significance of *Śakti* or the personal aspect of God, as inseparable from Brahman, the impersonal Absolute. The episode registering this growth in Naren's comprehension had taken place two years earlier, and the Master had been highly pleased then.

The Master was suffering from the fatal disease of throat cancer; hardly a few months of earthly life remained for him. The intense suffering on the plane of the body was matched by an unparalleled intensity of divine moods and unceasing spiritual ministrations to disciples and devotees. Young Naren was consumed with the longing for the vision of God. Quoting a letter from Swami Sivananda, a fellow disciple of Vivekananda, dated 7 December 1927, Romain Rolland writes about this memorable episode thus (*Life of Ramakrishna*, Fourth Impression, p. 268):

'One day, Swami Sivananda told me, he was present in the garden of Cossipore, near Calcutta, when Naren really attained this state. "Seeing him unconscious, his body as cold as that of a corpse, we ran in great agitation to the Master and told him what had happened. The Master showed no anxiety; he merely smiled and said: 'Very well!' and then relapsed into silence. Naren returned to outward consciousness and came to the Master. The Master said to him: 'Well, now do you understand? This (the highest

realization) will henceforth remain under lock and key. You have the Mother's work to do. When it is finished, She will undo the lock.' Naren replied: 'Master, I was happy in *samādhi*. In my infinite joy, I had forgotten the world. I beseech you to let me remain in that state!' 'For shame!' cried the Master. 'How can you ask such things? I thought you were a vast receptacle of life, and here you wish to stay absorbed in personal joy like an ordinary man! ...This realization will become so natural to you, by the grace of the Mother, that in your normal state you will realize the one Divinity in all beings; you will do great things in the world; you will bring spiritual consciousness to men, and assuage the misery of the humble and the poor'."

After the passing away of his Master, Vivekananda proclaimed the message of this total vision, with its practical implications, in both East and West. He developed out of it a dynamic and broad spirituality comprehensive of every facet of life and activity. In her 'Introduction' to *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Sister Nivedita, the English disciple of Vivekananda, brings out in a powerful utterance the practical implications of her Master's philosophy. After referring to his all-inclusive Advaitic vision, she continues:

'It is this which adds its crowning significance to our Master's life, for here he becomes the meeting-point, not only of East and West, but also of past and future. If the many and the One be indeed the same Reality, then it is not all modes of worship alone, but equally all modes of work, all modes of struggle, all modes of creation, which are paths of realization. No distinction, henceforth, between sacred and secular. To labour is to pray. To conquer is to renounce. Life is itself religion. To have and to hold is as stern a trust as to quit and to avoid.'

This brief paragraph can well stand as a fine exposition of the meaning and implications of these six verses of the *Īśā Upaniṣad*, nay of the *Īśā Upaniṣad* as a whole.

SIX

# ĪŚĀ UPANIṢAD—5

When discussing verses nine to fourteen of the *Īśā Upaniṣad* which expound a philosophy of *pūrṇajñāna*, total Vision, leading to the unity of mysticism and action, I pointed out that, keeping in view the *Weltanschauung* or world-view of this Upaniṣad, the *Bhagavad-Gītā* had later developed a complete philosophy of life and action in which the demands of outward action were reconciled with those of inward contemplation. The Upaniṣad told us that to concentrate our attention only on the external world, and endeavour to find our way in this world of the not-Self, and neglect the inner world of the Ātman in the process, was to 'enter into blinding darkness'; but that, on the other hand, to neglect this world which we see and touch and handle, and become involved only in a mystical world within, was to 'enter into still greater darkness, as it were'. What is needed, says the Upaniṣad, is to understand that Reality is one, untouched by limitations such as of outer and inner, of the not-Self and the Self, of the many and the One, and to conduct our life in the light of this all-embracing knowledge.

This knowledge will help us to overcome death by intelligent handling of this world of death, death that acts upon us continually in the form of time, and achieve immortality through the knowledge of ourselves as the eternal and ever-present Ātman.

### *Strength Through Education*

With the strength arising from this total vision, we achieve total life-efficiency—efficiency in external life and action as well as efficiency in internal thought and contemplation. When a man delights in his inner life, in the world 'beyond', says the Upaniṣad, neglecting the environment of the outer world in which his life is cast, he will 'enter into still greater darkness, as it were'.

The history of India in recent centuries well illustrates the truth of this statement. We became other-worldly in our attitudes, the whole country was seized with several types of what Vivekananda termed 'weakening mysticisms', and totally neglected the

virtues and graces of life in society. Totally overlooked was the need to educate the nation in political vision and social efficiency. There was an over-emphasis on negative virtues and on individual salvation. *The food meant only for vigorous natures became poison for the multitudes.* In course of time, the entire body-politic became weakened and eventually succumbed to foreign invasions. And for a few centuries the whole country lay prostrate in political subjection and cultural stagnation.

Summing up the lessons of India's political history, Will Durant writes in the section on India in *Our Oriental Heritage* (*The Story of Civilization*, Part I. p. 463):

'Weakened by division, it succumbed to invaders; impoverished by invaders, it lost all power of resistance, and took refuge in supernatural consolations; it argued that both mastery and slavery were superficial delusions, and concluded that freedom of the body or the nation was hardly worth defending in so brief a life. The bitter lesson that may be drawn from this tragedy is that eternal vigilance is the price of civilization.'

This is clear vindication of the truth of the Upaniṣadic remark that if *avidyā*, worldliness, leads to deep darkness, *vidyā*, other-worldliness, may lead to still deeper darkness. The world does not cease to exist merely by shutting our eyes to it. Negation of worldliness is quite different from negation of the world. The latter is the way of exclusively mystical other-worldly religions; and it leads to weakness and death. The former is the way of true philosophy; and it leads to life and more life and to total fulfilment in the end. This is the message conveyed by this Upaniṣad and by the *Gītā*.

Renunciation is the key-note in the mystical other-worldly religions as well as in the religion of the *Īśā Upaniṣad* and the *Gītā*. In the former, it is negative and weakening for all but the purest and stoutest hearts, while in the latter, it is an educational process, positive and strengthening, leading to the manifestation of the divine within, and to the broadening and deepening of character.

Analyzing this weakening of India's body-politic through long neglect of what the Upaniṣad terms the *avidyā* aspect of Reality, Swami Vivekananda writes (*Letters, Complete Works*, Vol. V, p. 48):

'The present Hindu society is organized only for spiritual men, and hopelessly crushes out everybody else. Why? Where should

they go who want to enjoy the world a little with its frivolities? Just as our religion takes in all, so should our society. This is to be worked out by first understanding the true principles of our religion, and then applying them to society. This is the slow but sure work to be done.'

In the course of a conversation on the same theme with Sister Nivedita, Vivekananda remarked (Nivedita: *The Master As I Saw Him*, p. 203):

'Hitherto the great fault of our Indian religion has lain in its knowing only two words—renunciation and *mukti* (spiritual emancipation). Only *mukti* here! Nothing for the householder!

'But these are the very people whom I want to help. For are not all souls of the same quality? Is not the goal of all the same?

'And so strength must come to the nation through education.'

In a previous lecture I had quoted the following stirring words of Sister Nivedita in her 'Introduction' to *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* which bears reproduction in this context:

'If the many and the One be indeed the same Reality, then it is not all modes of worship alone, but equally all modes of work, all modes of struggle, all modes of creation, which are paths of realization. No distinction, henceforth, between sacred and secular. To labour is to pray. To conquer is to renounce. Life is itself religion. To have and to hold is as stern a trust as to quit and to avoid.'

### *Work Is Worship*

This is the corollary of the philosophy of total vision. Work is worship. Inner and outer, the Self and the not-Self, are distinctions helpful in the analysis and study of experience, provided they are understood as provisional. In the final estimate they have to be transcended. 'Reality is undivided in things apparently divided', says the *Gītā* (XIII. 16):

*Avibhaktaṁ ca bhūteṣu vibhaktamiva ca sthitam.*

The *Mahānārāyaṇa Upaniṣad* says (XIII. 5):

*Antaḥ bahiśca tat sarvaṁ vyāpya nārāyaṇaḥ sthitaḥ*—

'Nārāyaṇa (the indwelling Divine), exists pervading all things, externally as well as internally.'

We have already seen the proclamation of the *Īśā Upaniṣad*, in its very opening verse, that the divine Reality envelopes everything in this changing universe:

*Īśāvāsyam idaṁ sarvaṁ yatkiñca jagatyāṁ jagat.*

Based on this total vision, this Upaniṣad gives its due place to *avidyā* or *aparā vidyā*, as well as to *vidyā* or *parā vidyā*. The spiritual education of man must take him from the *aparā* to the *parā* and back again to the *aparā* which now would appear to him not as enveloped in blinding darkness but as suffused with divine light. It is then that work becomes truly worship. The discipline of the *aparā* fits man for the pursuit of the *parā*. Without it, that pursuit may as well become a gamble. This warning is uttered by the *Gītā* as well (III.4).

*Na karmaṇām anāraṁbhāt naiṣkarmyaṁ puruṣośnute;*

*Na ca sannyasanādeva siddhiṁ samadhigacchati—*

'Man does not achieve the state of actionlessness by merely abstaining from action; nor by mere renouncing of actions does he attain spiritual perfection.'

Work in the world is a school of spiritual education for man. If work is performed merely for worldly gain, it piles up only bondages for him. On the other hand, the pursuit of *vidyā*, the pursuit of the knowledge of the Self, becomes the pursuit of the ego and therefore of denser darkness, when it is not backed by purity and strength of character arising from disciplined action in the world of *avidyā*. A view similar to this of the Upaniṣad is also expressed by Swami Vivekananda in a moving passage in his lecture on 'Vedānta in Its Application to Indian Life' (*Complete Works*, Vol. III, Eighth Edition, p. 247):

'Bring all light into the world; light, bring light! Let light come unto every one; the task will not be finished till every one has reached the Lord. Bring light to the poor, and bring more light to the rich, for they require it more than the poor; bring light to the ignorant, and more light to the educated, for the vanities of the education of our time are tremendous! Thus bring light to all and leave the rest unto the Lord.'

Vivekananda speaks of the need to bring more light to the educated because education today makes for vanity and the fattening of the ego, and not for illumination of the heart. If the uneducated are in need of light, the educated are in more need of it. This is in tune with the language and sentiment of the *Īśā Upaniṣad*. If we lose our way in the world of action, it is a matter of pity. But if, in the name of contemplation, we become self-centred and callous, it is a matter of greater pity, as it involves the loss of

both the not-Self and the Self; we fail to achieve character as well as vision. The *Gītā* teaches that true spirituality confers on man all-round efficiency—efficiency in the field of action, and efficiency in the field of thought and contemplation. *This total efficiency is the product of a total vision of Reality.* This teaching the *Gītā* derived from the Upaniṣads and developed into the science and art of a comprehensive spirituality—*brahmavidyāntargata yoga-śāstra.*

### *Dharma and Amṛta*

When man's life and action in the world are lit up by even a hazy awareness of the ever-present light of the Ātman, the one Self in all, he achieves social ethics, resulting in character efficiency in the individual and general welfare in society. This is the achievement of true manliness by man, the highest measure of his social personality. This is the concept of man in ancient Greek and modern western thought. But the world in which he is involved and of which he is a part is a world of change, of death. Something in him craves for the vision of the Eternal, of the Deathless, the intimations of which he has occasionally received even in his struggles in the world of change and death. This craving and its satisfaction is the true meaning of religion; it is man's reaching out to the Eternal and the Holy, and the realization by him of deathlessness, immortality.

This is the concept of man, of the height of human excellence, in all mystical faiths which expound some message of salvation. Such salvation is other-worldly and to be experienced only after death. The Upaniṣads and the *Gītā* term the former achievement *dharma* and the latter *amṛta*; they are the products respectively of *pravṛtti*, action, or rather, out-going action, and of *nivṛtti*, inaction, or rather inward-directed action. The first gives *abhyudaya*, social welfare, through the efficient control and manipulation of the physical, politico-economic, and social environment of the individual, while the second ensures *niḥśreyasa*, spiritual freedom, through an equally efficient control and manipulation of the world of the inner life.

These two are represented in the modern world by the positivistic or secular, and by the transcendental or religious attitudes, outlooks, and programmes respectively. These two have been in a relation of perpetual conflict with each other in almost every field

of human endeavour, exposing thus their individual inadequacy arising from a partial view of Reality. The *Īśā Upaniṣad* refers to this inadequacy in their outlooks, methods, and results in verses nine to fourteen, as we have already seen. He goes into deep darkness who worships *avidyā*, Reality as conceived by secular and positivistic thought. Into still greater darkness, as it were, does he enter who delights in *vidyā*, Reality as other-worldly and transcendental, as conceived in religious thought. Each has its distinct reward which, by itself, does not lead to total life-fulfilment, said the Upaniṣad and proceeded, in verses eleven and fourteen, to expound its own message of complete life-fulfilment flowing from the total vision of Reality enunciated in its 'Peace' invocation and in its opening verse.

Vedānta, as the philosophy and religion of the Upaniṣads is known, enshrines this total vision and upholds this comprehensive spirituality. In virtue of this, it has received the name of *Sanātana Dharma*, Eternal Religion, or Perennial Philosophy as Aldous Huxley has translated it. The *Sanātana Dharma* in its wholeness is a synthesis of what the *Īśā Upaniṣad* calls *vidyā* and *avidyā*. That this is its unique feature is clearly expressed by Śaṅkarācārya in the very opening paragraph of his beautiful commentary on the *Gītā*:

*Dvividho hi vedokto dharmaḥ, pravṛttilakṣaṇo nivṛttilakṣaṇaśca jagataḥ sthitikāraṇam, prāṇināṁ sākṣād abhyudayaniḥśreyasahetuḥ*—

'Twofold, verily, is the *dharma* as taught by the Vedas, one characterized by *pravṛtti*, action (or, rather, out-going action), and the other characterized by *nivṛtti*, inaction (or, rather, inward-directed action), both together constituting the stabilizing factor of the world, and the true cause of the *abhyudaya* (worldly welfare) and *niḥśreyasa* (spiritual freedom) of all beings.'

This comprehensiveness is the special quality of the message which the world gets from what *Sanātana Dharma* calls its *pūrṇa avatāras*, full incarnations of God, among whom Kṛṣṇa stands as the foremost. Says the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* (I. iii. 28):

*Ete cāṁśakalāḥ puṁsaḥ*
*kṛṣṇastu bhagavān svayam*—

'Other incarnations were but parts of the Lord, but He, Kṛṣṇa, was the Lord Himself.'

His message is both *dharmya* and *amṛta*, capable of ensuring collective social welfare and the realization by the individual of his immortal divine nature, as defined by Himself in the *Gītā* (XII. 20).

This is also the description that Swami Vivekananda gives of the scope of the mission of his Master, Sri Ramakrishna:

*Ātmano mokṣārtham jagaddhitāya ca*—

'For the spiritual freedom of oneself and the general welfare of the world.'

Kṛṣṇa refers to his teaching as *jñāna*, philosophy in the true sense of the term, where all knowledge is unified in wisdom. And this wisdom is realizable not in a post-mortem existence but in life itself, by understanding and accepting life as an educational process for the manifestation of the Divine within (*Gītā*: IX. 2):

*Rājavidyā rājaguhyam pavitram idam uttamam;*
*Pratyakṣāvagamam dharmyam suṣukham kartum avyayam*—

'The king of sciences (being the science of sciences), the king among all mysteries (being the mystery that clears up all other mysteries), the most purifying among disciplines (which is the unique quality of wisdom), *capable of direct demonstration in experience*, leading to general social welfare, easy of achievement (being a converging educational process), and imperishable in its results.'

## *The Synthesis of Character and Vision*

The philosophy of total vision thus synthesizes action and contemplation, the secular and the sacred, reason and faith, the human and the divine. The *Gītā* sings the glory of this sweeping vision and its blessing for man in its last verse (XVIII. 78):

*Yatra yogeśvaraḥ kṛṣṇo yatra pārtho dhanurdharaḥ;*
*Tatra śrīrvijayobhūtirdhruvā nītirmatirmama*—

'Where there is Kṛṣṇa, the master of *yoga*, and where there is Arjuna, the wielder of the bow, there, in my view, shall fortune, victory, and general prosperity be, as also unwavering justice and moral awareness.'

Kṛṣṇa, the master of *yoga*, represents the height of spiritual vision, the master of the *vidyā* of the *Īśā Upaniṣad*. Arjuna, the wielder of the bow, represents the man of action and endeavour,

the master of the *avidyā* of the *Īśā Upaniṣad*, the intensely practical man. When these two spiritual forces combine in a character or in a society, when lofty vision combines with intense practicality—*vidyāṁ cāvidyāṁ ca yastad vedobhayaṁ saha*, as the *Īśā Upaniṣad* puts it—there, in that character, in that society, says the *Gītā*, there shall be the full manifestation of *śrī*, fortune, *vijaya*, victory, *bhūti*, general welfare, and *dhruvā nīti*, unwavering justice and morality.

*Śrī*, wealth, is the product of intelligent labour; it comes from the efficient yoking of knowledge to productive enterprise; and it does not come by any other means, magical or mystical. Pure science is knowledge, *lucifera;* when it flows into the applied field of invention and discovery and develops technological efficiency, it becomes wealth and power, *fructifera*. This is the only source of material wealth for man, and of his freedom from want and fear in the external world. But freedom from want and fear in the external field of life does not constitute the totality of his welfare. Disintegration, or want of integration, in his inner life will turn his external successes into defeats. Hence to make his *śrī*, wealth, flow into true *vijaya*, victory, he must take the help of the science and technique of religion in order to obtain knowledge and mastery of his inner environment; thus only can he achieve total victory over want and fear. This is the true welfare of man, *paraṁśreyaḥ*. And a society of such men and women will be a society where justice and moral elevation, *dhruvā nīti*, will reign supreme and steady. That is the testament of the *Gītā*.

Man needs the combination, in his character, of *yoga*, or the transcendental vision of Kṛṣṇa, and the Promethean fire of Arjuna. In the *Mahābhārata* war, Kṛṣṇa did not do any fighting; he was only the unarmed charioteer of Arjuna. Arjuna was the fighter, the man of action, in the battle-field. But that action of Arjuna had the strength of Kṛṣṇa's vision behind it. That made it not the blind, self-cancelling, inefficient action of the ego, but the steady, purposeful, and efficient action of the illumined mind, of the *buddhi*. Action becomes a snare and a defeat for man when it does not draw nourishment from his true Self, which is the Self of all. Action illumined by the knowledge of the Self becomes itself illumination, and ceases to be mere action. Work *becomes* worship. All true action finds its consummation in illumination, says the *Gītā* (IV. 33). This combination of vision and action is what the

*Gītā* teaches, through which man achieves a double efficiency, namely, practical efficiency by which he becomes a productive unit of society and enhances its life and welfare, and spiritual, inward, efficiency by which he achieves the awareness of his immortal divine nature: '*Avidyayā mṛtyuṁ tīrtvā vidyayā amṛtam aśnute*, as the eleventh verse of the *Īśā Upaniṣad* told us.

This is the message which our country, nay, the whole world, needs very urgently today. These beautiful verses of the *Īśā Upaniṣad*, though written ages ago, breathe the spirit of the universal and human, and bring to us the message of a comprehensive spirituality capable of energizing and illumining every aspect of human life, every field of human endeavour. They summon us to a converging life-endeavour to develop an all-sided character, broad as the skies and deep as the ocean. One-sidedness in character and interests has been the bane of our country; it has, in fact, been the bane of the whole world. One developed his emotions, another developed his intellect, and a third his practical bent. Each left a vast segment of the field of his life uncultivated, allowed it to lie fallow, and thus reaped only a marginal character-harvest. The Upaniṣads and the *Gītā* hold out to man today the spiritual message and its technical know-how for an intensive and extensive cultivation of his life, by which he may achieve the total enrichment of his character and personality.

Sri Ramakrishna did not like one-sidedness in people. He appreciated very much the all-sidedness of his young disciple, Narendra (Swami Vivekananda) and held him up as an example before his other disciples. This is the meaning of true education in which science and religion complement each other. It is 'the manifestation of the perfection already in man', as Swami Vivekananda defined it. It is to this perfection that spiritual teachers invite us. 'Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect', says Jesus Christ (Matthew v. 48).

### *Prayer for Divine Revelation*

The concluding four verses of the *Īśā Upaniṣad*, verses fifteen to eighteen, to which we now turn, give us a glimpse into the mind of a spiritual seeker of the Vedic age who is nearing the end of his life. He has lived a life of goodness; he has striven hard to realize the truth; he has struggled earnestly to develop his spiritual awareness; now the time has come for him to quit his

body, to quit his psycho-physical organism which had served him as a good instrument for the realization of truth. It has now become worn out and jaded, and unfit for life's purposes, whether for the pursuit of pleasure or for the pursuit of truth and wisdom. He is expecting its dissolution any moment.

What is the frame of mind of such a seeker? What is the nature and scope of the thoughts that fill his mind at that critical time? How does a spiritual seeker, who has striven earnestly and advanced in the spiritual path, but who has not yet realized the highest truth of the fullness of being as expounded in the previous verses, face death? We get an answer to these questions from these four verses.

He thinks within himself: I have not achieved perfection, the fullness of being; I have not achieved the realization of the Ātman, my true Self, which is the Self of all, and the state of *jīvanmukti*, liberation *in* life, which such realization involves. But I have led a good life, a moral life; and I have meditated earnestly on the mystery of truth and existence; I have tried to achieve awareness of my spiritual nature and its kinship with the World-Spirit, and through it, with all that exists.

He now addresses, in verses fifteen and sixteen, that World Spirit symbolized externally by the sun:

*Hiraṇmayena pātreṇa satyasyāpihitaṁ mukham;*
*Tat tvaṁ pūṣan apāvṛṇu satyadharmāya dṛṣṭaye—*

'By the lid of the golden orb
is the face of Truth hidden;
Please remove it, O Thou, Nourisher of the world,
so that I may see Thee—
I who am devoted to Truth.'

*Pūṣannekarṣe yamasūryaprājāpatya*
*vyūha raśmīn samūha;*
*Tejo yat te rūpaṁ kalyāṇatamaṁ tat te paśyāmi;*
*yo'sāvasau puruṣaḥ so'hamasmi—*

'O Nourisher, O lonely Courser
of the heavens, O Regulator,
O Sun, thou offspring of Prajāpati,
remove Thy rays, gather up Thy effulgence,

So that I may see that which is
Thy most auspicious effulgence,
The Person that is in Thee, That am I.'

The ancient Vedic thinkers of India recognized the sun as the mother of all energy in the solar system. He is *pūṣan*, the nourisher, and *yama*, the controller and regulator of all the events and processes of the solar system—physical, organic, and even mental. This is echoed in the conclusions of modern science on the subject. Says Thomas R. Henry in his article on 'The Smitsonian Institution' (*The National Geographic Magazine*, September 1948):

'The sun is the great mother. All life on earth might be considered as transient materialization of the exhaustless floods of radiance which she pours on the planet's surface. This enables green plants to synthesize sugars and starches from water in the soil and from carbondioxide gas in the atmosphere, thus making possible all other forms of life on earth by producing the essential foods. We eat sunshine in sugar, bread, and meat, burn sunshine of millions of years ago in coal and oil, wear sunshine in wool and cotton. Sunshine makes the wind and the rain, the summers and winters of years and of ages. Inextricably interwoven are the threads of life and light.'

*Reality and Its Symbol*

The Vedic thinkers concluded from this that if there is a God in the universe, it is the sun. What god or gods imagined by the mind of man can compare in glory and majesty with this all-nourishing and all-controlling and visible entity in the sky, the source of all light and life in this world? So they invoked the visible sun as God and worshipped it. The scientific mind of today, which finds no place in its scheme of things for any of the gods of the so-called monotheistic religions, will consider this conclusion of the Vedic thinkers highly sensible and practical. But to these Vedic thinkers, who were inspired by a passion for truth and an untiring spirit of free inquiry, and who never sought for a mere cosy belief on which finally to rest their tired minds and hearts, this was but a first step.

Further steps steadily followed which revealed subtler and subtler depths of the gross surface reality of man and nature, the reality of the invisible behind the visible. They developed more and more spiritual ideas about man which resulted in the formulation of their ideas of God in more and more spiritual terms. There

was an evolution of man and there was a corresponding evolution of God; or, more correctly speaking, the evolution in their conceptions of man resulted in a corresponding evolution in their conceptions of God. They saw man as a spiritual principle of which the body and mind are but temporary limitations; and from this angle of vision, their God, the sun, also appeared to them as an all-pervading spiritual principle of which the visible sun in the sky was but a temporary limitation; it was but a symbol. As in the case of the physical man and the physical sun, they discovered an intimate kinship also between the spiritual principle in man and the spiritual principle in the sun.

They then took the next great step when they recognized the spiritual principle in the sun to be but an aspect of the supreme spiritual principle in the cosmos. This is the famous Vedic concept of Brahman, the spiritual Absolute, which is the origin, sustenance, and dissolution of the whole universe. Says the *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa* (III. xii. 9:7):

*Yena sūryastapati tejasā iddhaḥ—*

'That (Brahman) kindled by whose energy the sun shines.'

Of this supreme spiritual principle, which is beyond man's speech and thought and which yet is the illuminer of all his speech and thought, they still treated the sun as the best symbol; but *only as a symbol*. This is the vision that finds embodiment in the greatest Vedic prayer, the *Gāyatrī*:

*Om, bhū, bhuvaḥ, suvaḥ!*
*Tat savituravareṇyam*
*bhargo devasya dhīmahi;*
*Dhiyo yo naḥ pracodayāt—*

'*Om*, this world, the higher world, and the highest world!
That Sun, the adorable One,
On the glory of that luminous One we meditate;
May He endow us with pure intelligence!'

This is the spiritual background of the sentiments of these two verses of the *Īśā Upaniṣad*. The devotee had been engaged in life-long worship of the sun as the symbol of the cosmic Person. He has not been able to realize the thing symbolized and discard the symbol; he has not yet been able to worship his God 'in spirit and in truth'. He has now come to the end of his days in his physical body; only a few moments more are left. He now concen-

trates his mind, lifts it up in prayer above the pains and aches of the dying body, and implores, in verse fifteen, the object of his life-long adoration to reveal His true form to him:

*Hiraṇmayena pātreṇa satyasyāpihitaṁ mukham*—

'The face of truth is hidden by a golden lid (the golden orb of the sun),' says he, and adds:

*Tat tvaṁ pūṣan apāvṛṇu satyadharmāya dṛṣṭaye*—

'That attractive orb of Thine, O Sun, please remove, so that I may see Thy true form, I who am devoted to Truth.'

I am not satisfied with appearances, I am not interested in Thy golden orb. I know that there is a truth hidden behind that golden orb; there is the true sun, the cosmic spiritual Person, behind the visible sun, and I want to see Him and realize my kinship with Him, says the devotee. The expression 'golden orb' represents the attractive physical aspects of things. I have been seeing the perishable beauty of the external aspects of things, including that of the sun, all my life; I now want to see the imperishable beauty that lies in the depth of things. The external beauty of the sun is but a symbol of the spiritual beauty of its true form. Deign to reveal Thy true form to me, Thy cosmic spiritual form. I am a *satyadharmā*—'Truth and its quest is my *dharma*, my religion, my passion.'

Addressing the sun, he says again in verse 16:

*Pūṣan*, 'Nourisher'; *ekarṣe*, 'Thou lonely Courser of the sky'; the sun courses through the heavens alone, without a companion. *Yama*, 'the regulator of all'; it is the sun that regulates and controls all the activities and processes within the solar system; the most microcosmic and the most macrocosmic processes within the solar system are governed by the sun; *sūrya*, 'O Sun'; *prājāpatya*, 'the son of Prajāpati, the 'Father of all'; *vyūha raśmīn*, 'remove Thy rays'; *samūha*, 'gather up' (Thy effulgence). *Tejo yat te rūpaṁ kalyāṇatamaṁ tat te paśyāmi*—'so that I may see the most auspicious effulgence that is truly Thy form'. I want to see that, and not this physical appearance of yours. The physical sun I have seen all my life. I want now to see what is the spiritual reality behind the physical sun.

In our daily life we see the physical realities of men and things around us; we hardly develop the capacity to go beyond the phys-

ical to the spiritual. In the world we constantly jostle against each other physically, but rarely enter into each other, even mentally. The more civilized a society the more is this physical jostling and the less the capacity to enter into each other, to dig our affections into each other. The famous Norwegian arctic explorer Fridtjof Nansen referred to modern cities in our civilization as places 'where men incessantly rub against each other until they become round smooth ciphers'. Philosophy tells us that man is not exhausted in his visible physical form and dimension, that he has an interior depth to him, invisible and yet more real than the former. If our physical existence fails to lead to an awareness of this interior depth in ourselves and in everything else in nature, then that existence is infructuous.

The seeker, therefore, seeks to probe into the truth behind the sun and behind himself. He feels that the effulgence of the familiar sun is nothing compared to the effulgence of the spiritual reality that lies hidden in its depths. If the external effulgence is *kalyāṇa*, auspicious, the inner effulgence is *kalyāṇatama*, 'most auspicious'. We are naturally charmed by the body of a person, its youth and beauty; the visible and the tangible rivet our attention and interest. But when our vision becomes penetrating, a new dimension of the person's beauty reveals itself, more attractive and elevating than the physical aspects. But few have the time or the capacity to penetrate the body and go into the soul of things. This seeker wants to go into the soul of things, the cosmic Reality of which the sun is but a symbol, and which is the origin, sustenance, and final resting place of the whole universe. He prays from the bottom of his heart that the deity may graciously reveal to him his true and most auspicious form—*kalyāṇatamaṁ rūpam*.

*Kiñca ahaṁ na tu tvāṁ bhṛtyavad yāce*—'Moreover, I do not beg of you like a servant', comments Śaṅkara on this passage; for the devotee, recognizing his spiritual kinship with the deity, exclaims in a state of exaltation: *Yo'sāvasau puruṣaḥ so'hamasmi*—'The Person who is in the sun, I am He.' The spiritual reality in the sun is also the spiritual reality in me; we are spiritually one. There is really no difference; the body alone makes the difference. The sun is a big shining body, I am but a small clod of earth; but behind both is the immortal divine Self. This knowledge of the essential spiritual oneness of the whole universe, cosmic, celestial, as well as terrestrial, this knowledge is emphasized again and

again in the Upaniṣads. The difference in size or quantity or even function does not involve difference in the basic reality. The universe is all differences on the surface, but unity at the depths. The Ātman is the reality behind all beings, big and small. A big wave and a small bubble of water have their basic oneness in the ocean. In this way Vedānta asks us to see the One behind the many. The devotee is not frightened simply because the sun is big in size and he is small. His knowledge tells him, his penetrating vision assures him, that behind the big and the small there is a common unity of spiritual nature. As Śaṅkarācārya expresses it in his *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi* (verse 244):

> *Rājyaṁ narendrasya bhaṭasya kheṭakaḥ*
> *Tayorapohe na bhaṭo na rājā*—

'One man with the *upādhi*, or limiting adjunct, of the dress and function of rulership is called a king; another man with the *upādhi* of the dress and function of the lowest military rank is called a soldier. But when the particular *upādhi* of each is taken away there will remain neither king nor soldier, (but only man).'

In the language of political democracy, citizenship is the common bond uniting all members of a democratic state. Whatever high or low functions the members may be discharging, they have an inalienable common stature in their citizenship status. Taking the example of our Indian state today, Dr. Rajendra Prasad was the President of India. But when he ceased to be President he was just one of the millions of citizens of India. When he shed his temporary *upādhi* as the President of India, he resumed his normal personality, in the democratic context, as a citizen of India, a citizen among millions of such citizens. He resumed his inalienable political stature and status after shedding his temporary functional stature and status. Similarly, the *upādhi* of one individual makes him a tiny individual, the *upādhi* of another individual makes him a big individual, but when the *upādhis* are taken away, both become one in their common citizenship and in their common humanity. These *upādhis* are temporary limitations; they come and go. The Upaniṣads have also visualized man as without any of the *upādhis*. This is the Self of man, the pure and perfect, the birthless and deathless Reality, in which we are all one. *So'ham asmi*—I am He—is the Vedāntic equation, leading to the highest equation of all: *Ahaṁ brahmāsmi*—'I am Brahman (the All)'.

*Facing Death in a Grand Manner*

This devotee in the *Īśā Upaniṣad* realizes this with respect to the deity of his choice. He is getting weaker and weaker now, but only physically; his mind is firm and steady, and he is facing death in a grand manner, with the full knowledge of the process of death. Addressing himself in verse seventeen, he now says:

*Vāyuranilamamṛtam athedaṁ bhasmāntaṁ śarīram;*
*Om krato smarakṛtaṁ smarakrato smarakṛtaṁ smara—*

'The vital forces (in me are about to merge in) the immortal *Prāṇa* (the cosmic energy); then this (mortal) body shall be reduced to ashes. *Om!* O mind! Remember; your (good) deeds, remember. O mind! Remember; your (good) deeds, remember.'

The devotee now feels himself sinking into death; the vital energy that had been coursing through his body all these years, by means of which he had worked hard, achieved wealth, experienced the burdens and delights of social existence, and worshipped God, that energy is fast ebbing away, to merge in the sum total of the cosmic energy outside, and to spell death to his individual physical existence. The energy that was captured in his physical configuration at birth; that moved his lungs through the breathing apparatus and made of it a fly-wheel of the complicated bodily mechanism; the energy that had been temporarily trapped in his body all these years, and had imparted to him the attribute of being alive—that energy, *vāyu* or *prāṇa*, is now going to rejoin the immortal ocean of energy outside. Then what happens to this body? It becomes lifeless; it dies; it becomes divested of the attribute of life. The body was alive by virtue of the assemblage of several physical factors in an organic unity under the auspices of this energy. With the departure of this energy, the different physical factors cease to have organic unity, and they become just an assemblage ready to decompose and go back to their original forms.

Elements united to form the body; it will now go back to the elements; and the sooner the better. That is an ancient Indian idea which led to the practice of cremation. The idea of preserving the body never arose in this country because it had discovered the scientific truth that the body is a combination of perishable elements and that the real man is non-material and, therefore, immortal; also that the concept of destruction meant not going into absolute nothingness, but only a change of form or expression.

There is no absolute destruction of matter or energy according to Indian thought; also according to modern scientific thought. Destruction, according to Sāṁkhya and Vedānta, only means going back to the cause; and this pertains only to compound things. No destruction can affect that which is uncompounded, non-material, and simple. Such is the Ātman, the true Self of man, which, being of the nature of awareness, is always a singular. So the devotee says: *Idaṁ śarīraṁ bhasmāntaṁ bhūyāt.* This body, which is the product of a combination, and as such conditioned by time, which has been my servant all these years, its time has come; it has become jaded, worn out, unfit for further service. After the vital energy leaves it, let it be quickly decomposed into its constituent elements through the agency of fire. The chemistry of the body had brought together these constituents into an organic unity. Death has now dismantled that chemical laboratory; let fire now hasten their resumption of their original forms.

The Buddha expressed similar sentiments with regard to his body before his death. After a long life of spiritual ministration extending to eighty years, he felt the effect of age on his once robust body. Addressing his beloved disciple, Ānanda, he said (Cf. J. G. Jennings: *The Vedāntic Buddhism of the Buddha*, p. 398):

'I indeed, Ānanda, am now worn out, old, of great age; I have gone my journey, completed my life; my life has lasted eighty years. As when a worn-out cart is made to go by patching up, even so by patching up methinks, Ānanda, the body of the *tathāgata* (Buddha) is made to go. At such time as the *tathāgata*, by withdrawing attention from all outward things, by the cessation of each sensation, attains and dwells in a self-transcendent state of mind (*ceto-samādhim*), free from (thoughts of) outward things, then (only) is the body of the *tathāgata* at ease.'

The human body, according to Indian spiritual thought, is the best instrument nature has designed for the end purpose of evolution, namely, the manifestation of the indwelling divine Self. Having used his body for this high purpose throughout his life, and finding the body worn out and unfit for further use, the devotee in the *Īśā Upaniṣad* now says: 'Let the vital energy in me join the immortal cosmic energy from which it came and individualized itself as my psychophysical organism.' He then adds: '*Atha idaṁ śarīraṁ bhasmāntaṁ bhūyāt*—'then, let this body be reduced to ashes.' Then he addresses his mind and says with emphasis:

*Om krato smara; kṛtaṁ smara; krato smara; kṛtaṁ smara*—

'*Om*. O Mind! Remember; your (good) deeds, remember, O Mind! Remember; your good deeds, remember!'

*Death as a Creative Crisis*

He admonishes his mind to dwell on positive thoughts, not negative ones, at the moment of death; to think of good, not evil, to think of virtue, not sin.

Religions enjoin on the devotee the need to think of God and to take His name at the time of death. For death is not the end of all existence, as held in secular thought, in which man is essentially a body. Religions, on the contrary, hold that it is the end only of this bodily existence. To Indian spiritual thought, it is also the beginning, under fortunate circumstances, of a steady march to spiritual awareness in a disembodied state, or, under normal circumstances, the beginning of another bodily existence to continue the evolutionary march of the soul on the road to complete spiritual awareness. This makes the moment of death a moment of creative crisis, from the point of view of religion. Hence it is the time to concentrate the mind on positive thoughts, on thoughts of virtue because, as expressed in the classical statement on the subject by the *Gītā*, the last thoughts of a person have much to do with the new life that he is to have after death (*Gītā*: VIII. 6-7):

*Yaṁ yaṁ vāpi smaran bhāvaṁ tyajatyante kalebaram;*
*Taṁ tamevaiti kaunteya sadā tadbhāvabhāvitaḥ*—

'Entertaining whatever thought a man leaves his body at the time of death, having dwelt constantly on that thought, he achieves verily that, O Arjuna.'

*Tasmāt sarveṣu kāleṣu mām anusmara yudhya ca;*
*Mayyarpitamanobuddhiḥ māmevaiṣyasyasaṁśayaḥ*—

'Therefore, at all times, think of Me continuously, and also fight; if your mind and heart are fixed in Me, you will undoubtedly attain Me only.'

*Vedic Eschatology of Devayāna and Pitṛyāna*

Thus the thoughts of the last moment are of creative significance. The last thoughts, on their part, are determined by the thoughts of the lifetime, *sāda tadbhāvabhāvitaḥ*—as the *Gītā* puts it. The devotee of the *Īśā Upaniṣad* is of this type; he is *satya-*

*dharmā*, devoted to Truth, as he describes himself in verse fifteen. He now admonishes his mind to dwell on the auspicious deeds he has done during his long life. Such a step at this stage will keep the mind of the devotee poised for the great spiritual adventure ahead. This particular devotee seeks to avoid any further embodiment. And so he prays to God, conceived as *Agni*, cosmic divine energy, in the eighteenth and last verse of the Upaniṣad:

*Agne naya supathā rāye asmān*
*viśvāni deva vayunāni vidvān;*
*Yuyodhyasmad juhurāṇam eno*
*bhūyiṣṭhāṁ te nama uktiṁ vidhema—*

'O *Agni*, lead us by the good path that we may (enjoy) the wealth (the fruits of the good deeds we have done). Thou knowest all our deeds. Lord, destroy the deceitful sin in us. We salute Thee with our words again and again.'

In our ancient Vedic literature, we find mention of two paths taken by the soul after death. One is called *dhūmādi mārga*, the path beginning with smoke and associated with darkness; and the other is called *arcirādi mārga*, the path beginning with flame and associated with light. These paths are also termed *pitṛyāna*, the path of the manes, and *devayāna*, the path of the gods, respectively. The first path is for those who have lived the ordinary life motivated by self-interest, without seeking any transcendental spiritual value. This path is also associated with the *dakṣiṇāyana*, the southern path of the sun. Those who have lived a good life, on the other hand, and also sought higher spiritual values through meditation, go by the second path, the *devayāna*, which is associated with *uttarāyana*, the northern movement of the sun. Now it is difficult to understand what exactly is meant by the eschatology of these two paths. We have a detailed description of the two paths in the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* (Chapter V). The *Gītā* also treats of them in verses twenty-three to twenty-five of its eighth chapter and concludes its treatment in verse twenty-six thus:

*Śuklakṛṣṇe gati hyete jagataḥ śāśvate mate;*
*Ekayā yātyanāvṛttim anyayāvartate punaḥ—*

'These two—the white and the dark—are known as the world's eternal paths; one leads to cessation from rebirth; the other leads to rebirth again.'

In the *Mahābhārata* we have the instance of Bhīṣma, endowed with the power of death at will, lying on his bed of arrows for days together, and waiting for the commencement of the *uttarāyaṇa*, the northern movement of the sun, before giving up his body. This idea of the two paths seems to have greatly influenced the Indian religious mind during the post-Vedic period. However, its hold began to wane after the age of the Upaniṣads, and more especially after the commencement of the Buddhistic and Jain movements, and of post-Buddhistic Vedānta in its *jñāna* and *bhakti* expressions. In certain schools of Vedānta, the *devayāna* evolved, after shedding several of its Vedic details, into the concept of *kramamukti*, gradual, *krama*, evolution of the soul, even in its disembodied state, to spiritual emancipation, *mukti*.

*Vedāntic Jīvanmukti*

The darkness associated with the *pitṛyāna* refers to worldliness, and to the consequent absence of spiritual awareness. The brightness of the *devayāna* indicates the presence of spiritual awareness. But the Upaniṣads were not satisfied with these two paths. They discovered a third alternative in *jīvanmukti*, liberation-in-life, consequent on its discovery of the ever-pure, ever-perfect, and ever-illumined Ātman as the true nature of man. This meant that the highest spiritual freedom is not dependent on going to high and higher spheres outside of oneself, nor on the death of the physical body. It can be had *here* and *now*; for it is man's true nature. 'The Kingdom of Heaven is within you.' Perfection is to be had in this very life through the achievement of the fullness of spiritual awareness. This, as we have seen, is the theme of the first fourteen verses of this *Īśā Upaniṣad*.

The *Gītā* also, following the Upaniṣads, expounds this as its own view (VIII.27) after referring to the two types of post-mortem excellences:

> *Naite sṛtī pārtha jānan yogī muhyati kaścana;*
> *Tasmāt sarveṣu kāleṣu yogayukto bhavārjuna—*

'Knowing (the nature and scope of) these two paths, the *yogi* is not deluded. Therefore, O Arjuna, at all times be steadfast in *yoga*.'

It sings the praise of this highest excellence in several of its verses (V. 19 and VI. 31-32) in tune with verses six and seven of the *Īśā Upaniṣad*:

*Ihaiva tairjitaḥ sargo yeṣāṁ sāmye sthitaṁ manaḥ;*
*Nirdoṣaṁ hi samaṁ brahma tasmād brahmaṇi te sthitāḥ*—

'In this very life have they overcome birth (relativity) whose minds are fixed on sameness; for Brahman is free from all evil and is the same in all. Therefore are they fixed in Brahman.'

*Sarvabhūtasthitaṁ yo māṁ bhajatyekatvamāsthitaḥ;*
*Sarvathā vartamāno'pi sa yogī mayi vartate*—

'He who, being established in oneness, worships Me who dwells in all beings—that *yogi*, whatever be his mode of life, lives (really) in Me.'

*Ātmaupamyena sarvatra samaṁ paśyati yo'rjuna;*
*Sukhaṁ vā yadi vā duḥkhaṁ sa yogī paramo mataḥ*—

'He is known as the *yogi* supreme, O Arjuna, who, looking on the happiness and unhappiness of all beings as his own, sees sameness everywhere.'

Throughout the *Gītā* there is this great emphasis on the achievement of a character which is spiritual through and through. So also in the Upaniṣads. But both mention lesser spiritual ideals also, ideals which appealed to some section or other of the seekers. *Udārāḥ sarva evaite jñānī tvātmaiva me matam*—'All these seekers are noble indeed, but the *jñānī* (one who realizes the one Self in himself and in all in this very life) is My very self', says Kṛṣṇa in the *Gītā* (VII. 18). This generous inclusive attitude is the special characteristic of Vedānta.

### *Prayer for Passage to Heaven*

This seeker of the *Īśā Upaniṣad* prays to be taken by the northern path, by the path of light, by taking which he need not be born again; he will gradually attain, in a disembodied state, the highest plane of the *brahmaloka*, the equivalent of the Heaven of Christianity. He does not mind the enormous slowness involved, in view of its sureness.

This was also the highest plane in terms of contemporary thought. The *Īśā Upaniṣad* forms a part of the *Vājasaneyi Saṁhitā* —the only Upaniṣad that is part of a *Saṁhitā*, the earliest part of the Vedas. The Upaniṣads generally form the concluding portions of the later part of the Vedas—the *Brāhmaṇas*. Not being systematic expositions, the Upaniṣads also contain ideas of earlier thought developments side by side with the highest reaches of their own thought.

So here we have a seeker who seems to be unaware of the lofty spiritual ideas and sentiments of the earlier verses of the *Īśā Upaniṣad*, or, if aware, not sure of his spiritual strength to live in that atmosphere. So he resorts to the earlier *Saṁhitā* and *Brāhmaṇa* ideas and prays for a passage to Heaven:

*Agne naya supathā rāye*—'O *Agni*, lead me by the good path to reap the fruit of my actions.'

*Agni*, meaning fire, is here used in a technical sense: it is not the fire that we are familiar with, but the primordial divine energy that sustains this universe.

*Asmān viśvāni deva vayunāni vidvān*—'Thou knowest, O God, all our actions.'

I have not to tell you about them and about my spiritual assets, there is no secret hidden from you. Take me, therefore, by the bright northern path. And if I am not considered fit enough yet, please make me fit, by destroying any residual sin that may still be in me:

*Yuyodhyasmad juhurāṇam eno*—'Please destroy the crooked sin in me.'

Heavy with sin man cannot make spiritual progress: sin makes for gravitation towards the earth; without its removal, the soul cannot hope to rise steadily towards higher and higher levels of being.

Then he finally yields up his soul to God in an inward salutation:

*Bhūyiṣṭhāṁ te nama uktiṁ vidhema*—'I salute you again and again, but in speech only.'

The body is too weak to offer formal salutation; so please accept it given only in speech. Commenting on this, Śaṅkara says:

*Kintu vayam idānīṁ te na śaknumaḥ paricaryāṁ kartum; bhūyiṣṭhāṁ bahutarāṁ te tubhyaṁ nama uktiṁ namaskāravacanaṁ vidhema; namaskārena paricarema—*

'But now I am not in a position to serve you; I offer you many verbal salutations; I serve you through salutations.'

This elevation of the mind in humility and obeisance is all that I am capable of now. Please accept it and bless me, implores the devotee. As St. Paul says (1, Corinthians xv. 54-55):

'Then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, death is swallowed up in victory.

O death, where is thy sting?
O grave, where is thy victory?'

Two sentiments that are more often associated with the idea of salvation in India are disgust for the world and fear of rebirth. In a general way these two are found, with the second slightly modified, in all the salvationist faiths of the world. In the spiritual education of man these sentiments have a valid part to play. But many religions have overplayed them, and have consequently made a sombre and cheerless outlook characteristic of the religious life. The joy of God has been overshadowed by the sorrows and thwartings of the world. The sunny heights of the former seemed to have been reserved only for the greatest mystics of religion. The great Muslim woman saint, Rabiya, was asked. 'Do you love God?' 'O yes', she replied. 'But do you not hate the devil?' was the second question. 'My love for God does not give me time to hate the devil', was the characteristic reply. 'O God, save us from sullen saints', exclaims St. Teresa. Guru Nānak and several other Indian saints were intensely human and endowed with humour and laughter.

But the two fears mentioned above seem to have been overplayed in India. Our later religious books are heavy with these two sentiments. And our people in general have sought in religion only one blessing—a cessation from rebirth. This fear of life, this hope of salvation, this intense religious desire to escape from rebirth, have gone so far as to throw into the shade the problems and prospects of the brief spell of human life on earth. This helped to develop a negative attitude which, in its extreme forms, illustrated the sentiments in the lines of a German poet:

Sweet is sleep; death is better;
But it is best never to have been born.

This negative attitude has been digging deep into the Indian mind during the last thousand years. It has resulted in an excessive individualism and lack of social awareness, and made man unfit to pursue not only his spiritual welfare but also his worldly welfare. Fear beyond a certain measure is harmful to character. Excessive fear inhibits personality and results in tortuousness of behaviour and even hypocrisy.

*The Indian Fear of Rebirth*

How did this happen to us? The answer will be found in our history of the past two thousand years. The weakening process started with the neglect of social ethics, *dharma*, in the interest of *mokṣa*, understood as other-worldly salvation. This set in in the wake of the national upsurge caused by salvationist faiths like Buddhism, Jainism, and later Hinduism. The warning of the *Īśā Upaniṣad*: 'Into deeper darkness, as it were, do they enter who delight in *vidyā*', was not heeded; neither was any attempt made to understand correctly the positive and strengthening message of the *Gītā* and to live by it. Inner weakness invited external troubles in the form of foreign invasions.

These external pressures became endemic for centuries, thwarting at every step the national purposes. Weakness begat only further weakness, illustrating the warning of Jesus: 'For he that hath, to him shall be given; and he that hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he hath.' Continuous thwarting created a conditioned reflex first of fear, then of apathy, and finally of resignation. The peasant worked hard at the plough and raised a good crop; the artisan worked with his deft hands and produced things of beauty and utility. But before they could enjoy the products of their labours, an invader came and deprived them of their hard-earned wealth. This happened generation after generation. First, it was invaders from outside; later the despoilers were bred from within by chaotic political conditions. The continuous depredations of foreign invaders and petty local chieftains made the peasant, the artisan, and the common people of India develop a conditioned reflex of fear of the world around them and apathy as to their own lot in it. Swami Vivekananda refers

to this tragic situation in one of his letters (*Complete Works*, Vol. VIII, Eighth Edition, p. 307):

'Trodden under the foot of the Hindu, Mussalman, or Christian, they have come to think that they are born to be trodden under the foot of everybody who has money enough in his pocket. They are to be given back their lost individuality. They are to be educated.'

This long experience of slavery and oppression affected the minds not only of our masses but also of our other classes. The character of the average educated citizen of India, even today, is an assemblage more of negative virtues than of positive ones. There is a strong tendency in us to avoid difficult situations, to escape responsibility, and generally to resort to easy and cheap ways in earning wealth, acquiring knowledge and education, and even in the matter of realizing God.

*The Vedāntic Message of Fearlessness*

The human mind in India needed a new education in fearlessness and strength, and in a cheerful acceptance of life and its responsibilities; it stood in urgent need of education for manliness and true godliness. And it got this from the Upaniṣads through Swami Vivekananda. This education in fearlessness has the power to awaken the people as a whole to the heaven of freedom and delight. Under its influence the people will see the world, and their own life in it, in a new light. Swami Vivekananda says (*ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 160):

'If there is one word that you find coming out like a bomb from the Upaniṣads, bursting like a bombshell upon masses of ignorance, it is the word fearlessness. And the only religion that ought to be taught is the religion of *fearlessness*. Either in this world or in the world of religion, it is true that fear is the sure cause of degradation and sin. It is fear that brings misery, fear that brings death, fear that breeds evil. And what causes fear? Ignorance of our own nature.'

And so he exhorted ('The Mission of the Vedānta', *ibid.*, p. 193):

'Teach yourselves, teach every one his real nature, call upon the sleeping soul and see how it awakes. Power will come, glory will come, goodness will come, purity will come, and everything that is excellent will come when this sleeping soul is roused to self-conscious activity. Aye, if there is anything in the *Gītā* that I like it is these two verses, (XIII. 27, 28) coming out strong as the very gist, the very essence, of Kṛṣṇa's teaching:

'"He who sees the supreme Lord dwelling alike in all beings, the imperishable in things that perish, he sees indeed.

'"For seeing the Lord as the same, everywhere present, he does not destroy the Self by the self, and thus he goes to the highest goal."

'Thus there is a great opening for Vedānta to do beneficent work both here and elsewhere. This wonderful idea of the sameness and omnipresence of the supreme Soul has to be preached for the amelioration and elevation of the human race, here as elsewhere.'

Fear of death, fear of life, and fear of being reborn, must give way to an all-round fearlessness. Weakness and cowardice are worse deaths than physical death. In the words of Shakespeare (*Julius Caesar*, II. ii. 32-33):

Cowards die many times before their deaths;
The valiant never taste of death but once.

Is there a philosophy which can generate and sustain such a spirit of valour, of heroism, capable of releasing vast stores of human energy? Yes, say the Upaniṣads; yes, says the *Gītā;* and yes, says Swami Vivekananda. It is the knowledge of the truth of the Ātman, the immortal Self of man. Herein is the basis of true religion, as understood in Vedānta. The more spiritual a person, the more fearless he is, and the more gentle and compassionate. These are the fruits of the knowledge of truth. In the words of Swami Vivekananda ('My Plan of Campaign', *ibid.*, p. 224):

'And here is the test of truth—anything that makes you weak physically, intellectually, and spiritually, reject as poison; there is no life in it, it cannot be true. Truth is strengthening. Truth is purity. Truth is all-knowledge. Truth must be strengthening, must be enlightening, must be invigorating.'

The excessive fear of rebirth among our people received its much-needed corrective not only from Vivekananda's teachings but also from his own personal testament expressed in one of his most passionate utterances (*ibid.*, Vol. V, p. 136):

'And may I be born again and again, and suffer thousands of miseries, so that I may worship the only God that exists, the only God I believe in, the sum total of all souls—and, above all, my God the wicked, my God the miserable, my God the poor of all races, of all species, is the special object of my worship.'

### *True Spirituality*

This is a refreshingly new attitude for us in India. There is true spirituality in it; and fearlessness, love, and service flow from it. It is the worldly mind that is afraid of the world. The spiritual mind looks upon the body as the best servant and the most useful instrument for achieving life-fulfilment—worldly as well as spiritual. The possession of a physical body, with the senses and the mind in strength and vigour, becomes an opportunity and a delight when life is inspired by motives spiritual and human. In the context of such motives, life becomes a *Kurukṣetra*, a holy battle-field. Man enters this battle to win for himself a steady and perfect character, and he learns to take in his stride all its ups and downs of happiness and misery, gain and loss, and victory and defeat. The *Gītā* treats this attitude as the first step in ethical and spiritual life (II. 38):

*Sukhaduḥkhe same kṛtvā lābhālābhau jayājayau;*
*Tato yuddhāya yujyasva naivaṁ pāpamavāpsyasi—*

'Keeping the mind even in happiness and misery, gain and loss, victory and defeat, engage it then in (life's) battle; thus shall you incur no sin.'

This is the gift of a true and robust philosophy to the human mind; the criterion of its truth is the spirit of freedom and fearlessness, love and service that it imparts to human life. We have had a taste of that free and fearless mind in the recent decades of our history. The prison is viewed in one light by the criminal, and in quite a different light by a man like Mahatma Gandhi and by his bands of satyāgrahis. The criminal, with his unfree mind, dreads the prison and likes to avoid going there; but a Gandhi, with his free mind, moved by pure passion to free millions of his fellow countrymen from the larger prison of political subjection, had not only no dread of prison but also welcomed every opportunity to go into one. Thus a change in attitude made all the difference between a satyāgrahi and a criminal with respect to prison life. Similar is the position with regard to rebirth and life in the world. Fear of the world and fear of life is an unspiritual attitude entertained only by the worldly-minded. Life in the world is not the same as worldliness; just as being in a prison is not the same as being a criminal. There have been men who have gone to prison to study prison conditions in order to improve them. The world acclaims them as great humanists.

*Birth in a Puṇyabhūmi*

Life in the world is viewed from one angle by the timid and worldly-minded, and from quite a different angle by the heroic and spiritual-minded. The widespread fear of rebirth among the religious-minded in India is the offshoot, not of religion, but of a general national weakness. 'Spirituality declines when it falls into the hands of people who are weak and without control over their senses', says Śaṅkara in his commentary on the *Gītā* (IV. 2). Prahlāda and Rantideva and the many Bodhisattvas, who are some of the finest specimens of Indian spirituality, joyfully forswore their own salvation in order to help the struggling souls in the world.

Indian religious thought has visualized India as a *puṇyabhūmi*, holy land, and *karmabhūmi*, land of work, where souls are born not to indulge in sense pleasures but to work their way to the realization of God. It recognizes the presence of God in every country in the world as the indwelling Divine in the hearts of men and women; but these lands are visualized as *bhogabhūmis*, lands of pleasures, affording all scope for the satisfaction of the senses and the sense-bound mind. Its vision of India as a holy land, and as such conducive to man's spiritual evolution, derives from the fact that its landscape of rivers and mountains, plains and hills, has been sanctified for ages by the touch of a galaxy of divine incarnations and holy saints and sages; birth in India is coveted even by the gods in heaven. Says the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* (V. xix. 20-22):

*Etadeva hi devā gāyanti:*

'The gods (in heaven) verily sing thus (of the glory of human birth in India)':

*Aho amīṣāṁ kimakāri śobhanaṁ*
*prasanna eṣāṁ sviduta svayaṁ hariḥ;*
*Yairjanmalabdhaṁ nṛṣu bhāratājire*
*mukundasevaupayikaṁ spṛhā hi naḥ—*

'"Oh! What auspicious deeds have these done that *Hari* (the indwelling God) Himself has become pleased with them—deeds by which they have obtained birth in the continent of India, a birth which is the means for the service of *Hari*? We also keenly desire (to have) this (good fortune)'.

*Kiṁ duṣkarair naḥ kratubhiḥ tapovrataiḥ*
*dānādibhirvā dyujayena phalgunā;*

*Na yatra nārāyāṇapādapaṅkaja-*
*smṛtiḥ pramuṣṭātiśayendriyotsavāt—*

'"What have we achieved by winning this heaven, small in itself, but involving austere sacrifices, penaces, fastings, gifts, and other means? Here (in heaven) we lose the (very) memory of the lotus feet of Nārāyaṇa (the indwelling God), due to an abundant exuberance of sense enjoyments!"

*Kalpāyuṣāṁ sthānajayāt punarbhavāt*
*kṣaṇāyuṣāṁ bhāratabhūjayo varam;*
*Kṣaṇena martyena kṛtaṁ manasvinaḥ*
*sannyasya saṁyāntyabhayaṁ padaṁ hareḥ—*

'"Far better it is to win a few moments of life in India than aeons of life in these celestial regions; because, there, heroic souls can achieve, in a moment, the state of fearlessness in God, by renouncing in Him all actions done by their perishable bodies."'

What tragic irony that men in India learnt to fear and despise that life on its soil which was coveted by their own gods in heaven!

And our people pine to go to a post-mortem heaven, unmindful of the fact that a greater heaven lies about them!

Today, more and more of our people are learning to understand and appreciate the meaning and significance of this heroic approach to life and religion. This is Vivekananda's gift to our people, and to men and women everywhere. He took out of the heart of the Upaniṣads and of modern thought the message of a man-making education and religion, and he preached it from the housetops in East and West alike. Said he ('My Plan of Campaign'; *Complete Works*, Vol. III, pp. 223-24):

'Men, men, these are wanted....A hundred such and the world becomes revolutionized....For centuries people have been taught theories of degradation. They have been told that they are nothing. The masses have been told all over the world that they are not human beings. They have been so frightened for centuries, till they have nearly become animals. Never were they allowed to hear of the Ātman. Let them hear of the Ātman—that even the lowest of the low have the Ātman within, which never dies and never is born—of Him whom the sword cannot pierce, nor the fire burn, nor the air dry, immortal, without beginning or end, the all-pure, omnipotent, and omnipresent Ātman! Let them have faith in themselves....What we want is strength, so believe in yourselves. We have become weak, and that is why occultism and mysticism come to us, these creepy things; there may be great truths

in them, but they have nearly destroyed us. Make your nerves strong. What we want is muscles of iron and nerves of steel. We have wept long enough. No more weeping, but stand on your feet and be men. It is a man-making religion that we want It is man-making theories that we want. It is man-making education all round that we want.'

No truer words about what blessings the Upaniṣads hold for modern man have been uttered or can be uttered.

SEVEN

# KENA UPANIṢAD—1

We now commence the study of the *Kena Upaniṣad*. In the traditional enumerations, this Upaniṣad is placed second, the first being the *Īśā Upaniṣad*, the study of which we completed in the last lecture. This, too, is a short Upaniṣad; it has thirty-five verses, divided into four chapters.

The very title of this Upaniṣad is philosophically significant. *Kena* in Sanskrit implies a question, and means 'by whom?' Philosophy matures only when it becomes a critical estimate of experience and all its assumptions; otherwise it remains dogmatic and immature, or sceptical and over-mature. This Upaniṣad registers the appearance of critical philosophy in India at a very early period in her long history.

### *The Critical Approach in Philosophy*

In dogmatic philosophy, the power of the senses and the mind to apprehend reality is assumed. In critical philosophy, this assumption is questioned and subjected to a rigorous examination. Through such questioning of basic assumptions and the rigorous examination of experience, the *Kena Upaniṣad* helps us to discover in experience itself the presence of the Infinite and the Absolute as the pure Self.

In the history of modern western philosophy, Kant is considered to be the initiator of critical philosophy. For the first time he asked the basic question: Has the human mind the capacity to apprehend reality? It was he who made the science of epistemology, the study of the nature of knowledge, an essential part of modern philosophy. India had, ages ago in her Upaniṣads, recognized the significance of this discipline of epistemology. The critical approach and the questioning spirit pervade every Upaniṣad; but the *Kena Upaniṣad* represents them in a special sense—in its approach and treatment as well as in its very name.

Philosophy, according to Vedānta, is the product of *jijñāsā*, critical inquiry. The *Gītā* asks man to know Truth through *paripraśna*, thorough questioning (IV. 34). Such critical inquiry was directed not only to things and events of the outer world of nature, but also to the things and events of the inner world of man,

including mind and its power to know and the status of the ego. The need for the study of the nature and methods of knowledge, which the Upaniṣads recognized long ago, is being increasingly felt by modern science. Says Eddington (*The Philosophy of Physical Science*, p. 5):

'We have discovered that *it is actually an aid in the search for knowledge to understand the nature of the knowledge which we seek.*'

Thanks to this spirit and approach upheld by the Upaniṣads and the *Gītā*, religion in India became not a search for a creed, but a search for an *experience* of God, a search in which questioning and inquiry hold a high place together with faith. Says Robert Ernest Hume, one of the great English translators of the Upaniṣads (*Thirteen Principal Upaniṣads*, 'Introduction' p. 30, footnote):

'The earnestness of the search for truth is one of the delightful and commendable features of the Upaniṣads.'

This Indian philosophical approach receives strong endorsement, in effect, from the modern scientific spirit and temper. The Upaniṣads do not offer us spiritual food already cooked and ready for eating. On the contrary, they invite us to participate in the search for spiritual truth; they tell us that truth is not ours until each one of us participates in its search and makes it his own. As expressed by Śaṅkarācārya in his *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi* (verse 54):

*Vastusvarūpaṁ sphuṭabodhacakṣuṣā*
*svenaiva vedyaṁ na tu paṇḍitena;*
*Candrasvarūpaṁ nijacakṣusaiva*
*jñātavyam anyairavagamyate kim?—*

'The true form of Reality should be known through one's own *bodhacakṣu*, clear eye of understanding, and not through (the proxy of) a scholar; the true form of the (full) moon should be known by means of one's own eyes only; how can it be known by proxy?'

### *The Critical Approach in Religion*

This is the tenor of the approach to religion in India. The Ātman, Self, and the Paramātman, the Supreme Self or God, shall not remain mere words, but shall become verities of direct experience; the words must be pierced through and the meaning obtained. This search for meaning, this striving to go beyond the surface to the depths, from appearance to reality, is both religion and

philosophy, according to the Upaniṣads. India does not treat them as two separate disciplines. When separated from the spirit of religion, philosophy becomes intellectualism, cold, dry, and formal; when separated from the temper and approach of philosophy, religion, similarly, becomes an aimless exercise of the emotions, ever tending to become narrow, dogmatic, and intolerant. The Upaniṣads present philosophical reality as a value to be sought after and experienced by the individual. This flow of philosophy and religion into the river of lived experience is the unique feature of Vedānta.

*Ātmā vā are draṣṭavyaḥ*—'the Ātman is to be seen', says Yājñavalkya to his wife Maitreyī (*Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*: II, 4.5).

> *Vedāhametaṁ puruṣaṁ mahāntam*
> *ādityavarṇaṁ tamasaḥ parastāt*—

'I have *realized* this infinite Person, luminous as the sun and beyond all darkness of ignorance', says the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* (III. 8).

From the time of the Upaniṣads of antiquity to Sri Ramakrishna in modern times, this has been the authentic language of philosophy and religion in India. The familiar expression of the Indian seers is: 'I have *seen;* I have *realized;* and you also can *see;* you also can *realize*'. In this approach belief becomes provisional; the great teachers, while imparting their knowledge to their students, ask them to treat this knowledge only as a working hypothesis. The students are asked to validate it by personal experience. This finds clear and powerful expression in Buddha's famous address to the Kālāmās delivered a few months before his passing away (*The Aṅguttara Nikāya*, Pali Publication Board, 1960 Edition, Nālanda-Devanagari, Pali Series, Vol. I, 3.7.5):

*Iti kho, kālāmā, yaṁ taṁ avocuṁha—etha tuṁhe, kālāmā, mā anussavena, mā paraṁparāya, mā itikirāya, mā piṭakasaṁpadānena, mā takkahetu, mā nayaketu, mā ākāraparivitakkena, mā diṭṭhinijjhānakkhantiyā, mā bhabharūpatāya, mā samaṇo no garūti. Yadā tuṁhe, kālāmā, attanā va jāneyyātha—ime dhammā kusalā, ime dhammā anavajjā, ime dhammā viññuppasatthā, ime dhammā samattā samādinnā hitāya sukhāya saṁvattantīti, atha tuṁhe, kālāmā, upasaṁpajja vihareyyāthā'ti, iti yaṁ taṁ vuttam idametaṁ paṭicca vuttam*—

'This I have said to you O Kālāmās, but you may accept it, not because it is a report, not because it is a tradition, not because it is so said in the past, not because it is given from the scripture, not for the sake of discussion, not for the sake of a particular method, not for the sake of careful consideration, not for the sake of forbearing with wrong views, not because it appears to be suitable, not because your preceptor is a recluse, but if you yourselves understand that this is so meritorious and blameless, and, when accepted, is for benefit and happiness, then you may accept it.'

*The Spiritual Urge*

This is the tremendous urge in the heart of man—the urge to realize the truth, to possess the truth, and not to live merely on the plane of words and concepts. If God exists, I must realize Him; if there is a soul in me, I must see it, realize it. It is not enough that I believe in it, or that some body of specialists, like a church, believes in it on my behalf. On matters spiritual, India was never lukewarm; in this, her chosen field, she was deeply earnest and intensely practical. We get a glimpse of this mood in the seeker of the *Kena Upaniṣad* referring to whom Śaṅkara says in his 'Introduction' to this Upaniṣad:

*Kaścid guruṁ brahmaniṣṭhaṁ vidhivadupetya, pratyagātmaviṣayādanyatra śaraṇamapaśyan, abhayaṁ nityaṁ śivam acalam icchan, papraccha—*

'Approaching in due form a certain teacher who was well established in the knowledge of God, finding no refuge except in the knowledge relating to the Innermost Self, and desiring (to attain) the fearless, the eternal, the good, and the changeless, the seeker asked him (this question).'

And the question asked is, in brief, 'By whom are the mind, the senses, and the life of man directed?'

Thus the *Kena Upaniṣad* is in the form of a dialogue between a spiritually illumined teacher and an earnest spiritual student. The quotation from Śaṅkara gives us an insight into the student's frame of mind. He had long been in search of truth. He had probed into the mystery of the universe and discovered the universe to be changeful, evanescent. He had subscribed to the current belief in an extra-cosmic omnipotent and omniscient God, the Brahman, infinite and immortal, behind the universe, and had found this belief logically tenable. In the strength of this belief

in an Infinite behind the finite, in an Absolute behind the relative, in an immortal and changeless Being behind the world of death and change, the student could conduct his life in the finite world of change and death, remain content therewith, and easily pass in society for a philosopher or a man of religion.

But this student is not content with that; he has a questioning mind. He is not satisfied with a logical Absolute, or with the God of a monotheistic religious creed; neither is he satisfied with his conventional life in the world of change and death. He wants to *experience* the Immortal, *realize* the Infinite and the Absolute; he has already received what Wordsworth terms 'intimations of immortality'; he is convinced that there is a focus of immortality hidden somewhere in the universe of experience. He has tried through science to locate it in the external world, but he has found that world, in its near or far aspects, in its microscopic or macroscopic dimensions, ridden with finitude, change, and death. He has examined, through philosophy, the concept of the Absolute, Brahman, and found it intellectually satisfying but emotionally cold. He has scrutinized, through religion, the concept of God, and found it emotionally satisfying but intellectually uncertain. Reality as revealed by each of the disciplines of science, philosophy, and religion is satisfying in itself but, being compartmental, is non-negotiable with the others. Shall the human mind remain content with this situation in which reality, as apprehended by each of these three disciplines, remains fragmented, conditioned, and therefore finite? Man's insatiable hunger for truth and life-fulfilment cannot rest at this. He will not be fully satisfied until he unifies his experience by discovering the One behind the many. He must break this impasse or break himself in the attempt.

### *The Inadequacy of Knowledge from 'Without'*

This is the unique characteristic of the spiritual mood and urge in which is found a confluence of the moods and urges of science, philosophy, and monotheistic religion. These disciplines deal with the universe of experience only from without, and their limitations may possibly proceed from that approach. But is there another approach which may help man to break this impasse, lead him to the heart of the Immortal and the Infinite, and provide him with a key with which to open the doors of all the compartments of knowledge and experience which have hitherto remained water-

tight? The universe of experience certainly must have a 'within'. Is there an approach to this 'within' of things?

The sages of the Upaniṣads dared to ask this question; and did not stop till they found the answer. Modern science also is beginning to ask this question today. It has been driven to it by the utter inadequacy of its knowledge of external nature, vast and stupendous though it be; and by the inability of that knowledge to solve the mystery of that nature. To quote again the clear words of Eddington to which I referred when discussing verses 6 and 7 of the *Īśā Upaniṣad* (*Space, Time and Gravitation*; concluding passage):

'And yet, in regard to the nature of things, this knowledge is only an empty shell—a form of symbols. It is knowledge of structural form, and not knowledge of content.'

But where shall we find that content and how? Eddington gives a hint:

'All through the physical world runs that unknown content which must surely be the stuff of our consciousness.'

And he develops the significance of this hint:

'Here is a hint of aspects deep within the world of physics, and yet unattainable by the methods of physics. And, moreover, we have found that where science has progressed the farthest, the mind has but regained from nature that which the mind has put into nature. We have found a strange footprint on the shores of the unknown. We have devised profound theories, one after another, to account for its origin. At last, we have succeeded in reconstructing the creature that made the footprint. And lo! it is our own.'

*The Importance of the Knowledge from 'Within'*

If man's mind and consciousness provide 'a hint of aspects deep within the world of physics, and yet unattainable by the methods of physics', science will be only true to its objective and function if it seriously investigates this aspect of the universe of experience. This is what ancient India did in her Upaniṣads. Modern science too is forging ahead in this field through its investigations into the science of life and the science of mind. Here we may recall once again the words of the paleontologist, the late Pierre Teilhard de Chardin which I quoted during my exposition of the Peace invocation of the *Īśā Upaniṣad* (*The Phenomenon of Man*, p. 56):

'It is impossible to deny that, deep within ourselves, an "interior" appears at the heart of beings, *as it were seen through a*

rent (italics not author's). This is enough to ensure that, in one degree or another, this "interior" should obtrude itself as existing everywhere in nature from all time. Since the stuff of the universe has an inner aspect at one point of itself, there is necessarily a *double aspect to its structure*, that is to say in every region of space and time—in the same way, for instance, as it is granular: *co-extensive with their Without, there is a Within to things*.'

The more the sciences progress, the more is the conclusion forced upon science that the mystery of the external world is overshadowed by the mystery of man himself, of his mind and self-awareness. This fact is noted by Lincoln Barnett in words which I quoted during my exposition of verses 6 and 7 of the *Īśā Upaniṣad* (*The Universe and Dr. Einstein*, pp. 126-27):

'In the evolution of scientific thought, one fact has become impressively clear: there is no mystery of the physical world which does not point to a mystery beyond itself.'

And what, then, is this key mystery? Barnett gives the hint:

'Man is thus his own greatest mystery. He does not understand the vast veiled universe into which he has been cast for the reason that he does not understand himself.'

*The Unification of All Experience*

The study of the vast cosmos with its suns and moons, stars and nebulae did not reveal this 'within' of things. It was first revealed when nature evolved the phenomenon of life in the uniqueness of the living cell. Here nature revealed for the first time, in a rudimentary and hazy way, something of its profound interior depths; it was a revelation of a deeper aspect of the mystery of nature 'as it were seen through a rent', in the picturesque words of Chardin. This rent was widened with every advance in biological evolution, first with the appearance of the simple nerve fibre, then the more complex nerve-ganglion, then the spine and the central nervous system, and lastly with the cerebral cortex in man. In these unique steps we find nature astir, awake, and becoming aware, and, finally, self-aware. Has not nature then two aspects—the one unconscious, *acit*, and the other conscious, *cit*? And how can a philosophy such as that of modern science claim completeness if it does not possess an insight into both the *cit* and *acit* aspects of nature, an insight into both the 'within' and the 'without' of things? The Reality which Vedānta upholds is this totality of nature, this unity of both *cit* and *acit*. Says Kṛṣṇa in the *Gītā* (VII. 4-7):

*Bhūmirāponalovāyuḥ khaṁ manobuddhireva ca;*
*Ahaṁkāra itīyaṁ me bhinnā prakṛtiraṣṭadhā—*

'Earth, water, fire, air, ether, mind, intellect, and egoism—this is My *prakṛti* (nature) divided eightfold.'

*Apareyam itastvanyāṁ prakṛtīṁ viddhi me parām;*
*Jīvabhūtāṁ mahābāho yayedaṁ dhāryate jagat—*

'This is the lower aspect. But different from it, know thou, O mighty-armed, My higher *prakṛti*, of the nature of self-awareness, by which this changeful universe is sustained.'

*Etat yonīni bhūtāni sarvāṇītyupadhāraya;*
*Ahaṁ kṛtsnasya jagataḥ prabhavaḥ pralayastathā—*

'Know that these (*two prakṛtis*) are the womb of all beings; I am the origin and dissolution of the whole universe.'

*Mattaḥ parataraṁ nānyat kiñcidasti dhanañjaya;*
*Mayi sarvamidaṁ protaṁ sūtre maṇigaṇā iva—*

'Beyond me, O Dhanañjaya (Arjuna), there is nothing; all this (manifested universe) is strung in Me as a mass of pearls on a thread.'

Comments Śaṅkara on the third verse:

*Prakṛtidvayadvāreṇa sarvajña īśvaraḥ jagataḥ kāraṇam—*

'Through this twofold nature, the omniscient Lord is the cause of the universe.'

The concept of a self-evolving cause is common to Vedānta and modern science. Science had, till now, conceived of its self-evolving cause only in material terms; it could not do anything else so long as it viewed nature only from 'without'. But now it is becoming increasingly convinced that there is also the need to view nature from 'within', that the information that nature furnishes of its 'within' dimension, in its phenomena of life and awareness, needs to be evaluated by a new critique of the 'within' and not by the erstwhile critique of the 'without'.

Says the great neurologist Sir Charles Sherrington (*Man on His Nature*, p. 38, Pelican Edition):

'Today Nature looms larger than ever and includes more fully than ever ourselves. It is, if you will, a machine, but it is a partly mentalized machine and in virtue of including ourselves it is a machine with human qualities of mind. It is a running stream of energy—mental and physical—and unlike man-made machines it is actuated by emotions, fears and hopes, dislikes and love.'

*The Grip of the Inner World on the Indian Mind*

The study of nature in its manifestation as man is a study fraught with momentous philosophical and spiritual consequences. These consequences are bound to be faulty and harmful if that study is entirely conditioned by the sciences of external nature; it is a fruitless attempt to solve the mystery of man with the help of sciences like physics and astronomy, chemistry and physiology only. These deal only with the surface man, with 'man the known'. And this aspect of man is only the continuation in him of physical nature. But the real man, 'man the unknown', in the language of Alexis Carrel, eludes the grasp of these sciences. There is another science which deals with this subject, which dares to penetrate into the depths of human nature and unravel its mysteries and, through such unravelling, unravels also the mysteries of the rest of nature. This is *adhyātmavidyā*, the science of the Self, the science of the 'within' of things, which gripped the attention and interest of the sages of the Upaniṣads, and which has continued to grip the attention and interest of the Indian mind down the ages.

Ancient India did not neglect the sciences of external nature. Inspired by the idea that all knowledge is sacred, she pursued the investigation of external nature with zest, in both the theoretical and practical fields, and wrested from nature many a hidden truth and the ways of applying these truths for the good of man. In the course of these investigations she came across the mystery of the phenomenon of man and became intrigued by it. It became clear to her thinkers that the mystery of external physical nature was overshadowed by the mystery of man's inner nature. And this new mystery gripped their minds and, later, their hearts as well. *It is no exaggeration to say that no people have devoted so much time and thought to this subject, and that consistently for thousands of years, as the people of India.* They took it as a subject for specialization, and they reaped the good and bad fruits of all specialization. Referring to this Swami Vivekananda says, (Lecture on 'The Powers of the Mind', *Complete Works*, Vol. II, Ninth Edition, pp. 20-21):

'At a certain period of Indian history, this one subject of man and his mind absorbed all their interest. And it was so enticing, because it seemed the easiest way to achieve their ends. Now, the Indian mind became so thoroughly persuaded that the mind could do anything and everything according to law, that its

powers became the great object of study. Charms, magic, and other powers, and all that, were nothing extraordinary, but a regularly taught science, just as the physical sciences they had taught before that. Such a conviction in these things came upon the race, that physical sciences nearly died out.'

This study of *adhyātmavidyā* or *adhyātmayoga* revealed to them the true nature of man and the knowledge of the workings of his inner world. To quote Swami Vivekananda again (*ibid.*, p. 16):

'The science of yoga claims that it has discovered the laws which develop this personality, and, by proper attention to those laws and methods, each one can grow and strengthen his personality. This is one of the great practical things, and this is the secret of all education. This has a universal application; in the life of the householder, in the life of the poor, the rich, the man of business, the spiritual man, in everyone's life, it is a great thing, the strengthening of this personality. There are laws, very fine, which are behind the physical laws, as we know. That is to say, there are no such realities as a physical world, a mental world, a spiritual world. Whatever is, is one. Let us say, it is a sort of tapering existence: the thickest part is here; it tapers and becomes finer and finer; the finest is what we call spirit; the grossest, the body. And just as it is here, in the microcosm, it is exactly the same in the macrocosm. This universe of ours is exactly like that; it is the gross external thickness, and it tapers into something finer and finer until it becomes God.'

### *The King of Sciences*

*Adhyātmavidyā*, the science of the Inner Self, eventually became recognized in India as the king of sciences, *rājavidyā*. Indian sociology, ethics, education, medical science, art, and literature uniformly acknowledged the pre-eminence of this science. *Adhyātmavidyā vidyānām*—'Among sciences I am the science of the Self', says God through His incarnation as Kṛṣṇa in the *Gītā* (X. 32). Man's achievement of morality and ethics and the fruition of his life and action proceed from his meditation on and realization of his true Self which is the Self of all, says Manu (*Manu Smṛti*, XI. 82):

*Dhyānikaṁ sarvamevaitat yadetat abhiśabditam;*
*Na hyanadhyātmavit kascit kriyāphalam upāśnute—*

'All this that has been said (before) has to be achieved through inward meditation; one who does not know his inner Self will not enjoy the fruits of any of his actions.'

The contribution of *adhyātmavidyā* to Indian religion and philosophy is immense. Much of man's religion consists only of

anthropological phenomena like other similar phenomena. Anthropology treats the gods of religion as the products of human imagination, of human wish-fulfilment. Sociology recognizes their social utility while questioning their truth value. The Biblical statement that God created man in his own image is the reverse of the truth acknowledged by the psychology of religion that man created God or gods, in his own image. The gods of all such religions rest on the authority of a holy book or a body of priests. And such gods, bearing, in a large measure, a socio-political complexion, have always been at loggerheads with each other and with the secular urges of man, and will ever remain so.

On the other hand, reality apprehended by speculative philosophy is but a logical postulate; it is also, similarly, a product of the human mind. Its absolute is only the product of a logical necessity, the correlative of the relative.

The Absolute of philosophy and the God of religion both stand in need of a reassessment and restatement in the light of a penetrating science of man, of his knowledge and awareness and inward depth. Modern thought's study and assessment of religion through anthropology, sociology, and psychology is a right step in this direction; *but it is only the first step.* Modern philosophy since Kant has similarly subjected the philosophical concepts of reality and of the absolute to critical scrutiny through the science of epistemology. The result has been disastrous to the absolute, which has consequently quietly faded away, along with its discipline, metaphysics, from modern philosophy. Instead of a search for the absolute or the ultimate reality, philosophy today has become reduced to a form of sociology or logic, or even a ponderous study of language. It has also voiced its dissatisfaction and protest against this extreme positivism by throwing up various schools of existentialism.

The disorderly array into which modern philosophy has been thrown, the mutual incompatibility of the gods of the dogmatic religions leading to their displacement by various forms of humanistic religion, and the self-admitted limitations of the positive sciences in the search for the ultimate meaning of things—these facts reveal the confused and murky atmosphere of the world of modern thought. The situation calls for a bold and penetrating approach to truth and reality on the part of modern man with a view to reconstructing science, philosophy, art, and religion, and

to bringing out their basic unity. He will receive immense help in this task from the approach and method adopted by the Upaniṣad: in the exploration of the inner world of man and the insights thereby gained by them about the spiritual nature of man and the universe.

Says Dr. S. Radhakrishnan (*Indian Philosophy*, Vol I, p. 150):

'The central theme of the Upaniṣads is the problem of philosophy. It is the search for what is true. Dissatisfaction with things and second causes suggests the questions, which we read at the beginning of the *Śvetāśvatara* (I. 1-2): "Whence are we born, where do we live, and whither do we go? O, ye who know Brahman, tell us at whose command we abide here whether in pain or in pleasure. Should time or nature, or necessity or chance, or the elements be considered to be the cause, or he who is called Puruṣa, the man that is the Supreme spirit?" In the *Kena Upaniṣad* the pupil asks (I. 1): "At whose wish does the mind sent forth proceed on its errand? At whose command does the first breath go forth, at whose wish do we utter this speech? What god directs the eye or the ear?" The thinkers did not take experience to be an inexplicable datum, as common sense does. They wondered whether the report of the senses could be taken as final. Are the mental faculties by which we acquire experience self-existent, or are they themselves effects of something mightier still, which lies behind them? How can we consider physical objects, effects, and products as they are, to be quite as real as their causes? There must be something ultimate at the back of it all, a self-existent, in which alone the mind can rest. Knowledge, mind, the senses, and their objects are all finite and conditioned. In the field of morals we find that we cannot get true happiness from the finite. The pleasures of the world are transient, being cut off by old age and death. Only the infinite gives durable happiness. In religion we cry for eternal life. All these force upon us the conviction of a timeless being, a spiritual reality, the object of philosophical quest, the fulfilment of our desires, and the goal of religion. The seers of the Upaniṣads try to lead us to this central reality which is infinite existence (*sat*), absolute truth (*cit*), and pure delight (*ānanda*).'

*The Monotheistic God in the Light of the 'King of Sciences'*

The Upaniṣads transformed the concept of Brahman, the Absolute of philosophy and the God of religion, into a *given fact of experience* through the discovery of the Ātman, the infinite immortal Self of man behind his finite mortal ego. Brahman thus became not a mere logical absolute or a man-made god of sociological utility, but the innermost Self of man and the Self of the universe. As an impersonal-personal God, it is the *living unity*

of the impersonal background stuff or the primordial energy of the universe as held by science, of the Absolute of metaphysics, and of the personal God of religion. This discovery was greeted by the Upaniṣads as a momentous advance in spiritual thought; and it became the sheet-anchor of the monumental philosophical-religious thought of India—Vedānta, and was interfused with every subsequent development of Indian religious and philosophical thought. The student in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* asks (III. 4.1):

*Yat sākṣāt aparokṣāt brahma ya ātmā sarvāntaraḥ taṁ me vyācakṣva*—

'The Brahman which is immediate and direct, which is the innermost Self of all—please expound that Brahman to me.'

The *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* says (II. 15):

*Yadātmatattvena tu brahmatattvam*
*dīpopameneha yuktaḥ prapaśyet;*
*Ajaṁ dhruvaṁ sarvatattvaiḥ viśuddhaṁ*
*jñātvā devaṁ mucyate sarvapāpaiḥ*—

'When the self-controlled spiritual aspirant realizes, in this very body, the truth of Brahman through the truth of the Ātman, self-luminous as light, then, knowing the Divinity which is unborn, eternal, and untouched by the modifications of nature, he is freed from all sins.'

This momentous vision is not only enshrined in Indian spiritual thought but also forms the central spiritual element in advanced systems of religious thought everywhere in the world. The Kingdom of Heaven is within us, assures Jesus. Jalālud-Dīn Rūmī exclaims:

In each human spirit is a Christ concealed,
To be helped or hindered, to be hurt or healed;
If from any human soul you lift the veil
You will find a Christ there hidden without fail.

The continued vitality of Indian idealism has its source in this vision. Every religious system which advocates as a spiritual discipline closing the eyes and all the senses in meditation bears, knowingly or unknowingly, the impress of this vision. The spiritual significance of *Man, know thyself* of ancient Greek thought is also revealed in the light of this vision. It is this that sustains

the gentle and peaceful characteristics of the Indian cultural heritage and its ideal and practice of active toleration.

In picturesque language St. Augustine echoes this vision when he describes his long quest for God and his discovery of Him in his own being (*Confessions*, Book X, Everyman's Library Edition, Chapter 6):

'I asked the earth, and it answered me, "I am not He" ....I asked the sea and the deeps, and the living creeping things, and they answered, "We are not thy God, seek above us." I asked the moving air; and the whole air with his inhabitants answered, "Anaximenes was deceived, I am not God." I asked the heavens, sun, moon, stars, "Nor (say they) are we the God whom thou seekest." And I replied unto all the things which encompass the door of my flesh (the senses); "Ye have told me of my God, that ye are not He; tell me something of Him." And they cried out with a loud voice, "He made us." ...For truth saith unto me, "Neither heaven, nor earth, nor any other body is thy God." ...Now to thee I speak, O my soul, thou art my better part: for thou quickenest the mass of my body, giving it life, which no body can give to a body: but thy God is even unto thee the Life of thy life.'

*The Unity of Brahman and Ātman*

The transcendent God of the earlier Vedic monotheistic thought became the immanent One in the Upaniṣads without losing Its transcendent character. For, though *given* in experience, It is, as the witness of all states of consciousness, beyond speech and thought. Through a penetrating study of the three states of waking, dream, and dreamless sleep, the Upaniṣads isolated the Self as pure subject and then discovered the spiritual oneness of the Self and the non-Self. 'The identity between the subject and the object was realized in India before Plato was born', says Dr. S. Radhakrishnan (*Indian Philosophy*, Vol. I, p. 169) and then quotes Deussen who speaks of the significance of this Upaniṣadic discovery for human thought (Deussen, *Philosophy of the Upaniṣads*, 1906 Edition, pp. 39-40):

'If we strip this thought of the various forms, figurative to the highest degree and not seldom extravagant, under which it appears in the Vedānta texts, and fix our attention upon it solely in its philosophical simplicity as the identity of God and the Soul, the Brahman and the Ātman, it will be found to possess a significance reaching far beyond the Upaniṣads, their time and country, nay, we claim for it an inestimable value for the whole race of mankind. We are unable to look into the future, we do not know

what revelations and discoveries are in store for the restlessly inquiring human spirit; but one thing we may assert with confidence —whatever new and unwonted paths the philosophy of the future may strike out, this principle will remain permanently unshaken, and from it no deviation can possibly take place. If ever a general solution is reached of the great riddle, which presents itself to the philosopher in the nature of things, all the more clearly the further our knowledge extends, the key can only be found where alone the secret of nature lies open to us from within, that is to say, in our innermost self. *It was here that for the first time the original thinkers of the Upaniṣads, to their immortal honour, found it when they recognized our Ātman, our inmost individual being, as the Brahman, the inmost being of universal nature and of all her phenomena.*' (italics not author's).

*An Approach to the Study of the Kena Upaniṣad and the Peace Invocation*

The *Kena Upaniṣad*, to return to our present study, is a significant landmark in man's voyage of discovery of the Ātman. Emphasizing the spiritual character of the Absolute as the Self of our self, it says, in refrain, in verses 4 to 8 of chapter one: 'Know *that* to be Brahman and not what people worship here.' In the fifth verse of chapter two, it speaks of the realization of Brahman *here* and *now*. Through a delightful story narrated in chapter three, it speaks of the incapacity of the sense organs to give information about Brahman, and, in the concluding verses of chapter four, it refers to the ethical basis of the knowledge of Brahman.

Before we take up the study of the verses of the Upaniṣad, we shall make acquaintance with the two verses of the *Śāntipāṭha* or Peace invocation attached to this Upaniṣad. According to traditional practice, the Peace invocation of each Upaniṣad is meant to be recited at the commencement and conclusion of the study of that Upaniṣad; and these invocations vary according to the Veda to which the particular Upaniṣad belongs. The *Kena Upaniṣad* belongs to the *Talavakāra* recension of the *Sāma Veda*. At the commencement of the study of the *Īśā Upaniṣad*, we studied its Peace invocation and found it suffused with strengthening spiritual ideas.

All these Peace invocations breathe purifying and unifying ideas and sentiments. They serve to calm and refresh the mind and thus equip it for the silent adventure of thought ahead. In the *Kena Upaniṣad* the first of the two verses of the invocation reads as follows:

*Om sahanāvavatu; sahanau bhunaktu;*
*sahavīryaṁ karavāvahai;*

*Tejasvināvadhītamastu;*
*mā vidviṣāvahai.*

*Om śāntiḥ śāntiḥ śāntiḥ—*

'Om. May Brahman protect us both; may He nourish us both; may we both achieve energy; may this study make us both illumined; may we never hate each other. Om Peace, Peace, Peace.'

The word 'both' refers to student and teacher. True education, even in the secular field, is a communion of minds between the teacher and the taught. The higher the subject the deeper that communion; and it is most intense in the spiritual field. Without this background, with teacher and taught not *en rapport*, education becomes mere static and uninspired instruction. All education imparts a measure of alertness and vigour to the human mind. The knowledge of the Ātman, however, is the source of the highest vigour, as this Upaniṣad will tell us later on: *Ātmanā vindate vīryam*—'Man attains vigour through the Ātman.' Another important object of this study is illumination. Not stuffing the mind with facts and formulae, nor making it clever, is what is aimed at, but making it luminous with the luminosity of truth. The Ātman as pure awareness is the very principle of luminosity.

*Tasya bhāsā sarvamidaṁ vibhāti*—'by Its light all this universe is lighted', says the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* (II, 2.10).

*Māsābda yuga kalpeṣu gatāgāmyeṣvanekadhā;*
*Nodeti nāstametyekā saṁvid eṣā svayaṁprabhā—*

'In all the countless months, years, ages, and aeons, past and yet to come, Consciousness, which is one and self-luminous, does neither rise nor set' says the *Pañcadaśī* (I.7).

In the words of the great physicist Erwin Schrödinger quoted on an earlier occasion (*What is Life?*, pp. 90-91).

'Consciousness is never experienced in the plural, only in the singular....Consciousness is a singular of which the plural is unknown.'

The invocation ends with a prayer for a union of hearts among the students and between the students and the teacher.

The second invocation, which is more a prose piece, reads as follows:

*Om āpyāyantu mamāṅgāni vākprāṇaścakṣuḥ śrotram atho balam indriyāṇi ca sarvāṇi; sarvaṁ brahmaupaniṣadam; māhaṁ brahma nirākuryām; mā mā brahma nirākarot; anirākaraṇam astu;*

*anirākaraṇaṁ me'stu; tadātmani nirate ya upaniṣatsu dharmāḥ te mayi santu, te mayi santu. Om śāntiḥ śāntiḥ śāntiḥ—*

'Om. May my limbs become strong; also let my speech, vital airs, sight, hearing, and all the sense organs be vigorous. All existence is the Brahman of the Upaniṣads. May I never deny Brahman; may not Brahman deny me. Let there be no denial at all; let there be no denial at least on my part. Whatever virtues are in the Upaniṣads, may they abide in me who am devoted to the Ātman; may they abide in me. Om Peace, Peace, Peace.'

*Prayer for Strength and Light*

The student of *Ātmavidyā* prays for strength of limb and vigour of the senses. The spiritual journey is a hard one; it is like walking on the sharp edge of a razor, as the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* puts it (III. 14). The weak cannot realize this Ātman, says the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* (III. 2. 4.). It is the young, the vigorous, the intelligent, and the strong that will realize the Ātman, say the Upaniṣads. In youth the senses are vigorous. But the mind which is devoted to the pursuit of the knowledge of the Ātman is stronger still and hence capable of disciplining the senses and turning their energies towards the Self. This makes the youth devoted to *Ātmavidyā* a person of heroic calibre, *dhīra* in the language of the Upaniṣads. If the mind is weak or lazy, or inclined to obey the dictates of the senses, it loses the capacity and tendency to search and find the Ātman. It thus *denies* the ever-present reality of that which is the one Self in all; by denial is meant neglect. Brahman being the Self of all cannot neglect anyone. 'God is in all men; but all men are not in God; therefore man suffers,' says Sri Ramakrishna. So the student prays that there may be no neglect of Brahman at least on his part.

The only way to avoid this pitfall is by acquiring the requisite moral virtues which are the *sine qua non* of spiritual advancement and realization. Hence the student prays that the virtues proclaimed in the Upaniṣads may abide in him. There are several passages in the Upaniṣads which speak of these virtues. The following from the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* is specially instructive (III. 1. 5):

*Satyena labhyastapasā hyeṣa ātmā*
*samyagjñānena brahmacaryeṇa nityam;*
*Antaḥ śarīre jyotirmayo hi śubhro*
*yaṁ paśyanti yatayaḥ kṣīṇadoṣāḥ—*

'This Ātman can be realized by the constant practice of truth, self-control, true knowledge, and chastity. The self-controlled ones, freed from sin, realize Him, the luminous and the pure One, within their own being.'

We shall see the *Kena Upaniṣad* telling us later on (IV. 8):

*Tasyai tapo damaḥ karmeti pratiṣṭhā—*

'Of this wisdom, austerity, self-control, and (dedicated) work are the foundations.'

'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God,' assures Jesus (Matthew v. 8).

Since the end of philosophy or religion, as understood by the sages of the Upaniṣads, is not mere intellectual exercise nor the acceptance of a belief or dogma, these moral qualities are insisted upon which, when yoked to a passionate desire to *realize* Truth, take man to the feet of God. We shall come across this passion, which transmutes into pure forms all other passions in the heart of man, as we dip into the verses of this Upaniṣad.

EIGHT

# KENA UPANIṢAD—2

As we observed in the last lecture, the philosophy expounded in the *Kena Upaniṣad* is critical in its spirit and temper; it marks the development of the critical as different from the dogmatic approach in philosophy in ancient India. The aim of this approach is to evaluate all knowledge and experience. The Upaniṣad questions the truth and validity of our sense knowledge and of the knowledge gained by the logically and scientifically disciplined mind. It considers this knowledge as knowledge of the relative and not of the absolute. Even the knowledge of the disciplined mind, which is science, is knowledge about shadows and not substance, being derived from sense-data.

Is this the whole of knowledge, it asks, or is there something higher which is infinite and absolute? Ordinary philosophy can give no answer to this question. The *Kena Upaniṣad*, however, and other Upaniṣads also, give an answer. After assessing the nature and scope of human knowledge as revealed through the senses and the mind, the *Kena Upaniṣad* tells us that there is a higher form of knowledge, a higher form of awareness, in which knowledge and experience become one, and which transcends the transient and the relative. This is knowledge of the true Self of man which is also the Self of the universe. As such, the Absolute and the Infinite need not remain a matter of mere surmise or belief or inference.

Realization of the infinite and immortal Self, the 'Ātman' or 'Brahman' as the Upaniṣads term it, requires, however, discipline and training. This very mind that is now in thraldom to the senses, and, as such, is bound to the world of the finite and changing, can be disciplined and trained in order to equip it for the realization of the truth of Brahman. Indian philosophy therefore speaks of the mind in two aspects. In one aspect it is in thraldom to the senses and in the other it is free. This idea occurs again and again in Indian spiritual literature. Says the *Pañcadaśī* (XI. 116):

*Mano hi dvividhaṁ proktaṁ śuddhaṁ cāśuddhameva ca;*
*Aśuddhaṁ kāmasaṁparkāt śuddhaṁ kāmavivarjitam—*

'Mind is said to be of two types: the pure and the impure. It is

impure when it is subject to the pressures of lust and pure when free from them.'

*The Pure Mind*

The pure mind has the capacity to realize Brahman. Brahman is said to be *buddhigrāhyam atīndriyam*—'grasped by the *buddhi* but beyond the senses,' including also the *manas* or the sense-bound mind. Pure *manas* is the same as pure *buddhi* which again is the same as pure Ātman, says Sri Ramakrishna. This is the endeavour that converts philosophy from a mere intellectual and academic pursuit into a spiritual adventure, and religion from a socio-political discipline into a *sādhanā* for spiritual experience, uniting both religion and philosophy into a high spiritual adventure to *realize* truth and achieve the highest life excellence.

So then the question arises, how to make the mind pure? In every Indian spiritual treatise this subject is discussed: How to release the mind or awareness from its sense-bound finitude and restore it to its own true infinite expanse? The mind as it is now constituted is conditioned by various sense impressions which make it function in a finite way, which make it express itself through finite moulds. In the *Caṇḍī* or *Devi Māhātmyam*, one of the sacred books of India, we read (I. 47):

*Jñānamasti samastasya jantoḥ viṣayagocare—*

'The *jñāna* or knowledge of all beings is conditioned by sense moulds.'

Everyone, including the animals, has knowledge which comes through the doorways of the senses. This knowledge trickles, as it were, through little bits of sense experience; but whereas this knowledge is fragmentary and unorganized in animals, it is in some degree organized and coherent in ordinary men, and most organized and coherent in scientific men. *We make a serious mistake, however, when we think that this is the highest possible form of knowledge.* All speculative philosophy commits this same mistake. Limiting itself to sense-data, to the data of the waking state only, it stultifies itself as philosophy by not taking all experience for its province of study.

The Upaniṣads did not allow Indian philosophy to commit this mistake. They broadened and deepened philosophy by taking for its data all experience—the world of facts as well as the world of values, the world revealed in all the three states of waking, dream,

and deep sleep—and by a critical examination of the human mind, its nature and possibilities. They discovered that this mind, when trained and disciplined, revealed its own higher dimensions and manifested newer powers of penetration. At a lower level, at the psychic level these are called extra-sensory perceptions, where human knowledge becomes freed from the limitations of the sensory apparatus. But even this is limited to the world of the phenomenal, the realm of appearances. Its highest penetrating power is manifested when it reveals the noumenon behind all phenomena, the imperishable reality behind the world of perishable forms. This is *parā vidyā*, philosophy in the true sense of the term, according to the Upaniṣads (*Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad:* I.1.5.).

*The Discipline of Mind in Science*

In physics we are familiar with a similar physical phenomenon. Ordinary light is a radiation of very little penetrating capacity. But, by increasing the wave frequency of the radiation, science has developed radiation of greater and greater penetrating capacities such as X-rays, which can penetrate deeper still.

This phenomenon of the physical world we find repeated in the mental world. The average mind is untrained, undisciplined, and extremely dull in its operation; it stops at the very surface of experience. It cannot penetrate the surface and proceed to the depth of things. It cannot even raise the question whether there is anything behind the appearance. Such is the raw human mind. Yet the same mind can be trained and disciplined and made penetrating in its power; this gives us the scientific mind which has disciplined itself in the systematic inquiry and investigation into the universe of sensory experience. As a result of this discipline the mind gets the power to exercise control over the sensory and motor apparatus of the human system which, formerly, was under the direct dictation of the sense-impressions and instinctual impulses. The trained mind disciplines the imagination through reason and develops a capacity to check and evaluate those impressions and impulses, and find out what they mean and where they lead. As a result of this scientific training, the mind develops the ability to penetrate appearances and discover the truth behind, the laws that control the appearances. This is the discipline of human knowledge achieved in science.

If, however, a scientist stops there and refuses to proceed further in the search for truth, it is because he has forsaken his scien-

tific spirit and become sterile or dogmatic. Why should he stop there? If the mind can be trained to penetrate some appearances, by still greater discipline it can be trained to penetrate the whole crust of appearances that make up the universe of our daily experience, and penetrate to the noumenon behind all phenomena, the changeless One behind the changeful many. This is the most fascinating and intriguing subject for the human mind; though baffled again and again, the mind will return to it again and again. One may try to drag the mind away from such fundamental questions; one may adopt philosophies of positivism and humanism and try to direct the mind either to living a good life or to doing good to the world; but it is only for a time.

Since the nineteenth century the philosophy of positivism has become popular as a reaction against the irrational dogmas of religion and the inconclusive conclusions of metaphysics. This philosophy registers the despair of the human mind arising from the feeling that man can never know the ultimate truth. All metaphysics is moonshine, says positivism. Let us resort to metaphysics, if we must, for the little exercise of the intellect that it gives; but let us, while doing so, work to make the world a little better, a little happier than it is. Why bother about the subject of the ultimate truth? The mind, in spite of its rigorous discipline in science, is so constituted that ultimate truth is beyond its grasp; so it is the part of wisdom not to waste time and energy on it.

This is the despair of the human mind that has gripped modern man. And yet man cannot continue to live in this despair, in this defeatist attitude. As in mountain climbing, where the unclimbed peaks of a difficult mountain range pose a continuous challenge to the courage and tenacity of the human spirit, and the tougher spirits continue their unwearying assaults on the peaks until the last and highest peak is gained, so in the search for truth, the challenge and lure of the ultimate truth will make the courageous among seekers restless with longing to scale the highest peaks of knowledge and experience. Thus the human mind cannot be put off; it is intrigued by anything that is hidden, by anything that is mysterious. If one group of persons does not ask such questions, another will. If one scientist does not investigate them, another scientist will. We see this actually happening today in the world of science. There are some scientists today who would limit science merely to its positivistic approach. But there are other scientists who try to

take science beyond this limit, lead it into the region of fundamental questions, such as the nature of truth, the critique of causality, the nature of reality, and the nature and scope of human knowledge. These scientists may not achieve satisfactory answers to these questions, but they are bold enough to ask them; and in this they are in the true tradition of science and uphold its spirit of free and persistent inquiry into truth.

*The Discipline of Mind in Vedānta*

These are the two types of scientists in the modern world; and it is a happy augury that modern science, true to its spirit and tradition, is forging ahead in its fearless quest of truth, a virtue which it shares with Vedānta. Vedānta experienced the lure of unclimbed peaks of thought ages ago. It never admitted defeat, but marched on till the last peak was conquered. Referring to this aspect of Vedānta, Professor Max Müller says (*Six Systems of Indian Philosophy*, pp. 182-83):

'It is surely astounding that such a system as the Vedānta should have been slowly elaborated by the indefatigable and intrepid thinkers of India thousands of years ago, a system that even now makes us feel giddy, as in mounting the last steps of the swaying spire of an ancient Gothic cathedral. None of our philosophers, not excepting Heraclitus, Plato, Kant, or Hegel, ventured to erect such a spire, never frightened by storms or lightnings. Stone follows on stone in regular succession after once the first step has been made, after once it has been clearly seen that in the beginning there can have been but One, as there will be but One in the end, whether we call it Ātman or Brahman.'

What was the driving force behind this bold venture of the Indian thinkers? A passion for truth and a passion for human happiness and welfare. Says Professor Max Müller (*Three Lectures on Vedānta Philosophy*, pp. 39-40):

'I believe much of the excellency of the ancient Sanskrit philosophers is due to their having been undisturbed by the thought of there being a public to please or critics to appease. They thought of nothing but the work they had determined to do; their one idea was to make it as perfect as it could be made. There was no applause they valued unless it came from their equals or their betters; publishers, editors, and logrollers did not yet exist. Need we wonder then that their work was done as well as it could be done, and that it has lasted for thousands of years?'

It is good for modern science to investigate the type of discipline that the Upaniṣadic thinkers gave to their minds by which they climbed the highest peaks of thought, by which they realized

the changeless One behind the changing many. His single-minded love of truth, his intellectual discipline, and his moral purity, helped the Upaniṣadic thinker to evolve a new mind of high penetrating power out of his given mind. Freed from its thraldom to the senses, which is but the legacy of man's animal ancestry, and rigorously disciplined in detachment and objectivity, which is the fruit of an all-embracing renunciation, and stimulated by the love of truth viewed as a focus of both knowledge and value, the human mind, in the Upaniṣads, became the instrument of human enlightenment; pure *manas* became pure *buddhi* which in turn yielded *bodhi*, full illumination. This marks man's achievement of Buddhahood.

How important for science is the need to protect and cherish this free and fearless pursuit of truth becomes clear when we consider the various forces that tend to deflect the scientific mind today from its main purpose of the pursuit of truth.

First of all, there is the lure of pleasure which science offers through a highly efficient technical civilization; the fruit of science may smother the root of science.

Secondly, there is the tendency to forsake the path of objectivity due to the pulls of mutually hostile political ideologies.

Thirdly, there is the sheer laziness of the human mind which makes it rest on its oars, unwilling to continue an arduous journey. This gives birth to the dogmatic mood in science.

In earlier centuries science had occasionally to adjust with religious dogmas; now it has to adjust with political dogmas. And it has its own dogmas also to contend with. But no dogma can kill the spirit of science.

The need of science today is to free its spirit from dogmas of all kinds, whether religious or scientific, political or social. In this task modern science will receive the most helpful stimulus from Vedānta. For Vedānta is not committed to any dogma; it is committed to truth only and firmly believes in the power of truth to overcome half-truths and untruths. *Satyameva jayate nānṛtam*—'Truth alone triumphs, not untruth', is the watchword of the Upaniṣads (*Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*: III. 1. 6).

This was the quest pursued by the great sages of India and they have left for posterity an imperishable legacy. Ages have passed since the Upaniṣads were composed, but they hold our atten-

tion and we study them even today when there is such an advancement of intelligence and learning unparalleled in earlier ages. This can be explained only on the basis of the Upaniṣads having plumbed the depths of experience and brought information of vital importance for man both as to his own nature and as to the nature of the universe. It is not merely the ideas that they convey to us that attract us but also the rigorous methods which they employ and the dispassionate spirit which pervades them. The modern mind is at once attracted by the wonderfully critical approach adopted by the Upaniṣadic sages, by which they closely studied the mind and its structure, its functions and its capacity, and fearlessly evaluated all knowledge and information conveyed by the mind. They were determined to find out whether this mind could be made into a fit instrument for their particular field of inquiry, the field of the knowledge of the Self, the field of the *subject* of all experience, as different from the objects of all experience which are studied by the positive sciences.

In order to work in a particular field, a workman fashions his tools according to his requirements. A scientist or a philosopher does the same, but his tool is thought itself. His mind and thought form the tool. When a student goes to a great scientist in order to learn science from him, the teacher subjects him to the discipline of science—discipline in truth, in detachment, in objectivity, and in precision. Varied and intricate is the training given to the science student to enable him to develop the ability to tackle the vast array of data before him and become an original scientific explorer himself.

Vedānta, similarly, calls upon the spiritual seeker to subject himself to the type of discipline relevant to this field. *Dṛśyate tvagryayā buddhyā sūkṣmayā sūkṣmadarśibhiḥ*—'The Ātman is certainly realized by the one-pointed minds of those who are capable of seeing subtle truths, by minds which have been trained to grasp subtler and subtler facts', says the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* (III. 12). When we enter the field of spiritual quest, when we seek ultimate Reality, we need a still more intense discipline of the mind. If the training of the mind for science is rigorous, its training for spiritual realization is much more so; for, says the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* (III.14):

*Kṣurasya dhārā niśitā duratyayā*
*durgaṁ pathastat kavayo vadanti*—

'That path is like the sharp edge of a razor, difficult to tread and hard to cross, so say the sages.'

Therefore we require much more intensive training in moral purity, alertness, and concentration. Without this training our search for spiritual truth will be vain. The mind will be drawn away from the search by distractions, by desires, and by laziness. The desire for name and fame may come, various other desires also may come to distract the mind; but the spiritual seeker has to keep himself to the straight and narrow path, which is compared to walking on the edge of a razor. 'For strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leads to perfection,' says Jesus Christ. This is the training that was undergone by the great Indian sages and this is the training that we also must undergo if we wish to equip our minds for this spiritual field of investigation: by such training our minds will develop that penetrative power which alone can help us to pierce the veil that hides the ultimate truth of Brahman from us.

*The Power of Discipline*

In our daily life we see how things and forces acquire this penetrative power when subjected to certain conditions. Even the most flimsy things of the physical world can be given extraordinary strength or penetrative power if subjected to certain conditions. Air, for example, is considered to be a very insubstantial thing; but when put under pressure, it will acquire high penetrative power; compressed air can cut into rocks. If air can be disciplined into such a powerful instrument, why not the mind of man? The mind may be very flimsy now; it may be weak and unstable; it may have no penetrating power; the slightest obstacle coming in its way may make it recoil and lose initiative. But it need not remain in this flimsy state. It can be strengthened by training. A single thread is so weak that it can be broken by a slight pull. But combine that thread with many threads, twist them together to make a rope, and it can control an elephant. This is the classical example given in the scriptures to remind us that the mind can be trained in strength and resilience, and given the capacity to penetrate into the heart of truth.

The most important requirement, then, in the search for truth is this training and disciplining of the mind, of the whole mind. Part of this training lies in what we may call the secular field, the field

of social and educational endeavour. Even in these fields it is discipline that gives the mind greater energy and power.

It is the greatest misfortune of the Indian nation today that large numbers of people have not realized the importance of self-discipline as an essential aspect of the educational and social process. They think that they can achieve greatness by leaving the mind to follow its own whims or the dictates of the sense organs. The word 'discipline' is a bugbear to many people. It only shows that we have not fully grasped the meaning of freedom. It is the slave that resents all discipline; the free man welcomes all opportunities for self-discipline. Indiscipline is the way to make the mind weaker and weaker and make it unfit either for life in the world or for life in God.

Greatness in any field is never achieved without tremendous inner discipline. Energy disciplined is energy increased; and in the spiritual field, such increase is both in quantity and quality. That is the nature of all energy, physical or non-physical. The psychic energy in the human system can be raised to the highest level in quality and quantity only through inner cultivation; there is no other way, say the Upaniṣads again and again. The sooner our people realize this truth, the sooner our young people grasp the meaning of this vital idea, the better for them and the better for the nation. Self-discipline is the way to achieve strength of will, breadth of sympathy, loftiness of character, and consequent all-round social and spiritual efficiency. It is like raising bumper harvests through intensive farming with the help of scientific agriculture.

### *From Manliness to Godliness*

This is the royal way to achieve greatness in the secular field, in the world of daily endeavour. The same discipline, carried one step further, takes us into the world of spiritual aspiration and realization. *We make a great blunder when we think that the mind that is unfit for the world can be made fit for God.* And yet this is a very common mistake that we make. Again and again we find inefficiency masquerading as high piety. Indian society has permitted and encouraged this mistake for too long. Too long have we clung to one-sidedness in education, leading to one-sidedness in character and personality. And this in spite of the clear and bold teaching of the *Gītā* that godliness is the fruition of manliness and not its negation. Be a man first, and then try to be a

saint, is the teaching that we received from Swami Vivekananda. Manliness comes first and then comes godliness. Many of us, however, tried, and still try, to be saints first. We put the cart before the horse and lose both manhood and sainthood in the bargain. This wrong method and its harmful fruits for the individual and the nation were pointed out to us by our great seer, Swami Vivekananda, who also opened up to us the purifying, strengthening, and unifying message of the Upaniṣads and the *Gītā*; he revealed to us the nature and scope of an education based on the infinite Self within every man and woman which will lead to both manliness and godliness.

This great literature, the Upaniṣads and the *Gītā*—and the *Gītā* too is described as an Upaniṣad—forms a single core of inspiration to lead us to higher and higher levels of life expression and thus bring out the best in human life. And what is that best in human life? It is infinite truth itself; and not merely truth, but also infinite beauty and goodness and joy. The true Self in man is all these. And the Upaniṣads summon us to the joyous adventure of the quest for this truth through a converging life-endeavour:

*Tadeva brahma tvaṃ viddhi nedaṃ yadidaṃ upāsate*—

Know thou That to be Brahman (the infinite Self of all), and not what people worship here', as the *Kena Upaniṣad* will tell us in emphatic refrain (I. 4)

The mind is like a musical instrument which will produce good music only when properly tuned. If the strings are too loose or too tight the best music cannot be produced. The perfection of the human system, both mind and body, is to be sought for and struggled for; and when it is achieved the music that will come out of it will be the music of truth, knowledge, beauty, and bliss. This is the highest experience, which is also the highest knowledge, and the Upaniṣads want to give man a taste of this, *here, in this very life*, as the *Kena Upaniṣad* will tell us later (II. 5)

In order to understand the Upaniṣads and to profit from them it is necessary to reorient one's ideas of life and of religion. It is no post-mortem excellence that the Upaniṣads promise. Here and now, in this very body, with this very mind, man shall achieve the highest truth and the highest life-excellence. Here and now shall man cross the shoreless ocean of delusion and grief; and after crossing it, he will bless his psycho-physical organism for the invaluable

service rendered by it, just as a sailor blesses the boat that has carried him to a safe shore across the tumultuous ocean.

Thus we find that by appropriate training of body and mind we are able to achieve high levels of truth and excellence. With a trained mind man achieves the joys of health and character, knowledge and beauty, culture and civilization; with a trained mind he can also rise above all relativity and achieve the delights of transcendental experience, the *lokottara*, as Buddhism puts it, that which is beyond the world of the senses and the sense-bound mind.

### *The Search for the Highest*

The Self is beyond the world of the senses; and yet It impinges upon us occasionally through sense experiences. 'Intimations of immortality', Wordsworth called them. Perhaps we get an inkling of It, and at once it passes away. The intimation comes, but the next moment it vanishes. But we are intrigued by it, for it is enough to convince us that a greater reality looms beyond the horizon of the senses and that we must carry our pursuit there. It is like a cloud covering the sun. During the rainy season here, or winter season in northern climates, we long to see the sun, but the clouds or fog hide it from our view. Suddenly the fog or clouds part and the sun shines. But a moment later the clouds or fog close in once again. But whether we see the sun or not, we know that it is there. Our search for truth is just like this. Sometimes truth gives us a glimpse of itself through our psycho-physical experiences, through the daily events of our lives. Under the pressure of our life in the world we soon forget and ignore these little intimations from the beyond, but occasionally we stop and ask, Is it true? Is there a life beyond this everyday sense life, something better, purer?

And so the search begins, the search for ultimate truth and spiritual experience. All experience becomes subjected to scrutiny to discover a clue to the reality that lies beyond. It is at this stage that man becomes a pilgrim and his life becomes a quest that will lead him in due time to spiritual truth. He becomes a *sādhaka*. The true *sādhaka* is the spiritual aspirant whose heart genuinely hungers for the transcendental pure life of the spirit.

It is just this earnest mind, this spirit of seeking, that the *Kena Upaniṣad* expects of its student. When one is established in this he has set his sail in the right direction He becomes what in Bud-

dhism is called a *śrotāpanna*, one 'who has entered the current'. A boat, for example, is in the Ganges on its way to the sea. If it loses its way and enters the canals and ditches on the way, it may experience much movement but no progress. But once it attains the centre of the river and enters its main current, it has nothing more to fear. It will move steadily towards the sea. That is the position of a seeker who is a *śrotāpanna*. Having attained the main current of spiritual life, he goes forward step by step and realizes the truth.

This *sādhaka* attitude must be pervasive of life itself. Whether we are at work, or in leisure, in whatever situation we may be, the one constant factor will be that our hearts are pursuing truth, that we are seeking the pure and the deathless Self in and through all experience. All other things then become merely incidental, the means of our attainment, the fields of our training. The real quest is for none of these. The real quest is for the infinite Truth, for the infinitely purest and best. *Bhūmaiva sukham; bhūmā tveva vijijñāsitavyam*—'The Infinite alone is happiness; the Infinite alone should verily be sought after', says the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* (VII. 23. 1). In happiness and in misery, in success and in failure, in every experience of life, we will then be in search of that truth which we feel is there hidden somewhere in experience. This is the greatest adventure of the human spirit. Entering on it, man becomes seized with a new zest in life, for a life lived for truth, and leaves far behind all possibilities of ennui and frustration characteristic of life at the sense level. He becomes seized with a new restlessness, creative and constructive, holy and pure.

All this the Upaniṣads express, and that in arresting language. What varied expressions do the Upaniṣads adopt to impress upon the *sādhaka* the greatness and might of the human spirit and its ability to rise to and stay in the heights of spiritual experience and realize the empire of delight of which it is born heir! The song of man's true glory which the Upaniṣads sing is incomparable in charm and power. Says Swami Vivekananda (Lecture on 'The Sages of India', *Complete Works*, Vol. III, p. 253):

Beyond (waking) consciousness is where the bold search. Consciousness is bound by the senses. Beyond that, beyond the senses, men must go, in order to arrive at truths of the spiritual world; and there are even now persons who succeed in going beyond the

bounds of the senses. These are called *ṛṣis* (sages), because they come face to face with spiritual truths.'

In the *Kena Upaniṣad* we live in this atmosphere, the going beyond the senses, the determined seeking for the Ātman, the eternal truth of all experience. Somewhere in experience it is hidden, and the search is on. The body and the sense-organs which common sense and some schools of philosophy take to be self-sufficient and final, are not so. *They point to a reality beyond themselves.* With a view to knowing this, the student puts a question to the teacher which forms the opening verse of this Upaniṣad:

*Keneṣitaṁ patati preṣitaṁ manaḥ*
*kena prāṇaḥ prathamaḥ praiti yuktaḥ;*
*Keneṣitāṁ vācamimāṁ vadanti*
*cakṣuḥ śrotraṁ ka u devo yunakti—*

'At whose desire and by whom impelled does the mind alight on its objects? By whom impelled does the chief *prāṇa* (vital force) proceed to its function? By whom impelled do men utter this speech? What *deva* (luminous being) directs the eyes and the ears?'

The new-born baby gets information about his environing world through his sense organs. At birth, he is surrounded by a world of things and persons which seem to him, in the words of William James, 'a buzzing booming confusion'. Out of this buzzing confusion the child gradually develops knowledge by discriminating individual items, and the first thing he discriminates is the sound, the presence, of his mother. The mother stands apart from the general confusion around. Gradually the child attains more and more knowledge and the confusion acquires some clarity and order. Thus the child learns to *understand* the world, to grasp it, to control it, to understand also himself, although only in a hazy way, and is ultimately able to find his own way and become independent of his mother. Then the child undergoes still further training. He is educated. His knowledge of the world grows clearer, though his knowledge of himself does not keep pace with it. It remains a mixture of the self and the non-self, the latter predominating. Perhaps he becomes a scientist and discovers great scientific truths.

But his education can be carried still further; he can strive to understand his true self, bereft of all non-self elements. This

step makes him a spiritual seeker, a true student of the science of the Self. Realizing his Self as birthless and deathless, pure and perfect, he sees the same Self as the Self of the universe and thus achieves the philosophical vision of the fundamental spiritual unity of all existence. This, according to the Upaniṣads, is, in brief, the picture of the growth and development of human knowledge and realization in its various stages, from the child to the perfect man.

The *Kena Upaniṣad*, as we have seen above, opens with a question from the student to the teacher; and this question is asked by the higher reaches of modern neurology and psychology today. Is there a principle of pure intelligence, uncompounded and free, which directs the psycho-physical organism of man?

Our daily experience tells us that all our knowledge comes through the gateways of the senses; and our minds organize it into coherent forms. Is the self of man only a passing synthesis of all these non-self elements, or is it a pure principle of intelligence, without whose presence behind, the mind and the sense-organs and the body become reduced to dull dead entities unable to function?

The second verse gives us the teacher's reply:

*Śrotrasya śrotraṁ manaso mano yat*
*vāco ha vācaṁ sa u prāṇasya prāṇaḥ;*
*Cakṣuṣaḥ cakṣuḥ atimucya dhīrāḥ*
*pretyāsmāt lokāt amṛtā bhavanti—*

'It (the Ātman) is the ear of the ear, the mind of the mind, the speech of the speech, the *prāṇa* of the *prāṇa*, and the eye of the eye. Wise men, separating the Ātman from these (sense functions), rise out of sense-life and attain immortality.'

The teacher assures the student that his intimation is correct. That little intimation of the immortal which had led the student to raise his question is true. Now he should try to make this awareness clear and complete.

Explaining the meaning of the enigmatic words of the teacher, Śaṅkara comments in a luminous passage (I. 2).

*Asti kimapi vidvadbuddhigamyaṁ sarvāntaratamaṁ kūṭastham ajam ajaram amṛtam abhayaṁ śrotrāderapi śrotrādi, tatsāmarthyanimittam*—'There is a changeless reality at the innermost core of man, unborn, ageless, deathless, and fearless, which is revealed to the

intelligence of the wise, and which expresses itself through the functions of the ear and other sense-organs, being the one source of all their diverse energies.'

The teacher explains to the student that the power behind the various sense-organs is the Ātman. As the intelligent and changeless subject behind the activities of the changeful mind, senses, and the ego, it is the true self of man. It is not a mere concept or a statement, but the *very principle* of awareness which imparts meaning to all concepts and statements. As the self, it is something that can be realized, and the way to realize it is by carefully separating it from the conglomeration of senses and mind. The senses deal with mortal perishable things of the objective or not-self world; but the Ātman is the eternal subject, immortal and changeless. To go beyond the mortal, from the not-Self to the Self, requires extraordinary intelligence and courage; it requires high heroism. These are virtues with which we are familiar in the world; for they alone ensure success in achieving greatness in any sphere of life. But at their ordinary level they are not adequate for the purposes of achieving Self-knowledge. Comments Śaṅkara (I.2):

*Nahi viśiṣṭadhīmatvamantareṇa śrotrādyātmabhāvaḥ śakyaḥ parityaktum—*

'Without extraordinary intelligence, it is not possible, verily, to overcome the identification of the Self with the organs of hearing and so on.'

It is then that man realizes that he is not this body, not a mere bundle of sensations, thoughts, and emotions, but that he is divine. This knowledge does not come to us easily. It requires penetrating discrimination, for which one needs penetrating intelligence along with great moral courage and heroism.

The Upaniṣads set out clearly and precisely the exact steps which the human mind must take in order to attain this knowledge. And they also clearly describe the dangers that lie in the way of this quest, and ask the student to be armed with extreme alertness and sincerity.

So here, in the second verse, we have the teacher's explanation: the wise man separates the Ātman from the whole apparatus of mind and body; he rises out of sense-life and attains immortality through Self-realization.

The raw individual, as he is now, wrongly identifies the Ātman, the Self, with the body and the senses; the more intelligent may identify the Ātman with the mind or the ego. The wise one alone knows that these are all not-selves, including the ego, subject to change and destruction, but that his Ātman is the immortal and the fearless one. Says Śaṅkara in his *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi* (Verse 160):

*Deho'hamityeva jaḍasya buddhiḥ*
*dehe ca jīve viduṣaḥ tvahaṁ dhīḥ;*
*Vivekavijñānavato mahātmano*
*brahmāhamityeva matiḥ sadātmani—*

'The dull-witted man thinks he is only the body; the book-learned man identifies himself with the mixture of body and soul. But the sage, possessed of realization through discrimination, looks upon the eternal Ātman as his Self and thinks, "I am Brahman (the Self of all)".'

We find an echo of this teaching in the second discourse which Buddha gave to his five disciples in Sārnāth immediately after his own enlightenment. Stripping the Self of all its unreal non-Self elements, Buddha said (*Vinaya Piṭaka, Mahāvagga, Khandhaka,* I. VI):

'Again what think you, Bhikkhus? Is the material form permanent (*niccam*) or impermanent (*a-niccam*)?'

'Impermanent, revered Sir.'

'But that which is impermanent, is that suffering (*dukkham*) or happiness (*sukham*)?'

'Suffering, revered Sir.'

'That, then, which is impermanent, suffering, and by nature changeable (*vi-parināma dhammam*), is it proper to regard it thus: This is mine, I am this, this is my Self (*etam mama, eso'ham asmi, eso me attā*)?'

'No indeed, revered Sir.'

'Is sensation permanent? ... Is perception permanent? Is predisposition permanent? ... That, then, which is impermanent, suffering, and by nature changeable, is it proper to regard it thus: This is mine, I am this, this is my Self?'

'No indeed, revered Sir.'

'And so, *Bhikkhus*, all material form, whether past, future, or present, whether within us or external, whether gross or subtle, low or high, far or near, is to be regarded with right insight, as it really is (*yathā bhūtam*), thus: This is not mine, I am not this, this is not my Self ... All sensation ... gross or subtle, all

perception ... gross or subtle, ... all predisposition ... low or high, ... all consciousness ... far or near, is to be regarded with right insight, as it really is, thus: This is not mine, I am not this, this is not my self.

'Regarding them thus, O Bhikkhus, an instructed Āryan (noble) disciple becomes indifferent to (*nibbindati*) material form, becomes indifferent to sensation, becomes indifferent to perception, becomes indifferent to consciousness. Becoming indifferent, he becomes free from desire (*vi-rajjati*); through non-desire (*vi-rāga*) he is liberated.'

Realizing thus, man becomes immortal, *amṛtā bhavanti*, says the *Kena Upaniṣad*. In his first discourse in Sārnāth Buddha spoke of his realization in identical language (*Majjhima Nikāya*, Sutta 26):

'Hear me, Bhikkhus, the immortal has been gained by me. I teach, I show, the *Dharma*. If you walk as I teach, you will ere long and in the present life learn fully for yourselves, realize, and having attained, abide in the supreme fulfilment of the holy life.'

Here, then, we have the foundation of the most practical philosophy, the message of a universal and practical spirituality. The knowledge of the Ātman, the knowledge that 'I am the pure and deathless Self' is the rock on which we can raise a strong, steady, and broad character. This teaching has been given to mankind again and again by spiritual teachers. Jesus gave it in his parable of the wise and foolish men who built their houses on rock and sand respectively. (Luke, vi. 48-9).

The *Gītā* also develops its scheme of practical spirituality on the basis of this divine in the heart of man and speaks of the man of steady wisdom—the *sthitaprajña*—as the fruit of that spirituality.

In the next two verses of the Upaniṣad, the third and fourth of chapter one, the teacher leads the student to a fuller understanding of the nature of the Ātman:

*Na tatra cakṣuḥ gacchati na vāk gacchati no manaḥ;*
*Na vidmo na vijānīmo yathaitadanuśiṣyāt—*

'The eye cannot approach It, neither speech, nor mind. We do not therefore know It, nor do we know how to teach It.'

*Anyadeva tat viditāt atho aviditāt adhi;*
*Iti śuśruma pūrvepāṁ ye naḥ tat vyācacakṣire—*

'It is different from what is known, and It is beyond what is unknown. Thus have we heard from our predecessors who instructed us about It.'

How guarded is the language used by the teacher here! The experience of which this is a report is difficult to communicate. Hence language has to be used with the greatest care. Language in the market place is of one type and language in the laboratory is of quite a different type. In the latter we need greater precision and brevity. And it is still more exacting in the plane of spiritual experience.

Here the sage is trying to communicate to the student his profound experience. But he finds it difficult to express this in words. So he simply says that 'the eyes do not go there', and so on. The eyes, ears, speech, and mind are among the instruments by which we gain experience and communicate it. They, however, fail with respect to the Ātman.

The more rarefied the ideas, the more refined must be the language employed to express them. But even the most purified, the most refined language fails to describe the Ātman. Similarly, thought, too, no matter how refined, fails to grasp the truth of the Ātman. So the sage adds, very simply, *na vidmo*, we do not know, *na vijānīmo yathaitat anuśiṣyāt*, nor do we know how to communicate It to you. The experience is so transcendental that it leaves no tracks behind. Says Gauḍapāda in his *Māṇḍūkya Kārikā* (IV. 95):

*Aje sāmye tu ye kecit bhaviṣyanti suniścitāḥ;*
*Te hi loke mahājñānā tacca loko na gāhate—*

'They alone are said to be of great intellect (wisdom) who are firm in their conviction of the Self, beyond causality and ever the same. This, ordinary men cannot grasp.'

In his comment on the above verse, Śaṅkara quotes the following verse from one of the Smṛtis:

*Sarvabhūtātmabhūtasya sarvabhūtahitasya ca;*
*Devā api mārge muhyanti apadasya padaiṣiṇaḥ—*

'Even the gods feel puzzled while trying to follow in the footsteps of those who leave no track behind, of those who realize themselves in all beings and who are always devoted to the welfare of all.'

Again and again the Upaniṣads speak of Brahman as the end of a trackless path, but they do not leave us helpless. They assure us that difficult though It is to attain, It is not unattainable. It is not easy to teach It in the way one teaches other subjects, but the student can be helped and guided towards it. The first require-

ment is that the student of this subject must be in a frame of mind somewhat different from that of the student of all other subjects. Here is needed extreme alertness and the capacity to learn from suggestive hints. In the earlier stages of education there is much talking and instruction by the teacher; and this becomes less and less in the higher stages where the student's mind, trained in alertness and thinking, becomes capable of learning from hints and suggestions from the teacher. This process reaches its highest consummation in the communication of spiritual knowledge. This finds vivid illustration in the episodes of teacher-student communication in several Upaniṣads.

Here, in this third verse of chapter one of the *Kena Upaniṣad,* we find the sage impressing upon the student that the knowledge he seeks cannot be given to him for the asking. He has to get it for himself. 'I am helpless to communicate it to you in the customary way', says the teacher. 'But I shall help you with a few hints.' The Ātman, says the teacher in the next verse, verse four, is *anyadeva tat viditāt*—'other than everything that is known'. That is the difficulty. *Vidita* means 'known'. Whatever is known through the senses and the mind, this Ātman is entirely different from all such things. So all our present knowledge will have to be turned aside. It has no value here. In this sphere, all positive science becomes nescience. It merely brings us knowledge of the world of change, of the *dṛśyam,* of the objective world. It gives us knowledge about things that are subject to the modifications of birth, growth, decay, and death. But the Ātman is none of these. It is other than everything that is known.

On hearing this, our minds tend to conclude that the Ātman, then, must be something unknown and unknowable, if not entirely non-existent. So why search for It? The mind naturally recoils from searching for something that is both unknown and unknowable. This idea entered several modern western philosophies, especially that of Herbert Spencer, after Kant had proved through his *Critique of Pure Reason* that the human mind had no capacity to know the noumenon.

The Upaniṣads, however, deal with this question rather differently. The Ātman, the absolute and the infinite Reality, beyond the categories of speech and thought, is beyond the categories of both the known and the unknown. The Ātman is not the unknown in this sense. For it is the most known of all, because It

is the *Dṛk*, the eternal Seer, the Self of all. It is not known as an item of objective experience, but It is the Self of the knower himself, and, as such, more known than any known object. For what is more known to me than my own Self? And so the teacher gives the next hint that It is *aviditāt adhi*, 'more than (or beyond) the unknown', and adds:

*Iti śuśruma pūrveṣāṁ ye naḥ tat vyācacakṣire*—

'Thus have we heard from our previous teachers who explained It to us.'

With what humility the sage speaks! He claims nothing for himself. Swami Vivekananda often referred to this humility of the sages of India who wrote great books but never claimed any originality for themselves. A modern writer, on the other hand, he said, perhaps steals from others most of the things he writes, and then claims them all to be his own.

But there is a further significance in this statement made by the sage of the *Kena Upaniṣad*. Since the Ātman cannot be perceived by the senses and the mind, the student must first hear about It from illumined souls. The sage has himself experienced It, as his teachers had done before him. By this assurance the student will be encouraged to enter upon the path himself, grasping it by the few hints that he has been given. If Ātman is beyond speech and thought, if It is *anyadeva tat viditāt*, other than everything that is known, and also *aviditāt adhi*, more than the unknown, if It is beyond both known and unknown, then what is It? And how are we to realize It? This is the question that the rest of this first chapter attempts to answer, as we shall see in subsequent lectures.

NINE

# KENA UPANIṢAD—3

The first four verses of the *Kena Upaniṣad* told us about the nature of the Ātman and the difficulty of its comprehension. While discussing that subject in the last lecture, I referred to the significance of this approach to man's search for ultimate reality. The mind first seeks for the meaning of existence in the various objects and events of the external world. Unable to get conclusive answers from this field, man later turns his attention to that profound mystery which lies within, his own Self. The search for this mystery takes him beyond the world of relativity, the world revealed by speech and thought, to the world of pure Being and pure Awareness, the world of his true nature, the eternal non-dual Self.

This realization is the supreme achievement of the human genius; and it is the legacy which the Upaniṣads have left for all humanity. The *Kena Upaniṣad* itself will tell us about the glory of this realization a few verses later (II. 4):

*Ātmanā vindate vīryaṁ vidyayā vindate amṛtam—*

'Man achieves great energy through the Ātman, and immortality through Its realization.'

## *The Nature of Reality*

In the last discourse we also discussed the difficulty experienced by the teacher of the Upaniṣad in communicating his realization of the Ātman. The language and the thought become extremely rarefied. The teacher and the student hardly speak; they just indicate their meaning in suggestive hints. In the transcendental realm of the Self, words assume their true status as suggestive symbols, the fainter, the more suggestive. As in Vedānta, so in the great scientific thought of today. words are valued as symbols only. As one great scientist has put it:

'Words are but the counters of wise men; they do but reckon with them; but they are the money of fools.'

The third verse of the *Kena Upaniṣad* told us that this Ātman is beyond speech, beyond the sense of hearing, beyond the mind; and then the Upaniṣad added in the fourth verse:

*Anyadeva tat viditāt atho aviditāt adhi—*

'It is other than all that is known, and It is also beyond the unknown.'

This statement conveys the philosophic seriousness of the Upaniṣadic mind. Commenting on this, Śaṅkara says:

*Na hi anyasya svātmano viditāviditābhyām anyatvaṁ vastunaḥ saṁbhavati iti ātmā brahma—*

'Apart from the Ātman (one's own Self), there cannot, verily, be any other entity which can be other than both the known and the unknown; and therefore the Ātman is Brahman.'

*The Spiritual Character of the Absolute*

The realization of the infinite dimension of the Self follows from the fact that it is other than the known and the unknown. If the infinite Self is our true nature, then we are essentially birthless and deathless and immortal. Death pertains to the body, to the sense organs, to the mind, and to the ego. These constantly change and finally die; they are not our Self, either singly or in combination. Our true form is infinite and immortal; this is elucidated in many an Upaniṣadic dialogue between disciple and teacher. These dialogues bear the impress of intimate communion between minds. They are not like the discourses given by a learned lecturer to a class of listless students of philosophy in some of our modern colleges. They bear the stamp of philosophical quest and spiritual earnestness. The teaching they convey proceeds from spiritual realization and leads to spiritual comprehension.

The Upaniṣad now proceeds to elucidate in refrain, in the fifth and subsequent four verses of its first chapter, the infinite nature of the Self of man:

*Yadvācānabhyuditaṁ yenavāgabhyudyate;*
*Tadeva brahma tvaṁ viddhi nedaṁ yadidaṁ upāsate—*

'What speech cannot reveal, but what reveals speech—know thou That alone as Brahman, and not this (anything objective) that people worship here.'

*Yanmanasā na manute yenāhur mano matam;*
*Tadeva brahma tvaṁ viddhi nedaṁ yadidam upāsate—*

'What mind does not comprehend, but what comprehends the mind—know thou That alone as Brahman, and not this that people worship here.'

*Yaccakṣuṣā na paśyati yena cakṣūṁṣi paśyati*
*Tadeva brahma tvaṁ viddhi nedaṁ yadidam upāsate—*

'What sight fails to see, but what sees sight—know thou That alone as Brahman, and not this that people worship here.'

*Yacchrotreṇa na śṛṇoti yena śrotraṁ idaṁ śrutam;*
*Tadeva brahma tvaṁ viddhi nedaṁ yadidam upāsate—*

'What hearing fails to hear, but what hears hearing—know thou That alone as Brahman, and not this that people worship here.'

*Yat prāṇena na prāṇiti yena prāṇaḥ praṇīyate;*
*Tadeva brahma tvaṁ viddhi nedaṁ yadidam upāsate—*

'What smell does not reveal, but what reveals smell—know thou That alone as Brahman, and not this that people worship here.'

### *Conceptual God versus True God*

These five verses proclaim the spiritual character of the Absolute or Brahman: It is the Self of man, which his sense-organs and mind cannot reveal but which reveals the sense-organs and the mind. These verses also stress the need to go beyond all idolatry in order to be able to worship God in spirit and in truth. Vedānta treats as idolatry not only the worship of stocks and stones, which Semitic monotheism condemns as heathen superstition, but also the worship of the Semitic monotheistic personal God as well. For that God is a concept and, as such, is as much an item of the objective universe as the heathen idols are. Man creates his gods, including the monotheistic God. The only uncreated God is the eternal Self in man; and that is the God that Vedānta proclaims. Says Swami Vivekananda in his lecture on 'The Real and the Apparent Man' (*Complete Works*, Vol. II, p. 279):

'In worshipping God we have been always worshipping our own hidden Self.'

The God proclaimed by man's speech and thought is as much an idol as that fashioned by his hands. Dissatisfied with these creations of the human imagination, the Upaniṣads sought for the immortal and eternal God in the soul of man and found Him in 'the Ātman which is immediate and direct and the innermost Self of all', as the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* majestically expresses it (III. iv. 1). The Upaniṣads also discovered that, illumined by the knowledge of this *living* God, all worship of idols becomes transformed into worship of ideals, idols becoming mere symbols.

It is this philosophic comprehension that helped Vedānta to assume a sympathetic and understanding view of all forms of idol worship and all forms of popular worship. As the *Ṛg-Veda* put it: *Ekaṁ sat; viprā bahudhā vadanti*—'Truth is one; sages call It by various names.' It is equally the lack of this philosophic comprehension that made the Semitic religions dogmatic, narrow, and exclusive-minded, and made them condemn as superstition what they termed heathen idolatry of every kind, that is, all idolatry other than their own special brands. In the words of the historian, Toynbee (*An Historian's Approach to Religion*, pp. 282-83):

'It seems to be a matter of historical fact that, hitherto, the Judaic religions have been considerably more exclusive-minded than the Indian religions have. In a chapter of the world's history in which the adherents of the living higher religions seem likely to enter into much more intimate relations with one another than ever before, the spirit of the Indian religions, blowing where it listeth, may perhaps help to winnow a traditional Pharisaism out of Muslim, Christian, and Jewish hearts.'

The realization of the unity of Brahman and Ātman lies at the back of India's charity and comprehension in the world of religion; her long history has been marked by a pervasive mood of acceptance of other forms of belief. This realization did not remain merely as a spiritual idea but became the inspiration of saints and simple devotees as much as of administrators and statesmen. It found brilliant expression in our time in Sri Ramakrishna who realized the universality of truth and the harmony of all religions. Man takes to a particular symbol of God and worships it. He is devoted to it. He ignores everything else; and he develops the feeling that that alone is true, that that alone is the way to salvation. He thinks that he alone has the light and all others are in varying degrees of darkness; and he then prays to his God: 'O Lord, give to all others the light that I possess.'

This is how bigotry, narrowness, and, in its train, persecution come into the world. Opposed to it is the Indian idea that the divine Light is in the heart of all; that men approach It through the help of various symbols; and that the paths are many but the goal is one. This Indian approach makes for tolerance, understanding, and peace.

India discovered long ago the truth of the limitation of the senses. The senses reveal so little, though to an average man the senses and the mind are the gateways of all available knowledge.

But as his understanding grows, man begins to realize more and more the utter incapacity of the senses to pierce appearances and give knowledge of truth. This understanding has come to modern science in the twentieth century; it was not there in the nineteenth century.

The teacher of the *Kena Upaniṣad* denies the power of the senses and the mind to reveal the reality of the Self; for that reality is the power behind even them. Can a torchlight help to reveal the sun? They perform their own limited functions with the nourishment drawn from that infinite source. The last chapters of this Upaniṣad, as we shall see later, expound this truth through an arresting parable.

*Tadeva brahma tvaṁ viddhi nedaṁ yadidam upāsate*—'Know thou That alone as Brahman, and not this that people worship here,' says the Upaniṣad. This breathes the deep concern of the Upaniṣad to remove all traces of materiality and objectivity from man's conception of God, and to give him a *living* God in place of his anthropomorphic conceptions. This is the eternal Self of man. In the light of this living God, the anthropomorphic gods also become transformed into living gods, and the different faiths into tolerant co-operating units. Vedānta does not condemn or destroy any faith or form of worship. *Its aim is to illumine every faith and every worship with the light of the one living God of all religions.* Says Swami Vivekananda (*Complete Works*, Vol. II, pp. 81-82):

'What are these ideas of religion and God and searching for the hereafter? Why does man look for a God? Why does man, in every nation, in every state of society, want a perfect ideal somewhere, either in man, in God, or elsewhere? Because that idea is within you. It was your own heart beating and you did not know, you were mistaking it for something external. It is the God within your own Self that is propelling you to seek for Him, to realize Him. After long searches here and there, in temples and in churches, in earths and in heavens, at last you come back, completing the circle from where you started, to your own soul and find that He, for whom you have been seeking all over the world, for whom you have been weeping and praying in churches and temples, on whom you were looking as the mystery of all mysteries shrouded in the clouds, is nearest of the near, is your own Self, the reality of your life, body, and soul. That is your own nature. Assert it, manifest it. Not to *become* pure, you *are* pure already. You are not to be perfect, you are that already. Nature is like that screen which is hiding the reality beyond.

Every good thought that you think or act upon, is simply tearing the veil, as it were, and the purity, the infinity, the God behind, manifests Itself more and more. This is the whole history of man. Finer and finer becomes the veil, more and more of the light behind shines forth, for it is its nature to shine. It cannot be known; in vain we try to know it. Were it knowable, it would not be what it is, for it is the eternal subject. Knowledge is a limitation, knowledge is objectifying. He is the eternal subject of everything, the eternal witness in this universe, your own Self. Knowledge is, as it were, a lower step, a degeneration. We are that eternal subject already; how can we know it? It is the real nature of every man and he is struggling to express it in various ways.'

*Pitfalls in the Path*

In the second chapter of this Upaniṣad we are treated to a subtle communication of spiritual truth from teacher to student. The teacher helps the disciple to capture the right frame of mind with which to comprehend this extremely subtle truth of the Ātman. The disciple tries earnestly and feels that he has comprehended the truth well; and he expresses this to his teacher. But the teacher, in order to remove the least flaw in his understanding of so vital a truth, asks the student, in the very opening verse, to re-assess himself carefully:

*Yadi manyase suvedeti, dabhramevāpi nūnaṁ tvaṁ vettha brahmaṇo rūpam, yadasya tvaṁ yadasya deveṣvatha nu mīmāṁsyameva te; manye viditam—*

'If you think that you know Brahman well, then you know little indeed; for the form of Brahman that you see as conditioned in living beings and celestial beings is but a trifle. Therefore you should enquire further about Brahman.

'(The disciple, after reflecting further and fully realizing Brahman, replied):

'I think I have understood (Brahman).'

The teacher had a suspicion that the disciple had understood Brahman as the spiritual presence in the vast objective manifold; and even in this, he felt, the disciple had not grasped the infinite dimensions of that presence. *Dabhramevāpi nūnaṁ tvaṁ vettha brahmaṇo rūpam*—'very little indeed of Brahman's form have you known', said the teacher and continued: *Atha nu te (brahma) mīmāṁsyam eva*—'Therefore your Brahman needs further investigation.'

The disciple took the hint and sat quietly and thought deeply about the implications of the words of the teacher that Brahman is other than the known and beyond the unknown. 'What can this profound truth be?' In the depths of his meditation, the truth dawned on the disciple's pure mind and he exclaimed: *Manye viditam*—'I think I know it.'

The cautious mood and the careful approach on the part of disciple and teacher bespeak of the extreme subtlety of the subject. Easy and quick comprehension may turn out to be wrong comprehension, as in the case of Virocana, whose discipleship together with Indra under the teacher Prajāpati forms a fascinating section of the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* (VIII. vii-xv).

Referring to this episode in his comment on this verse of the *Kena Upaniṣad*, Śaṅkara says:

*Dṛṣṭaṁ ca, 'ya eṣo'kṣiṇi puruṣo dṛśyate eṣa ātmeti hovāca, etadamṛtam abhayam, etad brahma', ityukte prājāpatyaḥ paṇḍito api asurarāṭ virocanaḥ, svabhāvadoṣavaśāt anupapadyamānamapi viparitamarthaṁ śarīram ātmeti pratipannaḥ. Tathā indro devarāṭ, sakṛt dvistriruktaṁ ca apratipadyamānaḥ, svabhāvadoṣakṣayam apekṣya caturthe paryāye prathamoktameva brahma pratipannavān*—

'It has been seen that when the teacher said: "The person that is seen in the eye, this is the Ātman, this is the immortal and fearless Brahman," Virocana, even though a scholar and ruler of the *asuras*, and son of Prajāpati, on account of the blemish in his nature, and in spite of non-comprehension of the teaching, understood the opposite of what was taught, namely, that the body was the Ātman. Similarly Indra, the ruler of the *devas*, not comprehending the teaching at his first, second, and third attempts, grasped the truth of Brahman at the fourth attempt from the initial exposition itself, as a consequence of the destruction of the blemish in his nature.'

It is a matter of daily experience in education that some students stumble many times in trying to understand even an ordinary subject. The capacity to grasp also varies from student to student. To quote Śaṅkara's interesting remarks on this point from the same commentary:

*Loke api, ekasmāt guroḥ śṛṇvatāṁ, kaścit yathāvat pratipadyate, kaścit ayathāvat, kaścit viparītaṁ, kaścit na pratipadyate; kimu vaktavyam atīndriyam ātmatatvam*—

'Even in the world, from among a group of students listening to a teacher, some students grasp correctly, some wrongly, some just the opposite, while some fail to grasp anything at all; (if this is so in the worldly sphere), what to speak of the difficulty in comprehending the truth of the Ātman which transcends the senses?

*Cautiousness of Statement*

The student said: *manye viditam*—'I think I know it.' What was the content of his realization? We have it in the next verse (II. 2) in the words of the student himself:

> *Nāham manye suvedeti, no na vedeti, veda ca;*
> *Yo naḥ tat veda tat veda no na vedeti veda ca—*

'I do not think I know It well: nor do I think that I do not know It; I know too. He amongst us knows It who knows that It is other than the unknown and the known.'

In his commentary on this verse, Śaṅkara brings out the power of spiritual conviction behind the words of the student:

*Anyadeva tat viditāt, atho aviditāt adhi, ityācāryoktāgama sampradāyabalāt upapattyanubhavabalācca, jagarja ca brahmavidyāyāṁ dṛḍhaniścayatāṁ darśayannātmānaḥ—*

'The teacher had said: "It is other than the known and also beyond the unknown." On the strength of the spiritual tradition embodied in that saying and on the strength also of rational conviction and personal experience, the student roared (like a lion), thus demonstrating his firm conviction in the knowledge of Brahman.'

*Nāham manye suvedeti*—'I do not think I know It well.' This kind of knowing—*suveda*—can apply only to things objective. But Brahman is the eternal subject. And therefore the second negation: *no na vedeti*—'But not that I do not know It'. How can the student say that he does not know It when he has realized It as his own Self? What he has achieved is not mediate knowledge but knowledge immediate and direct, like the recognition of one's own name; and so he adds: *veda ca*—'I know too.'

Says Śaṅkara in his *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi* (Verse 532):

> *Devadatto'ham ityetat vijñānaṁ nirapekṣakam;*
> *Tadvat brahmavido'pyasya brahmāhamiti vedanam—*

'The awareness "I am Mr. Devadatta" is independent of external circumstances; similar is the case with the realization of a knower of Brahman that he is Brahman.'

Questioned by the teacher, the student in the *Kena Upaniṣad* clarifies himself in the second half of the verse:

*Yo naḥ tat veda tat veda no na vedeti veda ca—*

'He amongst us knows It who knows that It is other than the unknown and the known.'

And in the next verse (II. 3) the Upaniṣad itself clarifies the student's statement:

*Yasyāmataṁ tasya mataṁ mataṁ yasya na veda saḥ;*
*Avijñātaṁ vijānatāṁ vijñātam avijānatām—*

'He knows It, who knows (conceives) It not; and he knows It not, who knows (conceives) It. To the man of true knowledge, It is the "unknown", while to the ignorant It is the "known".'

A concept or idea of Brahman is not Brahman. When a man thinks he knows Brahman, he has formed only a concept of It; he does not know Brahman truly. On the other hand, he who truly knows Brahman, knows that he cannot know It through his sense-organs and mind. In the words of the *Aṣṭāvakra Saṁhitā* (XII. 7):

*Acintyaṁ cintyamāno'pi cintārūpaṁ bhajatyasau;*
*Tyaktvā tadbhāvanaṁ tasmāt evamevāhaṁ āsthitaḥ—*

'Thinking on the unthinkable One, one betakes oneself only to a form of thought. Therefore giving up that thought, thus verily do I abide.'

Sri Ramakrishna explains this truth through a parable (*The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, 1947 Edition, Ramakrishna Math, Madras 4, p. 28):

'A man had two sons. The father sent them to a preceptor to learn the knowledge of Brahman. After a few years they returned from their preceptor's house and bowed low before their father. Wanting to measure the depth of their knowledge of Brahman, he first questioned the older of the two boys. "My child," he said, "you have studied all the scriptures. Now tell me, what is the nature of Brahman?" The boy began to explain Brahman by reciting various texts from the Vedas. The father did not say anything. Then he asked the younger son the same question. But the boy remained silent and stood with eyes cast down. No word escaped his lips. The father was pleased and said to him: "My

child, you have understood a little of Brahman. What It is cannot be expressed in words."'

The greatest among the mystics of East and West have referred to this inadequacy of human language to communicate the deepest spiritual experience. The thought of Jacob Boehme, a great European mystic who was an unlearned shoe-maker, and of Eckhart, the scholarly saint, also of Europe, bears close kinship to the thought of the Upaniṣads. Says Boehme (Quoted by Evelyn Underhill: *The Mystics of the Church*, p. 217):

'I can but stammer of great mysteries like a child that is beginning to speak; so very little can the earthly tongue express of that which the Spirit comprehends.'

Says Eckhart:

'"Thou shalt apprehend God without image, without semblance, and without means"—but for me, to know God thus, without means, I must be very He and He very me.'

Even great masters of language have felt a profound humility before the deep mystery of existence. Sings the English poet Tennyson in his *In Memoriam* (LIV):

Behold, we know not anything;
  I can but trust that good shall fall
  At last—far off—at last, to all,
And every winter change to spring.

So runs my dream: but what am I?
  An infant crying in the night:
  An infant crying for the light:
And with no language but a cry.

*The Nature of Brahman-Realization*

If Brahman is entirely unknown to the knowing ones—*avijñātaṁ vijānatām*—then what is the difference between the knowing one and the ignorant one? Therefore it cannot be that Brahman is entirely unknown to the knowing one. In what way, then, does he know Brahman? The next verse, verse four of chapter two, gives the answer to this question in one of the most profound utterances of all the Upaniṣads:

*Pratibodhaviditaṁ matam amṛtatvaṁ hi vindate* ;
*Ātmanā vindate vīryaṁ vidyayā vindate amṛtam*—

'Indeed, he attains immortality, who realizes It in and through every *bodha* (pulsation of knowledge and awareness). Through

the Ātman he obtains strength and vigour, and through (Its) knowledge, immortality.'

*Pratibodhaviditam* means *bodhaṁ bodhaṁ prati viditam*—known through every mental act. The Ātman as pure Awareness is the unchangeable witness of all mental states, whether waking, dreaming, or in dreamless sleep. Śaṅkara's comment on this verse is illuminating:

*'Sarve pratyayā viṣayībhavanti yasya, sa ātmā, sarvabodhān pratibudhyate, sarvapratyayadarśī, cicchaktisvarūpamātraḥ, pratyayaireva pratyayeṣu aviśiṣṭatayā lakṣyate, nānyat dvāram ātmano vijñānāya—*

'He is the Ātman to whom all mental modifications are objects of awareness, who knows all mental states, who is the seer of all mental states, who himself is of the nature of the essence of pure Awareness, whose reflection is perceived by mental states in and through mental states as indistinguishable from them, there being no other means of knowing Him.'

The Ātman is the light of pure Awareness which lights up every act of knowledge and awareness of the mind. It follows accordingly that every mental modification reveals the light of the Ātman, reveals the light that lights up the modification. Hence the Ātman is *pratibodhaviditam*—'known through every pulsation of knowledge and awareness'. As expressed by Śaṅkara in his *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi* (Verse 217):

*Jāgrat svapna suṣuptiṣu sphuṭataraṁ*
*yo'sau samujjṛmbhate*
*pratyagrūpatayā sadā aham aham*
*ityantaḥ sphurannaikadhā;*
*Nānākāravikārabhāgina imān*
*paśyannahaṁdhīmukhān*
*Nityānanda cidātmanā sphurati taṁ*
*viddhi svametaṁ hṛdi—*

'That which clearly manifests Itself in the waking, dream, and dreamless sleep states; which is inwardly perceived in the mind, in various forms, as an unbroken series of "I" impressions; which is the witness of the ego, *buddhi* (intellect), etc. which are of diverse forms and modifications; and which shines as the eternal existence-knowledge-bliss Absolute, know thou this Ātman, thy own Self, within thy heart.'

### *The Continuity of the Indian Spiritual Tradition*

Spirituality, according to the Upaniṣads, is as much a communicable and verifiable truth as any physical scientific truth. The behaviour of liquids, solids, and gases under high temperature or low, under high pressure or low, is scientific truth arrived at by experiment, and open to verification by any competent individual. The Ātman, the divine nature of man, and Its realization, which this Upaniṣad expounds through a dialogue between a realized teacher and his earnest student, is truth similarly established by spiritual experiment, and verified by countless spiritual experiments in subsequent stages. As in physical science, so in religion, we do not live on the plane of guessing or surmise but on the plane of verified and verifiable truth. This dialogue between teacher and student discloses the last stages of the journey of man to the spiritual centre of his being which is also the spiritual centre of all existence. The summit of that experience is the truth expressed in the equation: Ātman is Brahman. That experience makes the fortunate ones who achieve it universal in vision and sympathy.

The *Kena Upaniṣad* dialogue is not the account of a final and closed revelation which we are asked to accept in faith. On the contrary, it is a revelation open to re-creation in his own life by every man and woman; it has found verification in scores of spiritual experimenters in subsequent ages, of whom the most glorious and outstanding was Buddha. It found its latest verification in Sri Ramakrishna in the last century. The account of his Advaita *sādhanā* under the guidance of his teacher, Totapuri, throws a flood of light on this *Kena Upaniṣad* dialogue and reveals the livingness and unbroken continuity of the Upaniṣadic spiritual tradition.

### *Totapuri and Sri Ramakrishna*

By about the end of 1865, when he was twenty-nine years old, Sri Ramakrishna had finished his ten years-long *sādhanās* based on the path of *bhakti* or devotion in which the devotee looks upon God as a Person and as the Other. He had been blessed with innumerable visions and other spiritual experiences. Endowed with the highest purity and renunciation, his mind had attained an extraordinary moral and spiritual sensitivity which made it plunge into a divine mood at the slightest spiritual suggestion. Absorbed in one of these moods, Sri Ramakrishna was one day sitting in a

corner of the open portico at the bathing ghat of the Dakshineswar temple on the sacred river, the Gaṅgā. Just then a wandering monk, by name Totapuri, alighted from a boat at the steps of the ghat, and walked up to the portico. As soon as his eyes fell on Sri Ramakrishṇa, he felt an instant attraction for this young man and felt a conviction in his heart of hearts that he was far out of the ordinary.

Totapuri himself was out of the ordinary. Hailing from Punjab and entering the monastic life in his boyhood, he was endowed with a robust physique and an iron will; and he had a fascination for the impersonal God, the non-dual Brahman. After forty years of unremitting spiritual practice, performed on the banks of the sacred Narmada river in Central India, he obtained the fruit of this path of the Advaita Vedānta, the experience of *nirvikalpa samādhi*, the impersonal, unconditioned state which Śaṅkara describes thus in three glorious verses in his *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi* (408-410):

*Kimapi satatabodhaṁ kevalānandarūpam*
*nirupamamativelaṁ nityamuktaṁ nirīham;*
*Niravadhigaganābhaṁ niṣkalaṁ nirvikalpam*
*hṛdi kalayati vidvān brahma pūrṇaṁ samādhau—*

'The wise one realizes in his heart, in *samādhi*, the infinite Brahman, which is an ineffable Something, of the nature of eternal Knowledge and absolute Bliss, which has no exemplar, which transcends all limitations, is ever free and without activity, which is like the limitless sky, indivisible and absolute.'

*Prakṛtivikṛtiśūnyaṁ bhāvanātītabhāvam*
*samarasam asamānaṁ mānasaṁbandhadūram;*
*Nigamavacanasiddhaṁ nityamasmatprasiddham*
*hṛdi kalayati vidvān brahma pūrṇaṁ samādhau—*

'The wise one realizes in his heart, in *samādhi*, the infinite Brahman, which is devoid of the touch of cause and effect, which is the Reality beyond all imagination, which is homogeneous, matchless, beyond the reach of logical proofs, (but) proved by the experience of the wise as recorded in the Vedāntic spiritual tradition, and ever familiar to man as the basis of his self-awareness.'

*Ajaramamaram astābhāvavastusvarūpam*
*stimitasalilarāśi prakhyamākhyāvihīnam;*
*Śamitaguṇavikāraṁ śāśvataṁ śāntamekam*
*hṛdi kalayati vidvān brahma pūrṇaṁ samādhau—*

'The wise one realizes in his heart, in *samādhi*, the infinite Brahman, which is undecaying and immortal, the Reality which is the negation of all negations, which resembles the ocean when the waves have subsided, which is without a name, in which have subsided all the modifications of the *guṇas*, (nature's modes), and which is eternal, pacified, and One.'

Having achieved this blessed experience, Totapuri wandered from place to place without any aim or purpose of his own, but fulfilling inscrutable divine purposes. The incomparable strength and freedom behind that wandering is difficult to gauge by ordinary minds. We get a glimpse of it in Buddha's inspiring charge to the enlightened soul (*Dhammapada*):

'Go forward without a path!
Fearing nothing, caring for nothing,
Wander alone, like the rhinoceros!
Even as the lion not trembling at noises,
Even as the wind not caught in a net,
Even as the lotus-leaf unstained by the water,
Do thou wander alone, like the rhinoceros!'

Realizing Brahman as the one Reality, and looking upon the world as an appearance, Totapuri spent his life under the canopy of heaven, alike in storm and sunshine, maintaining himself on alms. His wanderings took him to many a holy place in India, including Gaṅgāsāgar in Bengal, where the holy Gaṅgā meets the sea. It was on his return journey from there that he went to the Dakshineswar temple which, thanks to the piety, generosity, and broad-mindedness of its founder, Rani Rasmani, was then drawing holy men, ordinary and extraordinary, from all creeds and sects. Some of these, like Jatadhari and Bhairavi Brahmani, had already met Sri Ramakrishna and guided him to realization through their respective spiritual paths of the *bhakti* school. Totapuri represented an altogether different path, the path of *jñāna*, the path of the impersonal God, the path blazoned by the sages of the Upaniṣads and the great Buddha.

As soon as Totapuri's eyes fell on Sri Ramakrishna he recognized in him a fit aspirant for the path of the unconditioned and impersonal Brahman. He asked Sri Ramakrishna whether he would like to learn Vedānta. He told him: 'You seem to be an advanced seeker after truth. Would you like to be initiated in the path of Advaita realization?' Sri Ramakrishna felt a divine

urge within to agree. Under Totapuri's directions, Sri Ramakrishna performed the various ceremonies preliminary to the grand ceremony of *sannyāsa*—total renunciation of the world. One day, about two hours before dawn, both repaired to a small hut in a sequestered spot, not far from Sri Ramakrishna's room. Totapuri administered to Sri Ramakrishna the traditional monastic vows of complete renunciation of all the pleasures of life, both earthly and heavenly, and the holy vow to dedicate all one's mind and heart to the highest truth of the non-dual Brahman, and to be a source of fearlessness to all beings. And in the stillness of that early dawn, the teacher and the disciple re-enacted the momentous drama of tangible spiritual communication which has so often been enacted in India before. Prostrating himself before his teacher, Sri Ramakrishna then took his seat to receive instruction from Totapuri in the philosophy of Brahman.

To quote the words of Swami Saradananda, one of the direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna (*Sri Ramakrishna the Great Master*, 1952 Edition, Ramakrishna Math, Madras 4, pp. 254-55):

'He (Totapuri) said to the Master: "The Brahman, the one substance which alone is eternally pure, eternally awakened, unlimited by time, space, and causation, is absolutely real. Through *Māyā*, which makes the impossible possible, It causes, by virtue of its influence, to seem (*sic*) that It is divided into names and forms. Brahman is never really so. For, at the time of *samādhi*, not even a drop, so to speak, of time and space, and name and form, produced by *Māyā* is perceived. Whatever, therefore, is within the bounds of name and form can never be absolutely real. Shun it at a good distance. Break the firm cage of name and form with the overpowering strength of a lion and come out of it. Dive deep into the reality of the Self existing in yourself. Be one with It with the help of *samādhi*. You will then see the universe, consisting of name and form, vanish as it were into the void; you will see the consciousness of the little "I" merge in that of the immense "I", where it ceases to function; and you will have the immediate knowledge of the indivisible Existence-Knowledge-Bliss as yourself. The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (II. iv. 14) says: 'The consciousness, with the help of which a person sees another, knows another, or hears another, is little or limited; whatever is limited is worthless; for the supreme bliss is not there; but the knowledge, established in which a person becomes devoid of the consciousness of seeing another, knowing another, and hearing another, is the immense or the unlimited one. With the help of that knowledge, one gets identified with the supreme bliss. What mind or intellect is able to know that which exists as the Knower in the hearts of all?" '

After instructing his disciple thus in the central ideas of the *jñāna* path of Vedānta, Totapuri exhorted Sri Ramakrishna to fix his mind on the unconditioned Brahman. This part of the momentous story is best told in the words of Sri Ramakrishna himself (*Life of Sri Ramakrishna*, Sixth Edition, pp. 189-90):

'After the initiation, *Nangta*, "the naked one" (this was the appellation which Sri Ramakrishna, out of respect, invariably used for his *guru*, who, being a monk of the *Nāga* Order, generally went about naked) began to teach me the various conclusions of the Advaita Vedānta and asked me to withdraw the mind completely from all objects and dive into the Ātman. But in spite of all my attempts I could not cross the realm of name and form and bring my mind to the unconditioned state. I had no difficulty in withdrawing the mind from all other objects except one, the all too familiar form of the blissful Mother—radiant and of the essence of pure Consciousness—which appeared before me as a living reality preventing me from passing beyond the realm of name and form. Again and again I tried to concentrate my mind on the Advaita teachings, but every time the Mother's form stood in my way. In despair I said to "the naked one", "It is hopeless. I cannot raise my mind to the unconditioned state and come face to face with the Ātman." He grew excited and sharply said, "What? You can't do it. But you have to." He cast his eyes around, and finding a piece of glass he took it up and pressing the point between my eyebrows said, "Concentrate the mind on this point." Then with a stern determination I again sat to meditate, and as soon as the gracious form of the Divine Mother appeared before me, I used my discrimination as a sword and with it severed it in two. There remained no more obstruction to my mind, which at once soared beyond the relative plane, and I lost myself in *samādhi*.'

Sri Ramakrishna passed into the unconditioned state of the *nirvikalpa samādhi;* the senses and the mind stopped their functions; the body became motionless. He had realized Brahman, become one with Brahman, beyond all speech and thought.

Totapuri sat for a long time silently watching his disciple. Finding him still motionless, he left the hut, locking the door from outside lest anyone should intrude without his knowledge; he remained outside awaiting the disciple's call from within to open the door. The day passed, night came, a second and a third day and night also passed, and still there was no call. Totapuri was astonished. He opened the door and entered the room. He was speechless with wonder to see Sri Ramakrishna seated in the very same position in which he had left him. The face was calm, serene, and radiant. In breathless amazement he examined the disciple's heart and respiration and touched again and again the disciple's

almost corpse-like body. There was no sign of consciousness. He cried in bewilderment at the miracle of this young man achieving in a single day this highest realization of *nirvikalpa samādhi* which had taken him forty years of hard practice to realize.

Totapuri immediately took steps to bring the mind of his disciple down to the world of phenomena. The little room rang with the holy *mantra—Hari Om*—uttered in a solemn tone by the teacher. Little by little Sri Ramakrishna's mind came to an awareness of the outer world; and as he opened his eyes, he saw his teacher looking at him with tenderness and admiration. The disciple reverently prostrated himself before the teacher who in turn locked him in a warm embrace.

*The Fruit of Wisdom Is Strength*

"Through Ātman man obtains real strength, and through knowledge, immortality': *Ātmanā vindate vīryaṁ vidyayā vindate amṛtam*, said verse four of the second chapter of the *Kena Upaniṣad*. Strength is the product of man's knowing himself. A little self-knowledge has enabled man to control animals physically stronger than himself. Men possessed of self-knowledge control men bereft of it. Ordinary self-knowledge can be used to control and exploit others; but self-knowledge proceeding from the Ātman, the one Self in all, confers universality of outlook and sympathy, as the next verse of this Upaniṣad will tell us. This Ātman is the infinite reservoir of all strength and energy. Its manifestation is what we achieve through proper education. A well-developed character manifests more of this innate strength and energy than an ill-developed character. *There is the quality of innateness and inalienability in the strength derived from all forms of character as different from that derived from wealth and power and other external possessions.* Hence character is the most dependable source of strength and energy. External possessions, on the other hand, can confer only limited strength and limited fearlessness. Of all character, a spiritual character, a character that draws nourishment from the Ātman within, manifests the greatest strength; for it overcomes death itself. Commenting on this passage, Śaṅkara says:

*Dhanasahāyamantrauṣadhitapoyogakṛtaṁ vīryaṁ mṛtyuṁ na śaknoti abhibhavitum, anityavastukṛtatvāt; ātmavidyākṛtaṁ tu vīryam ātmanaiva vindate, na anyena, ityato ananyasādhanatvāt ātmavidyāvīryasya, tadeva vīryaṁ mṛtyuṁ śaknoti abhibhavitum—*

'The strength proceeding from wealth, friends, magic incantations, drugs, austerity, and mind-control cannot overcome death; because it is the product of things which are themselves transitory. The strength proceeding from the knowledge of the Ātman, on the contrary, is attained through the Ātman only and not through something else. Thus the strength arising from the knowledge of the Ātman, being self-attained, can alone overcome death, it being self-attained and not mediated by some other thing.'

Being the source of supreme strength, this knowledge confers also immortality. The knowledge that 'I am the Ātman' is also the knowledge that 'I am immortal'.

The nature of this realization of immortality forms the theme of the fifth and last verse of this second chapter which we shall discuss in the next lecture.

TEN

# KENA UPANISAD—4

In the last lecture the *Kena Upaniṣad* was expounding to us the nature of the highest spiritual experience which is so rarely obtained because it lies beyond the senses and the mind.

The Upaniṣad told us, in its own enigmatic language, that the profound truth of the Ātman, our immortal divine nature, is *unknown to those who know but known to those who do not know*. But if this truth is so transcendent and so extremely subtle, how are we to grasp it, to profit by it?

The Upaniṣad, in the fourth verse of chapter two, assured us that this Ātman, though it transcends the mind and the senses, has yet left its impress, its footprints, so to say, on the world of experience, especially on the mind and the senses:

*Pratibodhaviditaṁ mataṁ amṛtatvaṁ hi vindate*—'Indeed, he attains immortality who realizes the Ātman in and through every pulsation of knowledge and awareness.'

*Footprints of the Ātman on the Sands of Experience*

The movements of the mind reveal the presence of the Ātman behind. Says the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (I. iv. 7):

*Tadetat padanīyam asya sarvasya yad ayam ātma; anena hyetat sarvaṁ veda. Yathā ha vai padenānuvindet evam*—

'Of all these, this Self alone should be realized; one knows all these through It. Just as one may get at (an animal) through its footprints, (so may one get at the Self through Its footprints on the sands of experience).'

Commenting on the above passage Śaṅkara says:

*Kathaṁ punaḥ etat padanīyam, iti ucyate; yathā ha vai loke padena; gavādi khurāṅkito deśaḥ padam ityucyate, tena padena, naṣṭaṁ vivitsitaṁ paśuṁ padena anveṣamāṇo anuvindet, labheta*—'How, again, is This (Self) to be attained? It is thus replied: Just as, in the world, one may get back a missing animal that is wanted by seeking it through its foot, "foot" here means the ground with the print of hoof-marks left by a cow etc.'

The *Kena Upaniṣad* further told us that this realization is the source of infinite strength: *Ātmanā vindate vīryaṁ vidyayā vindate*

*amṛtam*—'Man attains energy and vigour through the Ātman, and immortality through the knowledge of It.'

Change and death belong to the body, the senses, and the mind, to all things in our personality that are composite. But the Ātman is a simple and not a compound. Hence it is deathless. We become immortal when we become truly ourselves, when we know our true nature.

*Scholarship versus Spirituality*

This *vidyā* or knowledge is not the knowledge that we usually acquire through books or through the study of nature. That cannot confer immortality, as it deals with the perishable and the changeable and with things external to ourselves. This knowledge, on the other hand, has reference to the unchangeable in experience, it is knowledge of the Self, *ātmajñāna*, and not of the non-Self. It is beyond sense-knowledge; it is 'beyond the known and the unknown', which are the two categories of knowledge at the sense level, *anyadeva tat viditāt atho aviditāt adhi*.

When a man understands this, he will consider the enormous fund of scholarship hitherto gathered to be so much lumber in his head; he will then wish for nothing more than to get rid of this mental dead weight, this learned ignorance, and strive for true knowledge. When young Ramakrishna was pressed by his loving elder brother to go to school, he gave a reply characteristic of this mood and temper (*Life of Sri Ramakrishna*, p. 50):

'Brother, what shall I do with a mere bread-winning education? I would rather acquire that wisdom which will illumine my heart and, getting which, one is satisfied for ever.'

When Swami Vivekananda, then young Narendra about to appear for his law examination, experienced this tremendous thirst for spiritual realization, the following interesting conversation took place between him and his master, Sri Ramakrishna (*The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, p. 925):

'Master (to Narendra, smiling): "Won't you continue your studies?" '

'Narendra (looking at the Master and M.): "I shall feel greatly relieved if I find a medicine that will make me forget all I have studied".'

Says the *Aṣṭāvakra Saṁhitā* (XVI. 1 and 11):

*Acakṣva śṛnu vā tāta nānāśāstrāṇyanekaśaḥ;*
*Tathāpi na tava svāsthyaṁ sarvavismaraṇāt ṛte—*

'My child, you may often speak on various scriptures or hear them. Even then you cannot be established in the Self *unless you forget all.*'

*Haro yadyupadeṣṭā te hariḥ kamalajo'pi vā;*
*Tathāpi na tava svāsthyaṁ sarvavismaraṇāt ṛte—*

'Let even Hara (Śiva), Hari (Viṣṇu), or the lotus-born (Brahmā) be your instructor; even then you cannot be established in the Self *unless you forget all.*'

The enormous energies proceeding from the personalities of the great spiritual teachers of mankind like Buddha, Jesus, Ramakrishna, and Vivekananda have their source in this immortal divine Self. All knowledge is power; but Self-knowledge is power *par excellence.*

### *Realization Here and Now*

Having thus expounded the glory and excellence of this knowledge, the Upaniṣad now proceeds to tell us, in the fifth and last verse of chapter two, that this realization is to be achieved *here* and *now*, in this very life, and not in a post-mortem heaven:

*Iha cedavedīt atha satyamasti*
*na cedihāvedīt mahatī vinaṣṭiḥ;*
*Bhūteṣu bhūteṣu vicitya dhīrāḥ*
*pretyāsmāt lokāt amṛtā bhavanti—*

'For one who realizes It here (in this world) there is true life. For one who does not so realize It, great is the loss. Discovering the Ātman in every single being, the wise ones, dying to this world (of sense-experience), become immortal.'

This is a great pronouncement of Vedānta. Truth is to be realized *iha—here* and *now*, in this very life. This emphasis is valid only if truth is our very nature, our very birthright. Truth is the very Self of man, declares Vedānta. True life for man begins only when he turns his energies in the direction of the deathless Ātman within. It becomes fully achieved when the Ātman is realized. The Upaniṣad summons man to this realization so that he may experience true life before his body falls away. But if he neglects it and misses it in this life, great shall be his loss. What other gain by way of wealth and power and pleasure in the world,

or the ephemeral delights of heaven, can compensate for this loss? Asks Jesus (Mark, VIII. 36-7):

'What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?'

The life of the senses is finite and trivial. All exclusively secular education has reference to this finite level of existence. That education is healthy and creative when it leads man to the search for this infinite existence, to the search for the true life; otherwise, it ends in sharpening man's sense appetites and in an endless round of the trivial and the finite, which Vedānta characterizes as the stagnation of *saṁsāra*. And Vedānta finds the tragedy of life in man's confining himself, through spiritual blindness, to the finite and the trivial, in spite of his being born heir to the vast and infinite.

What must be the dimension of that awareness which lifts man from the finite and the trivial and gives him an insight into the vast and the infinite! This movement from the finite to the infinite is also the movement from the false life to the true; it is also the passing from mortality to immortality. All moral and spiritual life expresses this passion for and movement towards the infinite, the immortal. The human heart is never satisfied with the small, with the finite; it ever seeks the great, the infinite. In the words of the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* (VII. xxiii. 1):

*Yo vai bhūmā tat sukham; na alpe sukham asti; bhūmaiva sukham; bhumātveva vijijñāsitavyam*—

'That which is infinite is verily happiness; there is no happiness in the small, (in the finite); the great (the Infinite) alone is happiness. The Infinite alone should verily be sought after.'

*Universality of Vision*

The transcendence of the limited ego and the liberation of the universal man is what is sought to be achieved by the scientific and moral discipline of detachment. The individual is not destroyed by the practice of detachment, but grows into largeness and fullness. Says J.B.S. Haldane in his *Possible Worlds*:

'I notice that when I think logically and scientifically or act morally my thoughts and actions cease to be characteristic of myself and are those of any intelligent or moral being in the same position. In fact, I am already identifying my mind with an absolute or unconditioned mind.

'Only in so far as I do this can I see any probability of my survival, and the more I do so the less I am interested in my private affairs and the less desire do I feel for personal immortality.'

It is this growth and development of the human awareness, which has been nourished earlier by scientific and ethical discipline, that Vedānta seeks to consummate in the spiritual realization of universality in this very life. Says Swami Vivekananda in his lecture on 'Practical Vedānta' (*Complete Works*, Vol. II, p. 331):

'The Vedāntic idea is not the destruction of the individual, but its real preservation. We cannot prove the individual by any other means but by referring to the universal, by proving that this individual is really the universal. If we think of the individual as separate from everything else in the universe, it cannot stand a minute. Such a thing never existed.'

Where shall man seek for the Infinite and the Immortal? Within himself, say the Upaniṣads; within himself, says also Jesus. The Infinite is his true nature; that is his true dimension. The Self of man is eternally pure, awakened, and free, says Vedānta. In the firm language of the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* (VI. viii. 7):

*Sa ya eṣo aṇimā, aitat ātmyamidaṁ sarvam, tat satyaṁ sa ātmā, tat tvam asi*—

'Everything in the universe has this subtle (infinite) Reality for its Self; That is the True; That is the Ātman; and That thou art.'

*The Evolutionary Vision*

Vedānta views the entire evolutionary process as progressive evolution of structure and form and greater and greater manifestation of the infinite Self within. It is evolution of matter and manifestation of spirit. The first emergence of living organisms is marked by the appearance of a rudimentary form of awareness. This awareness grows in richness and variety as we move up the evolutionary ladder. The evolution of the nervous system discloses a progressive development of awareness in depth and range, and a consequent increase in the grip of the organism on its environment.

This awareness achieves a new and significant dimension with the appearance of man on the evolutionary scene. The field of awareness of all other organisms is, largely, the external environment, and, to a small extent, the interior of their bodies as well. Man alone has awareness of the self along with awareness of the not-self. Self-awareness, which nature achieved through the evo-

lution of the human organism, is a new dimension of awareness containing tremendous implications both for nature and for man. A rudimentary form of self-awareness enabled the earliest man to establish his dominance over the entire animal kingdom. Neurologists speak of the emergence, in the earliest man, of the faculty of *imagination*—the power of retaining ideas in the mind and viewing them. This power is absent even in the highest of the subhuman species.

Says the neurologist W. Grey Walter in his book *The Living Brain* (p. 2):

'Thus the mechanisms of the brain reveal a deep physiological division between man and ape. ... If the title of soul be given to the higher functions in question, it must be admitted that the other animals have only a glimmer of the light that so shines before men. ... The nearest creature to us, the chimpanzee, cannot retain an image long enough to reflect on it, however clever it may be in learning tricks or getting food that is placed beyond its natural reach. Unable to rehearse the possible consequences of different responses to a stimulus, without any faculty of planning, the apes and other animals cannot learn to control their feelings, first step towards independence of environment and eventual control of it. The activity of the animal brain is not checked to allow time for the choice of one among several possible responses, but only for the one reflex or conditioned response to emerge. The monkey's brain is still in thrall to its senses. *Sentio ergo sum* might be the first reflection of a slightly inebriated ape, as it is often the last of alcoholic man; so near and yet so far apart, even then, are they.

'The brain of lion, tiger, rhinoceros and other powerful animals also lacks the mechanism of imagination, or we should not be here to discuss the matter. They cannot envisage changes in their environment, so they have never sought to alter it in all their efforts to retain lordship of their habitat.'

Man alone achieved this power of *imaging* ideas; and this power was not in him an isolated phenomenon. Within the increased area of the cortex of the ancestral organ, man evolved a mechanism capable of a series of new processes: observation, memory, comparison, evaluation, selection, and judgement. And, in achieving these, he achieved two things:

Firstly, discovery of the path leading to the processing of raw experience into knowledge, of knowledge into power, and of power into control and manipulation of the environment constituted by the not-self of experience.

Secondly, a faint awareness of the reality of himself as the subject, as the self behind the fleeting images, and the discovery of the road leading inward to the total comprehension of this new dimension of reality, with its increasing liberation of moral and spiritual values in his life and action and behaviour.

Man's steady advance on these two fronts constitutes the story of civilization and culture; it constitutes also the story of the march of evolution at the post-human stage. With the emergence, on the evolutionary scene, of the mind of man, disciplined in the knowledge of the not-self and the self in varying degrees, nature yields, in increasing measure, to one of her own products, the control and manipulation of the evolutionary process.

*From Knowledge to Wisdom*

In spite of his rudimentary self-knowledge which gave him control over the animal world, the earliest man remained an animal in appetites and behaviour. A little more of this self-knowledge, gained through reflection in the context of social experience, helped to increase his control over himself and to humanize him. This process, ever in operation in human civilizations and socio-political organizations, has led up to the man in the modern age, with his almost total control over the not-self environment through an efficient technology, with his global sweep in socio-cultural interests and contacts, and with his yearning for the universal and human Yet the disparity between his control over himself and his control over external nature, between his moral efficiency and his technical efficiency, confronts him with the most serious problem that his evolution has so far posed. This is thwarting the realization of his heart's yearning for the universal and human. Neglected and unsolved, this problem may make him the only possible destroyer of his civilization and of the fruits of evolution as well. In the meantime, he is destined to move from one tension to another, from one sorrow to another. *The only solution lies in the deepening of his moral and spiritual awareness.* Biological evolution achieved a measure of this in the life of the earliest man in his rudimentary knowledge of his own self. Social evolution, guided by human intelligence, advanced this still further; a physical and organic self separate from all others gave place to a social self, morally related to an increasing number of other individuals. The dynamism of human evolution demands that this education of man must continue till he rises from self-centredness to self-transcend-

ence and from knowledge to wisdom. Says Bertrand Russell (*The Impact of Science on Society*, pp. 120-21):

'We are in the middle of a race between human skill as to means and human folly as to ends. Given sufficient folly as to ends, every increase in the skill required to achieve them is to the bad. The human race has survived hitherto owing to ignorance and incompetence: but, given knowledge and competence combined with folly, there can be no certainty of survival. Knowledge is power, but it is power for evil just as much as for good. It follows that, unless men increase in wisdom as much as in knowledge, increase of knowledge will be increase of sorrow.'

*The Spiritual Training of the Will*

This increase in wisdom is what man achieves when he transcends his little separate self, when he moves in the direction of his true Self which is also the Self of all, the path to this lies through increasing control of the senses and the mind, and through discrimination between the real and the unreal, between the changeless One and the changing many. This is the highest education for man, according to the Upaniṣads: it is the education for him in what the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* (I.i.5) terms *parā vidyā*, the highest knowledge, wisdom, the realization of the imperishable One in the perishable many.

This education should not be postponed, say the Upaniṣads; it should not be left to be accomplished by nature's slow evolutionary process. Nature accomplished the first stage of this education, as I said, in the rudimentary self-knowledge imparted to early man. She thus put him, among all her products, on the road to full self-knowledge and self-fulfilment. Modern man does not stand in need of mother Nature's care to the same extent as early man did or the animal world still does. He has the intelligence and capacity to control the processes of nature and society, and to use these to ensure human fulfilment everywhere. *But his will is perverse: it seeks the ways of folly; it is his enemy; and it will remain his enemy so long as it is in thraldom to his animal nature and to the little ego centered in that nature.* It has to be turned in the direction of his divine nature within; then alone will his intelligence and will and feeling fuse into a new value to emerge as *buddhi*, wisdom. This is the *sāttvik* will, luminous and pure, according to the *Gītā* (XVIII. 33):

*Dhṛtyā yayā dhārayate manaḥprāṇendriyakriyāḥ;*
*Yogenāvyabhicāriṇyā dhṛtiḥ sā pārtha sāttvikī—*

'The will that controls the functions of the mind, the vital energies, and the sense-organs, and turns their energies uniformly in the direction of the divine Self within, that will, O Pārtha, is the *sāttvik* will.'

*The Direction of Human Evolution*

Since this subject of the growth of man and his fulfilment is a common theme in Vedānta and in modern biological thought, I can do no better than quote a significant passage from Swami Vivekananda; though rather long, it is worth quoting in full in view of its relevance. In a lecture on 'The Powers of the Mind' delivered in California in 1900, the Swami said (*Complete Works*, Vol. II, pp. 18-19):

'I shall tell you a theory which I will not argue now, but simply place before you the conclusion. Each man in his childhood runs through the stages through which his race has come up; only the race took thousands of years to do it, while the child takes a few years. The child is first the old savage man—and he crushes a butterfly under his feet. The child is at first like the primitive ancestors of his race. As he grows, he passes through different stages until he reaches the development of his race. Only he does it swiftly and quickly. Now, take the whole of humanity as a race, or take the whole of the animal creation, man and the lower animals, as one whole. There is an end towards which the whole is moving. Let us call it perfection. Some men and women are born who anticipate the whole progress of mankind. Instead of waiting and being reborn over and over again for ages until the whole human race has attained to that perfection, they, as it were, rush through them in a few short years of their life. And we know that we can hasten these processes, if we be true to ourselves. If a number of men, without any culture, be left to live upon an island, and are given barely enough food, clothing, and shelter, they will gradually go on and on, evolving higher and higher stages of civilization. We know also that this growth can be hastened by additional means. We help the growth of trees, do we not? Left to nature they would have grown, only they would have taken a longer time; we help them to grow in a shorter time than they would otherwise have taken. We are doing all the time the same thing, hastening the growth of things by artificial means. Why cannot we hasten the growth of man? We can do that as a race. Why are teachers sent to other countries? Because by these means we can hasten the growth of races. Now, can we not hasten the growth of individuals? We can. Can we put a limit to the hastening? ... You have no reason to say that this much a man can do and no more. Circumstances can hasten him wonderfully. Can there be any limit then till you come to perfection?'

Referring to the corollary of this line of thought, he continued:

'So, what comes of it?—That a perfect man, that is to say, the type that is to come of this race, perhaps millions of years hence, that man can come today. And this is what the Yogis say, that all great incarnations and prophets are such men; that they reached perfection in this one life. We have had such men at all periods of the world's history and at all times.'

And referring to his own master, Sri Ramakrishna, as an example of this achievement in our own age, he said:

'Quite recently, there was such a man who lived the life of the whole human race and reached the end—even in this life.'

And pleading for a scientific study of this spiritual growth of man so as to deepen the sciences of anthropology and sociology, he said:

'Even this hastening of the growth must be under laws. Suppose we can investigate these laws and understand their secrets and apply them to our own needs, it follows that we grow. We hasten our growth, we hasten our development, and we become perfect, even in this life. This is the higher part of our life, and the science of the study of mind and its powers has this perfection as its real end. Helping others with money and other material things, and teaching them how to go on smoothly in their daily life, are mere details.'

And adverting to the utility and urgency of this science of spirituality, and presenting the Vedāntic view of the uniqueness of man, he concluded:

'The utility of this science is to bring out the perfect man, and not let him wait and wait for ages, just a plaything in the hands of the physical world, like a log of drift-wood carried from wave to wave and tossing about in the ocean. This science wants you to be strong, to take the work in your own hands, instead of leaving it in the hands of Nature, and get beyond this little life. That is the great idea.'

*The Dynamics of Human Evolution*

This is the direction of human evolution according to Vedānta. The dynamics of evolution at the human stage finds its true expression in the struggle to liberate the universal man imbedded in the individual man. Bereft of this spiritual direction, every human action and struggle serves but to throw him deeper and deeper into the net of the delusion of his finitude, sharpen his animal appetites, and increase his tension and sorrow. In Vedānta such a life is termed a life of *saṁsāra*, worldliness. It is a static life, in spite of

all the stir and movement which it may exhibit. As a stagnant pool is to a sheet of flowing water, so stands this static life of *saṁsāra* in relation to the dynamic life of spirituality. Such a spiritual life is unworldly, but it is not outside the world. Live in *saṁsāra*, says Sri Ramakrishna, but allow not *saṁsāra* to get into you; a boat should be in water, but water should not be in the boat. *Saṁsāra* itself becomes the field of struggle, the *Kurukṣetra*, for this transcendence of the ego, for this achievement by man of universal awareness, of *brahmajñāna*, says this great verse of the *Kena Upaniṣad*: *iha cedavedīt atha satyamasti*—'If man realizes It here, then is there true life for him.'

### *The Uniqueness of Man*

It is not only his true life but it is also the highest human excellence and the acme of his life fulfilment. Vedānta further adds that it is also the birthright of every human being and the crown of the entire evolutionary process. Says the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (XI. ix. 28):

> *Sṛṣṭvā parāṇi vividhānyajayātmaśaktyā*
> *vṛkṣān sarīsṛpapaśūn khagadaṁśa matsyān;*
> *Taistairatuṣṭahṛdayaḥ manujaṁ vidhāya*
> *brahmāvalokadhiṣaṇaṁ mudamāpa devaḥ—*

'The Divine One, having projected (evolved) with His own inherent power various forms such as trees, reptiles, cattle, birds, insects, and fish, was dissatisfied at heart with all these; He then projected the human form endowed with the capacity to realize Brahman (the universal divine Self of all), and became extremely pleased.'

This is how Vedānta speaks of the uniqueness of man; it is quite different from the modern scientist's view of man's uniqueness, such as is expounded in a book like *The Uniqueness of Man* by Sir Julian Huxley. There Huxley says (p. 27):

> 'Those of man's unique characteristics which may better be called psychological and social than narrowly biological spring from one or other of three characteristics. The first is his capacity for abstract and general thought: the second is the relative unification of his mental processes, as against the much more rigid compartmentalization of animal mind and behaviour: the third is the existence of social units, such as tribe, nation, party, and church, with a continuity of their own, based on organized tradition and culture.'

He says further (*ibid.*, p. 29):

'The trouble, indeed, is to find any human activities which are not unique. Even the fundamental biological attributes such as eating, sleeping, and mating have been tricked out by man with all kinds of unique frills and peculiarities.'

These are, undoubtedly, unique characteristics. But they belong, says Vedānta, to a field of experience, namely, sense experience, which he shares with the animals. Even his advanced thought is sense-bound. Huxley is aware of higher dimensions revealed by the manifestations of man's extra-sensory faculties, for he drops the following hint (*ibid.*, p. 31):

'Man may thus be unique in more ways than he now suspects.'

Huxley is, unfortunately, not aware that man, in countries such as India, outside the sphere of western development, went far beyond this stage of 'suspicion' and systematically explored and developed a science of these higher dimensions of his uniqueness.

The Upaniṣads view man both as actor in and spectator of the drama of existence. He transcends himself in the act of knowing himself. His supreme uniqueness lies in his passion for truth and in his ability to realize it. He alone can solve the mystery of existence by transcending himself. He alone has the ego sense; and it is the supreme mark of his intelligence and courage that he treats this mysterious value within himself, fugitive in itself but suggestive of a hidden depth, not as a final conclusion but as an initial datum, as a starting point for a penetrating investigation into the mystery of its hidden depth; and he then discovers the Ātman, the infinite and immortal Self, as his true nature, and as the true nature of all beings.

This is the uniqueness of man, the uniqueness of his intelligence, that the Upaniṣads and the Indian spiritual tradition proclaim. Sings the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* in words spoken by Kṛṣṇa, the God-man, to man, the spiritual seeker (XI. xxix. 22):

*Eṣā buddhimatāṁ buddhiḥ manīṣā ca manīṣiṇām;*
*Yat satyam anṛteneha martyenāpnoti mā amṛtam—*

'This is the intelligence of the intelligent and the wisdom of the wise—that they attain Me (God), the True and the Immortal, by means of the unreal and the mortal (the body and the ego).'

Vedānta, however, considers the two dimensions of human excellence upheld by the Upaniṣads and modern science as complementary and not contradictory.

This is clearly stated in the following similar verses which are also from the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (XI. vii. 19-21):

*Prāyeṇa manujā loke lokatattvavicakṣaṇāḥ;*
*Samuddharanti hyātmānam ātmanaiva aśubhāśayāt—*

'In the world, men are generally efficient in the investigation of the truth of nature; (and through that) they uplift themselves by themselves from all sources of evil.'

*Ātmano gururātmaiva puruṣasya viśeṣataḥ;*
*Yat pratyakṣānumānābhyāṁ śreyo asau anuvindate—*

'For a human being, particularly, his *guru* or guide is, verily, his own self; because he achieves his welfare through the help of direct sense experience, and through inference based on it.'

*Puruṣatve ca māṁ dhīrāḥ sāṁkhyayogaviśāradāḥ;*
*Āvistarāṁ prapaśyanti sarvaśaktyupabṛṁhitam—*

'Wise men who have mastered the science and art of the spiritual life realize clearly, within the human personality itself, Me (the universal Self of all), the unlimited source of all the (limited psycho-physical) energies (of the individual).'

Vedānta considers that since man shares his sensuality with the animals, his distinctive uniqueness is spirituality only. The urge to this spirituality alone makes him truly himself. And so Vedānta would ever strive, out of compassion for man, to stimulate this urge in him. To quote the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* again to get a touch of the Vedāntic concern for man's spiritual growth (XI. ix. 29):

*Labdhvā sudurlabhamidaṁ bahusaṁbhavānte*
*mānuṣyam arthadam anityamapīha dhīraḥ;*
*Tūrṇaṁ yateta na patet anumṛtyu yāvat*
*niḥśreyasāya viṣayaḥ khalu sarvataḥ syāt—*

'Having obtained, at the end of many births, this human form which is difficult to obtain, and, though perishable, capable of conferring on man, in this very life, the highest spiritual freedom, the wise man should strive earnestly, before death overtakes him, for spiritual freedom which is his highest excellence. Sensual delights can be had in all other bodies; (hence the human body need not be *dedicated* to them).'

*The Place of the Ego in the Strategy of Evolution*

Modern physical and biological knowledge reveals to us the grand design of linkages in nature. Things and events are interlinked; nothing is absolutely separate and self-sufficient. In the context of this grand design of nature, belief in a separate self-sufficient ego becomes a delusion. And modern biology, along with Vedānta and Buddhism and all higher spiritual thought, proclaims this truth of the insufficiency of the ego. In the voluminous digest of modern biological knowledge entitled *The Science of Life*, produced by H. G. Wells, Julian Huxley, and G. P. Wells, the authors have discussed in a moving passage this subject of man's ego (pp. 1368-69):

'Alone, in the silence of the night and on a score of thoughtful occasions we have demanded, can this self, so vividly central to my universe, so greedily possessive of the world, ever cease to be? Without it surely there is no world at all! And yet this conscious self dies nightly when we sleep, and we cannot trace the stages by which in its beginnings it crept to an awareness of its own existence. ...

'Personality may only be one of Nature's methods, a convenient provisional delusion of considerable strategic value.'

And further (p. 1497):

'The more intelligent and comprehensive man's picture of the universe has become, the more intolerable has become his concentration upon the individual life with its inevitable final rejection.'

Again, referring to man's ethical and spiritual capacity for identification with and participation in a greater reality, the authors conclude (p. 1497):

'He escapes from his ego by this merger and acquires an impersonal immortality in the association; his identity dissolving into the greater identity. This is the essence of much religious mysticism, and it is remarkable how closely the biological analysis of individuality brings us to the mystics. The individual, according to this second line of thought, saves himself by losing himself. But in the mystical teaching he loses himself in the Deity, and in the scientific interpretation of life he forgets himself as Tom, Dick, or Harry, and discovers himself as Man. The Buddhist treatment of the same necessity is to teach that the individual life is a painful delusion from which men escape by conquest of individual desire. Western Mystic and Eastern Sage find a strong effect of endorsement in modern science and the everyday teaching of practical morality. Both teach that self must be subordinated, that self is a method and not an end.'

This is familiar language to students of the Upaniṣads and Buddhism. The subject of the unreality of the ego is the theme of the second discourse delivered by Buddha to his disciples at Sārnāth (Vāraṇāsi) 2,500 years ago. Stripping the notion of individuality of all its unreal elements, Buddha says (*Vinaya Piṭaka, Mahāvagga, Khandhaka*, I. vi):

'*Rūpam* (material form) is *an-attā* (not the Self); *vedana* (sensation) is *an-attā*. . . .; *saññā* (perception) is *an-attā*. . . .; *saṃkhārā* (pre-disposition) is *an-attā* . . .; *viññānam* (consciousness) is *an-attā*.'

Then follows a dialogue between Buddha and his disciples. Stripping the Self of all its unreal elements, Buddha said:

'Again what think you, *Bhikkhus*? Is the material form permanent (*niccam*) or impermanent (*a-niccam*)?'

'Impermanent, revered Sir.'

'But that which is impermanent, is that suffering (*dukkam*) or happiness (*sukham*)?'

'Suffering, revered Sir.'

'That, then, which is impermanent, suffering, and by nature changeable (*vi-pariṇāma dhammam*), is it proper to regard it thus: This is mine, I am this, this is my Self (*etam mama, eso'ham asmi, eso me attā*)?'

'No indeed, revered Sir.'

'Is sensation permanent? . . . Is perception permanent? Is predisposition permanent? . . That, then, which is impermanent, suffering, and by nature changeable, is it proper to regard it thus: This is mine, I am this, this is my Self?'

'No indeed, revered Sir.'

'And so, *Bhikkhus*, all material form, whether past, future, or present, whether within us or external, whether gross or subtle, low or high, far or near, is to be regarded with right insight, as it really is (*yathā bhūtam*), thus: This is not mine, I am not this, this is not my Self . . . All sensation . . . gross or subtle, all perception . . . gross or subtle, . . . all predisposition . . . low or high, . . . all consciousness . . . far or near, is to be regarded with right insight, as it really is, thus: This is not mine, I am not this, this is not my Self.

'Regarding them thus, O *Bhikkhus*, an instructed *Āryan* (noble) disciple becomes indifferent to (*nibbindati*) material form, becomes indifferent to sensation, becomes indifferent to perception, becomes indifferent to consciousness. Becoming indifferent, he becomes free from desire (*vi-rajjati*); through non-desire (*vi-rāga*) he is liberated.'

This is the teaching of Buddha on the subject, and it is also the teaching of the Upaniṣads. And today the authors of *The Science of Life* tell us that the given personality of man, centred round his ego, is but an assemblage of constantly vanishing elements and cannot be his true self. It is, at best, as they said, 'one of nature's methods, a convenient provisional delusion of considerable strategic value'. And it needs to be transcended. With *this hint, the science of biology withdraws from the scene, leaving the field to the science of spirituality.*

To the question: 'When shall I be free?' Sri Ramakrishna gave the significant answer: 'When *I* shall cease to be.'

The only transcendence of the ego which biological science can place before man for his acceptance is either his total mergence in the species, yielding an experience of a biological or genetic immortality, or his achievement of a sort of cosmopolitan awareness through a humanistic education by which he will learn to forget himself as 'Tom, Dick, or Harry and discover himself as Man.'

The philosophical insufficiency of this theory of mergence in nature, the *prakṛtilaya* conception of Indian thought, has been discussed and demonstrated by Śaṅkara and other Indian thinkers. They have also pointed out the pitfall of the fallacy of total nihilism bordered on by any philosophy which upholds the unreality of the ego. Modern biological and psychological analysis must go deeper in the search for man's sense of individuality in order to avert this dangerous fallacy and discover his true dimension in the universal Self. Neither his eternal sleep in nature nor his reduction into a soulless nothingness, nor even the achievement of a cosmopolitan humanism, can satisfy man's rational urges or spiritual hungers. The limited ego may not be the final truth; but it is a significant first datum; for it is the promise of something unlimited and eternal. Hence the aptness of the statement that it is 'a convenient provisional delusion of considerable strategic value'. In what sense is it strategic?

A baby, till its birth, is part of the mother's body. At birth it becomes a new organism with a separate existence of its own. The first step in the education of the baby is the development of its ego sense, its sense of individuality. The new-born child considers itself as one of the items of the world around it. The education it receives after birth is designed to give it an awareness of its own personality, of its own uniqueness among the objects

around it, of its being a subject and not an object. This rudimentary subjective awareness of the baby develops, as it grows in its powers and capacities, through the handling of objects and entities and persons around it. The education given to the child is meant to strengthen his ego sense; he draws to himself the energies and influences around him and grows into a distinct individual, an identifiable person.

This is the first phase of the ego's strategic value; almost simultaneously begins the second phase when, first, under external influences and, later, under his own conscious efforts, the child becomes aware of his close relationship not only with things and objects but also with other subjects like himself and learns to treat them as subjects, as he would himself like to be treated by them. This is social ethics, the recognition of the subject in a social object, which sees the emergence of a moral personality in the child, in which the idea of a totally separate individuality gives place to a personality with ever-widening frontiers within the *milieu* of the psychic world of society around him. The old limited individuality is transcended giving place to an expansive individuality and an expansive awareness and love; through this process Nature's strategy, now expressed through the human personality itself, grows and finds its consummation in the spiritual realization of the Universal, the Brahman, as Vedānta calls it, the eternal, pure, enlightened Self of all. And this strategy and its final issue in the realization of this universal Self forms the grand theme of verse five of chapter two of the *Kena Upaniṣad* which we have been discussing so long:

*Iha cedavedīt atha satyamasti*
*na cedihāvedīt mahatī vinaṣṭiḥ;*
*Bhūteṣu bhūteṣu vicitya dhīrāḥ*
*pretyāsmāt lokāt amṛtā bhavanti.*

### *The True Life for Man*

Its realization *here* and *now*, *iha*, is the consummation of man's education, says the verse. That is the true life for man; life at the level of the ego is only a shadow life. If man gets stuck at this level, if he fails to treat it merely as 'a convenient provisional delusion of considerable strategic value', and refuses to march onward to capture the sunlit heights of his true individuality, it will be to his great loss, *mahatī vinaṣṭiḥ*. What can be a greater loss

for man than to be condemned to live in a phantom shadow world when just behind him is the true world of light and life, of which he is the heir? What can be a greater loss for him than to be a chained prisoner in a dark cave, handling all the time shadows thrown on the wall in front by the light behind, as depicted in Plato's famous allegory? No, that shall not be, says the verse. There is the touch of concern and compassion for man in the temper and tone of this verse. The Upaniṣad is deeply concerned to help man to find his true life, life lived in the light of truth. And what is that truth?

*Bhūteṣu bhūteṣu viciṭya dhīrāḥ*
*pretyāsmāt lokāt amṛtā bhavanti.*

Realizing the universal Self as his true nature, of which his own ego was but a projecting tip he recognizes his oneness with every being: by this he becomes *dhīra*, the wise one, one who has achieved the highest elevation of spirit: and by this rising above the given world of the ego and the senses, the world which is subject to change and mortality, by thus using it not as the final goal but only as a strategic base, he achieves immortality—*amṛtā bhavanti*: he achieves true life in which the shadows of death weave no patterns, unlike the false life of the ego which is but the darkness of spiritual blindness and also of death, hazily lit up with a trace of the light of the eternal Self. This answers Bertrand Russell's demand, in the passage quoted earlier, for knowledge growing into wisdom: 'Unless men increase in wisdom as much as in knowledge, increase of knowledge will be increase of sorrow.'

*Immortality*

By rising above this transient world of sense experience and the ego, man becomes immortal, says the verse. What is the nature of this immortality? Biology speaks of genetic immortality; individual organisms die; but the species continue to exist through the genes. Psychology today hints at the possibility of the immortality of the soul in the sense of survival after death. Several theologies hold to the idea of immortality as continuity of the soul in higher spheres after death. Vedānta alone speaks of an immortality which is realized *in this very life*; this is possible because freedom is the nature of man. Whatever is conditioned is mortal; to be conditioned is to be bound by space, time, and cause; to be unconditioned is to be free from all these bonds. Whatever, therefore, is free, in the sense of being unconditioned, is immortal. The

body and the ego, as much as the things of nature around, are all conditioned and mortal. The Ātman alone is unconditioned, free, and therefore immortal. This Ātman is the true nature of man. Man is essentially the *nitya-śuddha-buddha-mukta-svabhāva paramātman*—the eternally pure, awakened, and free Self, says Vedānta and adds that, this realization is the goal of human life. The sages of the Upaniṣads achieved this realization and communicated it to humanity for the first time. Says the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* (VI. 14):

*Yadā sarve pramucyante kāmā ye'sya hṛdi sthitāḥ;*
*Atha martyo amṛto bhavati atra brahma samaśnute—*

'When all the desires of the heart are overcome, this very mortal becomes immortal and experiences Brahman, the universal Self, here, in this very life.'

After attaining enlightenment, Buddha gave expression to the content of that enlightenment in the remark that the Immortal had been gained by him. The message of all spiritual religions is this message of the Immortal. Vedānta adds that it is to be realized *here* and *now*, as this *Kena Upaniṣad* verse puts it: *iha cedavedīt atha satyamasti*, and by realizing which man transcends this transient world of sense experience and realizes immortality: *pretyāsmāt lokāt amṛtā bhavanti.*

Commenting on this line, Śaṅkara says:

*Pretya, vyāvṛtya; mamāhaṁbhāvalakṣaṇāt avidyārūpāt asmāt lokāt uparamya, sarvātmaikyabhāvam advaitam āpannāḥ santo, amṛtā bhavanti; brahmaiva bhavanti, ityarthaḥ—*

'Dying, meaning, rising above; renouncing this world which is of the nature of spiritual blindness, and characterized by the notions of 'I' and 'mine'; thus achieving the non-dual state of the unity of the universal Self, they become immortal; meaning thereby, become, verily, Brahman.'

Brahman is the life and soul of the universe. The rest of this Upaniṣad will expound this basic truth of Vedānta through a beautiful allegory which we shall study in the next lecture.

ELEVEN

# KENA UPANISAD—5

In the last lecture the *Kena Upaniṣad* gave us the profound message of Indian philosophical thought that truth is not a matter of mere belief or intellectual formulation, but that it is something to be realized by each individual. This is what converts the philosophical urge into a spiritual passion. A man's life will not become fruitful until he realizes the mystery that is within life itself. This idea of *realizing* truth runs through all Indian religious literature. Religion is a matter of realization. Life grows; and this growth is mental as well as physical. In the higher reaches of mental growth and development, life experiences the glow of truth playing about itself; and at the summit of that development, truth pervades and penetrates life through and through. This fact was communicated to us by the *Kena Upaniṣad* in the famous verse which we studied in the last lecture, the last verse of the second chapter:

*Iha cedavedīt atha satyamasti*
*na cet iha avedīt mahatī vinaṣṭiḥ;*
*Bhūteṣu bhūteṣu vicitya dhīrāḥ*
*pretyāsmāt lokāt amṛtā bhavanti—*

'For one who realizes It *here* (in this world) there is true life. For one who does not so realize It, great is the loss. Discovering the Ātman in every single being, the wise ones, dying to this world (of sense-experience), become immortal.'

The *Kena Upaniṣad*, in its opening verses, had begun with the statement that the body, the senses, the mind, and the ego are not self-sufficient entities but that they point to a supreme Reality beyond and above them—Brahman, the Universal Self of all—by whose energy they all live and function. By themselves, each one of them is but a zero, in the words of Sri Ramakrishna, and the zero becomes significant only when the figure 1 is placed behind it. The reality of this One behind the many was expounded to us by several subsequent verses of this Upaniṣad. The Upaniṣad also enlightened us with the truth that this One is a spiritual reality, being the innermost Self of all, and that Its realization connotes the achievement of universality of vision and sympathy. This is the true Self of man. But in his state of ignorance, he mistakes the senses, the mind, the intellect, or the ego for his Self. This

false notion, with its attendant evils, vanishes with the dawn of true knowledge.

### *A Fascinating Story*

This fundamental Vedāntic idea is now sought to be amplified by means of a fascinating story in the last two chapters of the Upaniṣad—chapters three and four. The third chapter opens with a reference to a mythical battle between the forces of evil and the forces of good, between the forces of darkness and the forces of light—the *asuras* and the *devas*:

> *Brahma ha devebhyo vijigye;*
> *tasya ha brahmaṇo vijaye devā amahīyanta;*
> *Te aikṣanta: asmākamevāyaṁ vijayo*
> *asmākamevāyaṁ mahimeti—*

'The story goes that Brahman obtained a victory for the *devas*; though the victory was due to Brahman, the *devas* became elated by it and thought: this victory is due to us only; this glory belongs to us only.'

The *devas*, or gods, represent the forces of light, and the *asuras*, or demons, represent the forces of darkness, in Indian mythology; they are eternal enemies. When the forces of light are pressed hard by their enemies, Brahman, the Light of all lights, intervenes to ensure the victory of light over darkness, the victory of the spiritual man over the sensuous man.

Earlier, when studying the *Īśā Upaniṣad*, we learned in its verse three that he who neglects Self-knowledge, and pursues only external things, falls into the dark world of the *asuras*, the world of ignorance and delusion. Though representing the forces of light, the *devas* also are not free from the clutches of ignorance and delusion. They take their separate egos to be their real Self; but this delusion lies less thick on them than on the *asuras* and so it can be lifted by a little spiritual help from outside. Among the gods, the more prominent ones, namely, Agni, Vāyu, and Indra, who were the leaders, felt the vanity of victory most. Comments Śaṅkara on this verse (III. 1):

*Tat ātmasaṁsthasya pratyagātmanaḥ īśvarasya sarvajñasya sarvakriyāphalasaṁyojayituḥ prāṇināṁ sarvaśakteḥ jagataḥ sthitiṁ cikīrṣoḥ ayaṁ jayo mahimā ca ityajānantaḥ te devā aikṣanta, ikṣitavanto, agnyādisvarūpaparicchinnātmakṛto, asmākamevāyaṁ vijayo asmākamevāyam mahimā, agnivāyvindratvādi lakṣaṇo jaya-*

*phalabūto asmābhiranubhūyate, na asmatpratyagātmabhūta īśvarakṛta iti—*

'Not knowing that this victory and glory belonged to God, the Inner Self of their own selves, the all-knowing and all-powerful One who brings about for all beings the conjunction of their actions with the results of those actions, and who is moved by the desire to ensure the welfare of the world, these *devas* thought; this victory and this glory belong to us—we who are conditioned by the forms such as Agni, etc.—ours alone is this victory, ours alone is this glory; the fruit of victory is experienced by us, we who are characterized by the attributes of the Agni form, the Vāyu form, the Indra form, and the like; and not by the God who is our inner Self.'

Man, in spite of his obvious limitations, thinks too much of his strength and glory; but all this ends in death. If only he knew the One, the source of all strength, glory, and excellence in men and nature, how blessed his life would be, and how fearless of death he would become! Life is trivial if it does not overcome death in the knowledge of the deathless Self, the one Self in all.

This is echoed by Shakespeare in his *Measure for Measure* (II. ii. 119-24):

> But man, proud man,
> Dress'd in a little brief authority—
> Most ignorant of what he's most assured,
> His glassy essence—like an angry ape,
> Plays such fantastic tricks before high heaven
> As make the angels weep.

In moments of deep thoughtfulness, man feels within himself the presence of a power greater than his given self. He then learns to feel humility and to experience an elevation of spirit in that humility. His 'unripe' ego becomes the 'ripe' ego, in the words of Sri Ramakrishna; 'I, and yet not I, but the Christ that liveth in me' in the significant utterance of St. Paul. Man then ceases from his erstwhile habit of stealing the glory that belongs to God alone; he experiences the truth of the holy utterance: *Gloria in excelsis.*

Man's passage from spiritual blindness to illumination, and the concern of God, who is the inner Self of all, to illumine the heart of man, form the theme of the eleven verses that follow, beginning with verse two to the end of this chapter, chapter three:

> *Taddhaiṣāṁ vijajñau; tebhyo ha prādurbabhūva;*
> *Tat na vyajānata kimidaṁ yakṣam iti—*

'Brahman came to know this (their vanity); He verily appeared before them. But they did not understand who that *yakṣa* (adorable Spirit) was.'

The three gods were puzzled and inwardly afraid; they desired keenly to know who was the *yakṣa* confronting them. So they decided to depute one from among themselves to interview Him; they chose Agni for the mission:

*Te'gnimabhuvan, jātaveda, etat vijānīhi kimetat yakṣamiti. Tatheti—*

'They addressed Agni: "O *Jātaveda*, please find out who this *yakṣa* is." "Yes," said Agni.'

So saying, he proceeded on his mission.

*Tadabhyadravat, tadabhyavadat ko'sīti, agnirvā ahamasmi ityabravīt, jātavedā vā ahamasmi iti—*

'He (Agni) hastened (to the *yakṣa*). (The *yakṣa*) asked him who he was; (Agni) replied: "I am, verily, Agni; I am also known as *Jātaveda* (near omniscient)".'

The undue stress on the 'unripe' ego is evident in the tone and content of Agni's answer. He not merely gave his name but, in order to impress the visitor with the extraordinary nature of his personality, he also mentioned his title—*Jātaveda*—by which he was well known in the world.

The *yakṣa* does not seem to have been much impressed judging from his next question:

*Tasmin tvayi kim vīryam iti. Api idaṁ sarvaṁ daheyaṁ yadidaṁ pṛthivyām iti—*

'"What energy do you possess—you of such fame?" (asked the *Yakṣa*). "I can burn everything, whatever there is on this earth," (replied Agni).'

*Tasmai tṛṇaṁ nidadhau, etat daheti. Tadupapreyāya sarvajavena; tanna śaśāka dagdhum. Sa tata eva nivavṛte, naitadaśakaṁ vijñātum yadetat yakṣam iti—*

'The *yakṣa* placed a straw before him (and said): "Burn this!" (Agni) approached it with all speed; he was, however, unable to burn it. So he withdrew from there (and returned to the gods), saying, "I could not ascertain who the *yakṣa* was."'

Agni was crestfallen. The gods, however, decided to continue the investigation of the strange phenomenon:

*Atha vāyum abruvan, vāyava etat vijānīhi kim etat yakṣamiti. Tatheti—*

'Then they addressed Vāyu: "O Vāyu, please ascertain this, who this *yakṣa* is." "Yes," said Vāyu.'

*Tat abhyadravat. Tam abhyavadat ko'si iti. Vāyur vā aham asmi ityabravīt; mātariśvā vā aham asmi iti—*

'(Vāyu) hastened to the *yakṣa*. The *yakṣa* asked him who he was. Vāyu replied: 'I am, verily, Vāyu; I am also known as *mātariśvā* (courser of the atmosphere)".'

Vāyu did not lag behind Agni in self-esteem and self-importance. The *yakṣa*, however, was equally unimpressed by his tall claim:

*Tasmin tvayi kim vīryam iti. Api idaṁ sarvam ādadīya yadidaṁ pṛthivyām iti—*

' "What energy do you possess—you of such fame?" asked the *yakṣa*. "I can, verily, blow away everything, whatever there is on this earth," replied Vāyu.'

*Tasmai tṛṇaṁ nidadhau, etat ādatsveti. Tadupapreyāya sarvajavena, tanna śaśāka ādātum. Sa tata eva nivavṛte, naitadaśakaṁ vijñātum yadetat yakṣamiti—*

'The *yakṣa* placed a straw before him and said: "Blow this away!" Vāyu approached it with all speed; he was, however, unable to blow it away. So he withdrew from there (and returned to the gods) saying, "I could not ascertain who the *yakṣa* was."'

The gods now decided to ask their leader, Indra, to solve the mystery:

*Athendram abruvan, maghavan etat vijānīhi, kimetat yakṣamiti. Tatheti; tat abhyadravat. Tasmāt tirodadhe—*

'Then the gods addressed Indra: "O *Maghavan*, please ascertain who this *yakṣa* is." "Yes," said Indra, and hastened to the *yakṣa*. But the *yakṣa* disappeared from his view.'

Indra was baffled. But his perplexity turned into amazement a moment later, as the next and last verse, verse twelve, of this chapter tells us:

*Sa tasmin eva ākāśe striyam ājagāma bahuśobhamānām umāṁ haimavatīm. Tāṁ hovāca, kim etat yakṣamiti—*

'And in that very spot he (Indra) beheld a woman, the wondrously effulgent Umā, the daughter of the snow-clad mountain, Himavat. And of her he asked, "Who could this *yakṣa* be?"'

### *The Grace of knowledge*

The three gods were defeated in their common mission; of them, Indra had not even the privilege of conversing with the *yakṣa* as Agni and Vāyu had. But all three had a spiritual catharsis through this experience; their self-esteem and sense of egoistic self-sufficiency received a jolt. In this they became the recipients of the grace of the one living God who dwells in the hearts of all beings as the Self of their selves. Śaṅkara's comment on verse 2 explains the motive that prompted Brahman to appear before the *devas* in the wondrous form of the *yakṣa*:

*Sarvekṣitṛ hi tat sarvabhūtakaraṇaprayoktṛtvāt devānāṁ ca mithyājñānam upalabhya maiva asuravat devā mithyābhimānāt parābhaveyuḥ iti; tadanukaṁpayā, devān mithyābhimānāpanodanena anugṛhṇīyām iti, tebhyo devebhyo ha kila arthāya prādurbabhūva, svayogamāhātmyanirmitena atyadbhutena vismāpanīyena rūpeṇa, devānāṁ indriyagocare prādurbabhūva—*

'Brahman, verily, is the Thinker of all thought; He is the Power behind the senses and the mind of all beings. As such He knew the wrong notion in the minds of the *devas*. He did not like the idea that the *devas*, like the *asuras*, should, through self-esteem proceeding from ignorance of their true Self, come to grief. And so, desiring to bless the *devas* by removing their self-esteem born of ignorance and, moved by compassion and the desire to do some good to them, He, Brahman, appeared before them in a wondrous and awe-inspiring form produced by the glory of His *yoga* power.'

At the approach of Indra the *yakṣa* vanished; Indra was baffled; he was exercising his mind to ascertain who the *yakṣa* was. He was experiencing what in mysticism is called 'the dark night of the soul'. Unlike the other two gods, however, Indra did not accept defeat and withdraw. He persisted in his search for knowledge and illumination. Seeing this devotion to truth in the heart of Indra, spiritual Knowledge itself appeared before Indra in the form of the goddess Umā with a view to blessing him. Umā is described as *bahuśobhamānā*, extraordinarily effulgent. Comments Śaṅkara on this term (III. 12):

*Sarveṣāṁ hi śobhamānānāṁ śobhanatamā vidyā, tadā bahuśobhamānā iti viśeṣaṇam upapannaṁ bhavati—*

'*Vidyā*, spiritual knowledge, is the most luminous among all luminous things; it is thus only that the qualification *bahuśobhamānā*, extraordinarily effulgent, becomes appropriate.'

This spiritual knowledge, personified as Umā Haimavatī, now instructs Indra in the eternal truth behind all that is perishable, men and things; and this forms the theme of the following first six verses of the fourth and last chapter of this Upaniṣad:

*Sā brahmeti hovāca. Brahmano vā etat vijaye mahīyadhvamiti. Tato haiva vidāṁcakāra brahmeti—*

'"That *yakṣa* was Brahman," said She. "It was through the victory of Brahman, indeed, that you achieved this glory." It was from that (from the words of Umā) that he (Indra) understood that the *yakṣa* was Brahman.'

Indra saw Brahman and realized the truth of Brahman through the grace of spiritual Knowledge in the form of Umā. The other two gods, Agni and Vāyu, also saw Brahman in the form of the *yakṣa*, and also conversed with Him, but they could not recognize who He was. This they did later through their leader Indra:

*Tasmāt vā ete devā atitarām iva anyān devān, yad agnirvāyurindraḥ; te hyenat nediṣṭhaṁ pasparśuḥ; te hyenat prathamo vidāṁcakāra brahmeti—*

'Therefore, verily, these gods—Agni, Vāyu, and Indra—excel the other gods; for they approached the *yakṣa* nearest; they were the first to know Him as Brahman.'

*Tasmāt vā indro atitarām iva anyān devān; sa hyenat nediṣṭhaṁ pasparśa; sa hyenat prathamo vidāṁcakāra brahmeti—*

'And therefore indeed, Indra excels the other gods; for he approached the *yakṣa* nearest; he was the first to know Him as Brahman.'

## *Unity of Microcosm and Macrocosm*

Indian thought conceived an intimate unity between the macrocosm of nature and the microcosm of the human body, between the *ādhibhautika* and the *ādhyātmika* aspects of nature; the latter is an epitome of the former. The gods thus represent not only the forces of external nature mythically conceived, but also the sensory and thought forces within the body of man. The story in its *ādhyātmika* significance is an allegorical presentation of the journey of man to God, his own innermost Self. Indra, Agni, and Vāyu are personifications of the forces of nature. These forces, though appearing separate and self-sufficient, are yet only different

forms of one single cosmic force. Within the human body, Agni represents the power of speech, Vāyu represents the power of thought, and Indra stands for the Jīva or the individual soul.

The life of every man is a battle-ground between the forces of good and evil, between the forces of light and darkness. The former tend to freedom of the soul, and the latter to its bondage. To the question 'What is life?' asked by the Mahārājā of Khetri, Swami Vivekananda gave a significant answer (*The Life of Swami Vivekananda*, By His Eastern and Western Disciples, Fourth Edition, p. 220):

'Life is the unfoldment and development of a being under circumstances tending to press it down.'

This unfoldment, at the human level, is a spiritual unfoldment, which is thwarted by the predominance of man's animal nature, the darkness of non-awareness. Man is man so long as he struggles to overcome this nature and reach out from darkness to light. This struggle between his lower and higher natures is mythically presented in the Upaniṣad as a war between *devas* and *asuras*, and projected to cosmic dimensions. This is an important theme of a vast branch of Indian religious literature, namely, the Purāṇas. Knowledge of Brahman came to the *devas* only after they had achieved victory over the *asuras*. This emphasizes the truth that the edifice of spiritual effort and realization can be raised only on moral foundations. Moral life is itself the first manifestation of spiritual life.

The success of the *devas* over the *asuras* was due not to the *devas* themselves as separate limited cosmic forces, but to the one cosmic divine Force, Brahman, which informs and sustains them all. Without the power of Brahman, they are but empty shells. The gods in the story realized their emptiness and limitedness as individual separate entities and their fullness and unlimitedness as Brahman.

### *Hints and Suggestions*

The Upaniṣad in its first and second chapters had told us one of the central truths of the Upaniṣads that speech and thought cannot grasp Brahman. This truth is allegorically explained by this story. Agni, the god of speech, representing all sense-organs, and Vāyu, the god of mind or thought, both failed to ascertain the identity of the *yakṣa*. Verses four to eight of the first chapter of this Upaniṣad had presented Brahman as that which neither the sense-organs nor the mind can reveal, but which reveals

all the sense-organs and the mind. It is their innermost reality and the one source of their power. When speech and mind returned baffled, the Jīva, or soul, represented as Indra in the story, took up the challenge. But the *yakṣa* vanished from his presence. This is of great significance; for Jīva and Brahman are not two different realities. Brahman is the true nature of the Jīva; but the Jīva is not aware of this ever-present truth. This awakening comes to it through the Grace of knowledge when the heart becomes pure; the transcendence of the ego is the index of this purity. Indra achieved this through the shock of the disappearance of the *yakṣa* at his mere approach. The meekness and humility born of it intensified his passion for the knowledge of Truth; and the Truth soon dawned on his pure mind. The words of Jesus: 'Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God' constitute an eternal spiritual truth. This dawning of the Grace of knowledge in the pure heart of Indra is allegorically presented as the vision of the extraordinarily luminous Umā Haimavati and the instruction he received from Her. This goddess is the embodiment of all knowledge, and more especially of the knowledge of God, according to Indian thought: *Vidyāḥ samastāḥ tava devi bhedāḥ*—'All types of knowledge, O Goddess, are different forms of Thee,' sings the *Devī Māhātmyam* (XI, 6). In the path of *bhakti* or devotion this truth is represented as divine Grace through which alone, and not through any effort on the part of the individual, the highest spiritual realization is achieved.

Leaving the story aside, the Upanisad now proceeds to indicate the nature of Brahman through hints and suggestions which are extremely obscure due to brevity:

*Tasyaiṣa ādeśo yadetat vidyuto vyadyutad ā iti: it nyamīmiṣad ā; ityadhidaivatam*—

'This is the teaching regarding That (Brahman): It is like a flash of lightning; it is like a wink of the eye; this is with reference to the *adhidaivatam* (Its aspect as cosmic manifestation).'

The revelation of Brahman in nature is of a momentary character; man can get only a glimpse of Brahman by contemplating external nature; for external nature presents to the human mind mostly the perishable crust of names and forms. In deep moments of artistic or religious experience this crust is broken, revealing the beauty of the eternal spiritual truth behind. But these glimpses are often momentary. This verse compares them to the flash of

lightning or the wink of an eye. Brahman's appearance before the gods was also like a flash of lightning. The Upaniṣad now proceeds, in verse five of its fourth chapter, to describe Its manifestation in the inner world:

*Atha adhyātmam; yadetat gacchati iva ca mano anena ca etat upasmarati abhīkṣṇaṁ saṅkalpaḥ—*

'Now Its description with reference to the *adhyātma* (Its aspect as manifested in man); mind proceeds to Brahman in all speed, as it were; by his (mind) also, this Brahman is remembered and imagined as always near.'

As verse five of chapter one of this Upaniṣad told us, Brahman is not revealed by the mind but by Brahman does the mind itself reveal objects. Though the mind cannot reveal Brahman, the mind has a persistent desire to know Brahman; through thought, memory, and imagination, the mind ever tries to move towards Brahman though baffled again and again in the attempt. Through these acts of the mind, Brahman discloses in flashes Its presence as the innermost Self of man. Earlier, verse four of chapter two of this Upaniṣad told us:

*Pratibodhaviditaṁ matam amṛtatvaṁ hi vindate*—'Indeed, he attains immortality, who realizes It in and through every pulsation of mind and awareness.' To this Śaṅkara adds his comment: 'And there is no other way to *know* Brahman.' Brahman is *manaḥpratyayasamakālābhivyaktidharmi*—'Brahman has the characteristic of disclosing Itself simultaneously with every pulsation of the mind', says Śaṅkara in his comment on the present verse (IV. 5).

The Upaniṣad proceeds now to describe Brahman as the adorable One (IV. 6):

*Tad ha tadvanaṁ nāma; tadvanamityupāsitavyam. Sa ya etat evaṁ veda abhi hainaṁ sarvāṇi bhūtāni saṁvāñchanti—*

'Brahman is well known by the name of *Tadvanam*; so It is to be meditated upon as *Tadvanam*. All beings love him who knows Brahman as such.'

Śaṅkara explains *tadvanam* as:

*Tasya prāṇijātasya pratyagātmabhūtatvāt vananīyam, saṁbhajanīyam, ataḥ tadvanaṁ nāma prakhyātaṁ brahma—*

'Brahman is well known by the name of *Tadvanam* because It is the innermost Self of all beings and therefore the most adorable, the most worshipful.'

Realization of Brahman as the innermost Self of all beings transforms the individual man into the universal man; he becomes Brahman. Naturally he is then loved by all, just as Brahman is so loved.

## *Ethical Basis of Spirituality*

A dialogue between the student and the teacher now ensues (IV. 7):

*Upaniṣadaṁ bho brūhi iti. Uktā te upaniṣad; brāhmīṁ vāva te upaniṣadamabrūmeti*—

'"Sir, teach me the Upaniṣad." "The Upaniṣad has been imparted to you; we have, verily, imparted to you the Upaniṣad relating to Brahman."'

The student wants to know whether the whole subject of the knowledge of Brahman has been imparted to him. And the teacher affirms that it has been imparted.

The teacher now imparts to the student knowledge of the moral values which are the indispensable means to the realization of Brahman (IV. 8):

*Tasyai tapo damaḥ karmeti pratiṣṭhā; vedāḥ sarvāṅgāni; satyamāyatanam*—

'Of the Upaniṣad, *tapas* (concentration of the energies of the mind and the senses), *damaḥ* (self-restraint), and *karma* (dedicated work) form the support; the Vedas (Knowledge) are its limbs; and Truth its abode.'

The Upaniṣad stresses the importance of moral character in the pursuit of spiritual knowledge; for spirituality is not mere scholarship; it is *being* and *becoming*, in the words of Swami Vivekananda; it is growth, development, realization. Spiritual knowledge, unlike scholarship, does not arise in the mind of man so long as it is morally impure. As the *Praśna Upaniṣad* expresses it (I. 16): *na yeṣu jihmam anṛtaṁ na māyā ceti*—'In whom there is no crookedness, no falsehood, and no deception.'

The struggle to overcome the animal impulses, the effort to release the mind from its thraldom to the senses, the endeavour to forge a pure will possessed of the capacity to turn the energies of body and mind in the direction of the divine Self within, this is what makes spiritual life a heroic endeavour. *The heroes of the Spirit are the greatest heroes of history.* In them, the long

travail of evolution achieves its consummation. Man the brute becomes man the God.

### *An Infinite Personality*

The Upaniṣad now concludes with an eulogy of this consummation (IV. 9):

*Yo vā etāṁ evaṁ veda, apahatya pāpmānam anante svarge loke jyeye pratitiṣṭhati, pratitiṣṭhati*—

'One who realizes it (knowledge of Brahman) thus, destroys sin and is well established in Brahman, the infinite, the blissful and the highest.'

Spiritual realization arises in the human heart when its sinful propensities are destroyed by persistent endeavour. Says the *Mahābhārata* (12. 197. 8, Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute Edition):

*Jñānamutpadyate puṁsāṁ kṣayāt pāpasya karmaṇaḥ;*
*Athādarśatalprakhye paśyatyātmānamātmani*—

'Spiritual realization arises in man when his sinful actions are exhausted; just as a man sees himself in a clean mirror so does he realize the Ātman in his own self.'

That the sin referred to by the Upaniṣad has none of the sinister aspects associated with it in dogmatic Christianity is clear from this verse from the *Mahābhārata*.

The *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* also, in its narration of Nārada's spiritual education under the illumined teacher, Sanatkumāra, majestically proclaims this fact (VII. xxvi. 2):

*Āhāraśuddhau sattvaśuddhiḥ; sattvaśuddhau dhruvā smṛtiḥ; smṛtilaṁbhe sarvagranthīnāṁ vipramokṣaḥ.*

*Tasmai mṛditakaṣāyāya tamasaḥ pāraṁ darśayati bhagavān sanatkumāraḥ*—

'When the impressions gathered by the sense-organs are pure, the mind becomes pure; when the mind is pure, the memory (of one's divine nature) becomes constant; when this memory is attained, one becomes completely freed from all bondages.

'To him (Nārada), whose impurities had been completely destroyed, the blessed Sanatkumāra reveals (the Light) beyond the ocean of darkness (spiritual blindness).'

The attainment of Brahman is described in the last verse of the *Kena Upaniṣad* as the attainment by man of an infinite personality, of the highest excellence, and of the fullness of bliss. No more hopeful message than this for man in the modern age, caught up as he is in the meshes of finitude and triviality, but hankering earnestly for the infinite and the universal.

TWELVE

# KAṬHA UPANIṢAD—1

Having completed the study of the first two Upaniṣads—the *Īśā* and the *Kena*, we now take up the study of the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*. The Upaniṣad has a *śāntipāṭha*, Peace invocation which is common to several other Upaniṣads as well. It is as follows:

*Om. Sahanāvavatu; sahanau bhunaktu;*
*sahavīryaṁ karavāvahai;*
*Tejasvināvadhītamastu;*
*mā vidviṣāvahai.*

*Om. śāntiḥ. śāntiḥ. śāntiḥ—*

'Om! may Brahman protect us (teacher and student) both! May Brahman nourish us both! May we both acquire energy (as a result of this study)! May we both become illumined (by this study)! May we not hate each other! Om. Peace! Peace! Peace!'

This Peace invocation contains many beautiful sentiments, sentiments which have inspired Indian education—secular and religious—for a few thousand years. Teacher and student engaged in the pursuit of knowledge and excellence of character is education. It is a co-operative endeavour between the student and the teacher. The invocation expresses the idea of education as the achievement of knowledge and excellence of character in the context of a harmonious relationship between teacher and student; they are *en rapport*. The giving and receiving of knowledge leading to the remaking of man depends on the stimulus of such teacher-student relationship. The teacher gives and the student receives not only ideas and information, but inspiration as well. In all true education, teacher and student are not mere individuals but personalities. Education, according to the Indian sages, is the lighting of one lamp from another lamp.

### *Education as Illumination*

And so the Upaniṣad begins with a prayer for peace within and without. 'May Brahman protect us both! May Brahman nourish us both!' Brahman is the supreme spiritual reality in man and nature. The student and the teacher in this case are engaged in a great adventure, the adventure of knowledge; not

the usual secular knowledge capable of nourishing only our worldly life, but something deeper. It is the knowledge 'by which the Imperishable is realized', as the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* puts it (I. i. 5), and life achieves all-round fulfilment. Weak as we are, even the strongest of us, the challenge of an adventure such as this will chasten us; we shall then feel the need to resort to prayer which is the fruit of a mood of dynamic humility. Says J.A. Thomson (*Introduction to Science*, p. 206):

'At the end of his intellectual tether, man has never ceased to become religious.'

Says Coleridge (Quoted by J. A. Thomson, *ibid.*, p. 208):

'All knowledge begins and ends with wonder; but the first wonder is the child of ignorance; the second wonder is the parent of adoration.'

The mood of dynamic humility seeks expression in prayer to the divine Reality which informs and sustains the universe. This invocation breathes this spirit of humility and robust faith. *Saha-vīryaṁ karavāvahai*—'May we both acquire energy (as a result of this study)!' *Ātmanā vindate vīryam*—'Through the Ātman man achieves energy', as the *Kena Upaniṣad* told us earlier. It is this energy gained through the knowledge of the Self that manifests itself as efficiency in work and as efficiency of character. But all efficiency may become a bondage and a snare if it is not nourished by inner illumination. Hence the verse adds: *Tejasvināvadhīt-amastu*—'May we become illumined by this study!'

This is a great idea in Indian thought. Education is not stuffing the brain but illumining the mind and heart; what was dark becomes lit up. Man seeks knowledge for this very end; it is a journey from darkness to light; but this darkness or ignorance is spiritual blindness and not mere intellectual non-understanding. It is thus a journey from evil to good also. Hence the verse adds: *mā vidviṣāvahai*—'May we not hate each other!' All moral evils proceed from the primary evils of lust and anger which again are the obverse and reverse of a single evil. Anger cannot be overcome without overcoming lust, and vice versa. Says Kṛṣṇa in the *Gītā* in answer to Arjuna's question, 'By whom impelled does man commit sin?' (III. 36-7):

*Kāma eṣa krodha eṣa rajoguṇasamudbhavaḥ;*
*Mahāśano mahāpāpmā vidhyenam iha vairiṇam—*

'This (man's propensity to sin) is lust, this is anger, proceeding from the quality of *rajas* (passionate nature in man); it is characterized by much craving and much sin. Know, thou, this as the enemy here (in human life).'

Hence this prayer for cleansing the heart of all propensity to evil, of all propensity to lust and hatred. These alone create the barrier between man and man. Knowledge is knowledge when it breaks down this barrier. 'Knowledge leads to unity, and ignorance to diversity', says Sri Ramakrishna. This process must commence with the very commencement of education, in an endeavour to break all barriers between the teacher and the taught. We have already seen that education is a co-operative undertaking; hatred, or even indifference, sunders that creative nexus. When hatred goes, faith comes in, faith in oneself and faith in the other. Swami Vivekananda tells us that it is not enough for the student to have faith in the teacher; it is equally necessary for the teacher to have faith in the student, if education is to produce good results. It is only then that mental *rapport* between the teacher and the student is established. All profound knowledge leading to the inward transformation of man is acquired only in this way. A knowledge of facts and formulae in one or more subjects can be acquired by some form of instruction; in this the personality of the teacher and the personality of the student do not come much into play; and it leaves the student shallow as a personality. But if the knowledge imparted is to percolate to the inner depths and evolve a rich and stable personality, it requires the stimulus of that creative nexus. One of the criticisms against modern education, in both East and West, is that it makes for shallowness; aiming only to instruct but not to inspire, it fails to impart depth to the human personality. There is very little communion of minds; hence no emergence of creative personalities. The credit for the few that do emerge occasionally must go more to their inborn gifts than to the educational process to which they are subjected.

Writing in the American journal, *National Parent-Teacher* (April 1955), an American critic defines current education as 'that mysterious process whereby information passes from the lecture notes of the professor, through the fountain pen and onto the note book of the student, without passing through the mind of either.'

When we peer into the world of our own education in India today, we realize the truth of this severe criticism. Without enter-

ing into the mind of either student or teacher, education goes on as static communication of information. As against this, we have the Indian idea expressed in this invocation and in many other similar verses in Sanskrit literature. If secular education needs this communion of minds to produce character and creative personalities, spiritual education needs it all the more. The teacher having something to give, and the student fit and eager to receive, are the *sine qua non* of spiritual education. Says Swami Vivekananda in his lecture on 'My Master' delivered in New York in 1896 (*Complete Works*, Vol. IV, Eighth Edition, pp. 177-78):

'He alone teaches who has something to give, for teaching is not talking, teaching is not imparting doctrines, it is communicating. Spirituality can be communicated just as really as I can give you a flower. This is true in the most literal sense. This idea is very old in India and finds illustration in the West in the theory, in the belief, of apostolic succession.'

The Upaniṣads conceived education as training in clearness of vision, in purity and strength of will, and in richness and stability of the emotions. The very word 'Upaniṣad' means 'education received by a student sitting close to his teacher'. The profounder the subject, the more the need for close communion between teacher and student. Such subjects cannot be communicated through tape-recordings and correspondence courses. The idea of 'sitting near' emphasizes the importance of personality and the silence and quietness of communication. Shouting and oratorical flourishes have no place in these higher levels of knowledge where more is achieved by hints and suggestions than by words.

Even in modern education we notice that the higher we proceed the less becomes the number of students, the less the formal teaching and lecturing, and the more the communication of stimulus from the teacher to the student. In post-graduate studies, wherever these studies are genuinely pursued, we see modern education approaching the Upaniṣadic ideal, the 'sitting near' ideal, the ideal of teacher-student communion.

This invocation is called a *śāntipāṭha*, Peace chant, because it is meant to induce a state of creative tranquillity in the mind by making it receptive, knowledge-oriented, and bereft of hatred and other evil passions. It is only then that the mind becomes capable of receiving, digesting, and assimilating the knowledge gained. Undigested knowledge is as toxic to the mind as undigested food is to the body. The body is nourished only from food which is

digested and assimilated. The mind is nourished only when knowledge is digested and assimilated.

Ancient India devoted a good part of its energy to the acquisition of knowledge in various subjects; it has left to posterity the legacy of a vast and varied literature through the medium of a great and highly developed language, Sanskrit. The Upaniṣads form the immortal part of that literary heritage; they have for their theme the real nature of man and his true destiny; and they take for their investigation the inner world of experience. When man achieves some sort of order and stability in his outer life, and if his mind is not stifled in the process but continues to be creative and seeking, he is bound to feel the impact of a vaster and more significant inner world pressing upon his mind and seeking his attention. It is only then that he becomes aware of something profound and deep within himself, close to him and not far away. This recognition at once makes for a gradual silencing of the clamours of the sense-organs; a mood of inwardness and peace descends on the soul of man; and he now enters on the search for the truth of experience, not in the field of sense-data, but beyond them. This stage is characterized by a certain maturity of outlook, a chastening of the emotions, and a mood of comparative unconcern with the pressures of the external world. His pursuit of truth, which was till then intellectual and academic, now becomes a converging life-endeavour.

### *The Science of the Soul*

Only a seeker endowed with such a frame of mind, and backed by a measure of inner discipline, can pierce the outer literary form, and enter into the spiritual atmosphere, of the Upaniṣads. The *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, which we shall now study, emphasizes this truth through the two participants in its dialogue: young Naciketā, the student, and wise Yama, the teacher. Naciketā is the embodiment of inner discipline and one-pointed love of truth. He is a child, pure and fresh and fearless, pulsating with life and vigour. And Yama, the god of death, is the master of Self-knowledge; he has pierced the mystery hidden in life and death and achieved wisdom and serenity. His very name suggests self-control and moral elevation. He has compassion for those who struggle in the path of truth. Śaṅkara begins his commentary on this Upaniṣad with a reverential salutation to both Yama and Naciketā:

*Om namo bhagavate vaivasvatāya mṛtyave brahmavidyācāryāya, naciketase ca—*

'Om! Salutation to the god of death, the blessed one, the son of Vivasvat, and the teacher of *Brahmavidyā* (the science of God), as also to Naciketā.'

The Upaniṣad sets out the communication of truth from Yama to Naciketā. The theme here is the highest theme of *Brahmavidyā*, the science of God and soul; it is approached through the ever-present mystery of death. *No philosophy can achieve depth without comprehending the meaning and significance of death.* Religion, as understood in this Upaniṣad, is not something magical or 'misty'; it is not a creed to be believed and salvation assured thereby; it is a science, the science of spirituality, as communicable and verifiable as any science can be. This Upaniṣad, in its sixth and last chapter, concludes its exposition not with the statement that Naciketā *believed* what Yama had told him and was thus redeemed, but with the statement that he *realized the truth for himself* and became free, and that *others also can do likewise*. It speaks of God and soul as mysteries, just as a modern scientist describes the deeper aspects of the universe as mysteries; and it proceeds to help the earnest inquirer to clear up all this mystery. In the words of Max Müller (*Three Lectures on Vedānta Philosophy*, p. 171):

'Mystic meant originally no more than what required preparation and initiation, and mysteries were not dark things left dark, but dark things made bright and clear and intelligible.'

Among the Upaniṣads the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* stands in a category all alone. It blends in itself the charm of poetry, the strength of philosophy, and the depth of mysticism; it contains a more unified exposition of the spiritual insights of Vedānta than is found in any other single Upaniṣad. Its appeal is heightened by the two characters who participate in its dialogue—young Naciketā and old Yama. The Upaniṣad in its six chapters unrolls a fascinating picture of young pulsating life, inquisitive and fearless, knocking at the doors of death the terrible, and extracting from it wisdom which lies beyond life and death.

The first chapter of the Upaniṣad provides the human setting for the exposition of its philosophy in the rest of the book.

Firstly, the story is told of how Naciketā asked Yama three questions, the last of which related to profound metaphysics and spirituality. Secondly, on the basis of this third question the re-

maining five chapters expound a philosophy which conveys the essential spiritual message of all the Upaniṣads.

The story of Yama and Naciketā is not told for the first time in this Upaniṣad. The story first occurs in the *Ṛg-Veda*, in its tenth *maṇḍala*, which speaks of a boy who went to the heaven of Yama at the express desire of his royal father. The story appears in a more developed form in the *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa* of a later period where Naciketā is granted three boons by Yama; the story in the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* corresponds in all essential particulars with that in the Brāhmaṇa. The single point of difference lies in Yama's answer to the third boon by which Naciketā asked Yama to tell him how to conquer death. In the Brāhmaṇa the answer to this boon referred to the performance of a certain sacrifice; this was but a repetition of the answer to the second boon. *But the answer to this question given in the Kaṭha Upaniṣad lifts the subject from sacrifices and rituals to the high level of moral striving and spiritual realization.* This little difference makes all the difference between a hedonistic heaven-centred theology and a spiritual character-building philosophy.

The Upaniṣad opens its first chapter of twenty-nine verses with a simple statement recalling an old legend:

> *Uśan ha vai vājaśravasaḥ sarvavedasaṁ dadau;*
> *Tasya ha naciketā nāma putra āsa—*

'Desirous (of heavenly rewards) Vājaśravā, it is said, gave away all his possessions (at the *Viśvajit* sacrifice). He had a son, Naciketā by name.'

This is simple unembellished language. The sacrifice in question demanded the giving away of all one's possessions as gifts. The sacrifice commenced. Naciketā, the young son, was watching the proceedings intently. Continuing the simple narration, the Upaniṣad says in its second verse:

> ***Taṁ ha kumāraṁ santaṁ***
> ***dakṣiṇāsu nīyamānāsu***
> ***śraddhā āviveśa.***
> ***So'manyata—***

**'When the gifts were being brought (for distribution), Naciketā, though still a child, was filled with *śraddhā* (the spirit of truth); and he thought (within himself)'.**

*Śraddhā*

Something that the father was doing evoked deep reflection in the son who was still a *kumāra*, a boy who had not attained physical maturity. He became possessed of *śraddhā*. This word *śraddhā* has no exact equivalent in English; it is usually translated as faith; but it is not faith in a creed or dogma but faith in oneself, faith in the infinite power lodged in every soul; it is also faith in the power of truth and goodness, a firm conviction of the ultimate meaningfulness of the universe. It is the totality of positive attitudes, *āstikya buddhi*, as Śaṅkara defines it. It is the impelling force behind man's efforts at character development, his civic virtues and social graces, his search for truth in science and religion. Its total absence from the heart marks the complete cynical attitude.

Dealing with the importance of this virtue for human character and achievement, Swami Vivekananda says in his 'Reply to the Address of Welcome at Calcutta' (*Complete Works*, Vol. III, Eighth Edition, pp. 319-20):

'I would not translate this word *śraddhā* to you, it would be a mistake; it is a wonderful word to understand, and much depends on it.... Unfortunately, it has nearly vanished from India, and this is why we are in our present state. What makes the difference between man and man is the difference in this *śraddhā* and nothing else. What makes one man great and another weak and low is this *śraddhā*. My Master used to say, he who thinks himself weak will become weak, and that is true. This *śraddhā* must enter into you. Whatever of material power you see manifested by the western races is the outcome of this *śraddhā*, because they believe in their muscles; and if you believe in your spirit, how much more will it work! Believe in that infinite Soul, the infinite Power which, with consensus of opinion, your books and sages preach. That Ātman which nothing can destroy, in It is infinite Power, only waiting to be called out. For here is the great difference between all other philosophies and the Indian philosophy. Whether dualistic, qualified monistic, or monistic, they all firmly believe that everything is in the soul itself; it has only to come out and manifest itself. Therefore, this *śraddhā* is what I want, and what all of us here want, this faith in ourselves, and before you is the great task to get that faith. Give up the awful disease that is creeping into our national blood, that idea of ridiculing everything, that loss of seriousness. Give that up. Be strong and have this *śraddhā*, and everything else is bound to follow.'

Cynicism spells the spiritual death of the individual. It scorns all values. It is the final nemesis of every thorough-going materialism. It has afflicted, more or less, every civilization: but it has be-

come the prevailing attitude of modern civilization. It sets in when man is spiritually weakened through over-emphasis on material things and physical satisfactions and neglect of the ever-present datum of his inner self. Man then loses the power to digest experiences: he is, on the other hand, digested by them. In cynicism, the onward current of evolution is side-tracked and ends up in a stagnant pool, a self-centred personality which is no personality but only 'a clod of ailments and grievances', in the words of Bernard Shaw, 'ever complaining that the world does not devote itself to making you happy'. In ancient civilizations, cynicism used to be only a peripheral mood; men and women tended to be cynical in advancing years due to jolts and defeats in life's battles; but it was rarely the mood of early life. Whereas, in the modern age, it has become the central mood afflicting men of all ages, beginning with the youth hardly out of his teens, and extending to the proud intellectual, and to the aged man tottering on his stick. This is the surest index of the decay of a civilization, of its utter insufficiency, its spiritual poverty. When man loses faith in himself, he loses faith in everyone and everything else as well, and the gate is opened to all-round degeneration.

Swami Vivekananda sounded the note of warning about the centuries-old loss of *śraddhā* by the people of India more than sixty years ago. That warning had a wholesome effect on the national mind, it induced a wave of faith in oneself and love for man in the people, and led them to political independence. But since independence there has been a slow decay of idealism and an invasion of this dire disease of cynicism. Unless we recognize it as a disease and take steps to eradicate it, there is no hope for our society. We have set before ourselves the task of eradicating diseases such as cholera, small-pox, tuberculosis, and leprosy. This is, undoubtedly, vital for our national health: but far more vital is the need to eradicate the deadly virus of cynicism, the loss of *śraddhā*, corroding the human heart. This is achieved only through spiritual education: and the Upaniṣads hold out the priceless blessing of such an education to our people, nay, to the people of every country today. It will strengthen the inner life of man by imparting to him a philosophy of man and his destiny which is rational, practical, and universal, and in tune with the deep-felt urges of the modern age. It will help him to capture faith in man and his high destiny, and to retain his youthful zest and joy throughout life.

Fortified with this accession of *śraddhā*, young Naciketā thought within himself. What was the trend of his reflection? The next verse, verse three, indicates this:

*Pītodakā jagdhatṛṇā dugdhadohā nirindriyāḥ;*
*Anandā nāma te lokā tān sa gacchati tā dadat—*

'Joyless, verily, are those worlds to which he goes who gives such cows as these—cows that have finished drinking water, eating hay, giving milk, and that would calve no more.'

Evidently, the father was not sincere in fulfilling the demands of the sacrifice which he had voluntarily undertaken. He was to give in charity all he possessed. What he was actually giving were old and useless cattle. Such deception is the path not to a joyful heaven but to a joyless hellish existence. And the truthful son could not reconcile himself to it. So in verse four we find him gently but firmly taking a creative step:

*Sa hovaca pitaraṁ tata kasmai māṁ dāsyasīti;*
*Dvitīyaṁ tritīyaṁ taṁ hovāca, mṛtyave tvā dadāmīti—*

'He said to his father: "Father, to whom will you give me?" He said this to him a second and a third time. "I will give thee unto *mṛtyu* (death)," (thus replied the father in anger).'

The son reminded his father that he was to give away all his possessions; that he, as his son, was also meant to be given away, and so he wanted to know to whom his father proposed to give him. In asking this, he revealed the fearlessness and boldness proceeding from his innate virtue of *śraddhā*. He had great love for his father; but he had greater love for truth and righteousness. His goodness was not static but dynamic. His love for his father and his love for truth found dynamic expression in an effort to bring his father to the path of truth. The father ignored the son's question; but the son pressed home his question a second and a third time. Then the father lost his temper at what he considered to be the impudence of his son, and exploded in anger: 'Unto death I give thee.'

### *Fearless Love of Truth*

Hearing the angry words of his father, Naciketā was not perturbed; nor was he angry with his father. He was ever ready to do anything or go anywhere for love of truth. He thought within himself as the next verse, the fifth, tells us:

*Bahūnām emi prathamo bahūnām emi madhyamaḥ;*
*Kimsvit yamasya kartavyaṁ yanmayādya kariṣyati—*

'Among many (of his children or students) I am the foremost; among many, (again), I am the middle; (but never the most backward). (Why, then did my father say that he would give me to death?). What work of Yama will be accomplished by his giving me unto him?'

In the meantime the father regained his composure and repented his rash utterance. He wanted to withdraw what he had said. But Naciketā did not appreciate his father's desire to eat his own words. He must, Naciketā felt, stick to truth and bring harmony between his thought, speech, and action. Everything must be sacrificed for the sake of truth which alone is eternal. So in the next verse, verse six, we find him admonishing his father:

*Anupaśya yathā pūrve pratipaśya tathāpare;*
*Sasyamiva martyaḥ pacyate sasyamivājāyate punaḥ—*

'Remember how the ancients behaved; mark also how the moderns do. Like corn the mortal ripens (and falls), and like corn is he born again.'

Naciketā reminds his father how their forefathers never abandoned truth, even for fear of death; how the great ones of their own times also never swerved from the path of truth. How, then, could his father now break his word for fear of sending his son to the world of death? How ephemeral is human life and how eternal is the majesty of truth! Is it wisdom to sacrifice the latter for the former? Truth, *satya*, which expresses itself as righteousness, *dharma*, in human life, is an eternal value. It cannot be moulded and shaped to suit human convenience. The latter, on the other hand, must be made to conform to Truth. The mind and heart of Naciketā had become fearless because of his love of truth. Even death held no terror for him. He is a shining example for human society, ancient or modern. Says Swami Vivekananda (Lecture on 'The Real Nature of Man', *Complete Works*, Vol. II, Ninth Edition, pp. 84-85):

'*Truth does not pay homage to any society, ancient or modern. Society has to pay homage to Truth, or die.* Societies should be moulded upon truth, and truth has not to adjust itself to society.... *That society is the greatest, where the highest truths become practical.* That is my opinion; and if society is not fit for the highest truths, make it so; and the sooner, the better. Stand up, men and women, in this spirit, dare to believe in the Truth, dare to practise the Truth! The world requires a few hundred bold men and wo-

men. Practise that boldness which dares know the Truth, which dares show the Truth in life, which does not quake before death, nay, welcomes death, makes a man know that he is the Spirit, that, in the whole universe, nothing can kill him. Then you will be free. Then you will know your real soul.'

Man swerves from the path of truth and righteousness under the pulls of his sensate nature. He is then unaware of his true spiritual stature. As he becomes increasingly aware of his spiritual nature, he learns to keep under control the impulsions of his lower sensate nature and live a life, truthful and righteous. This is the achievement of spiritual strength to which all other forms of man's strength, physical or intellectual, are but the means. The *Mahābhārata* exhorts man to gain this spiritual strength by constant devotion to *dharma*, righteousness (18. 5. 50, Bhandarkar Edition):

*Na jātu kāmāt na bhayāt na lobhāt*
*dharmaṁ tyajet jīvitasyāpi hetoḥ;*
*Nityo dharmaḥ sukhaduḥkhe tvanitye*
*jīvo nityo heturasyatvanityaḥ—*

'Neither through lust, nor fear, nor greed shall man forsake *dharma* even to save his life; for eternal is *dharma*, ephemeral are joys and sorrows; eternal is the soul of man, but ephemeral, however, is its cause (which makes for the soul's limitation in a body).'

The pulls of lust, fear, and greed are inhibitors of the moral sense in man. Man allows himself to come under their sway when he takes himself to be a mere aggregation of body and sense-organs. As pure Spirit he is eternal; but he is conditioned by body and sense-organs, and the fruits of actions done by them, which are perishable. Blinded by this conditioning, he takes himself to be a limited perishable entity. So deluded, he succumbs to the tyranny of the immediate present, to the sway of his lower sensate nature, which is characterized by a state of constant tension and fear and which always seeks only its own profit, pleasure, and perpetuation. When he begins to be aware of his spiritual nature he begins also his march to freedom, freedom from the sway of his sensate nature. This marks the evolution of his moral personality, characterized by increasing fearlessness and largeness of vision and sympathy, and culminating in the realization of his true selfhood in the Ātman, the universal Self.

The *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* will illumine for us this passage of man from the finite to the infinite, from darkness of unawareness to the light of awareness, and from death to immortality, in the succeeding verses of this chapter and in the remaining five chapters.

THIRTEEN

# KAṬHA UPANIṢAD—2

The first six verses of the first chapter of the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, which we studied in the last lecture, acquainted us with the exemplary character of young Naciketā, with his passion for truth and his fearlessness of death. Exhorted by Naciketā to keep to truth and righteousness. Vājaśravā, his father, eventually reconciled himself to the prospect of his son's going to the abode of Yama (god of death). And Naciketā reached the abode of Yama. But Yama was not at home then, and Naciketā had to wait there without food until Yama returned after three days. The Upaniṣad now proceeds to say, in its seventh and eighth verses, what people in Yama's house told him on his return about the neglect of the august visitor in his house; and to describe the results accruing from this sin:

*Vaiśvānaraḥ pravisatyatithiḥ brāhmaṇo gṛhān;*
*Tasyaitāṁ śāntiṁ kurvanti hara vaivasvatodakam—*

Like fire, a Brāhmaṇa (holy) guest enters households. They (the householders) pacify him with this (well-known) peace-offering. Bring water, O Vaivasvata (Yama).'

*Āśāpratīkṣe saṁgatam sūnṛtāṁ ca*
*iṣṭāpūrte putrapaśūn ca sarvān;*
*Etat vṛṅte puruṣasyālpamedhaso*
*yasyānaśnan vasati brāhmaṇo gṛhe—*

'Hopes and expectations, the fruit of association with the good, the merit of sweet and beneficial speech, of religious acts and philanthropic works, children and cattle, all these are destroyed in the case of that foolish man in whose house a brāhmaṇa stays without food.'

## The First Two Boons

Yama keenly felt a sense of guilt and decided to make amends, as verse nine tells us. Approaching Naciketā he said:

*Tisro rātrīryadavātsīrgṛhe me*
*anaśnan brahman atithirnamasyaḥ;*
*Namaste'stu brahman svasti me'stu*
*tasmāt prati trīn varān vṛṇīṣva—*

'O holy one, as thou, a venerable guest, hast dwelt in my house three nights without food, choose on that account three boons.

Obseisance to thee, O holy one, and may all be well with me as well.'

Naciketā chose for his first boon, says verse ten, peace of mind for his father, revealing thus the tender human side of his character:

*Śāntasaṁkalpaḥ sumanā yathā syāt*
*vītamanyuḥ gautamo mā'bhimṛtyo;*
*Tvat prasṛṣṭaṁ mā'bhivadet pratīta*
*etat trayāṇāṁ prathamaṁ varaṁ vṛṇe—*

'O Death, I choose as the first of the three boons that Gautama (my father) be cheerful and free from anxiety and anger; and that he may recognize and welcome me when I shall be sent back home by thee.'

Granting this boon easily, Yama said in verse eleven:

*Yathā purastāt bhavitā pratīta*
*auddālakirāruṇirmatprasṛṣṭaḥ;*
*Sukhaṁ rātrīḥ śayitā vītamanyuḥ*
*tvāṁ dadṛśivān mṛtyumukhāt pramuktam—*

'By my command, Auddālaki Āruṇi (Gautama) shall recognize thee when he sees thee after being released from the jaws of death; and he shall be towards thee even as he was before; he shall (also) sleep peacefully at night and be free from anger.'

*Heaven and What Lies Beyond*

Having secured peace at home and his own return to the human world with his first boon, Naciketā's thoughts turned to heaven. He formulated, in verses twelve and thirteen, his second boon thus:

*Svarge loke na bhayaṁ kiñchanāsti*
*na tatra tvaṁ na jarayā bibheti;*
*Ubhe tīrtvā aśanāyāpipāse*
*śokātigo modate svargaloke—*

'In heaven there is no fear; Thou art not there (O Death); nor is one afraid of old age. In that heaven-world, (one) rejoices, having crossed both hunger and thirst and overcome all sorrow.'

*Sa tvam agniṁ svargyam adhyeṣi mṛtyo*
*prabrūhi tvaṁ śraddhadhānāya mahyam;*
*Svargalokā amṛtatvaṁ bhajanta*
*etat dvitīyena vṛṇe vareṇa—*

'Thou knowest, O Death, that fire (sacrifice) which leads to heaven; teach it to me who am possessed of faith. Those who are in heaven are deathless, (so I have heard). This I choose for my second boon.'

The first attempt of philosophy in India, as elsewhere, was to reach the ultimate Reality through a study of the external universe revealed by the five senses. Such attempts led either to a personal god as the governor of the universe or to the unity and self-sufficiency of undifferentiated and insentient nature. But these could not be the whole truth; each of them could at best be a partial truth—either a human or a physical explanation of the universe. But our human or physical conceptions do not cover the whole of existence. A solution of the problem of the universe, as we can get from the outside, labours under this difficulty that, in the first place, the universe we see is our own particular universe, our own view of Reality. That Reality cannot be seen through the senses; and our universe is what our five senses abstracts out of this Reality. This very universe would appear quite different to us if we had more than five senses. Our senses are very limited, and within this limitation exists what we call our universe. And a personal god or insentient nature may be the solution for that universe, but it cannot be the solution for the totality of existence.

In the earlier part of the Vedas there developed the idea of heaven. It arose out of the desire to go beyond the sense-world and sense-life. Life and work on this earth were conceived as a preparation for heaven which was taken to be the highest excellence for man. The tensions and struggles, privations and sorrows, of earthly life become transcended in a life of perpetual joy and sunshine. Every one of the world religions has upheld a heaven philosophy of one sort or another, but has also gone beyond it in the truly spiritual part of its teachings. In the Vedic religion, this heaven philosophy was subjected to close scrutiny by the Upaniṣadic part of the Vedic literature. The Upaniṣads discovered the insufficiency of the heaven concept. Life in heaven would not be very different from life in this world. At best it would only be a healthy rich man's life, with plenty of sense enjoyments and a sound body which knows no disease. It would still be this material world, only a little more refined. We have referred already to the difficulty that a study of the external material world alone can never solve the problem of Reality; it follows that no such heaven also can solve the problem. Says Swami Vivekananda

This is the special theme of all the Upaniṣads, and especially of the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad;* it is, as we shall presently see, the one all-absorbing search in the heart of Naciketā. But since Yama had generously granted him three boons, he meant to tackle this theme with his jealously guarded third boon. He could very well use the first and second boons, therefore, for things of lesser concern. The first he appropriately used for an intensely human purpose. With the second he seeks now, moved by sheer curiosity, to have a peep into heaven; for many there were in his time who sought, as there are bound to be some at all times who seek, a safe and delightful heaven as the highest excellence.

Readily granting this boon, Yama said, in the words of verse fourteen:

*Prate bravīmi tadume nibodha*
*svargyamagniṁ naciketaḥ prajānan;*
*Anantalokāptimatho pratiṣṭhāṁ*
*viddhi tvametaṁ nihitaṁ guhāyām—*

'Knowing well the Fire (sacrifice), O Naciketā, which leads to heaven, I tell it to thee—learn it from me. Know this as the means of attaining the infinite world (of heaven), the support of this world, and hidden in the heart (of the learned in the Vedas).'

The Upaniṣad narration continues, in verses fifteen and sixteen, to describe the sacrifice and Yama's conferring an additional boon on Naciketā:

*Lokādimagniṁ tamuvāca tasmai*
*yā iṣṭakā yāvatīrvā yathā vā;*
*Sa cāpi tat pratyavadat yathoktam*
*athāsya mṛtyuḥ punarevāha tuṣṭaḥ—*

'Then he (Yama) explained to him that Fire which is the source of the world, and also what kind of bricks and how many (of them) were required (for the altar), and how (the sacrificial fire was to be lit). And he (Naciketā), on his part, repeated everything as told, at which, being pleased, Yama said again.'

*Tamabravīt prīyamāṇo mahātmā*
*varaṁ tavehādya dadāmi bhūyaḥ;*
*Tavaiva nāmnā bhavitāyamagniḥ*
*sṛṅkāṁ cemāṁ anekarūpāṁ gṛhāṇa—*

'The high-souled (Yama), being well pleased, said to him (Naciketā): I give thee here and now one extra boon: (henceforth) this Fire (sacrifice) shall bear thy name; and accept also this garland of various hues.'

Yama was struck by the sharp intelligence and memory of Naciketā. He was to see more of it soon, and to have, perhaps for the first time in his experience, the joy and stimulus of crossing his wits with a seeking penetrating mind; and he was to say later on, as befits a great teacher: 'May I have more questioning students like you, O Naciketā' (*ibid.*, II. 9).

The Upaniṣad now gives, in two verses, verses seventeen and eighteen, its estimate of the fruit of the sacrifice, now called the Nāciketa sacrifice:

*Triṇāciketastribhiretya sandhiṁ*
*trikarmakṛt tarati janmamṛtyu;*
*Brahmajajñaṁ devamīḍyaṁ viditvā*
*nicāyyemāṁ śāntimatyantameti—*

'One who has thrice performed the Nāciketā sacrifice and united himself with the three (instruction by the mother, the father, and the preceptor), and who has also done his threefold duties (study of the Vedas, performance of rituals, and giving alms), overcomes (the round of) birth and death; and having known and realized that worshipful, omniscient, and resplendent one (the deity of Fire), born of Brahman, he attains supreme peace.'

*Triṇāciketastrayametat viditvā*
*ya evaṁ vidvān cinute nāciketam;*
*Sa mṛtyupāśān purataḥ praṇodya*
*śokātigo modate svargaloke—*

'The wise (man) who, having known the three (details about bricks), performs the Nāciketā rite three times, experiences joy in the heaven-world free from grief, after destroying the bondage of death (even) before (the fall of the body).'

Yama now calls upon Naciketā, in verse nineteen, to choose his third boon:

*Eṣa te'gnirnaciketaḥ svargyo*
*yamavṛṇīthāḥ dvitīyena vareṇa;*
*Etamagniṁ tavaiva pravakṣyanti janāsaḥ;*
*tritīyaṁ varaṁ naciketo vṛṇīṣva—*

'This is thy Fire, O Naciketā, which leads to heaven, and which was chosen by thee as the second boon. People will call this Fire after thy name only; now choose, O Naciketā, thy third boon.'

*A Question Fraught with Great Blessings*

We can well imagine the buoyant hope that must have welled up in the heart of this young votary of truth when the opportunity arrived for him to use his last and remaining boon to explore the subject of truth—his life's converging passion. He was in his true element now; he felt himself entering into his true mood, leaving behind him the world of make-believe by which static common sense and timid piety had covered the face of truth. He now formulates, in verse twenty, his third and last boon in precise well-chosen words:

*Yeyaṁ prete vicikitsā manuṣye*
*astītyeke nāyamastīti caike;*
*Etat vidyām anuśiṣṭastvayāhaṁ*
*varāṇāmeṣa varastritīyaḥ—*

'When a man dies there is this doubt: some say that he exists; some (others) say that he does not exist. This I should like to know, being taught by you. Of the boons this is (my) third boon.'

It is the phenomenon of death that makes us ask questions about life. What is the truth about life? How many times does this question arise in our minds? We eat and drink, we experience joys and sorrows, successes and defeats. We just live our lives or, rather, allow ourselves to be driftwoods in life's current until one day we see someone dying, or we ourselves stand face to face with death. This induces in us a mood of questioning about life and its purposes. What is life? What is man? Is there anything abiding in him? Is there anything abiding in the world? The world outside is in constant flux. The body and mind of man are also in a constant state of change even when he is alive, and entirely cease to be in the final change of death.

This mood of questioning comes to all people at some time or other in their lives. But the mood does not stay; the pressures of external life drive it away and man continues his humdrum existence, shut out from the knowledge of the mystery which alone renders life meaningful and worthwhile. But if the mood stays, man becomes philosophical; he achieves spiritual depth. If it is not properly handled, however, this mood will make man pessimis-

tic and apathetic, and rob him of all zest in life. He will become in the words of Shakespeare, 'sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought'; from the thoughtless and shallow optimism of worldliness he will swing to the opposite extreme of the sickly pessimism of other-worldliness. *There is, therefore, need to discipline this mood of questioning that the experience of death induces in man.* It must be disciplined in the rigorous pursuit of truth, unattached to passing moods and unafraid of consequences. This is the Vedāntic discipline which is also the discipline of modern science. It is such a disciplined mind that we shall meet with in Naciketā. The grappling with truth on the part of such a mind, and under the guidance of a master mind such as Yama, is what invests this Upaniṣad with special significance for human thought.

The approach to truth here is not through the investigation of external nature; that is the method and field of the positive sciences which, at their farthest reach, are inconclusive as to the meaning and mystery of existence but are suggestive of a greater mystery within man himself.

In these lectures I have already quoted the views expressed by Lincoln Barnett in his *The Universe and Dr. Einstein* (pp. 126-27; Mentor edition). They are significant enough to bear repetition here:

'In the evolution of scientific thought, one fact has become impressively clear: there is no mystery of the physical world which does not point to a mystery beyond itself. All highroads of the intellect, all byways of theory and conjecture lead ultimately to an abyss that human ingenuity can never span. For man is enchained by the very condition of his being, his finiteness and involvement in nature. The farther he extends his horizons, the more vividly he recognizes the fact that, as the physicist Niels Bohr puts it, "We are both spectators and actors in the great drama of existence." *Man is thus his own greatest mystery. He does not understand the vast veiled universe into which he has been cast for the reason that he does not understand himself.* He comprehends but little of his organic processes and even less of his unique capacity to perceive the world about him, to reason and to dream. *Least of all does he understand his noblest and most mysterious faculty: the ability to transcend himself and perceive himself in the act of preception.*' (Italics not author's.)

Naciketā is setting out to investigate precisely this mysterious internal nature of man with its faculty to *transcend himself and perceive himself in the act of perception.* This mystery of man holds the key to all other mysteries that baffle the human mind,

thinks Naciketā. Man presents two aspects: one, that which makes for *his finiteness and involvement in nature,* and the other, faintly suggested in modern scientific thought, that which makes for *his transcendence of such involvement.* The first views him as a tissue of evanescent changes, like the panorama of nature around him; the second dimly gives hints of an eternal dimension to his being. If the first is the whole truth, then certain consequences follow for man and his civilization; but if the second is true, if it is true that man is essentially a spiritual entity, birthless and deathless, then certain other consequences follow which are more tremendous in their impact than in the first case.

*Hence the third question that Naciketā asks Yama stands at the cross-roads of human thought and destiny.* Naciketā thinks that an answer to this question can alone make life meaningful and worthwhile; otherwise, human life will appear to a *thinking* mind to be just 'a tale told by an idiot', as expressed so pungently by Shakespeare. It is, then, no wonder that this question has agitated the minds of serious seekers of truth in East and West, ancient and modern. In the very opening paragraph of his famous lecture on 'Immortality' delivered in America, Swami Vivekananda refers to the perennial fascination of this subject to the human mind (*Complete Works,* Vol. II, Ninth Edition, p. 226):

'What question has been asked a greater number of times, what idea has led men more to search the universe for an answer, what question is nearer and dearer to the human heart, what question is more inseparably connected with our existence, than this one, the immortality of the human soul? It has been the theme of poets and sages, of priests and prophets; kings on the throne have discussed it, beggars in the street have dreamt of it. The best of humanity have approached it, and the worst of men have hoped for it. The interest in the theme has not died yet, nor will it die so long as human nature exists. Various answers have been presented to the world by various minds. Thousands, again, in every period of history have given up the discussion, and yet the question remains fresh as ever. Often in the turmoil and struggle of our lives we seem to forget it, but suddenly someone dies—one, perhaps, whom we loved, one, near and dear to our hearts, is snatched away from us—and the struggle, the din, and the turmoil of the world around us cease for a moment, and the soul asks the old question, "What after this?" "What becomes of the soul?"'

Naciketā's question relating to this tremendous theme, however, was to Yama like the bursting of a bombshell. How could he dare to impart this truth to a mere stripling? But he was

bound by his promise to grant whatever boon the boy sought. Why not try to take the boy's mind off this profound theme by offering him alternatives more attractive to boyish hearts? Thinking thus, Yama addresses Naciketā in verse twenty-one:

*Devairatrāpi vicikitsitaṁ purā*
*na hi sujñeyam aṇureṣa dharmaḥ;*
*Anyaṁ varaṁ naciketo vṛṇīṣva*
*mā moparotsīḥ ati mā sṛjainam—*

'On this subject, even the gods in olden times had their doubts; very subtle is this subject and not easy to comprehend. Choose, therefore, O Naciketā, some other boon; press me not on this point; let me off this (boon).'

But the boy stood firm, says verse twenty-two, meeting argument with argument:

*Devairatrāpi vicikitsitaṁ kila*
*tvaṁ ca mṛtyo yanna sujñeyamātha;*
*Vaktā cāsya tvādṛganyo na labhyo*
*nānyo varastulya etasya kaścit—*

'Thou sayest indeed, O Death, that even the gods had their doubts on this subject and that it is not easy to comprehend; but another teacher like thee is not to be found and I consider no other boon equal to this.'

*Temptations Refused*

Yama was impressed with this plain speaking. He admired the boy's single-minded devotion to truth. But he wanted to make sure that it was genuine and not the product of a tutored or assumed bravado. So he decided to subject him to some further tests. In the next three verses, twenty-three to twenty-five, we have Yama acting as the tempter of Naciketā:

*Śatāyuṣaḥ putrapautrān vṛṇīṣva*
*bahūn paśūn hastihiraṇyamaśvān;*
*Bhūmermahadāyatanaṁ vṛṇīṣva*
*svayaṁ ca jīva śarado yāvadicchasi—*

'Choose sons and grandsons who shall live a hundred years, many cattle, elephants, and horses and (much) gold; choose immense territory on earth; and thyself live on for as many autumns as thou desirest.'

*Etat tulyaṁ yadi manyase varaṁ*
*vṛṇīṣva, vittaṁ cirajīvikāṁ ca;*
*Mahābhūmau naciketastvāmedhi*
*kāmānāṁ tvā kāmabhājaṁ karomi—*

'Ask for any other boon that thou thinkest equal to this, (such as) wealth and long life. Be (a ruler) on the wide earth, O Naciketā. I will make thee the enjoyer of all pleasures.'

*Ye ye kāmā durlabhā martyaloke*
*sarvān kāmān chandataḥ prārthyasva;*
*Imā rāmāḥ sarathāḥ satūryāḥ*
*nahīdṛśā lambhanīyā manuṣyaiḥ;*
*Ābhirmatprattābhiḥ paricārayasva*
*naciketo maraṇaṁ mānuprākṣīḥ—*

'Whatever pleasures are difficult to get in this mortal world, do thou ask for all of them according to thy choice; these fair damsels with chariots and musical instruments—things such as these are not obtainable by men; by these, as given by me, be thou attended upon; but question me not, O Naciketā, about death.'

Yama has presented his case as forcefully and clearly as possible. If Naciketā is an ordinary and immature boy, to impart to him the profound philosophy of the Ātman, the ever-pure, ever-illumined, ever-free, and deathless Self in man, would be a rash act on his part. From the point of view of the boy also, it would be a scrap of useless information for him; it would be like *kākadantaparīkṣā*—'examining the teeth of a crow', as Śaṅkara puts it in his comment on this verse. Yama must first satisfy himself 'that behind the third question is a questioner, may be young in years, but mature in mind and heart, pure, alert, and sensitive, and firm of will and purpose.

Naciketā was totally unimpressed by the alluring prospects held out by Yama. His mind sought truth and nothing but truth, and not profit, comfort, and pleasure; and this was a firm conviction with him and not a mere opinion or hearsay. With a mind which was *mahāhṛdavat akṣobhyamānaḥ*—'unshakeable like a mighty lake', in the words of Śaṅkara in his comment on this verse, Naciketā replies to Yama, in the remaining four verses of this chapter, verses twenty-six to twenty-nine, in a voice low, soft, but sure:

*Śvobhāvā martyasya yadantakaitat*
*sarvendriyāṇāṁ jarayanti tejaḥ;*
*Api sarvaṁ jīvitam alpameva*
*tavaiva vāhāstava nṛtyagīte—*

'These (all the pleasures you have enumerated) are transient, O Death; they (also) wear out the vigour of all the sense-organs of mortal man. Moreover, all life (long or short) is only *alpam*, little (from the point of view of eternity). Let thy chariots, dance, and song remain with thee only.'

In this brief utterance Naciketā has evaluated all self-sufficient hedonistic philosophies. *He and others like him have impressed upon the Indian mind that the object of human life is knowledge and not pleasure.* Pleasure and pain are incidental to physical existence; the animals function only on that plane but man has the capacity and privilege to transcend it and achieve intellectual knowledge, moral elevation, aesthetic delight, and spiritual perfection. Though living and functioning in time, man experiences the longing for the eternal and reaches out to it in diverse ways.

Naciketā rejects sense pleasures, firstly because they are transient, and secondly because indulgence in them beyond a certain measure destroys the vigour of the sense-organs and arrests the onward march of the soul to self-knowledge and self-fulfilment.

The modern concepts and programmes of social security and of the welfare state suffer from this serious limitation. They involve a concept of man and his destiny which contains features which are *necessary* but not *sufficient*. Man seeking only pleasure, comfort, and security is man viewed from the surface. Man seeking truth, and courting even pain, discomfort, insecurity, and loss in its wake, is another view of him, a more glorious one, one that betokens his evolutionary march to perfection. Pleasure that does not lead to self-knowledge cloys the senses and produces ennui and frustration in the end. Entertainment, excitement, and exhaustion form a triple sequence in all such pursuits of pleasure. Instead of life expansion and fulfilment, it leads to life contraction and negation. What Schopenhauer said about a hundred years ago in his *The World as Will and Idea*, (Vol. I, p. 404) is proved largely true in the case of man in modern welfare states:

'Almost all men who are secure from want and care, now that at last they have thrown off all other burdens, become a burden to themselves.... As want is the constant scourge of the

people, so ennui is that of the fashionable world. In the middle-class life ennui is represented by the Sunday, and want by the six week-days.'

So Naciketā continues:

*Na vittena tarpaṇīyo manuṣyo*
*lapsyāmahe vittamadrākṣya cet tvā;*
*Jīviṣyāmo yāvadīśiṣyasi tvaṁ*
*varastu me varaṇīyaḥ sa eva—*

'Man is never satisfied with wealth. (Moreover) when we have seen thee, we shall surely get wealth; we shall (also) live as long as thou rulest. But *that* alone is the boon fit to be chosen by me.'

Man seeks wealth to satisfy his urge for physical or mental pleasure. Desire seeks satisfaction; wealth helps him to get this satisfaction. If unchecked by ethical and spiritual values and disciplines, this urge for pleasure in him becomes an endless urge; every satisfaction raises ten more urges for pleasure in its place. Desires chase satisfactions and satisfactions chase desires, leaving man an increasing fraction of a personality and a prey to unethical proclivities. The ideal of a complete man, integral and fulfilled, recedes far into the background.

This vital truth about man at the sensate level was discovered by the ancient sages of India and incorporated by them in her social philosophy. It finds expression in the poignant words of a great emperor of prehistoric India, Yayāti. Reaching old age with a youthful heart still longing for pleasure, he begged each of his sons to give him youth in exchange for his old age; they all refused except the youngest one who, moved by filial affection, gladly parted with his youth and accepted the old age of his father. Yayāti, now young again, plunged once more with zest into a life of pleasure. Years passed in this care-free manner until one day he noticed that his skin was developing wrinkles and his hair was turning grey. He marked with dismay the onset of old age again and, with it, the prospect of imminent death. But he was distressed to find that his heart was still craving for pleasures; the body had become old and unfit as an instrument of pleasure, but the heart remained youthful in its urge for pleasure. This glaring contrast made him thoughtful; and, reviewing his life with its double round of pleasures, he was struck with the foolishness of it all and exclaimed to himself (*Bhāgavatam*, IX. xix. 14):

*Na jātu kāmaḥ kāmānām upabhogeṇa śāmyati;*
*Haviṣā kṛṣṇavartmeva bhūya evābhivardhate—*

'Desires are never satiated by the enjoyment of desires; thereby they only flame forth ever more like fire with butter.'

This wisdom which came to Yayāti is echoed in some of the deeper levels of the world's literary heritage. Goethe's Faust, in his soliloquy in the wood, breathes this tragic pathos in human life at the stage before it rises to the sunlit height of the wisdom expressed by Yayāti:

Oh, for the broken state of man: I know
Our unfulfilment now! Thou gavest bliss
Which brings me near and nearer to the gods,
And gavest, too, the dark companion whom
I cannot rid me of, though with his scorn
He breaks my pride, and in a single word,
A breath, turns all thy gifts and makes them nothing.
He builds a wildfire in my heart, a blaze,
Till from desire I stumble to possession,
And in possession languish from desire.

Modern technological civilization over-emphasizes sensate values; it therefore produces and supplies a wide range of consumer goods on an ever-increasing scale. What was one single individual's experience in Yayāti of ancient days, the experience of desire and satisfaction chasing each other in an endless process, has now become a world-wide phenomenon. The Hoover Committee's Report upon the post-war economic changes in the United States contains the following significant confession, echoing Yayāti's sentiments (Quoted by Lewis Mumford in his *Technics and Civilization*, p. 393):

'The survey has proved conclusively what has long been held theoretically to be true, that wants are almost insatiable, that one want makes way for another. The conclusion is that economically we have a boundless field before us; that there are new wants which will make way endlessly for newer wants as fast as they are satisfied.'

Naciketā said to Yama: *Man is not satisfied with wealth*. This has for its positive corollary the idea that the unchecked pursuit of wealth and sensate satisfactions does not express the true glory of the human spirit. That glory will find expression only through man's control of his sensate nature. This is renunciation, which is the eternal message of religion; it is renunciation of the trivial

and the finite, and manifestation of the large and the infinite. Ordinary man seeks freedom of the senses; religion teaches him to seek freedom *from* the senses. True freedom and delight come to man only through renunciation. Joy is to be sought, but not joy that hides a rumbling moan within. The *Īśā Upaniṣad*, as we have seen before, therefore asks man to 'enjoy through renunciation': *Tena tyaktena bhuñjīthāḥ*.

Naciketā was not a kill-joy ascetic pursuing sterile ascetic ways. He loved life and its joys; but he loved truth more than both, and pursued it single-mindedly, so that the life he lived might be the true life, and the joys he experienced might be the true joys. Pursuit of knowledge and excellence is strenuous exercise needing all the health and vigour of the psycho-physical system. And since he was dead-set on this pursuit, he politely asks Yama, with a touch of filial irony, to keep those attractive things to himself, and says, in verse twenty-eight:

*Ajīryatām amṛtānām upetya*
*jīryan martyaḥ kvadhaḥsthaḥ prajānan;*
*Abhidhyāyan varṇaratipramodān*
*atidīrghe jīvite ko rameta—*

'Having approached the ageless and immortal ones, and knowing (the more worthy boons to be had from them), what man, living on the earth below, and himself subject to aging and death, can exult in a life of long duration, after closely scrutinizing the pleasures of dancing and singing?'

Naciketā's discriminating mind shines out in this verse. A round of pleasures can be welcome to a man if he knows nothing better. Such men, however, are immature; they are just grown-up children. But when a man finds wider horizons opening up before him, it would be utterly foolish on his part to remain confined to the trivial sense-life of his immature years; this refusal to grow up spiritually means stagnation, which is spiritual death. He can avoid it only by becoming a seeker of truth and excellence, and commencing his march from the valley to the peaks. This march is a strenuous endeavour and will demand increasing knowledge, endurance, and courage. These are the values that the discriminating seeker will prize then, and not a 'thoughtless' round of 'dancing and singing'. Naciketā therefore says that, having got the rare opportunity of meeting a great teacher like Yama

and receiving his favour, it would be utterly foolish of him if he were now to forsake his original question and ask for trivial things; it would be, Naciketā thinks, like a man using the favours of an emperor to ask him for a few kilos of vegetables!

And so Naciketā, in the twenty-ninth and last verse of this chapter, firmly tells Yama that he stands by his original request and that it is up to Yama to stand by his original promise, or retract:

> *Yasminnidaṁ vicikitsanti mṛtyo*
> *yatsāmparāye mahati brūhi nastat;*
> *Yoyaṁ varo gūḍhamanupraviṣṭo*
> *nānyaṁ tasmāt naciketā vṛṇīte—*

'Tell us, O Death, about that supreme theme of the Hereafter in which they have this doubt. Naciketā shall not choose any other boon than this which is (so) profound and mysterious.'

Naciketā tells Yama in plain words: Please stop this pastime of tempting me with transient things and pleasures. I am convinced that the question that I have asked as my third boon is fraught with great blessings for me and for all humanity. It is capable of arresting the stagnation in human life proceeding from a rank materialistic outlook and the unmitigated worldliness it engenders. Hence I beseech you to honour your promise and enlighten me on this subject of far-reaching significance.

Yama was immensely pleased; he was proud of this young boy who had stood the severest of tests and established his fitness to receive and to benefit from knowledge of the truth asked for in his third boon; and using the subject of the boon as a starting point, he proceeded to impart to him the highest wisdom. This forms the theme of the next five chapters, as we shall see in the lectures to follow.

FOURTEEN

# KAṬHA UPANIṢAD—3

In the last discourse, we left Yama and Naciketā facing each other, Naciketā expecting the answer from Yama to his question about the truth of the Hereafter. Yama had tested Naciketā variously and had found him unwavering in his passion for truth. We studied the beautiful verses describing the severe testing of the student by the teacher, the firm rejection by the student of all the alluring alternatives offered to him by way of profit, pleasure, power, and long life, and his sticking to his original boon of being granted the light of truth.

The first chapter, as we saw, concluded with this firm resolve on the part of Naciketā:

*Nānyaṁ tasmāt naciketā vṛṇīte*—'No other boon, therefore, than this shall Naciketā choose.'

Naciketā never wavered even once. He illustrates in its highest and purest form what the *Gītā* (II. 41) calls *vyavasāyātmikā buddhi*, one-pointed determination. He illustrates the type of character that is emphasized in Vedānta. This discloses a mind that seeks truth and nothing but the truth; it is prepared to face suffering, privation, and even death itself in the bargain. It found expression in a later age in Buddha's resolve on his meditation seat on the eve of his enlightenment, as vividly described by the *Lalitavistara* (XIX. 57):

*Ihāsane śuṣyatu me śarīraṁ*
*tvagasthimāṁsaṁ vilayaṁ ca yātu;*
*Aprāpya bodhiṁ bahukalpadurlabhāṁ*
*naivāsanāt kāyamataḥ caliṣyate—*

'Let my body wither away on this seat,
let skin, bone, and flesh get dissolved;
Without getting enlightenment,
difficult to achieve in many æons,
never shall this body move from this seat.'

This, too, is the spiritual earnestness which Jesus upholds when he says (Matthew vii. 7 and 8):

'Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh re-

ceiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened.'

### *The Paths of Śreya and Preya*

Yama is highly pleased with Naciketā; he finds in him a fit student of *Atmavidyā*, the science of the Self. With the second chapter of the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, into the study of which we now enter, we are introduced to a fascinating exposition of this science, which is *the science of all sciences*, an exposition given by Yama to Naciketā, and by both to humanity at large. Yama begins his exposition with a pointed reference to the good life as the ethical precondition to spiritual striving and realization:

*Anyat śreyo anyadutaiva preyaḥ*
*te ubhe nānārthe puruṣaṁ sinītaḥ;*
*Tayoḥ śreya ādadānasya sādhurbhavati*
*hīyate arthāt ya u preyo vṛṇīte—*

'One thing is *śreya* (the good) and (quite) different indeed is *preya* (the pleasant). Leading to different ends as they do, they both bind man. The good befalls him who accepts the good, but falls he away from the goal who chooses the pleasant.'

The term *preya* means that which is pleasant, immediately attractive; the term *śreya* means that which conduces to true welfare, which is ultimately beneficial. Ethics and religion divide all objects and experiences into these two categories.

Even a purely materialistic ethics, which believes only in pleasure and self-interest, makes a distinction, analogous to the distinction between *preya* and *śreya* made here, between pure self-interest and enlightened self-interest, between short-sighted selfishness and far-sighted selfishness. But it is only in systems of spiritual ethics and philosophy, which believe in a non-physical spiritual reality in man, that this distinction between *śreya* and *preya* becomes significant. To all such, catering merely to the sensate man is *preya*, and what helps the manifestation of the spiritual man is *śreya*.

*Preya* is happiness arising from organic satisfactions, arising from the titillation of the senses. If man considers this as the be-all and end-all of life, his life will be lived at a very low level, very near the animal level; when man abandons himself to a round of sensory stimulations, he loses his independence and even surrenders his self-hood in which alone consists his humanness. This

is what the Upaniṣad means when it says: *hīyate arthāt ya u preyo vṛṇīte*—'But he falls away from the goal who chooses the pleasant.'

Getting stuck in a round of pleasures, man falls away from his evolutionary direction, which is greater awareness and life fulfilment. He remains a biological organism and misses his spiritual direction and goal. *Preya* is therefore below ethics. Ethics begins with parting from *preya* and entering the path of *śreya*; from then on, man ascends from the organic to the mental, and thence to the spiritual, dimensions of his being, liberating the value of humanness in the process, to rise, in the end, step by step, to the full stature of his true selfhood. In the *preya* path, therefore, the self of man is submerged in the darkness of *avidyā*, ignorance, spiritual blindness, as the next verse will tell us; and this darkness will begin to lift as he enters the *śreya* path, which will be designated, therefore, as the path of *vidyā*, knowledge, spiritual awareness. *Preya* demands freedom of the senses; *śreya*, on the other hand, demands freedom *from* the senses. All law and morality mean limitation of the sense-bound man in order to liberate the true self of him. They involve a distinction between man's lower self and his higher self.

Referring to the condition of man under the influence of the *preya* idea, Plato says ('Republic' ix, *The Dialogues of Plato*, Vol. II, pp. 459-60; Jowett's Edition):

'Those then who know not wisdom and virtue, and are always busy with gluttony and sensuality, are carried down and up again as far as the mean; and in this region they move at random throughout life; but they never pass beyond into the true upper world; thither they neither look, nor do they ever find their way, neither are they truly filled with true being, nor do they taste of pure and abiding pleasure. Like cattle, with their eyes always looking down and their heads stooping to the earth, that is, to the dining table, they fatten and feed and breed, and, in order to obtain the chief share of these delights, they kick and butt at one another with horns and hoofs which are made of iron; and they kill one another by reason of their insatiable lust; for they fill themselves with that which is not real, and the part of themselves which they fill is also neither real nor retentive.'

*Śreya* has two levels, namely, *dharma*, the good life, and *amṛta*, the divine immortal life. The good life is not an ultimate, not an end in itself; it must lead to the realization of the Ātman, the true Self of man, the birthless and deathless spiritual reality in him and the universe. This is the achievement of *amṛta*, the

second and highest level of *śreya*. This is again and again emphasized in Vedānta and in all the higher religions. Though ethics is not an end in itself, nor the highest end, yet, without ethics, one cannot achieve that highest end. Religions speak of spiritual realization as this highest end; and Vedānta terms it *niḥśreyasa*, the ultimate *śreya* or good.

### *Abhyudaya and Niḥśreyasa*

The first stage in man's spiritual evolution is ethics, which Vedānta terms *abhyudaya*, welfare in the social context. At this stage, man is a producer of wealth and social welfare and an enjoyer of the delights of social existence, in association with his fellow men. At the ethical level man takes into account not only himself but also others. Society is the venue of his ethical education; ethics has no meaning without this social reference. This social reference of the individual's effort and struggle, of his delights and satisfactions, is known as *dharma* in Vedānta. This is *śreya* in what, in modern times, has come to be known as the secular context. This *śreya* has reference to man as conditioned by time. This is the highest reach of Græco-Roman thought, as well as of modern western thought. It finds expression in a continuous effort to manipulate the economic and socio-political conditions of human life in order to ensure the good life for man.

But this is insufficient, says Vedānta. If carried too far, as in the modern concepts of social security and the welfare state, it will defeat its own purpose. Vedānta holds that the good life will also become the true life, only if man is approached from the *within*, over and above the approach to him from the *without*. This approach from within helps to release the energies of his innate spiritual nature and manifest his immortal divine Self within.

When his life does not rise to this second level, when he does not seek to express his deathless dimension, man becomes a problem to himself in spite of all the security and welfare built up from the outside. This is the essential spiritual message of the great world religions. It is the central theme of the Upaniṣads. Jesus expressed it when he said, 'My Kingdom is not of this world.' This truth is thus expressed in St. John (*i*. 17):

'For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.'

The sense-bound man with his time-bound life is not the highest excellence that man is capable of. In religion man seeks and finds something beyond the world of conditioned existence. After

experiencing the pleasure, power, and knowledge available in his sense-bound existence, man reaches after the supersensual. That is the line of his further evolution; if he does not proceed in that line, it will not be growth and evolution but stagnation and death for him; it will just be an endless repetition of his time-bound experiences of the sense world. This is called *saṁsāra*, the repetitive experiences of worldliness, in the technical language of Vedānta. But if he dares to break through this bondage of *saṁsāra*, he will achieve a timeless existence characterized by naturalness, spontaneity, and fullness of being. This is the plenitude of *śreya*, *paramaṁ śreya*, which Vedānta also calls *niḥśreyasa*, or *mokṣa*, the highest freedom of the spirit. This very Upaniṣad in its last chapter will tell us later (VI. 14):

> *Yadā sarve pramucyante kāmā ye'sya hṛdi śritāḥ;*
> *Atha martyo amṛto bhavati atra brahma samaśnute—*

'When all the desires that cling to one's heart will fall away, then this very mortal man will become immortal and experience Brahman *here* (in this world).'

Thus *dharma* and *amṛta*—the achievement of social ethics and the experience of immortality—form the two levels of *śreya*. And religion as understood in Vedānta or *Sanātana Dharma* comprehends both. It comprehends *Rājadharma*, ethics of the State and *Mokṣadharma*, ethics of spiritual emancipation. It thus constitutes a comprehensive philosophy of life for man. Kṛṣṇa characterizes his message in the *Gītā* (XII. 20) as both *dharmya* and *amṛta*, conducive to social welfare and spiritual emancipation. Swami Vivekananda similarly defines his message as *Ātmano mokṣārthaṁ jagaddhitāya ca*—'For the spiritual liberation of oneself and the welfare of the world.'

Every human being is bound, *sinītaḥ*, by *śreya* and *preya*, says the opening verse of this second chapter of the Upaniṣad. This bondage arises from the impelling force of desire within man which makes him resort to the one or the other, according to the constitution of his mind. They lead to different ends so that if he chooses one of them he is far away from the other. The unbridled pursuit of sensate satisfactions is not the way to the realization of one's spiritual nature. By pursuing his spiritual nature man becomes *sādhu*, good; he becomes ethically perfect and spiritually illumined. All moral evolution is the fruit of spiritual awareness; whereas, mere physical awareness makes for self-centredness, com-

petition, and exploitation. Those who resort to *preya*, says the verse, miss the goal, the achievement of true freedom through the realization of the Ātman, the eternal, ever-pure Self. Such a person, says Śaṅkara in his comment on this verse, is *adūradarśī*, short-sighted, and *vimūḍha*, utterly foolish.

## *The Yogakṣema Mood*

Amplifying this idea, Yama says in the next verse, verse two:

*Śreyaśca preyaśca manuṣyametaḥ*
*tau saṁparītya vivinakti dhīraḥ;*
*Śreyo hi dhīro abhipreyaso vṛṇīte*
*preyo mando yogakṣemāt vṛṇīte—*

'Both *śreya* and *preya* approach man; the dhīra (wise man), examining the two (well), discriminates between them. The wise man verily prefers *śreya* to *preya;* but the foolish man chooses *preya* through love of gain and attachment.'

Man is free to choose *śreya* or *preya;* the Upaniṣad picturesquely expresses the idea by saying that each of them approaches man and tries to capture his attention and interest. Of the two, *preya*, which conduces to immediate profit and pleasure, is outwardly more attractive; but its inside is hollow, which time alone will reveal. *Śreya*, on the other hand, although it involves some initial privation, conduces to man's abiding welfare; its attractions are in the solid worth hidden in its depths, not on the surface. A little diving is necessary to reach those attractive depths. The shining shells float on the surface of the sea, says Sri Ramakrishna, but the pearls lie in its depths; the fool in his infatuation and laziness just stretches out his hands and takes the shells; but the wise man, fortified by discrimination and unafraid of the depths, dives down and secures the pearls. The wise man, exercising his discrimination, carefully examines the two by turning them upside down, *tau saṁparītya*, going round them, as the Upaniṣad puts it. Outward appearances may be deceptive; he wants to be assured that what *appears* is also what *is*; and he has the patience to wait; his hunger for truth can silence all his hunger for lesser things. He therefore chooses *śreya*. But the fool or the dull-witted man chooses *preya*. Why does he do so? Because he has no power of discrimination nor the patience to wait; he does not need these either; he wants results immediately. He is not in search of truth. What then does he seek? *Yogakṣema*, says the Upaniṣad; this term literally means *yoga*, 'acquisition' and *kṣema*, 'preservation'

Technically, it is used to express the entire range of man's worldly propensities, of which the two basic ones are greed and attachment. The *yogakṣema* mood, in its pronounced unbridled form, is the oppressive worldly mood in which, as poignantly expressed by Goethe in his *Faust*:

> From desire I stumble to possession,
> And in possession languish from desire.

When, however, this *yokakṣema* mood functions within the framework of the ethical urge, it remains healthy and creative. But when it gets loose from its ethical moorings and becomes oppressive, it has come under the tyranny of the immediate present; all distant horizons of true well-being are then shut out. Pleasure and profit become the ruling motives; ethical and spiritual motives fade away.

If man is free to choose *śreya* or *preya*, why do the generality of people choose *preya*? asks Śaṅkara in his commentary on this verse, and answers:

*Satyaṁ svāyatte, tathāpi sādhanataḥ phalataśca mandabuddhīnāṁ durvivekarūpe satī vyāmiśrībhūte iva manuṣyam, puruṣam, etaḥ, prāpnutaḥ, śreyaśca preyaśca—*

'Though man has the freedom to choose, yet, from the point of view of means and ends, *śreya* and *preya* approach man in a mixed-up form, as it were, in a form difficult to discriminate by a man of poor understanding.'

But those who do so discriminate, reject *preya* as trivial and choose *śreya*; they are prepared to pay the price of such a choice, the price of having chosen a path which is like 'walking on the edge of a razor' as Yama will tell us later on. In such a choice is found blended high intelligence and great courage, a rare combination in the human character. This the verse denotes by the term *dhīra*, a term which the Upaniṣads use again and again. Yama now eulogizes Naciketā in verse three for possessing such a character:

> *Sa tvaṁ priyān priyarūpāṁśca kāmān*
> *abhidyāyan naciketo atyasrākṣīḥ;*
> *Naitāṁ sṛṅkāṁ vittamayīm avāpto*
> *yasyāṁ majjanti bahavo manuṣyāḥ—*

'Thou hast, O Naciketā, renounced, after due deliberation, all those dear and attractive objects of desire which were within your reach.

Thou has not gone into this way of (infatuation for) wealth in which many men get drowned.'

'Thou hast renounced, *atyasrākṣīḥ*, after due deliberation, *abhidhyāyan*', says Yama. Naciketā's renunciation is not the product of any temporary emotional upsurge produced by life's sorrows and defeats. It is the product of knowledge, fortified by deep deliberation, such as that which the world saw again in a later age in Buddha. To the discriminating mind, the world conjured up by the senses is a world of constant flux, riddled with contradictions; it is the same also with the perceiving ego. The heart that seeks after Reality, abiding and changeless, will be dissatisfied with the world of change and death, provided that the seeking is whole-souled and not merely intellectual and academic. Herein lies the whole difference between Vedānta and all academic philosophies. Vedānta insists that if the search for the eternal and the changeless is to come to fruition in spiritual realization, it must be backed by renunciation of the finite and the changeful. Man shall not seek God and mammon at the same time.

The way of wealth is the way of profit and pleasure. It is a mighty current in which many a bark of life, many a ship of civilization, has sunk. He who can withstand this current must be extraordinarily intelligent and strong; it is a superior type of intelligence and strength, quite unlike the intelligence and strength which ensure success in worldly life or domination over others. Yama is struck by this intelligence and strength in Naciketā—*aho buddhimattā tava*—'wonder of wonders, what fine intelligence is yours,' exclaims Yama, as elucidated by Śaṅkara. The *Gītā* also sings the glory of such intelligence (V. 23.):

*Śaknoti ihaiva yaḥ soḍhuṁ prāk śarīravimokṣaṇāt;*
*Kāmakrodhodbhavaṁ vegaṁ sa yuktaḥ sa sukhī naraḥ*—

'He who can withstand in this very life, before the fall of the body, the flood-tide arising from lust and anger, he is the spiritually integrated one, he is the happy man.'

### *Vidyā and Avidyā*

Yama now contrasts, in verse four, this spiritual intelligence, *vidyā*, with spiritual unintelligence, *avidyā*:

*Dūramete viparīte viṣūcī*
*avidyā yā ca vidyeti jñātā;*
*Vidyābhīpsinaṁ naciketasaṁ manye*
*na tvā kāmā bahavo alolupanta*—

'Wide apart and leading to different ends are these two, ignorance and what is known as knowledge. I consider thee, Naciketā, an

aspirant for knowledge, (since) the prospect of so much pleasure could not shake thee.'

Yama now identifies *śreya* with *vidyā*, knowledge, and *preya* with *avidyā*, ignorance. This ignorance is not the ordinary ignorance of facts and formulae but it means spiritual blindness. It is unintelligence, because it fails to take note of the most primary datum of all experience, namely the Self. Materialism commits this blunder; it submerges man in the not-Self. Even great scientists have protested gainst this materialistic folly. Says the astrophysicist R.A. Millikan (*Autobiography*, last chapter):

'To me a purely materialistic philosophy is the height of unintelligence.'

T. H. Huxley, the eminent scientific thinker of the nineteenth century and collaborator of Darwin, strongly repudiated materialism as a philosophy of life (*Methods and Results*, pp. 164-65):

'If we find that the ascertainment of the order of nature is facilitated by using one terminology, or one set of symbols, rather than another, it is our clear duty to use the former; and no harm can accrue, so long as we bear in mind that we are dealing merely with terms and symbols....

'But the man of science, who, forgetting the limits of philosophical inquiry, slides from these formulae and symbols into what is commonly understood by materialism, seems to me to place himself on a level with the mathematician who should mistake the *x*'s and *y*'s, with which he works his problems, for real entities—and with this further disadvantage, as compared with the mathematician, that the blunders of the latter are of no practical consequence, *while the errors of systematic materialism may paralyse the energies and destroy the beauty of a life*.' (Italics not author's.)

Materialism confines man to the world of sensate realities and values. It is the world of darkness or unawareness, the world of finitude, change, and death—*asuryā nāma te lokā andhena tamasāvṛtā*, as the *Īśā Upaniṣad* told us. The path of *preya* is the path that leads to spiritual bondage, to absorption in this finite world; it is the path which takes man away from light and life. The path of *śreya*, on the other hand, is the path that leads to light and life, to the infinite and the eternal. Says Śaṅkara in his *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi* (Verse 160):

*Dehohamityeva jaḍasya buddhiḥ*
*Dehe ca jīve viduṣastvahaṁ dhīḥ;*
*Vivekavijñānavato mahātmano*
*Brahmāhamityeva matiḥ sadātmani—*

'"I am the body", thinks the dull-witted man; whereas the knowing man has his idea of selfhood in the soul within the body; but the *mahātman* (the great-souled one), possessed of discrimination and realization, looks upon the eternal Ātman as his self, and thinks "I am Brahman".'

## *Yama's Eulogy of Naciketa*

Yama considered Naciketā as a fit aspirant for *vidyā* because he chose *śreya*, because he could not be shaken by the allurements of *preya*. *Vidyābhipsinaṁ naciketasaṁ manye*—'I consider you, Naciketā, an aspirant of *vidyā*', says Yama. Naciketā is a *vidyābhīpsi* or *vidyārthi*, a lover, a seeker of *vidyā*.

The ordinary meaning of *vidyābhīpsi* or *vidyārthi* is 'student', one who has enrolled himself in some school or college in search of what Sri Ramakrishna characterized as 'a mere bread-winning education'. Naciketā is not such a humdrum student, however. He is a seeker of knowledge in every sense of the term; not a 'milker' of worldly advantages from the 'cow' of knowledge. And the knowledge he seeks is *parā vidyā*, the highest knowledge, by which *tad akṣaram adhigamyate*—'that Imperishable Reality is realized', as the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* (I. i. 5) expresses it. Yama eulogizes this one-pointed love of truth in Naciketā: *na tvā kāmā bahavo alolupanta*—'many an object of pleasure did not shake you'. This is an elevating idea of education, where what is sought is knowledge and life excellence. Even in ordinary secular education, a student gets the best result when he aims at the silent acquisition of knowledge in a spirit of intellectual austerity and dedication. No education can achieve results if the student spends more hours in the canteen than in the laboratory or the library.

Within the brief period of his stay in a college or university he has to take in whatever the world of knowledge has to give him, and discipline himself thoroughly so as to make that knowledge grow with his life, and flower into character and vision. Education may start with the *aparā* aspect of *vidyā* or knowledge, knowledge relating to the not-Self, to the changing and perishable world of experience; but it should not stop there, but lead the student on to the *parā* aspect of *vidyā*, which is *adhyātmavidyā*, knowledge of the Self, the changeless and immortal reality in man and the universe. If education stops short of this higher dimension it defeats its very purpose. Such *vidyā* or knowledge is nothing else but *avidyā* or nescience, because it does not achieve liberation of the human spirit. Yama refers to this in the next two verses, verses five and six of this second chapter, as we shall see in the next lecture.

FIFTEEN

# KATHA UPANIṢAD—4

In the last lecture, the Upaniṣad was telling us about the distinction between *śreya* and *preya*. I had occasion then to point out the ethical significance of these two terms—*śreya* standing for human welfare in a fundamental sense, and *preya* standing for self-sufficient hedonism, leading to stagnation of life at the physical level.

Through the *śreya* ideal, ethics redeems life from this stagnation and sets it on the road to true evolutionary advance through the increasing liberation of spiritual values embedded in the heart of life. The economic, political, and cultural fields of human life provide the earlier phase of this ethical education of man; and religion, understood as spiritual realization, provides its final phase. This is the *śreya* idea in its comprehensiveness, where life advances, through increasing spiritual awareness, to purer and higher joys and zests, to culminate in the bliss of total fulfilment.

Life under the *preya* idea can never advance beyond its elementary forms, because there is a stifling of spiritual awareness by the tyranny of the immediate present—the lure of profit and pleasure. *Śreya* is characterized by far-sight and foresight, whereas *preya* is characterized by short-sight, with the flowing stream of life arrested and stagnant. Hence the Upaniṣad identifies *śreya* with *vidyā*, knowledge, and *preya* with *avidyā*, ignorance. Both social welfare and spiritual realization are the products of far-sight and foresight which are two important characteristics of both the scientific and the Vedāntic outlooks.

### *The Vedāntic Concept of Education*

The Upaniṣad thereafter gave us an exposition of *vidyā* and *avidyā*. *Avidyā* means ignorance in the sense of spiritual blindness; *vidyā* means knowledge in the sense of spiritual illumination. *Vidyā* does not mean mere secular knowledge or scholarship; nor does *avidyā* mean mere illiteracy and lack of information. Vedānta does include in *vidyā* literacy and gathering of information, and all forms of training of the mind for creative acquisition of knowledge —what is usually termed education. But it holds that if this education fails to advance the spiritual growth and development of

man, if it fails to raise him above the sensate level, it sheds its *vidyā* quality and becomes *avidyā;* for *vidyā* is that which liberates the human spirit from thraldom to the senses—*yā vidyā sā vimuktaye*—and where it fails to do this it becomes *avidyā*, in spite of all the intellectual knowledge and sharpness of mind gained from that education.

The sensate man, guided by a self-sufficient hedonistic ideology, refuses to grow into the spiritually-aware man, in spite of his high intellectual knowledge and discipline. In spite of all the energy and movement manifested in his life and work, the life force has become stagnant in him; he blindly, because unaware of the divine within, and foolishly goes round and round in the very limited arena of the sensate world—*dandramyamāṇāḥ pariyanti mūḍhā*—as verse five of this chapter of the Upaniṣad will presently tell us. He is content to stay in this dark valley and is afraid to march up to the sunlit heights; by thus refusing to move forward he makes his *vidyā* turn into *avidyā*. By stepping aside from the main stream of evolution which leads to increasing awareness and fulfilment, he chooses a path leading nowhere, like some of the biological species, the insects for instance, which reached a dead-end in organic evolution.

The Upaniṣad therefore does not condemn secular education in itself; but it expects education to be a continuing process. The building up of the sensate man and his ego is but the first step; it must lead to the transcendence of this trivial finite man and the emergence of the spiritual man endowed with clear vision, ever-widening sympathy, and a firm grip on the evolutionary process. Like the chick breaking the shell or the butterfly coming out of its cocoon into the wide world of light and opportunity, man has to break through the shell of his sensate world which had nourished him so long, and continue his march to self-fulfilment in the infinite expanse of the trans-sensuous world. That is the opening of his third eye; that is his second birth. He then becomes a *dvija*, twice-born, in the language of Vedānta.

Thus *vidyā* is not education in the sense of mere equipment for bread-winning or world-gaining; it is this but also something vastly more; it is illumination. The English word 'education' can stand for the Vedāntic word *vidyā* if it includes both the *aparā* and *parā* aspects of *vidyā*. But then it will cease to be mere book-learning, mere gathering of information, mere control and manip-

ulation of the external world; it will mean setting man on the road to spiritual growth, development, and realization by an ever-increasing discipline and control of the given sense-bound man.

Referring to the scientific approach of India to this spiritual education of man, Swami Vivekananda said in his famous speech at the Chicago Parliament of Religions in 1893 (*Complete Works*, Vol. 1, Eleventh Edition, p. 13):

'The Hindu does not want to live upon words and theories. If there are existences beyond the ordinary sensuous existence, he wants to come face to face with them. If there is a soul in him which is not matter, if there is an all-merciful universal Soul, he will go to Him direct. He must see Him, and that alone can destroy all doubts. So the best proof a Hindu sage gives about the soul, about God, is: "I have seen the soul; I have seen God." And that is the only condition of perfection. The Hindu religion does not consist in struggles and attempts to *believe* a certain doctrine or dogma, but in *realizing*—not in believing, but in *being and becoming*.'

*The Blind Leading the Blind*

The self-sufficient sensate man under the control of the *preya* idea moves in the valley of *avidyā*; he is blissfully unaware of his higher spiritual dimension. In the limited sensate world in which he lives and moves he naturally thinks too much of himself, of his power and possessions. In the next two verses, verses five and six, which we shall now study, Yama tells Naciketā about this *avidyā* and its bitter fruits:

*Avidyāyāmantare vartamānāḥ*
*svayaṁ dhīrāḥ paṇḍitaṁ manyamānāḥ;*
*Dandramyamāṇāḥ pariyanti mūḍhā*
*andhenaiva nīyamānā yathāndhāḥ—*

'Fools, dwelling in the very midst of ignorance, but fancying themselves as wise and learned, go round and round staggering to and fro, like the blind led by the blind.'

*Na sāmparāyaḥ pratibhāti bālam*
*pramādyantaṁ vittamohena mūḍham;*
*Ayaṁ loko nāsti para iti mānī*
*punaḥ punarvaśamāpadyate me—*

'The truth of the Hereafter does not shine before that child (childish person) who is inattentive, and befooled by the delusion of wealth. "This world (seen by the senses) is, and there is no other"—thinking thus, he falls into my (death's) clutches again and again.'

*Avidyā* or spiritual blindness is characterized by absence of discrimination, with or without learning or scholarship. If it is with learning, it becomes a greater tragedy. For learning without inner illumination makes for greater pride and vanity, resulting in increased spiritual blindness. This is childish foolishness, says Yama; it is learned ignorance. Living in the midst of such ignorance, man yet considers himself learned and wise; he is full of life and movement; but it is a staggering movement, with mind clouded and steps unsteady. And Yama compares his wisdom and his movement to a blind man leading another blind man—with both falling into the ditch!

### *The Delusion of Wealth*

The finite sense-world has become a prison to him instead of a field in which to cultivate spiritual awareness. So imprisoned, he does not see anything beyond; nor does he care to see either, for he has much at stake in that sense-world; its wealth, power, and pleasure hold him in thrall. Conditioned by time as he is, and also by the world which possesses him, and, fully satisfied with his state, he does not get even a glimpse of the unconditioned and timeless dimension of his being. He has wealth which can purchase the pleasures of the sense-world; and starting with possessing wealth and pleasure, he ends up in *being possessed* by them; and the power of wealth deludes him into thinking that whatever cannot be purchased with it is not worthwhile or true. He firmly believes that pursuits other than profit, power, and pleasure are illusory. But he is a deluded child, says Yama; absorbed in his attractive toys of variegated colours and various types, he does not seek anything else. Worldliness has entered into him and filled him, like water filling a boat; his spiritual freedom and free movement are lost, just like the free mobility of that boat, and it spells his spiritual death.

Sri Ramakrishna tells the parable of the frog to illustrate the delusion arising from wealth: A frog lived in a hole by the wayside. One day he came across a shining silver rupee on the road; he was fascinated by it and took it to his hole. With the possession of the rupee, he became a different frog. One day, an elephant chanced to pass by his hole. The frog became furious and thought to himself how impudent it was of the elephant to pass by his hole. He quickly came out of the hole and gave vent to his anger with a few kicks at the back of the elephant's leg.

Having thus demonstrated his importance, he went back to his hole and gazed at his rupee. All the while, the elephant was blissfully unaware of the very existence of the frog.

### *The Tyranny of the Sensate*

This tyranny of the sensate may over-power a whole civilization, and not merely individual men and women. It is particularly evident in modern western civilization, to which Yama's sentiments in this verse aptly apply. Its inner spiritual quality and strength are smothered by its sensate *Weltanschauung* or world-view. In the words of Dr. S. Radhakrishnan (*Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, p. 383):

'The world of nations seems to be like a nursery full of perverse, bumptious, ill-tempered children, nagging one another and making a display of their toys of earthly possessions, thrilled by mere size.'

Without overcoming this foolish delusion arising from the possession of material wealth, man will not taste immortality; he will only inflate his ego and increase his tension and sorrow; he will only experience death again and again: *punaḥ punarvaśamāpadyate me*—'they come into my clutches again and again', says Yama, the god of death. The death of the body is not the only form of death; nor is it so serious for a being so high in the scale of evolution as man; but spiritual death is a more serious matter. Absence of spiritual awareness while living in the body leads to the body becoming not an instrument of evolution but a tomb. This is great tragedy indeed!

### *True Humanness*

The self of man is separate from his body. This is the foundation of all moral and spiritual life; this truth is proclaimed by every step that man takes in the discipline and control of his body and its appetites. The animal identifies itself fully with the body; it cannot therefore control its appetites. But with man begins the process of disengaging the self from this wrong identification as the new dimension of self-awareness lights up his horizon of experience; experience which, in the animal, had been confined only to the world of the not-self. The body, in fact the entire psychophysical organism, slowly reveals itself to human consciousness not as the self but as the instrument of the self, the finest instrument

that nature has designed to help in the manifestation of the true self—*brahmāvalokadhiṣaṇam*—as the *Bhāgavatam* (XI. ix. 28) puts it. But in the early stages of man's development this distinction is not very clear because of the pressure of the animal legacy, because of the influence of the 'primeval slime' of his early evolutionary origins. But man soon begins gradually to overcome this legacy; and, in and through that struggle, he achieves true humanness. Says Swami Vivekananda in his lecture on 'The Ātman' (*Complete Works*, Vol. II, Ninth Edition, p. 250):

'No books, no scriptures, no science can ever imagine the glory of the Self that appears as man, the most glorious God that ever was, the only God that ever existed, exists, or ever will exist.'

*Lower Self and Higher Self*

This struggle to achieve true humanness brings to light in man, for the first time in evolution, two natures, an outer physical one and an inner spiritual one; and, correspondingly, it also brings to light two selves in him, a lower self consisting of his phycho-physical organism identified with outer nature, and a higher self stripped of all non-spiritual elements.

Reality is constituted of these two natures—the not-self which is the lower nature, and the self which is the higher nature. Says God as Kṛṣṇa in the *Gītā* (VII. 4-6):

*Bhūmirāpo'nalo vāyuḥ khaṁ mano buddhireva ca;*
*Ahaṅkāra itīyaṁ me bhinnā prakṛtiraṣṭadhā—*

'Earth, water, fire, air, space, mind, intellect, and the ego—these diverse eightfold forms constitute My nature.'

*Apareyam itastvanyāṁ prakṛtiṁ viddhi me parām;*
*Jīvabhūtāṁ mahābāho yayedaṁ dhāryate jagat—*

'This is the lower one; apart from this, know My higher nature consisting of the Self by which this entire universe is sustained.'

*Etat yonīni bhūtāni sarvāṇītyupadhāraya;*
*Ahaṁ kṛtsnasya jagataḥ prabhavaḥ pralayastathā—*

'Know that all beings and entities have these (two) as their sources; I am the origin and dissolution of the entire changeful universe.'

*Prakṛtidvayadvāreṇa sarvajña īśvaraḥ jagataḥ kāraṇam*—'The Supreme all-knowing Lord, in his twofold nature, is the cause of the universe', comments Śaṅkara on the last of the above verses.

*The Vedāntic View of Evolution*

This *parā prakṛti*, higher Nature, in the form of the indwelling Self, is submerged in the *aparā prakṛti*, lower nature, in the form of the material world. Evolution, says Vedānta, is the progressive manifestation of the Self through the transformation it effects in the material mass around. The whole process becomes self-aware only in man, that too only in the *thinking* man endowed with moral awareness. From now on evolution becomes, according to Sir Julian Huxley, less and less organic and more and more psycho-social and cultural. Evolution from now on becomes a spiritual pilgrimage.

It is at this stage that man becomes dimly aware of something within him which is not essentially affected by the fortunes of his physical instrument, the body, or its physical environment, outer nature. But the body is affected by 'the sixfold waves of change' as Vedānta expresses it, namely, birth, existence, growth, transformation, decay, and destruction; this is also true of the entire world of outer nature. These belong to the category of the changeful; they are under the realm of 'death', a realm which extends not only to the body of man but also to his mind and ego within, as also to the entire range of celestial entities outside. They are conditioned by time because they are subject to causality; they are *hetuprabhavā*, within the chain of cause and effect, as Buddha describes them. The changeless and the immortal cannot be sought there. Yama will tell us later on, in the fourth chapter: *dhruvam adhruveṣu iha na prārthayante*—'the wise do not seek the eternal in this world of the non-eternal'. If there is an eternal dimension to reality, it has primarily to be sought in the 'within' and not in the 'without'. Organic evolution has disclosed the faint glimmerings of such a mystery in the inner world of man; not merely disclosed the mystery but also provided the psycho-physical equipment capable of solving that mystery. The fourth chapter of this very Upaniṣad will tell us in clear and firm language the nature of this mystery and the technical know-how of its solution.

Says Swami Vivekananda in his lecture on 'The Necessity of Religion' delivered in London (*Complete Works*, Vol II, Fifth Edition, p. 65):

'*Man is man so long as he is struggling to rise above nature*, and this nature is both internal and external. Not only does it com-

prise the laws that govern the particles of matter outside us and in our bodies, but also the more subtle nature within, which is, in fact, the motive power governing the external. It is good and very grand to conquer external nature, but grander still to conquer our internal nature. It is grand and good to know the laws that govern the stars and planets; it is infinitely grander and better to know the laws that govern the passions, the feelings, the will, of mankind. This conquering of the inner man, understanding the secrets of the subtle workings that are within the human mind, and knowing its wonderful secrets, belong entirely to religion.'

### *The Self of Man Indestructible*

If the body is but an instrument of the self, its destruction or dissolution does not mean the destruction or dissolution of the self. This truth does not shine in the heart of the thoughtless man who is deluded by his wealth, says Yama: *na sāmparāyaḥ pratibhāti bālam. Sāmparāya* refers to the self of man being essentially independent of his gross physical body. The term 'body' includes in Vedânta not only the gross physical body, the *sthūlaśārīra*, but also the subtle mental body, the *sūkṣmaśarīra* or *liṅgaśarīra*, which is equivalent to the 'soul' in western thought, and the still more subtle causal body, the *kāraṇaśarīra*. Death means only the shuffling off of the gross physical body.

The inadequacies of *aparā vidyā*, lower knowledge, knowledge of the environing world of change and death, led the Indian mind to the search after *parā vidyā*, higher knowledge, knowledge of the imperishable and the immortal Self. The inadequacy of *aparā vidyā* is inherent in its relativity and inconclusiveness; this inadequacy reveals itself also in its capacity for restricting and destroying the spiritual freedom of man and for increasing tension and sorrow in him.

### *'All Expansion Is Life; All Contraction Is Death'*

The ignorant man eats well, digests well, and sleeps peacefully. He goes to school and college, acquires knowledge of the world and becomes a civilized knowing man; he feels a sense of expansion coming over him and greater freedom within. He now settles down to enjoy his civilized existence; he stifles his longing to continue the evolutionary march; the creative fires die out in him. The spiritual heights remain untrod and unconquered. He becomes stagnant at the sensate level.

Then begins his life of tension and sorrow. His digestion suffers and his sleep is impaired. He becomes a prey to many

ailments whose origins lie in the non-physical part of his being, in his spiritual malnutrition, in the damming of his life current. He becomes a problem to himself, in the words of Schopenhauer, and then a problem to others. His knowledge fails to deal with his problem. This makes him cast a longing glance at the bliss of the ignorant man. This nostalgia for the care-free primitive state is a recurring phenomenon in high civilizations of a frankly secular character. Absence of purpose, ennui, and frustration, which are the final fruits of such a civilization, reveal the inadequacies of the *Weltanschauung* of that civilization. The Roman civilization experienced it in ancient times, and modern western civilization is experiencing it today. Says Bertrand Russell of the latter (*Impact of Science on Society*, p. 121):

'Unless men increase in wisdom as much as in knowledge, increase of knowledge will be increase of sorrow.'

The Upaniṣads knew of this malady of man, of this malady of the increase of knowledge of the *aparā vidyā* kind leading to much sorrow and tension. Bertrand Russell's remark sounds so akin in language and sentiment to the remark of truth-seeking Nārada to sage Sanatkumāra (*Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, VII. i. 3). Nārada's dissatisfaction with *aparā vidyā* and its fruits led him to an earnest search for *parā vidyā*, which is the one theme of all the Upaniṣads. Therein was achieved the flowering of knowledge into wisdom and the resolution of all actual and possible tension and sorrow into the peace and bliss of the Ātman, the immortal Self of man. The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (II. iv. 2) speaks of Maitreyī spurning wealth when Yājñavalkya, her husband, tells her unequivocally that wealth can never be the means to immortality, *amṛtatvasya tu na āśā asti vittena*, but that it is the means to ensure for man only social security and welfare. Maitreyī, whose heart was set on the eternal and the immortal, spurned the offer of wealth and asked her husband for education in *parā vidyā*.

### *Modern Knowledge and Sri Ramakrishna's Wisdom*

This limitation of *aparā vidyā*, this inadequacy of positivistic knowledge, and the search for wisdom in *parā vidyā*, is the deep-felt urge in the heart of man in the modern age. This is what invests the life of Sri Ramakrishna with compelling fascination to thinking minds in West and East. For Sri Ramakrishna was the very embodiment of this *parā vidyā*; and he went to it directly without going through *aparā vidyā*. He did not go to school, nor did he

acquire book-learning. Yet from the young age of nineteen he subjected himself for seventeen years to an education so thorough and complete, and the remaining thirteen years of his life to the untiring dissemination of his wisdom among seeking men and women, that his life became a blazing example of *parā vidyā*, and a demonstration of the Upaniṣadic truth that *parā vidyā* is the consummation and fulfilment of all forms of *aparā vidyā*, that *brahmavidyā* is *sarvavidyāpratiṣṭhā*. In his lecture on 'The Sages of India' delivered in Madras in 1897, Swami Vivekananda referred in moving words to this challenging uniqueness of his Master, Sri Ramakrishna (*Complete Works*, Vol. III, Eighth Edition, pp. 267-68):

'The time was ripe for one to be born who in one body would have the brilliant intellect of Śaṅkara and the wonderfully expansive, infinite heart of Caitanya; one who would see in every sect the same spirit working, the same God; one who would see God in every being, one whose heart would weep for the poor, for the weak, for the outcast, for the downtrodden, for every one in this world, inside India or outside India; and at the same time whose grand brilliant intellect would conceive of such noble thoughts as would harmonize all conflicting sects, not only in India but outside of India, and bring a marvellous harmony, the universal religion of head and heart, into existence. Such a man was born, and I had the good fortune to sit at his feet for years. The time was ripe, it was necessary that such a man should be born, and he came; and the most wonderful part of it was that his life's work was just near a city which was full of western thought, a city which had run mad after these occidental ideas, a city which had become more Europeanized than any other city in India. There he lived, without any book-learning whatsoever; this great intellect never learnt even to write his own name, but the most brilliant graduates of our university found in him an intellectual giant. He was a strange man, this Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa.'

M, the author of the monumental work *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (Ramakrishna Math, Madras, 1947, p. 2) mentions in his book his amazement at hearing, during his first visit to Sri Ramakrishna, that the Master had no book-learning whatsoever:

'When they (M. and his friend Sidhu) reached Sri Ramakrishna's door again, they found it shut, and Brinde, the maid, standing outside. M., who had been trained in English manners and would not enter a room without permission, asked her. "Is the holy man in?" Brinde replied, "Yes, he is in the room."

M: "How long has he lived here?"

Brinde: "Oh, he has been here a long time."

M: "Does he read many books?"

Brinde: "Books? Oh, dear no! They're all on his tongue."

'M. had just finished his studies in college. It amazed him to hear that Sri Ramakrishna read no books....

'On his way home, M. began to wonder: "Who is this serene-looking man who is drawing me back to him? Is it possible for a man to be great without being a scholar? How wonderful it is. I should like to see him again."'

*Wisdom versus Scholarship*

Thus neither wealth nor secular education by themselves can lead man to fulfilment. Without spiritual discipline in the light of *parā vidyā* man will ever remain incomplete and divided, and a prey to inner and outer tensions. *Atmajñānavihīnā mūḍhā te pacyante narakamanekam*—'Fools are they who are bereft of the knowledge of the divine Self within; they pass through hellish experiences of diverse sorts', sings Śaṅkara in his *Mohamudgara*. The following parable, which was dear to Sri Ramakrishna, brings out the inadequacy of mere scholarship and the significance of this fundamental spiritual education of man (*The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, p. 341):

'Once several men were crossing the Ganges in a boat. One of them, a *puṇḍit* (scholar), was making a great display of his erudition, saying that he had studied various books—the Vedas, the Vedānta, and the six systems of philosophy. He asked a fellow passenger, "Do you know the Vedānta?" "No, revered Sir." "The Sāṁkhya and the Pātañjala?" "No, revered Sir." "Have you read no philosophy whatever?" "No, revered Sir." The *puṇḍit* was talking in this vain way and the passenger sitting in silence, when a great storm arose and the boat was about to sink. The passenger said to the *puṇḍit*, "Sir, can you swim?" "No," replied the *puṇḍit*. The passenger said, "I don't know the Sāṁkhya or the Pātañjala, but I can swim".'

Spiritual knowledge helps us to swim across the sea of the world; those who are bereft of this knowledge and are deluded by wealth, they die, not knowing how to swim across the sea of the world. 'They fall again and again into my clutches', says Yama, the god of death. This tragedy can be averted by man continuing his education from *aparā* to *parā vidyā*, from the knowledge of the perishable not-Self to the realization of the imperishable Self. And Yama introduces this theme of the Self in the verses to follow, which we shall take up in the next lecture.

SIXTEEN

# KATHA UPANIṢAD—5

In the last lecture the Upaniṣad told us that the view of man as revealed by sense-knowledge is highly limited, and that such a view betokens an immature mind. Men of childish intellect cannot fathom the transcendent depths that lie behind the visible man, the deep mystery within him that is suggested even by his eyes. The sensate man is in the grip of death; as we peer into him, we begin to get what Wordsworth termed 'intimations of immortality'. This peering behind the physically-conditioned personality is what this Upaniṣad is engaged in, for which Naciketā's question to Yama in the first chapter provided a starting point: 'When this (visible) man dies there is this doubt among men: some say that he exists; some (others) say that he does not exist; this I should like to know, being taught by you. Of the boons this is my third boon.'

## *Science and the Non-physical Aspects of Experience*

In verse six of chapter two which we studied in the last lecture, Yama introduced us to the truth of the survival of the human personality at the time of physical death; this truth is not given to man by the physical sciences with their very limited fields of investigation. But when the field of investigation is shifted to the non-physical aspects of experience, science comes across this truth of survival which is the counterpart of the truth of the conservation of energy in the physical world. Science itself knows no limitation of fields of study. To quote Eddington (*The Philosophy of Physical Science*, p. 187):

'If science is the study of the rational correlation of experience, the endeavour of the scientific philosopher must be to extend this rational correlation from a limited field of experience to the whole of experience. His task is to provide a general philosophy which a scientist can accept *without throwing over his scientific beliefs.*'

When this extension is made, the scientific philosopher will not be called upon to throw over his scientific beliefs; but he will certainly be required to throw over his *unscientific prejudices;* and materialism is one such prejudice. When this is shed, man is revealed in his true form. That man is nothing but a body is the view of him from the 'without' of things; but when viewed from

the 'within' of things, he is revealed as a soul, as a spiritual entity, which uses the physical body as its instrument for self-fulfilment. Death of the body therefore need not involve death of the soul. The soul which was conditioned by the physical body during life becomes released from that body at death.

This subject of the survival of the soul at death is engaging the serious attention of modern thought. What was till now treated as a physical product, as an epiphenomenon, is being recognized as a spiritual principle. The study of man underwent a similar significant revolution in ancient India also. The Vaiśeṣika and Nyāya schools of Indian thought had viewed the soul as a substance among other material substances. The Sāṅkhya school broke away from this limited materialistic view, and taught, for the first time, the spiritual character of the soul and its essentially detached nature. And the Sāṅkhya accordingly became the pioneer in the field of the science of the soul and, through this, the pioneer also of the science of religion, both of which later flowered in Vedānta. The modern West is experiencing a similar revolution in thought today as a result of the casting off of the unscientific and rigid materialistic and mechanistic framework of nineteenth-century science. The result is a keen interest in a dispassionate study of phenomena proceeding from the 'within' of nature as revealed in man—phenomena which till now had been treated as unimportant and brushed aside as inconvenient. A new science is slowly emerging based on the data furnished by the inner nature of man. Existentialism, from the side of philosophy, and the compulsions of paranormal phenomena or extrasensory perceptions, from the side of psychology, are helping to reveal the deeper dimensions of the human personality.

### *The Fruits of such a Study*

The study of the soul or the spiritual self of man has, in this context, yielded three ideas regarding its nature, namely, survival, reincarnation, and immortality. Modern thought has already become impressed with the vast mass of evidence for survival, and, to a lesser extent, for reincarnation, arising from investigations into extrasensory experiences. These point to the independence of the mind of the physical organism, to mind acting on mind outside the normal channels of sense communication. If this is true, what is the nature of man so revealed? Is it proper to equate him

with the body and its fortunes? Does it not establish him as essentially independent of the physical environment, including the body, which also forms part of that environment? Man lives in two environments—one, the external world, of which his body forms a part, and the other, the inner spiritual world. It is this inner spiritual world whose study is fraught with great consequences for man and his life fulfilment today. Here we enter into the depth of experience; all over the world today there is a craving for this experience, a craving to go beyond the limited prosaic world revealed by the five senses, and enter the deeper world within, the world of meaning and value. The craving for values is universal today; and it is being increasingly recognized that values do not form part of the physical world. Says Bertrand Russell (*The Impact of Science on Society*, p. 77):

'The Machine as an object of adoration is the modern form of Satan, and its worship is the modern diabolism.... Whatever else may be mechanical, values are not, and this is something which no political philosopher must forget.'

If values are not physical or mechanical and do not arise from the outside, they must be spiritual; and they have to be sought not outside but within; and we have to experience them and thereby enrich our personality; this is done only by cultivating our inner life. This is the central mood and passion of religion; and this central passion of religion is stirring in the heart of modern man, beneath his prevailing mood of materialism and worldliness.

The first fruit of this inquiry into the inner world is the truth of survival; the second fruit is reincarnation—the inner self or soul or *jīva* taking up body after body to gain experience and knowledge and achieve fulfilment; and the third and highest fruit is immortality—the self as the Ātman, essentially pure and perfect; deathless, and therefore birthless; infinite, and therefore non-dual. The whole subject is deep and profound, and its comprehension, says Vedānta, calls for a high degree of purity and detachment of mind. Man has to outgrow his childish immaturity arising from attachment to the body, which equates the self with what is only its outermost physical sheath and which sees the extinction of the self at the extinction of the physical body at death. Vedānta calls this physical body *sthūla śarīra*, gross body. The self is also clothed with a finer body—the *sūkṣma śarīra* or subtle body—which constitutes the entire inner world of thoughts and feelings, memory and impressions, and the ego sense.

It is this finer body or *sūkṣma śarīra* that is the equivalent of 'soul' in the English language, and that forms the subject of survival and reincarnation. It is the object of study for psychology and epistemology, and the field of inquiry and discipline for ethics and religion. It was an insight into the nature of this finer body that gave man the truths of survival and reincarnation; that these truths have been widely held by an impressive cross-section of humanity in ancient and modern times is revealed to us by a very recent book, *Reincarnation: An East-West Anthology* compiled by Joseph Head and S. L. Cranston, and published by The Julian Press, Inc., New York. The announcement on the cover flap reads:

'Reincarnation is frequently regarded as an oriental concept incompatible with western thinking and traditional belief. The present encyclopedic compilation of quotations from eminent philosophers, theologians, poets, scientists, etc. of every period of western culture, and the thoroughly documented survey of Reincarnation in world religions, will serve to correct this error in thinking.

'This anthology deals with a subject which many philosophers have called the central issue of our time—the question of man's immortality.'

The announcement ends with the following comments of James Freeman Clarke:

'It would be curious if we should find science and philosophy taking up again the old theory of metempsychosis, remodelling it to suit our present modes of religious and scientific thought, and launching it again on the wide ocean of human belief. But stranger things have happened in the history of human opinion.'

In the Preface to the book the compilers state:

'Although a surprising number of distinguished thinkers of every period of history have either championed or on occasion favourably considered the idea of repeated existences upon earth, as this *Anthology* attests, such testimony hardly establishes reincarnation as a fact. It does suggest, however, that an idea that has occupied so many exceptional minds cannot be lightly dismissed, but is worthy of questioning, study, and investigation.'

### *The Main Theme of Vedānta: The Immortal Self of Man*

The main theme of the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* or of Vedānta as a whole is not survival or reincarnation; these form only suggestive clues to what all the Upaniṣads seek, namely, immortality. The thinkers of the Upaniṣads realized that to be deathless also involved being birthless; also that anything that is birthless and death-

less cannot be finite, but must be infinite, and, further, that the infinite cannot be two, but must be non-dual. The sages of the Upaniṣads *realized* this infinite non-dual Self, the Ātman, as the true self of man wherein the values of subtlety, inwardness, and infinitude reach their consummation in supreme universality. It is this vision of man that Yama is endeavouring to communicate to humanity through a highly competent disciple, Naciketā. And in verse seven of chapter two, which we shall study now, Yama refers to the profundity and consequent difficulty of comprehension of this subject of the Ātman:

*Śravaṇāyāpi bahubhiryo na labhyaḥ*
*śṛṇvanto'pi bahavo yaṁ na vidyuḥ;*
*Āścaryo vaktā kuśalo'sya labdhā*
*āścaryo jñātā kuśalānuśiṣṭaḥ—*

'Even to hear of It is not available to many; many having heard of It cannot yet comprehend. Wonderful is Its teacher and (equally) talented Its pupil. Wonderful indeed is he who comprehends It taught by a talented preceptor.'

In the next verse, verse eight, Yama tells us further that:

*Na nareṇāvareṇa prokta eṣa*
*suvijñeyo bahudhā cintyamānaḥ;*
*Ananyaprokte gatiratra nāsti*
*aṇīyān hyatarkyam aṇupramāṇāt—*

'This (Ātman) can never be well comprehended if taught by an inferior person, even though variously pondered upon. Unless taught by another (who has realized his oneness with It), there is no way (to comprehend It). Subtler than the subtlest is It, and beyond *tarka* or logical reason.'

That the Ātman is beyond logical reason is emphasized further in the next verse, verse nine:

*Naiṣā tarkeṇa matirāpaneyā*
*proktānyenaiva sujñānāya preṣṭha;*
*Yāntvamāpaḥ satyadhṛtirbatāsi*
*tvādṛṅno bhūyāt naciketaḥ praṣṭā—*

'This (spiritual) understanding which thou hast obtained, O Naciketā, cannot be attained by logical reason; it becomes easy of comprehension, O dearest one, when taught by another. Indeed

thou hast thy will yoked to truth. May we have a questioner like thee!'

*Limitations of Logical Reason*

In these three verses the Upaniṣad emphasizes the uniqueness of the knowledge relating to the Ātman. It is not the product of intellectual subtlety or cleverness; it is the product of spiritual illumination; it calls for high moral qualities such as truthfulness, purity, detachment, and devotion. Absorbed in the activities and pleasures of life, many do not get the opportunity even to hear of the Ātman, to hear that in the heart of their hearts dwells the divine, which is an infinite mine of knowledge and bliss. Bereft of this knowledge, they go through life not as masters but as slaves; their activities proceed from their inner restlessness, their zest and pleasures are a measure of their inner emptiness. Says Emerson:

'The men and women that we see in ourselves do not bear the impress of men and women; we are dragged through the world, we are harried, wrinkled, anxious, we all seem but the hacks of some invisible riders. How seldom do we behold tranquillity!'

Some do get the opportunity to hear of the Ātman; but they have not the requisite moral and spiritual capacity to grasp the significance of what they hear. About such Jesus says (Matthew xiii, 14-15):

'By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive:

'For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed.'

Missing the meaning, they get lost in the words. Says Śaṅkara about such people (*Vivekacūḍāmaṇi*, Verse 60):

*Śabdajālaṁ mahāraṇyaṁ cittabhramaṇakāraṇam—*

'The mighty array of words (of scriptures) is a dense forest in which the mind gets deluded and lost.'

*Wonderful the Teacher*

The teacher of the science of the Self should be a wonderful person—*āścaryo vaktā*, and the student highly talented—*kuśalo asya labdhā*, says Yama. Śaṅkara indicates the qualifications of such a teacher (*Vivekacūḍāmaṇi*, Verse 33):

*Śrotriyo avṛjino akāmahato yo brahmavittamaḥ;*
*Brahmaṇyuparataḥ śānto nirindhana ivānalaḥ;*
*Ahetukadayāsindhuḥ bandhurānamatāṁ satām—*

'(The teacher is one) who knows the spirit of the scriptures, sinless, unsmitten by desire, and best among the knowers of Brahman (God), who has found his peace in Brahman, is calm like fire that has consumed its fuel, who is a boundless ocean of motiveless mercy, and a friend of all good people who humbly approach him.'

*Extraordinary the Student*

The student should be talented—*kuśala*; this talent does not refer to the capacity to master books and secure high marks in examinations, or conduct worldly affairs successfully. Intelligence of a high degree is certainly called for in all these worldly fields; but in the spiritual field, that intelligence must be creative as well; and it must be reinforced by high moral and spiritual qualities. Teachers of Vedānta expect the student of this science of the Self to possess certain qualifications generally referred to as *sādhanacatuṣṭaya*, the fourfold discipline; Śaṅkara definess them thus (*Vivekacūḍāmaṇi*, Verses 18-19):

*Sādhanānyatra catvāri kathitāni manīṣibhiḥ;*
*Yeṣu satsveva sanniṣṭha yadabhāve na siddhyati—*

'Regarding this, sages have spoken of four *sādhanās*, disciplines, in the presence of which alone the devotion to ultimate Truth (Brahman) succeeds, and in the absence of which it fails.'

*Ādau nityānityavastuvivekaḥ pariganyate;*
*Ihāmutra phalabhogavirāgaḥ tadanantaram;*
*Śamādiṣaṭkasaṁpattiḥ mumukṣutvam iti sphuṭam—*

'First is enumerated the discrimination between the eternal and the ephemeral; next comes the renunciation of enjoyment of fruits (of one's actions) here (in this world) and hereafter (in heaven); (next is) the sixfold wealth, beginning with *śama* (namely, *śama*, calmness of the mind; *dama*, control of the sense organs; *uparati*, the indrawn state of mind; *titikṣā*, calm endurance of the pairs of opposites; *śraddhā*, faith in truth; and *samādhāna*, inward concentration); and (last) is clearly the yearning for liberation.'

These virtues impart purity and a penetrating power to the mind and make it capable of diving deep into experience. The sense-organs control and guide the minds of men, including scholars; such a mind can come in touch with only sense-bound truths; but the truths of religion lie beyond the sense level and are to be sought there. Hence the need for the 'fourfold discipline' men-

tioned above. Spirituality is achieved only by the elimination of sensuality. A spiritually sensitive student is compared by Sri Ramakrishna to a dry matchstick; a single rubbing produces the fire of illumination. But a student who, though learned, has not his senses under control is compared by him to a damp matchstick; all the rubbing will be lost even on a whole box of such sticks; no fire of illumination will result from the labour.

*The Aim of Teacher-Student Communion: Illumination*

Thus the teacher must be *āścarya*, wonderful, and the student also must be *kuśala*, talented, if their contact is to result in illumination. For illumination is the end sought for in religion. A talented student in contact with an ordinary teacher is compared by Sri Ramakrishna to a bull-frog in the grip of a water-snake; the snake cannot swallow the frog and suffers agony while inflicting greater agony on the frog. If it were a cobra, Sri Ramakrishna humorously adds, the frog would have been silenced in a single gulp with the minimum of agony for both. Hence the further emphasis in verse eight on the need for a competent teacher. If taught by an inferior person, *nareṇa avareṇa prokte*, this Ātman is not easy of comprehension, *eṣa na suvijñeyaḥ*; and, the Upaniṣad adds, even if variously pondered upon, *bahudhā cintyamānaḥ*. All such exercises of intellect are compared by another Upaniṣad, the *Chāndogya* (VI.14.1-2) to the restless movements and shoutings of a blindfolded man:

*Yathā somya puruṣaṁ gandhārebhyo abhinaddhākṣam ānīya taṁ tato atijane visṛjet, sa yathā tatra prāṅgvodaṅgvādharāṅgvā pratyaṅgvā pradhmāyita abhinaddhāksa ānīto abinaddhākṣo visṛṣṭaḥ.*

*Tasya yathābhinahanaṁ pramucya prabrūyāt etāṁ diśaṁ gandhārā etāṁ diśaṁ vrajeti; sa grāmāt grāmaṁ pṛcchan paṇḍito medhāvī gandhārāneva upasaṁpadyeta, evameva iha ācāryavān puruṣo veda, tasya tāvadeva ciraṁ yāvat na vimokṣye atha saṁpatsya iti—*

'Just as, my dear, (some robber), bringing a man from the Gandhāra region (north-west frontier of present West Pakistan) with his eyes bandaged, might leave him in a lonely place, and just as that man (losing all sense of direction), would shout towards the east or towards the north or towards the south or towards the west (wailing), "I have been brought here with my eyes bandaged, I have been left here with my eyes bandaged"

'And as someone might remove his bandage and tell him thus: "In this direction is the Gandhāra region, in this direction proceed"; and as he, asking his way from village to village, and getting instructed, and endowed with judgement, would reach Gandhāra, even so, in this world, a person who has a teacher (to guide him) will know (the Ātman); for him, only so long is the delay as he is not freed from (attachment to) the body; then (along with the destruction of attachment to the body) he attains realization.'

*The Unfathomable Nature of Spiritual Illumination*

The *guru* or teacher must be himself illumined; otherwise it will be like the blind leading the blind, as verse five of this chapter told us earlier. One who is helpless because his own eyes are bandaged can neither remove the bandage from another's eyes nor show him the way home. But the guidance from one who has realized the Ātman is sure and unerring, as is said in verse eight: *ananyaprokte gatiratra nāsti*. The way of the Ātman is described by the Vedāntic sages as a trackless path; the rest of humanity cannot comprehend with their finite minds the infinite dimension of the one who has realized the Ātman, the Self of all. Says the *Māṇḍūkya Kārikā* (IV.95):

*Aje sāmye tu ye kecit bhaviṣyanti suniścitāḥ;*
*Te hi loke mahājñānāḥ tacca loko na gāhate—*

'They alone are said to be *mahājñānās*—endowed with the highest wisdom—who are firm in their conviction of the Self, birthless and the same-in-all. This, ordinary men cannot understand.'

Commenting on this verse, Śaṅkara says:

'That this knowledge of the supreme Reality is incapable of being understood by the narrow-minded, by the unwise, that is, by persons of small intellect who are outside the knowledge of Vedānta, is thus explained in this verse. Those few, even though they be women or others, who are firm in their conviction of the nature of the ultimate Reality, unborn and undivided, are alone possessors of the highest wisdom. They alone know the essence of Reality. Others, that is, persons of ordinary intellect, cannot understand their ways, that is to say, the supreme Reality realized by the wise. It is said in the Smṛti: "Even the gods feel puzzled while trying to follow in the footsteps of those who leave no track behind, of those who realize themselves in all beings, and who are always devoted to the welfare of all. They leave no track behind like the birds flying through the sky."'

The unfathomable nature of an illumined sage is brought out in a conversation between Gautama Buddha and the monk Vacchagotta (*Sutta Piṭaka, Majjhima Nikāya*, Sutta 72; adapted from J. G. Jenning's *The Vedāntic Buddhism of the Buddha*, pp. 509-11):

'O Gotama, whither does the monk with mind thus liberated proceed?' 'The phrase "he proceeds", indeed, Vaccha, does not apply.' 'Then, indeed, O Gotama, he does not proceed.' 'The phrase "he does not proceed", Vaccha, does not apply.' 'Then indeed, O Gotama, he both proceeds and does not proceed.' 'The phrase, "he both proceeds and does not proceed", Vaccha, does not apply.' 'Then, indeed, O Gotama, he neither proceeds nor does not proceed.' 'The phrase, "he neither proceeds nor does not proceed", Vaccha, does not apply'.... 'In this matter, O Gotama, I have arrived at ignorance and confusion.'

'There is enough (cause), Vaccha, for ignorance and confusion in thee. Deep indeed, Vaccha, is this *dhamma* (truth), difficult to see, hard to understand, peaceful, exalted, not in the sphere of logical reasoning (*atakkāvacaro*), subtle, to be experienced by the wise; it is difficult to be understood by thee who follow a different view.... Therefore indeed, Vaccha, I will question thee now, and do thou answer as it may please thee.

'What thinkest thou, Vaccha? If a fire burn in front of thee, wouldst thou be aware that it was burning in front of thee?' '...I should be aware that the fire was burning in front of me.' 'But if, Vaccha, one should ask thee, "On what depends this fire which burns in front of thee?" What wouldst thou answer?' 'I would answer thus: "This fire which burns before me depends on fuel of grass or wood."' 'But if...the fire should become extinguished, wouldst thou be aware that it was extinguished?'.... 'I should be aware that it was extinguished.' 'But if, Vaccha, one should ask thee...to what region, east or west or north or south has the fire gone hence, what wouldst thou answer?' 'This does not apply, O Gotama, for the fire burnt depending on fuel of grass or wood, and when this has been consumed and no other fuel is obtained, on being without nutriment it is reckoned as extinct.'

'So indeed, Vaccha, the material form of the *Tathāgata* (Buddha) by which one might distinguish him, being rejected, being cut off at root, rendered like an up-torn palm tree, deprived of separate existence, not able to proceed (to a new existence) in the future, and the *Tathāgata*, indeed, Vaccha, thus liberated from material form, being profound, immeasurable, unfathomable, even as the great ocean, the phrase "he proceeds" does not apply, the phrase "he does not proceed" does not apply.'

*The Transcendence of Logical Reason*

This illumination is accordingly described by verse eight as *aṇīyān hi atarkyam aṇupramāṇāt*—'not a subject to be grasped by

*tarka* (logical reason) because it is subtler than the subtlest.' Verse nine clarifies this still further: *naiṣā tarkeṇa matirāpaneyā*—'this spiritual understanding cannot be attained by *tarka*.' We have seen already that Buddha also refers to his realization as beyond the reach of logical reason. Logical reason has been judged to be inconclusive by every religious system; but what these systems offer as a substitute is revelation as contained in their respective scriptures. Other philosophical thinkers offer intuition as such a substitute. Vedānta, including Buddha, accepts the position that the highest spiritual experience is beyond the reach of logical reason; but it adds the proviso that neither revelation nor intuition should contradict logical reason. The limitation of logical reason is also admitted by scientists and rationalists today. So that the Upaniṣadic statement that 'this (spiritual) understanding cannot be attained by *tarka*, logical reason, deductive or inductive, receives more general recognition today than it did in the nineteenth century. There is, however, no unanimity among scientists, philosophers, and religious thinkers as to the nature of that limitation. Vedānta has its own explanation of this limitation; and its approach to this subject deserves careful consideration by all modern thinkers, be they religious men, philosophers, or scientists; for Vedānta has all along upheld reason—logical and scientific—and has also declared that what lies above reason should not contradict reason. Says Swami Vivekananda (*Complete Works*, Vol. I, eleventh edition, p. 181):

'The field of reason, or of the conscious workings of the mind, is narrow and limited. There is a little circle within which human reason must move. It cannot go beyond. Every attempt to go beyond is impossible, yet it is beyond this circle of reason that there lies all that humanity holds most dear. All these questions, whether there is an immortal soul, whether there is a God, whether there is any supreme intelligence guiding this universe or not, are beyond the field of reason. Reason can never answer these questions. What does reason say? It says, "I am an agnostic; I do not know either yea or nay". Yet these questions are so important to us. Without a proper answer to them, human life will be purposeless. All our ethical theories, all our moral attitudes, all that is good and great in human nature, have been moulded upon answers that have come from beyond the circle.'

And further (*ibid.*, pp. 184-85):

'To get any reason out of the mass of incongruity we call human life, we have to transcend our reason, but we must do it scientifically, slowly, by regular practice, and we must cast off all superstition. We must take up the study of the superconscious

state just as any other science. On reason we must have to lay our foundation, we must follow reason as far as it leads, and when reason fails, reason itself will show us the way to the highest plane. When you hear a man say, "I am inspired", and then talk irrationally, reject it. Why? Because these three states—instinct, reason, and superconsciousness, or the unconscious, conscious, and superconscious states—belong to one and the same mind. There are not three minds in one man, but one state of it develops into the others. Instinct develops into reason, and reason into the transcendental consciousness; therefore, not one of the states contradicts the others. Real inspiration never contradicts reason, but fulfils it.'

*Logical Reason versus Philosophical Reason*

Vedānta upholds logical reason in dealing with the outer world of the not-Self; in this field of experience knowledge expresses itself through the category of relation. But logical reason discovers its own limitations when it tries to get a knowledge of the relationless Absolute. The Absolute of logical reason turns out to be only a correlative of the relative, besides being a mere logical abstraction. The Vedāntic reason discovered that if there is an absolute Reality imbedded in experience, it must be sought for in experience itself, and not in the categories of thought. But this search is not to be confined to the field of sense-experience, which is the world of the not-Self, where relativity reigns supreme, but must rise to the supersensual field of the Self, which is the world of fact and the world of value in one. Hence Vedānta turned its attention to this inner world and, with the help of *buddhi*, philosophical Reason, stripped the self of all not-Self elements, and discovered the true Self as Brahman, the non-dual Absolute, deathless and birthless. This is the Ātman of Vedānta; and as the *subject* of all experience, it cannot be brought into the terms of any logical relation because, as the subject, It is the everpresent witness of every logical judgement, and of all experiences in the waking, dream, and dreamless states. The Ātman is thus beyond the grasp of the senses and the sense-bound logical intellect or reason, but it is revealed by *buddhi*, philosophical Reason. The *Gītā* (VI. 21) accordingly refers to this highest experience as *buddhigrāhyam*, grasped by the *buddhi*, but *atīndriyam*, beyond the reach of the senses. Any attempt to bring the Ātman or Self within the fold of a logical judgement or relation, which is what man does when he says: I am happy, unhappy, ignorant, or learned, finite, infinite, alive, dead, and so on, is immediately a failure, be-

cause the true Self, which is the subject, ever remains the perceiver of all such judgements and relations It is the unseen but ever present factor in every act of perception and knowledge Says the *Aṣṭāvakra Gītā* (XII. 7):

*Acintyam cintayamānovat cintārūpam bhajatyasau*—
'Thinking on the unthinkable One, one betakes oneself only to a form of thought'

Spiritual discipline in Vedānta is meant to purify and transform the sense-bound intellect or logical reason into *buddhi* or philosophical Reason Spiritual truths and life's mysteries are penetrated and laid bare by this *buddhi* alone, the glories of which are sung in the *Gītā* and other Vedāntic works

*Naciketā's Will to Truth*

Naciketā had achieved this *buddhi*, and Yama therefore tells him: *naiṣā tarkeṇa matirāpaneyā yām tvam āpaḥ*.—'The (spiritual) understanding which thou hast obtained cannot be attained through *tarka* or logical reason' How does man achieve this *buddhi*? By acquiring the spiritual strength that comes from one-pointed devotion to truth, for, as Swami Vivekananda says (*Complete Works*, Vol III, Eighth Edition, pp. 224-25):

'And here is the test of truth—anything that makes you weak physically, intellectually, and spiritually, reject as poison, there is no life in it, it cannot be true Truth is strengthening Truth is purity Truth is all-knowledge.'

Yama finds in Naciketā this one-pointed devotion to truth He tells him: *satyadhṛtirbatāsi*—'indeed thou hast thy will yoked to truth,' and exclaims in high appreciation: *tvādṛṅno bhūyāt Naciketaḥ praṣṭā*—'may we have, O Naciketā, a student like thee'

'To yoke the will to truth' is the greatest thing that man can do with his will This is the beginning, middle, and end of all moral and spiritual training. The will yoked to worldly profit and pleasure makes it a slave to man's lower nature It then becomes a force for evil, by tending to destroy other people's happiness When moral discipline turns it in the direction of the divine within, it achieves its redemption; and every step onward becomes a march to greater purity, energy, and illumination. The fusion of pure will, pure intelligence, and pure feeling is *buddhi* or Vedāntic Reason, which signifies the consummation of education in character and illumination. In praise of this will, Swami Vivekananda says (*Complete Works*, Vol. III, Eighth Edition, p. 224):

'The will is stronger than anything else. Everything must go down before the will, for that comes from God and God Himself; a pure and a strong will is omnipotent.'

### *The Extraordinary Nature of Vivekananda's Discipleship under Ramakrishna*

Naciketā was the talented student of *ātmavidyā*, the science of the Self, *kuśalo asya labdhā*, under Yama, the wonderful teacher, *āścaryo vaktā*. The coming together of two such gifted minds resulted in lasting benefit to humanity at large in the shape of the immortal inspiration contained in the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*. History is illumined with instances of communion of extraordinary minds producing results of far-reaching consequence in different fields of human endeavour. Herein we see the very soul of all true education. This communion of minds helps to turn every human relationship into a dynamic educational process, be it student-teacher relationship in education, or man-woman relationship in marriage. Where such communion of minds is absent, human relationship becomes shorn of all spiritual value. The modern age saw an extraordinary instance of such a human relationship in education in the discipleship of Vivekananda under Ramakrishna. The Upaniṣadic description of *āścaryo vaktā* and *kuśalo asya labdhā* fits Ramakrishna and Vivekananda most aptly and well. For in the wonderful drama of spiritual communion between these two extraordinary minds, which was enacted for five years in the precincts of the Kali temple at Dakshineswar near Calcutta, the modern world witnessed the gathering up and energizing of the scattered spiritual forces of humanity. That redemptive energy could not be contained within the precincts of the temple nor even of the vast Indian continent, but soon travelled to the four corners of the world with an impact which promises to be both pervasive and lasting. Swami Vivekananda concludes his lecture on 'My Master', delivered in New York in 1896, with this exposition of the immortal legacy of Sri Ramakrishna to all humanity (*Complete Works*, Vol. IV, Eighth Edition, p. 187):

'This is the message of Sri Ramakrishna to the modern world: "Do not care for doctrines, do not care for dogmas, or sects, or churches, or temples; they count for little compared with the essence of existence in each man, which is spirituality: and the more this is developed in a man, the more powerful is he for good. Earn that first, acquire that, and criticize no one, for all doctrines and creeds have some good in them. Show by your lives that religion does not mean words, or names, or sects, but that it means spiritual

realization. Only those can understand who have felt. Only those who have attained to spirituality can communicate it to others, can be great teachers of mankind. They alone are the powers of light."

'The more such men are produced in a country, the more that country will be raised; and that country where such men absolutely do not exist is simply doomed, nothing can save it. Therefore, my Master's message to mankind is: "Be spiritual and realize truth for yourself." He would have you give up for the sake of your fellow beings. He would have you cease talking about love for your brother, and set to work to prove your words. The time has come for renunciation, for realization; and then you will see the harmony in all the religions of the world. You will know that there is no need of any quarrel. And then only will you be ready to help humanity. To proclaim and make clear the fundamental unity underlying all religions was the mission of my Master. Other teachers have taught special religions which bear their names, but this great teacher of the nineteenth century made no claim for himself. He left every religion undisturbed because he had realized that, in reality, they are all part and parcel of the one eternal religion.'

SEVENTEEN

# KATHA UPANISAD—6

In the last lecture the Upaniṣad told us about the limitations of *tarka* (logical reason) and its inability to penetrate the mystery of the Ātman, the Self. In fact, as we have seen, logical reason, which is the instrument of logic and scientific method, feels baffled even by the mystery of the external world, the not-Self, as admitted by scientists themselves. Logical reason is *inconclusive*: *tarka apratiṣṭhānāt*, as the *Vedānta Sūtra* of Bādarāyaṇa cryptically expresses it; this is found echoed in the writings of many modern scientific thinkers. The following passage from Sir James Jeans (*The New Background of Science*, p. 68) which I had quoted on an earlier occasion may be relevantly referred to here:

'Physical science set out to study a world of matter and radiation, and finds that it cannot describe or picture the nature of either, even to itself. Photons, electrons, and protons have become about as meaningless to the physicist as x, y, z are to a child on its first day of learning algebra. The most we hope for at the moment is to discover ways of manipulating x, y, z without knowing what they are, with the result that the advance of knowledge is at present reduced to what Einstein has described as extracting one incomprehensible from another incomprehensible.'

I discussed briefly in the last lecture this subject of the limitations of logical and scientific reason as viewed in Vedānta. The supreme importance of the subject demands fuller treatment, and this, therefore, I propose to give it this evening.

### *Limitations of Logical Reason: How and Why?*

Reason is a precious value thrown up by evolution and the source of much of human progress in culture and civilization The discovery of its inadequacy is itself the fruit of man's insatiable love of truth, and his passion to push forward in its search; such a discovery is not, and should not be allowed to become, a signal to revert to unreason or less reason. If logical and scientific reason is found to be inadequate, it has to be further developed into a more adequate instrument for seeking truth. This is what Vedānta achieved in its *buddhi* or philosophical Reason. This is conveyed in the lucid utterance of Swami Vivekananda which, though quoted before, bears reproduction in this context:

'On reason we must have to lay our foundation, we must follow reason as far as it leads, and when reason fails, reason itself will show us the way to the highest plane.'

What is the chief basis of this drawback of logical and scientific reason? Vedānta finds it in its dependence on sense-experience. Within the field of sense-experience, logical and scientific reason is the most wonderful instrument of knowledge and truth. Man has, by slow degrees, developed this instrument, along with its most important tool, language, in precision and range in order to deal with the baffling and confused mass of data pouring in upon him from his external world. It has functioned as the luminous point of his inner self, which is otherwise dark and unplumbed; and with its help he has wrested from nature truth after truth and gained greater and greater control over her forces. This has enabled him to outstrip the rest of the animal world in the race of evolution and establish his hegemony over external nature. It has also helped him to establish by stages, through the transmission of knowledge and experience, an ordered society, growing steadily in range from the tribal to the international, providing a steady *milieu* for his restless onward march. Besides these practical achievements, it has also given him a measure of satisfaction in his quest for truth, in his search for knowledge, in his desire to unravel the mystery of existence.

With these great achievements to its credit how, then, can anyone speak of the limitations of human reason? Have we not seen reason's limitations being overcome by reason itself in the brief course of human history? What a distance has reason travelled, from an uncertain tool in the hands of primitive man to an efficient instrument in the hands of the twentieth-century scientist! Can we not therefore expect that whatever limitations have come to view in human reason will be overcome in due course, and that it will be developed into a perfect instrument to unravel completely the mystery of existence and establish peace and happiness in the whole world?

### *Vedānta Upholds Reason*

The answer of Vedānta to these doubts and questions is bold and clear. And behind its answer lies an impressive record of human endeavour to develop human reason and human language into their maximum possible perfection as instruments to secure for man satisfaction in his insatiable hunger for knowledge for its own

sake and, to a lesser measure, in his search for general happiness and welfare. Vedānta holds that reason is man's most precious possession and that it should be kept bright and pure, and that nothing should be indulged in which weakens or destroys it. The Sanskrit word for reason, in its brightest and purest form, is *buddhi*, which means philosophical Reason, of which logical and scientific reason is but a limited expression. The English word 'intellect' stands for *buddhi* in this limited sense. In the search for knowledge in any field, reason is the final court of appeal. This primacy of reason is upheld in many passages in the Upaniṣads and in the *Gītā*, the *Mahābhārata*, and the *Bhāgavata*.

Here are a few passages from the *Gītā*:

'Seek refuge in Reason' (II. 49); 'Reason helps man to cross beyond the taint of delusion or ignorance' (II. 52); 'By ruin of Reason man is utterly lost' (III.63); 'No man should be unsettled or confounded in his Reason' (III. 26); 'Reason is supreme among man's faculties' (III.42); 'It is Reason that grasps the infinite joy of the ultimate Reality' (VI.21); 'Through absence of Reason man fails to know the immutable nature of the highest Reality' (VII.24); 'God blesses man by endowing him with Reason' (X.10); 'When man's Reason is impure he fails to realize the Self as it is' (XVIII.16); 'It is purified Reason that helps man to know right and wrong, fear and fearlessness, bondage and liberation' (XVIII.30); 'It is by resorting to the *yoga* of Reason that man attains supreme Reality' (XVIII.57).

Here are two passages, among many, from the Upaniṣads:

'The Ātman is realized by subtle seers endowed with the keenest Reason' (*Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, III.12); 'May the Supreme endow us with clear Reason' (*Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad*, III.4).

### *Reason in Classical Physics*

Logical and scientific reason is man's only guide in his search for truth in the external world. In this field reason seeks unity in the midst of multiplicity; and every advance in knowledge is an advance towards unity. In this search reason takes certain principles as its basic assumptions—principles like uniformity, non-contradiction, and causality; it does not question the truth of these assumptions; neither does it seek ultimate Truth; but something in him urges man to question *all* assumptions, and also to seek ultimate Truth. The rigid framework of logical and scientific reason

thus feels the impact of a higher force within. When this reason becomes critical of itself and discovers its own limitations, it takes the first step in evolving into philosophical Reason. But this first step must be followed by further steps if it is not to end up in futility as a high critique of mere sense-experience. This is what happened to Kant whose *Critique of Pure Reason* ended in agnosticism, needing another critique, *Critique of Practical Reason*, to restore faith in moral values.

These further steps are necessitated by reason being confronted by new segments of experience. Reason as experienced in formal logic is under the most rigid framework, and has very little to do with experience; this explains its static and formal nature. Reason achieves a direct confrontation with experience in the logic of scientific method. It was this discipline of experience that enabled scientific reason from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century to achieve its great successes in unravelling the mystery of external nature. But by the end of the nineteenth century, reason began to feel even the erstwhile scientific framework of classical physics too rigid for its expansive mood. Says physicist Heisenberg (*Physics and Philosophy*, p. 169):

'... the nineteenth century developed an extremely rigid frame for natural science which formed not only science but also the general outlook of great masses of people. This frame was supported by the fundamental concepts of classical physics, space, time, matter and causality; the concept of reality applied to the things or events that we could perceive by our senses or that could be observed by means of the refined tools that technical science had provided. Matter was the primary reality. The progress of science was pictured as a crusade of conquest into the material world. Utility was the watchword of the time. ... this frame was so narrow and rigid that it was difficult to find a place in it for many concepts of our language that had always belonged to its very substance, for instance, the concepts of mind, of the human soul, or of life.'

### *Reason in Twentieth-Century Physics*

The breakdown of this rigid framework of classical physics became inevitable at the end of the nineteenth century with the discovery of a mass of new facts regarding the physical world, more especially the sub-atomic world. The development of the quantum and relativity theories accelerated this process through the early decades of the twentieth century until the old framework became utterly untenable. The most revolutionary

aspect of this change lay in repudiating the exclusively 'objective' character of the so-called objective world studied by science, and the consequent change in its concept of reality. Pointing out the significance of the quantum theory, Heisenberg says (*ibid.*, p. 33):

'...it is in quantum theory that the most fundamental changes with respect to the concept of reality have taken place, and in quantum theory in its final form the new ideas of atomic physics are concentrated and crystallized. ...But the change in the concept of reality manifesting itself in quantum theory is not simply a continuation of the past; it seems to be a real break in the structure of modern science.'

And dealing with its revolutionary impact, he continues (*ibid.*, pp. 54-55):

'To what extent, then, have we finally come to an objective description of the world, especially of the atomic world? In classical physics science started from the belief—or should one say from the illusion?—that we could describe the world or at least parts of the world without any reference to ourselves. This is actually possible to a large extent. We know that the city of London exists whether we see it or not. It may be said that classical physics is just that idealization in which we can speak about parts of the world without any reference to ourselves. Its success has led to the general ideal of an objective description of the world. Objectivity has become the first criterion for the value of any scientific result. ... One may perhaps say that quantum theory corresponds to this ideal as far as possible. ... But it starts from the division of the world into the 'object' and the rest of the world, and from the fact that at least for the rest of the world we use the classical concepts in our description. This division is arbitrary and historically a direct consequence of our scientific method; the use of the classical concepts is finally a consequence of the general human way of thinking. But this is already a reference to ourselves and in so far our description is not completely objective.'

The same is emphasized also by Sir James Jeans in his significantly titled book *The New Background of Science* (pp. 2-6):

'The old philosophy ceased to work at the end of the nineteenth century, and the twentieth-century physicist is hammering out a new philosophy for himself. Its essence is that he no longer sees nature as something entirely distinct from himself. Sometimes it is what he himself creates or selects or abstracts; sometimes it is what he destroys.

'Thus the history of physical science in the twentieth century is one of a progressive emancipation from the purely human angle of vision.

'The physicist who can discard his human spectacles, and can see clearly in the strange new light which then assails his eyes,

finds himself living in an unfamiliar world, which even his immediate predecessors would probably fail to recognise.'

Again (*ibid.*, pp. 287-88):

'The old science which pictured nature as a crowd of blindly wandering atoms, claimed that it was depicting a completely objective universe, entirely outside of, and detached from, the mind which perceived it. Modern science makes no such claim, frankly admitting that its subject of study is primarily our observation of nature, and not nature itself. The new picture of nature must then inevitably involve mind as well as matter—the mind which perceives and the matter which is perceived—and so must be more mental in character than the fallacious picture which preceded it.

'Yet the essence of the present situation in physics is not that something mental has come into the new picture of nature, so much as that nothing non-mental has survived from the old picture. As we have watched the gradual metamorphosis of the old picture into the new, we have not seen the addition of mind to matter so much as the complete disappearance of matter, at least of the kind out of which the older physics constructed its objective universe.'

### *Reason in Modern Science*
### *versus*
### *Reason in Western Philosophy*

The history of science reveals the distance travelled by reason from the sterility of formal logic, through the fruitful though rigid framework of classical science, to the revolutionary and expansive heights of modern science. Every advance in reason's clarity and effectiveness has been the product of increase in detachment, in subtlety, and in the range of facts. The reason of formal logic rose beyond its own limitations by developing into the reason of classical science with its stress on induction and verification; the reason of classical science similarly transcended its own limitations by growing into the reason of twentieth-century science. In this latest development, reason has achieved an evaluation of experience and a criticism of itself far surpassing anything that was achieved in the whole range of western thought, scientific or philosophical. This is clearly revealed in an estimate of the fundamental position of Kant in his *Critique of Pure Reason* made by physicist Heisenberg from the standpoint of modern physics (*Physics and Philosophy*, pp. 80-82):

'With regard to physics Kant took as a priori, besides space and time, the law of causality and the concept of substance. In a later stage of his work he tried to include the law of conservation of matter, the equality of "actio and reactio" and even the law of gravitation. No physicist would be willing to follow Kant here,

if the term "a priori" is used in the absolute sense that was given to it by Kant....

'Coming now to the comparison of Kant's doctrines with modern physics, it looks in the first moment as though his central concept of the "synthetic judgments a priori" had been completely annihilated by the discoveries of our century. The theory of relativity has changed our views on space and time, it has in fact revealed entirely new features of space and time, of which nothing is seen in Kant's a priori forms of pure intuition. The law of causality is no longer applied in quantum theory and the law of conservation of matter is no longer true for the elementary particles. Obviously Kant could not have foreseen the new discoveries, but since he was convinced that his concepts would be "the basis of any future metaphysics that can be called science" it is interesting to see where his arguments have been wrong.

'As example we take the law of causality....

'Is this true in atomic physics? Let us consider a radium atom which can emit an $\alpha$-particle. The time for the emission of the $\alpha$-particle cannot be predicted. We can only say that in the average the emission will take place in about two thousand years. Therefore, when we observe the emission we do not actually look for a foregoing event from which the emission must according to a rule follow. Logically it would be quite possible to look for such a foregoing event, and we need not be discouraged by the fact that hitherto none has been found. But why has the scientific method actually changed in this very fundamental question since Kant?

'Two possible answers can be given to that question. The one is: We have been convinced by experience that the laws of quantum theory are correct and, if they are, we know that a foregoing event as cause for the emission at a given time cannot be found. The other answer is: We know the foregoing event, but not quite accurately. We know the forces in the atomic nucleus that are responsible for the emission of the $\alpha$-particle. But this knowledge contains the uncertainty which is brought about by the interaction between the nucleus and the rest of the world. If we wanted to know why the $\alpha$-particle was emitted at that particular time we would have to know the microscopic structure of the whole world including ourselves, and that is impossible. Therefore, Kant's arguments for the a priori character of the law of causality no longer apply.

'The a priori concepts which Kant considered an undisputable truth are no longer contained in the scientific system of modern physics.

'What Kant had not foreseen was that these a priori concepts can be the conditions for science and at the same time can have only a limited range of applicability.... It was the fundamental paradox of quantum theory that could not be foreseen by Kant

Modern physics has changed Kant's statement about the possibility of synthetic judgments a priori from a metaphysical one into a practical one. The synthetic judgments a priori thereby have the character of a relative truth.'

*Modern Scientific Reason versus Vedāntic Reason*

The reason employed by modern science in its twentieth-century form in the above critique of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* reveals a sweep and depth unachieved till then in the West by its scientific and philosophical reason. This new dimension of reason has possibilities within it of developing into the *buddhi* or philosophical Reason of Vedānta which derives its sweep and depth from a dispassionate and penetrating study of experience in its totality—experience as revealed in the three states of waking, dream, and dreamless sleep. Vedānta adopts therefore the *avasthātraya prakriyā*, the methodology of the three states, which is scientific method amplified and developed for the study of experience as a whole with a view to arriving at ultimate Truth.

Neither the reason of formal logic nor the reason of classical science, it is now obvious, can arrive at ultimate Truth. Their limitations proceed from what Jeans calls their 'purely human angle of vision'. Vedānta expresses the same idea by saying that *their limitations proceed from their confining themselves to the data of the waking or conscious state only.* Reason in modern science has, through revolutionary advances not only in physics but also in other branches of modern thought like biology and psychology, broken through this rigid framework of the waking state with its static sense-data and the ego, its synthetic a priori concepts, its limited ideas of subject and object, its notion of substantiality as criterion of reality, and copy, correspondence, and coherence etc. as criteria of truth. *It has thus released reason from its sensate tether, or from its waking-state tether, in the Vedāntic language, and set it on the road of high adventure into the mystery of the unknown in man and nature.*

By admitting, in the words of Jeans, that 'the new picture of nature must then inevitably involve mind as well as matter—the mind which perceives and the matter which is perceived'—modern science has enormously enlarged the field of data for its study, and correspondingly enlarged the scope of its reason as well. In Vedāntic language, this means that modern science has gone beyond the exclusive study of the waking state to a study of the waking

and dream states in correlation. The reality that confronts modern science is not *objects* in space and time but *events* in the space-time continuum, in which the subjects and objects of the waking state become just configurations of space-time. It is this dimension of experience that is revealed in the dream state. If science finds that mind as subject enters into its knowledge of the world as object, if the purely objective is nowhere to be found, then it will be only true to itself if it enters into an investigation of the world of the subject, the world of mind, with a view to arriving at the reality underlying all phenomena. Says M. K. Bradby (*The Logic of the Unconscious Mind*, Introduction, x-xi):

'The human mind is somewhere on the way to perfection, moving along the now familiar lines of organic growth, lines of "differentiation and integration". At each advancing stage some element is made explicit which before was implicit, some content of mind brought out, defined and emphasized, which already existed in embryo.

'But if reason be the highest faculty yet known, there are thinkers who look for its successor, and belittle reason in their longing for that power which shall transcend it; a power, they hope, less arduous and exacting in its demands upon the will.

'The power transcending reason may, however, best be served by those who develop reason itself to the height of its capacity, for analogy suggests that the new is soonest reached through developing the old.'

*Scientific Reason versus the Prejudices of Scientists*

Science cannot rest content on the way; its nature is to continue to pose questions to experience, objective or subjective, till the mystery of experience is cleared; and reason is its luminous instrument in this adventure into the unknown; the development and sharpening of reason has to keep pace with the enlargement of the field of investigation. This is achieved through greater and greater intellectual detachment and moral purity by continuous liberation of reason, according to Vedānta, from the thraldom to man's sensate nature. The logic of the conscious and the logic of the unconscious, the logic of the waking state and the logic of the dream state, become fused into what Vedānta calls the logic of all *dṛśyam* or the totality of all percepts and concepts. Modern scientific reason is already on the road to this development. If its progress is slow and halting it is only because of the unscientific attitude adopted by some scientists *in refusing to face inconvenient facts* due to *their attachment to older theories*. That love

of scientific dogma can stifle love of truth and retard the progress of science, has often been demonstrated in the history of modern science. Says John Langdon-Davies in his book *Man: The Known and Unknown* (p. 27):

'When people fail to understand the nature of a scientific law, they may easily be deceived into denying a new fact because it does not fit into some law which has hitherto been a law simply because all previous facts *did* fit into it. There are many facts about human nature which are still denied because they are thought to destroy some scientific law.

'There are scientists, for example, who deny that telepathy *can* exist. This is how they argue: information cannot pass from one person to another without some sort of energy-exchange: thus, if we tell somebody something, energy has to be used to cause sound waves and neural discharges. In telepathy there is no place for energy-exchange as physics knows it, therefore telepathy does not exist and anyone who says it does is either self-deceived or a plain liar. That is an example of arguing from law to fact, as if scientific law could annihilate a single fact. It is not a scientific way of arguing.'

John Langdon-Davies adds (*ibid.*, p. 29):

'If we look at the history of science we are astonished at the fools which even great scientists have made of themselves by not coming to terms with their will-to-disbelieve.

'We laugh at the priests who refused to look at Galileo's telescope, but were they more foolish than the great Lavoisier, the father of modern chemical science and industry, when he wrote a paper to the French Academy proving that meteoric stones could not fall from the sky because there were no stones in the sky to fall?'

John Langdon-Davies gives two other examples: First, Baumé, the leading French chemist, who refused to accept Lavoisier's announcement of air being composed chiefly of two separate gases; second, a leading member of the French Academy of Sciences, M. Bouillard, who refused to believe Edison's demonstration of the phonograph in 1878 and who, seizing the demonstrator by the collar, called him a ventriloquist. Giving Baumé's objections John Langdon-Davies continues (*ibid.*, p. 30):

'"It is not to be imagined," wrote Baumé, "that these elements regarded as such for 2,000 years are now to be placed among the number of compound substances, or that the results of experiments to decompose air and water can be looked upon as certain truth or that reasoning on the subject, to say the least, can be anything but absurd. The recognized properties in the elements are relat-

ed to all the physical and chemical knowledge we have yet obtained. Thus far they have served as our basis for an infinite number of discoveries and support brilliant theories. Are we now expected to surrender our belief in fire, water, earth, and air? Are these no longer to be recognized as elements, that is, primary substances?"'

*Reason in Twentieth-Century Biology*

From these and other similar illustrations, it is clear that scientific reason becomes truly scientific only when it accepts the challenge of new facts. The advance of science continually poses this challenge to reason. We have already seen how the reason of classical science received a jolt from twentieth-century physics. It received a second jolt from twentieth-century biology where scientific reason is well on the way to liberating itself from the limitations of the waking point of view which dominated nineteenth-century biology. In an earlier lecture I quoted the words of the paleobotanist and thinker, the late Pierre Teilhard de Chardin; it is relevant to quote him again here (*The Phenomenon of Man*, p. 55):

'In the eyes of the physicist, nothing exists legitimately, at least up to now, except the *without* of things. The same intellectual attitude is still permissible in the bacteriologist, whose cultures (apart from some substantial difficulties) are treated as laboratory reagents. But it is still more difficult in the realm of plants. It tends to become a gamble in the case of a biologist studying the behaviour of insects or coelenterates. It seems merely futile with regard to the vertebrates. Finally, it breaks down completely with man, in whom the existence of a *within* can no longer be evaded, because it is the object of a direct intuition and the substance of all knowledge.'

Dealing with the irrationality involved in the hesitation of science in recognizing this *within* of nature, de Chardin continues (*ibid.*):

'The apparent restriction of the phenomenon of consciousness to the higher forms of life has long served science as an excuse for eliminating it from its models of the universe. A queer exception, an aberrant function, an epiphenomenon—thought was classed under one or other of these heads in order to get rid of it. But what would have happened to modern physics if radium had been classified as an 'abnormal substance' without further ado? Clearly, the activity of radium had not been neglected, and could not be neglected, because, being measurable, it forced its way into the external web of matter—whereas consciousness, in order to be integrated into a world-system, necessitates consideration of the ex-

istence of a new aspect or dimension in the stuff of the universe. We shrink from the attempt, but which of us does not constantly see identical problems facing research workers, which have to be solved by the same method, namely, *to discover the universal hidden beneath the exceptional?*'

And applying the above scientific method to the phenomenon of consciousness, de Chardin concludes (*ibid.*, p. 56):

'It is impossible to deny that, deep within ourselves, an "interior" appears at the heart of beings, as it were seen through a rent. This is enough to ensure that, in one degree or another, this "interior" should obtrude itself as existing everywhere in nature from all time. Since the stuff of the universe has an inner aspect at one point of itself, there is necessarily a *double aspect to its structure,* that is to say in every region of space and time—in the same way, for instance, as it is granular: *coextensive with their Without, there is a Within to things.*'

*Reason in Modern Depth Psychology*

We shall now consider how the reason of classical science and the rationalism and enlightenment it had upheld and sworn by, received a more serious challenge from modern psychology. Freud's discovery of the unconscious and its primacy over the conscious revealed human reason as a fugitive value ever at the mercy of man's more powerful irrational and blind drives and forces. This discovery demonstrated the utter shallowness of the rationalism and enlightenment of the nineteenth century.

The study of human nature in the light of physics and physiology in the nineteenth century had yielded the psychology of behaviourism. That was human psyche viewed *from the outside.* Through the study of dreams, initiated by Freud and his school, the study of human nature in its depths began to be undertaken, blazing the trail for a study of the psyche *from the inside.* The first impact of this penetration into the unconscious through the study of dreams was, however, unfortunate, from the point of view of the growth of reason. For it resulted in the submergence of reason in unreason and the presentation of human nature in the darkest colours. The unconscious was presented by Freud as shot through with sex, and by Adler with love of power. The outlook and temper so generated infected literature and art, politics and social life for several decades. The apotheosis of the irrational man led to the lowering of morals due to the weakening of the will to check innate impulses and drives. The unconscious received more wholesome treatment from Jung who protested vigorous-

ly against its lurid presentation by Freud and Adler. Says Jung (*Modern Man in Search of a Soul*, pp. 12-13):

'The view that dreams are merely imaginary fulfilments of suppressed wishes has long ago been superseded. It is certainly true that there are dreams which embody suppressed wishes and fears, but what is there which the dream cannot on occasion embody? Dreams may give expression to ineluctable truths, to philosophical pronouncements, illusions, wild fantasies, memories, plans, anticipations, irrational experiences, even telepathic visions, and heaven knows what besides. One thing we ought never to forget: almost the half of our lives is passed in a more or less unconscious state. The dream is specifically the utterance of the unconscious.'

Pleading for the recognition of the presence of something higher than mere instincts in the unconscious, Jung says (*ibid.*, pp. 136-37):

'I do not doubt that the natural instincts or drives are forces of propulsion in human life, whether we call them sexuality or the will to power; but I also do not doubt that these instincts come into collision with the spirit, for they are continually colliding with something, and why should not this something be called spirit? I am far from knowing what spirit is in itself, and equally far from knowing what instincts are. The one is as mysterious to me as the other, yet I am unable to dismiss the one by explaining it in terms of the other.... They are terms that we allow to stand for powerful forces whose nature we do not know.'

And protesting against Freud's view of the sexuality of the human psyche, Jung says (*ibid.*, pp. 138-41):

'I hold that psychic energy involves the play of opposites in much the same way as physical energy involves a difference of potential. ... What I seek is to set bounds to the rampant terminology of sex which threatens to vitiate all discussion of the human psyche; I wish to put sexuality itself in its proper place. Common-sense will always return to the fact that sexuality is only one of the life-instincts—only one of the psycho-physiological functions —though one that is without doubt very far-reaching and important.

'...There is nothing that can free us from this bond except that opposite urge of life, the spirit. It is not the children of the flesh, but the "children of God" who know freedom.... That is what Freud would never learn, and what all those who share his outlook forbid themselves to learn. At least, they never find the key to this knowledge. ... We moderns are faced with the necessity of rediscovering the life of the spirit; we must experience it anew for ourselves. It is the only way in which we can break the spell that binds us to the cycle of biological events.

'...As for Freud's idea of the "super-ego", it is a furtive attempt to smuggle in his time-honoured image of Jehovah in the

dress of psychological theory. When one does things like that, it is better to say so openly.'

Explaining the proper scientific approach to the study of the human psyche, Jung continues (*ibid.*, p. 141):

'It is permissible for science to divide its field of enquiry and to set up limited hypotheses, for science must work in that way; but the human psyche may not be parcelled out. It is a whole which embraces consciousness, and is the mother of consciousness. Scientific thought, being only one of its functions, can never exhaust all the possibilities of life. The psychotherapist must not allow his vision to be coloured by the glasses of pathology; he must never allow himself to forget that the ailing mind is a human mind, and that, for all its ailments, it shares in the whole of the psychic life of man.'

One of the limitations of the reason of classical science was its incapacity to understand the phenomenon of religious consciousness. It is true that the recurring conflicts of science and religion during the post-renaissance centuries owed not a little to the narrowness and irrationality of the prevailing western religious mood and outlook. Religion became equated with irrational dogmas and frozen creeds buttressed by the authority of church and state. All rational investigations into the claims of religion were frowned upon. Both religion and science in the West held this view of religion. Reason which is the very life-breath of science was treated as the death-knell of religion. *Neither western science nor western religion was acquainted with the rational and scientific approach to religion cultivated in India from the time of the Upaniṣads.* India has always upheld experience as the touchstone of religion. And in the science of religion this experience refers to what lies beyond the sensory or waking consciousness, which latter, Indian thought holds, is exclusively the province of the physical sciences. And India therefore found no conflict between science and religion. Says Swami Vivekananda in his lecture on 'The Sages of India' (*Complete Works*, Vol. III, Fourth Edition, p. 253):

'Beyond (waking) consciousness is where the bold search. Consciousness is bound by the senses. Beyond that, beyond the senses, men must go, in order to arrive at truths of the spiritual world, and there are even now persons who succeed in going beyond the bounds of the senses. These are called *ṛṣis* (seers of thought), because they come face to face with spiritual truths.'

India accordingly saw three levels in the mind, the subconscious, the conscious, and the superconscious. India had never

upheld any concept of the supernatural, nor believed that it was essential for religion. The supernatural is believed in only by those who have a very limited view of nature. India had a comprehensive view of nature—more comprehensive in some respects than what is found even in twentieth-century science—in which was included not only the physical universe, but also the biological and the mental. The modern West is slowly widening its conception of nature, as evidenced by such books as Chardin's *The Phenomenon of Man* and by the enlarging of the scope of scientific investigation from the waking to the dream state.

### *The New Dimensions of Scientific Reason*

The scientific study of the unconscious, and of dreams in which it finds free expression, gave a new dimension to reason. Baffled in its efforts to penetrate to the noumenon at the heart of the external world, reason turned on itself; it turned from the study of the not-self to a study of its own matrix, the mind, to penetrate into the world of the subject, the self. This led to the initiation of the scientific study of human nature in its depths and the consequent enlargement of the bounds of reason. This study was till now motivated by clinical considerations; and this pragmatic approach has produced valuable results of a practical nature; but so far as revealing the truth of human nature is concerned, it has only scratched the surface. But a vast array of new facts about human possibilities have been discovered, including those revealed by parapsychology, which refuse to be enclosed in the rigid frameworks of the current theories about man and his mind; the *inadequacies of these theories proceed from their being the product of a reason which is under the dominance of classical physics and the waking state.* And science today is struggling to frame new concepts and theories adequate to the new facts, enlarging in the process the range and scope of scientific reason as well.

### *The Development of Scientific Reason into Philosophical Reason*

Scientific reason, so enlarged and developed, emerges as what Vedânta terms *buddhi* or philosophical Reason which, in its search for the ultimate reality, discovers the insufficiency of all *dṛśyam* or the world of objects, of all percepts and concepts of the waking and dream states. It gets the call to penetrate into the *within* of things as revealed in the fact of consciousness. It finds the need

to search for the *dṛk*, the seer, the observer, or the subject of all experience. Even scientific reason in its twentieth-century form had felt this need at the farthest reaches of its study of the *without* of nature; but it was not insistent then. But now, with the enlargement of the field of inquiry to the totality of *dṛśyam*, an inquiry into the nature of the *dṛk*, the subject or self becomes inescapable. The answer to the question, What is the 'known'? cannot be found until the answer to the question, What is the 'knower'? is found. Both the waking and dream states reveal the presence of the subject-object relation. The first fruit of this inquiry is the truth of the relative character of the subjects or egos revealed in the waking and dream states. The subject of each state is a correlative of the objects of that state, and exclusive to that state alone.

Scientific reason had already established the relative character of all objects experienced in the waking state, as also of its ideas of time, space, and causality. As configurations of the space-time continuum, these had been interpreted by relativity physics as possessing some reality which in their separate forms was denied to them. The study of dreams similarly revealed the unreality of the separate dream presentations and the reality of the mind-stuff. It is this study that opens the way to develop scientific reason into philosophical Reason.

Philosophical Reason not only discovers the relativity, finitude, and changeability of all *dṛśyam*, including the egos of the waking and dream states, but it also asks the fundamental philosophical question whether there is a changeless reality imbedded in experience, and if there is, what is its nature and what is its relation to the world of the *dṛśyam*? Knowledge and memory demand the unity and unchangeability of the subject; but the egos of the dream and waking states are changeable and mutually exclusive.

Does experience disclose a changeless subject beyond the egos of the two states? On seeking an answer to this question philosophical Reason finds it necessary to study the significance of *suṣupti* or dreamless sleep where the entire world of objects and subjects experienced in the waking and dream states disappears. Where does the world of objects and subjects disappear to then? Certainly, into the subject itself, whence it reappears again in the next dream and waking states. What then, is the nature of this subject? Philosophical Reason reveals the subject as of the nature of consciousness or awareness. All objects or presentations in the

waking or dream states are also therefore of the nature of consciousness or awareness, being only configurations of the subject or self. When stripped of its last and most persisting attachment, namely, the causal notion of the waking state, a notion which even in the waking state has been found to be untrue and objectively invalid by scientific reason, philosophical Reason achieves the highest purity, detachment, and penetrating power. It then *realizes* the subject or self as pure Consciousness—eternal and changeless, non-dual and absolute—and the world of objects also as spiritual through and through. It is this non-dual Self that manifests itself as the multitudes of ego centres, and as the 'I' consciousness of the three states.

Says the great physicist Erwin Schrödinger (*What Is Life?*, Epilogue, pp. 90-91):

'Consciousness is never experienced in the plural, only in the singular....consciousness is a singular of which the plural is unknown; that there is only one thing and that, what seems to be a plurality, is merely a series of different aspects of this one thing, produced by a deception (the Indian *Māyā*).'

In two of the states, namely waking and dream, this 'I' consciousness is accompanied by the 'not-I' or object consciousness, while in the third or dreamless sleep state it is objectless. The *buddhi* or philosophical Reason, as developed in Vedānta, realized the unity of all experience in the non-dual Ātman or Self, which it described as of the nature of Sat-Cit-Ānanda, pure Existence, Consciousness, and Bliss. Some of its profound utterances convey the summit of this realization or illumination: *sarvaṁ hi etat brahma*—'All this, verily, is this Brahman, the absolute Reality'; *ayam ātmā brahma*—'This Self is Brahman'; *Idaṁ sarvaṁ yad ayam Ātmā*—'This entire universe is this Self; *Sarvaṁ khalu idaṁ brahma*—'All this universe is verily Brahman.'

### *The Function of Philosophical Reason as Understood in Vedānta*

Philosophical Reason thus realizes the fundamental unity of all experience which is the aim of all knowledge, and the goal of every activity of logical and scientific reason, a goal which scientific reason, however, realizes only in limited fields of experience. It is this limited reference of scientific reason that makes religious faith and artistic inspiration appear to stand in opposition to it. This sundering of experience into scientific, religious, and artistic

is permissible as a provisional approach for purposes of study and analysis, but it results in the distortion of reality when pushed further and treated as final. It is the supreme function of philosophical Reason, say the Upaniṣads, to synthesize the results of the various disciplines, and study experience in its totality. *Brahmavidyā*, Philosophy, they say, is *sarvavidyāpratiṣṭhā*, the basis of every *vidyā*, or science.

In investigating the nature of knowledge or of truth or of reality, logical and scientific reason confines itself to the field of the 'known'; it ignores the 'knower', the subject, or the self; this explains the limitations of its knowledge, the partial character of the truths it finds, and the relative character of the reality it reveals. It confesses its limitation in its statement that ultimate Truth or ultimate Reality is not its concern. It is justified in this in so far as it confines itself to the 'known'. But reason itself is not necessarily so tied; it is not barred from going beyond the 'known' to the 'knower'. *When reason dares to do this, it sheds the straight-jacket of logical and scientific reason and develops into unfettered philosophical Reason.* It is then that reason becomes capable not only of seeking for ultimate Truth and ultimate Reality, but also of finding It. It is then that reason rises from the world of fact to the world of meaning and value. It achieves this elevation by purifying itself through the elimination of attachment to the limited sense-world and cultivation of a passion for truth for its own sake. In developing into philosophical Reason, reason does not throw overboard its earlier conclusions arrived at by scientific reason; on the other hand, these conclusions remain valid, but only for the world of the 'known'; for philosophical Reason does not contradict scientific reason but only fulfils it.

As in the province of scientific reason itself, the conclusions of classical science do not really contradict those of twentieth-century science; the laws of classical physics are but limiting cases of the more all-embracing laws of relativity physics. In the same way, the truths revealed by modern scientific reason become limiting cases of the truths revealed by philosophical Reason. Says Swami Vivekananda in his paper on Hinduism read at the Parliament of Religions held at Chicago in 1893 (*Complete Works*, Vol. I, Eleventh Edition, p. 17):

'To the Hindu, man is not travelling from error to truth, but from truth to truth, from lower to higher truth.'

*Buddhi* or philosophical Reason reveals the ultimate truth of the unity of experience in the unity of Ātman and Brahman, in the unity of the *within* and the *without* of nature. It signifies the complete annexation of the subconscious and unconscious by Reason. It signifies, according to Vedānta, the complete and true waking state, the ever-awake and ever-free state of the Ātman. Herein reason achieves perfection in illumination by becoming co-extensive with infinite knowledge and awareness. This vision of unity is the meeting ground of faith and reason, love and knowledge, poetry and philosophy, science and art. Referring to this sweep of philosophical Reason in Advaita Vedānta as presented by Swami Vivekananda, Sister Nivedita (Miss Margaret Noble) writes (*Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Introduction, pp. xiii-xiv):

'To him, there is no difference between service of man and worship of God, between manliness and faith, between true righteousness and spirituality. All his words, from one point of view, read as a commentary upon this central conviction. "Art, Science, and Religion," he said once, "are but three different ways of expressing a single truth. But in order to understand this we must have the theory of Advaita (non-duality)."'

Says Sri Ramakrishna (*The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, p. 802):

'Ātman (Self) cannot be realized through this mind: Ātman is realized through Ātman alone. Pure mind, pure *buddhi* (Reason), Pure Ātman—all these are one and the same.'

Verse nine of chapter two of the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* told us not only of the inability of logical and scientific reason to comprehend the Ātman, but also that Naciketā had acquired the *mati*, which means *buddhi* or philosophical Reason, capable of comprehending the truth of the Ātman. A *mati* such as this denotes the human mind in its highest state of purity and luminosity. Philosophy which seeks to give man the vision of the ultimate Truth can ask for no higher blessing than this. It is a blessing never conferred, however, on philosophy of the merely speculative type based only on the waking state. It is no wonder therefore that Yama, the teacher, exclaimed in joy: *tvādṛi no bhūyāt naciketaḥ praṣṭā*—'May we have questioners of your calibre, O Naciketā!'

EIGHTEEN

# KAṬHA UPANIṢAD–7

In the last discourse, we discussed the subject of the limitations of logical and scientific reason and the Vedāntic view of its development into philosophical Reason. Verse nine of the second chapter of this Upaniṣad told us about Yama's praise of Naciketā for possessing philosophical Reason as a fruit of this yoking his will to truth: *satyadhṛtirbatāsi*. 'Let me have more questioning students like you'. Yama had said in high appreciation of his gifted student. Such a questing and questioning mind is the very life-breath of science and philosophy. And Naciketā is in search of the changeless and the eternal, hidden in the world of change and death. Knowledge of the changeless is the only key to the knowledge of the changeful, which, otherwise, will ever remain a mystery. This is Philosophy, *parāvidyā* (supreme knowledge), according to the Upaniṣads—*atha parā yayā tadakṣaram adhigamyate*, as defined by the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* (I. i. 5), which again characterizes, in its previous verse, the sciences and all the rest of knowledge dealing with the world of change as *aparā vidyā* (lower knowledge).

*The Resolute Spiritual Will of Naciketā*

Having praised Naciketā for his one-pointed love of truth, Yama now proceeds to say something about himself in the two succeeding verses, ten and eleven, which we shall now take up for study:

*Jānāmyahaṁ śevadhirityanityam*
*na hyadhruvaiḥ prāpyate hi dhruvaṁ tat;*
*Tato mayā nāciketaścitognih*
*anityairdravyaiḥ prāptavānasmi nityam—*

'I know that (all) wealth is transient; and verily the eternal is never attained by the transient; yet by me has been performed the Nāciketa sacrifice with the transient objects and (through that) have I attained the eternal.'

*Kāmasyāptiṁ jagataḥ pratiṣṭhām*
*kratoranantyam abhayasya pāram;*
*Stomamahat urugāyaṁ pratiṣṭhām*
*dṛṣṭvā dhṛtyā dhīro naciketo'tyasrākṣīḥ—*

'Having seen that which is the complete fulfilment of all desires, the mainstay of the universe, the endless fruit of all sacred rites, the shore of fearlessness, the most adorable and great, the exalted resort, and the support of life, thou hast, O Naciketā, being intelligent and brave, rejected it with firm resolve.'

Comparing himself with young Naciketā, Yama feels that he is not up to the mark in his *satyadhṛti*—will to truth. With a touch of humility, therefore, Yama tells Naciketā wherein he, Naciketā, is superior to him. On one side is the one-pointed search for truth, and on the other side is the love of *śevadhi*—treasure or wealth. Wealth here signifies not only material wealth, which is the source of worldly pleasure and power, but also the store of the fruits of meritorious actions, which becomes the source of pleasure and power in the world beyond the grave. Philosophical inquiry in the Upaniṣads had already discovered that wealth in both these senses was finite and perishable. In the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (IV. v. 3), we have the unequivocal reply of Yājñavalkya to the question of his wife Maitreyī whether the wealth which he proposed to make over to her as her share of his property would help her to achieve the one quest of her life, namely, immortality:

*Neti hovāca yājñavalkyaḥ; yathaiva upakaraṇavatāṁ jīvitaṁ tathaiva te jīvitaṁ syāt; amṛtatvasya tu na āśā asti vittena iti*—

'No, said Yājñavalkya; (with wealth) your life will be just like the life of those who have plenty of material means; there is no hope, however, of immortality (being gained) through wealth.'

Yama had known this conclusion of philosophy and the logic behind it, which he now states himself: *na hi adhruvaiḥ prāpyate hi dhruvaṁ tat*—'The eternal, verily, cannot be attained by that which is known to be transient'. The infinite cannot be attained through a multiplication of the finite; the timeless cannot be reached by an endless extension of time; and the unconditioned cannot be had by an indefinite stretching of the conditioned.

### *Worldly Achievements versus Spirituality*

Yama confesses that, in spite of this knowledge, his love of truth had been diluted with a love of external achievement and advancement, and it was in response to this that he performed the Nāciketa sacrifice: *Tato mayā nāciketaścitognīḥ*. And with means so transient as a sacrifice, with its little accessories, he has achieved the comparatively permanent status of Yama, the god of death;

*anityaiḥ dravyaiḥ prāptavānasmi nityam*. The status of a god is *nityam*, eternal, not in the absolute sense, but only in a relative sense. Compared to the short span of human life below, the aeon-long life of a god is long enough to be classed as eternal according to the common idea of the 'eternal'. It is only at the touch of philosophy that its inherent relativity and transiency become exposed. And philosophy, as understood in the Upaniṣads, is a tireless search for Brahman, the infinite and the eternal, given in experience as the Ātman or Self; says Śaṅkara in his commentary on the *Vedānta-Sūtra* (I. i. 2):

*Anubhavāvasānatvāt bhūtavastuviṣayatvāt ca brahmajñānasya* —'Because the knowledge of Brahman culminates in the experience (of Brahman) and because it (such knowledge) has an already existing entity for its object.'

Thus philosophy is not a struggle for external advancement, or a search after an at-present-non-existing status or position. Knowledge of the Ātman does not depend upon any particular status or position. Man in any status or position can achieve it. When the heart is set on this knowledge, it finds no special interest in the pursuit of external advancement. It is only after one's external circumstances have become somewhat stabilized that the heart becomes set on the pursuit of the Ātman. Every step in the progress of evolution is marked by a stabilization of the external circumstances of the organism, followed by its forging ahead to a higher state; behind every significant biological advance is found the achievement of a condition known as homeostasis. This is also illustrated in human cultural history.

Spiritual awareness is the criterion of progress at the human stage of evolution. This is measured by a measure of stability at the *preya* level, followed by a forging ahead to the *sreya* level, as indicated by the opening verse of the second chapter of this Upaniṣad. An endless pursuit of the *preya* idea makes for stagnation of the life-energy. Vedānta terms this *saṁsāra*, which means continuous movement with no progress. All worldly achievements and heavenly delights are the product of the impulsions of this *preya* idea. Within the limitations of the *preya* idea, man has established a hierarchy of lower and higher achievements. He has conceived of a heaven, with its higher and lower grades, where everything is pleasant, and placed it higher than earthly life and its joys; within earthly life itself the *preya* idea impels him to seek for higher and higher positions of power and pleasure.

*The Journey Outward and the Journey Inward*

The *preya* quest is the quest for wealth, power, and pleasure; but the quest of *śreya* is different; it is the quest for spirituality; it is the quest for that energy which will digest all wealth, power, and pleasure. Without this spiritual digestion, wealth, power, and pleasure will corrode the human soul and make man small in stature and trivial. Referring to this triviality arising from power undigested by spirituality, Shakespeare says in his *Measure for Measure* (II. ii. 119-124):

> ....but man, proud man,
> Dress'd in a little brief authority—
> Most ignorant of what he's most assured,
> His glassy essence—like an angry ape,
> Plays such fantastic tricks before high heaven
> As make the angels weep.

Spirituality alone is strength; and it is inherent in everyone, says Vedānta. Accordingly, its search is an inward journey, if journey it can be called. It certainly does not consist in an endless quest of external achievements. Says Śaṅkara in his commentary on verse eleven of chapter three of this Upaniṣad:

*Sarvasya pratyagātmatvāt avagatireva gatiriti upacaryate. Pratyagātmatvaṁ ca darśitam indriyamanobuddhiparatvena. Yo hi gantā so'yam apratyagrūpaṁ gacchati anātmabhūtaṁ, na vindati svarūpeṇa—*

'Since the Ātman is the inner Self of all, *avagati* (knowledge or realization) is spoken of figuratively as *gati* (a going or journeying). That the Ātman is the inner Self is shown by its description (in the previous verse) as beyond the sense-organs, *manas* (mind), and *buddhi* (intellect). He who is a goer is one who goes *away* from his inner Self, and *towards* the not-Self; and (he is one who) never realizes himself in his true nature.'

This is a profound observation in Vedānta. When we say that a man goes, what does it mean? *Sa apratyagrūpaṁ gacchati* —'he goes *away from* his own Self'; one cannot possibly go to one's Self. *Pratyagrūpam* means one's inner Self; *apratyagrūpam* means away from one's inner Self. Physically speaking, it is like a man leaving his own house and going to a neighbour's house. Feeling an inner vacuum, and wishing to overcome it, he decides to go on a visit to his neighbour's house. All such going, physical or mental, is from the self to the not-self—*anātmabhūtam*. This

is what people generally do. But the result of that going forth is that, by that alone we never experience our true nature—*na vindati svarūpeṇa.* We may scatter ourselves everywhere, hoping thus to be happy and fulfilled; but by doing this, we only become fractionalized and recede further and further from our objective of fulfilment. Our going out of ourselves may take us from our neighbourhood to the highest of heavens, but it will all be a journey in ignorance, in spiritual blindness, say the Upaniṣads; it will not help us to achieve our own *svarūpa,* real nature. This other journey, the journey to the Self, is only figuratively a journey, since it is only a matter of awareness, realization. Says Śaṅkara (*Vivekacūḍāmaṇi*: verses 531-32):

> *Ayam ātmā nityasiddhaḥ pramāṇe sati bhāsate;*
> *Na deśaṁ nāpi vā kālam na śuddhiṁ vāpyapekṣate—*

'This Ātman, which is an ever-present reality, manifests Itself as soon as the right means of knowledge are present, and does not depend upon either place, or time, or (ceremonial) purity.'

> *Devadatto'ham ityetat vijñānaṁ nirapekṣakam;*
> *Tadvat brahmavido'pyasya brahmāhamiti vedanam—*

'The awareness "I am Mr. Devadatta" is independent of external circumstances; similar is the case with the realization of a knower of Brahman that he *is* Brahman.'

All this movement up and down is movement in *saṁsāra,* relativity, proceeding from ignorance of one's true nature as the infinite and unconditioned Brahman. There is no difference between here and there; to one who knows the truth, everything is *here, now.* 'Here, here, is knowledge; there, there, is ignorance', says Sri Ramakrishna. This very Upaniṣad will tell us in a later chapter (IV. 10):

> *Yadeveha tadamutra yadamutra tadanviha;*
> *Mṛtyoḥ sa mṛtyumāpnoti ya iha nāneva paśyati—*

'Whatever is here, that also is there; whatever is there, that is here also; he goes from death to death who sees, as it were, the slightest difference here.'

Says the *Śiva-Gītā* (XIII. 32):

> *Mokṣasya na hi vāso'sti na grāmāntaram eva vā;*
> *Ajñānahṛdayagranthināśo mokṣa iti smṛtaḥ—*

'*Moksa* (spiritual freedom) is not in a particular place, nor has one to go to some other village to obtain it; the destruction of ignor-

ance, (spiritual blindness) which is the knot of the heart, is known as *mokṣa*.'

Says the *Bhagavad-Gītā* (V. 26):

*Abhito brahmanirvāṇaṁ vartate viditātmanām*—

'To the knowers of the Ātman, there is *Brahmanirvāṇaṁ*, spiritual freedom in its absolute form, wherever they may be.'

Man goes out of himself because he finds that all is not quite right within himself; he goes on searching here and there, trying to achieve security, happiness, welfare, and fulfilment. At the end of all these rounds of movement, he finds himself far from fulfilment; examining the situation critically and with calm detachment, the knowledge dawns on him that he has been searching for something which has been all the time nearest to him, within him, his own infinite Self.

Says Swami Vivekananda in his lecture on 'The Real Nature of Man' (*Complete Works*, Vol. II, Ninth Edition, pp. 81-82):

'No perfection is going to be attained. You are already free and perfect. What are these ideas of religion and God and searching for the hereafter? Why does man look for a God? Why does man, in every nation, in every state of society, want a perfect ideal somewhere, either in man, in God, or elsewhere? Because that idea is within you. It was your own heart beating and you did not know, you were mistaking it for something external. It is the God within your own self that is propelling you to seek for Him, to realize Him.' After long searches here and there, in temples and in churches, in earths and in heavens, at last you come back, completing the circle from where you started, to your own soul and find that He, for whom you have been seeking all over the world, for whom you have been weeping and praying in churches and temples, on whom you were looking as the mystery of all mysteries shrouded in the clouds, is nearest of the near, is your own Self, the reality of your life, body, and soul. That is your own nature.'

As the New Testament puts it (Luke xvii. 20-21):

'And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation:

'Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you.'

Now this knowledge is extremely difficult to come by. The mind has a tendency to go outside of itself all the time. That is its nature; this Upaniṣad will refer to it in the opening verse of its fourth chapter. The result is that it always tries to find truth and

happiness and welfare outside of itself. The whole story of man as a seeker of knowledge, social delights, and physical satisfactions is the story of this journey of man outside of himself in search of complete fulfilment. Having gone to the farthest extent in space and time, and being baffled in his attempts, wisdom dawns on him sustained by a spirit of mature renunciation; and on the wings of both he quickly finds within himself the infinite ocean of existence, knowledge, and bliss. This is beautifully expressed by the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* (I.ii.12):

> *Parikṣya lokān karmacitān brāhmaṇo*
> *nirvedamāyāt, nāstyakṛtaḥ kṛtena—*

'Examining all the worlds which can be gained through action, the wise one develops the spirit of renunciation (proceeding from the conviction) that the uncaused cannot be had through the caused.'

### *The Spiritual Utility of the Outward Journey*

And yet all these goings about are not meaningless; they are necessary; for they form the integral elements of man's spiritual education. A father's mature wisdom cannot just be transferred to the child. The child has to pass through experiences and arrive at the wisdom afresh. Man's movements in the world of the not-Self achieve for him, in this very life, physical health and material wealth, scientific knowledge and aesthetic experiences, political society and ethical vision, the delights of civilization, and the joys of social relationships. In his struggle to attain these, he is undergoing the first phase of his spiritual education leading to the achievement of what Vivekananda called 'manliness'.

### *Achievement versus Personality*

The success of this education, however, is to be measured not merely in terms of the power and position and pleasure experienced, but in terms of the spiritual awareness achieved; this is a gentle process, in and through life and action, in which manliness is put on the road to flowering into godliness. For the attainment of this spiritual awareness is the end and aim of human life, according to the Upaniṣads. Therein alone is true freedom for man. 'What *are* you?' is a deeper and more meaningful question than 'What have you *done* or *achieved?*' But in life and in its educational processes the former comes *after* the latter. Jung calls the former 'personality' or 'culture', and the latter 'achievement'. In

all healthy living, according to him, if the early part is devoted to achievement, the later part must be devoted to personality or culture. Says he (*Modern Man in Search of a Soul*, pp. 118-20):

'Achievement, usefulness, and so forth are the ideals which appear to guide us out of the confusion of crowding problems (in the second stage of life, i.e., from puberty to middle life). They may be our lode-stars in the adventure of extending and solidifying our psychic existences—they may help us in striking our roots in the world; but they cannot guide us in the development of that wider consciousness to which we give the name of culture. In the period of youth, at any rate, this course is the normal one and in all circumstances preferable to merely tossing about in the welter of problems....

'The nearer we approach to the middle of life, and the better we have succeeded in entrenching ourselves in our personal standpoints and social positions, the more it appears as if we had discovered the right course and the right ideals and principles of behaviour. For this reason we suppose them to be eternally valid, and make a virtue of unchangeably clinging to them. We wholly overlook the essential fact that the achievements which society rewards are won at the cost of a diminution of personality.'

Pleading for an important place in life for the culture of the personality, or the spiritual enrichment of the individual, Jung further says (pp. 125-26):

'The afternoon of human life must also have a significance of its own and cannot be merely a pitiful appendage to life's morning. The significance of the morning undoubtedly lies in the development of the individual, our entrenchment in the outer world, the propagation of our kind, and the care of our children. This is the obvious purpose of nature. But when this purpose has been attained—and even more than attained—shall the earning of money, the extension of conquests, and the expansion of life go steadily on beyond the bounds of all reason and sense? Whoever carries over into the afternoon the law of the morning—that is, the aims of nature—must pay for so doing with damage to his soul just as surely as a growing youth who tries to salvage his childish egoism must pay for this mistake with social failure. Money-making, social existence, family, and posterity are nothing but plain nature—not culture. Culture lies beyond the purpose of nature. Could by any chance culture be the meaning and purpose of the second half of life?'

According to Vedānta, there is no gulf between the first and second halves of life. The spiritual education commencing in the first, with stress on achievement, is to be carried over more intensely into the second with a greater stress on personality and a more direct approach to self-realization.

### *The Way of the Spiritually Gifted*

There are some rare souls who are so spiritually equipped as to stand in no need of the spiritual education arising from the pursuit of achievement, but who, in the very first half of life, enter directly into the struggle for self-realization. Yama considers Naciketā as belonging to this rare type who, like Mary, in the words of Jesus, had 'chosen that good part which shall not be taken away from her'. Yama also had achieved knowledge of the Ātman; but he had striven also for external advancement and attained the high status of the god of death. Possession of the power associated with such a high status did not, however, harm Yama spiritually in virtue of his spiritual knowledge which enabled him to digest all such power and position, and shine forth as the very perfection of justice, *dharma*, and a master of self-discipline, as his very name, Yama, indicates. He was also the teacher of *brahmavidyā*, the science of Brahman, the universal Self. The philosophy that helped him to keep himself spiritually steady in the midst of the multifarious demands of his high office was *Practical Vedānta*, which is the great theme of the *Gītā*. Kṛṣṇa, the incarnate God, in the *Gītā* (IV.1) refers to his having taught this immortal philosophy, in one of his previous incarnations, to Vivasvān, the father of Yama, and, through him, to other philosopher-kings.

### *Naciketā's Spirit of Renunciation*

In verse eleven of the second chapter of this Upaniṣad, which I recited at the commencement of this lecture, we saw Yama praising Naciketā for his renunciation and spiritual maturity at so young an age. As the second boon, he had offered him the highest heaven, the highest in the scale of achievement—that in which all the out-going desires of man reach their consummation, *kāmasyāptim*; this is *abhayasya pāram*, the achievement of freedom from fear, *urugāyam*, expansive existence, and *pratiṣṭhām*, unshaken security. In spite of this tremendous temptation, Naciketā had remained steady in his quest for spiritual knowledge and realization. *Dṛṣṭvā dhṛtyā dhīro naciketo'tyasrākṣīḥ*—'Intelligent and brave as you are, you have, O Naciketā, with open eyes, rejected it with firm resolve.'

This renunciation is the homeostatic prelude to the search for the immortal in experience. In the first chapter of the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* we saw Naciketā telling Yama:

*Śvobhāvā martyasya yadantakaitat*
*sarvendriyāṇāṁ jarayanti tejaḥ;*
*Api sarvaṁ jīvitam alpameva*
*tavaiva vāhāstava nṛtyagīte—*

'(All the pleasures you have enumerated) are transient, O Death; they (also) wear out the vigour of all the sense-organs of mortal man. Moreover, all life (long or short) is only short (from the point of view of eternity). Let thy chariots, dance, and song remain with thee only.'

Naciketā had said further:

*Na vittena tarpaṇīyo manuṣyo—*

'Man is never satisfied with wealth.'

*Ajīryatām amṛtānām upetya*
*jīryan martyaḥ kvadhaḥsthaḥ prajānan:*
*Abhidhyāyan varṇaratipramodān*
*atidīrghe jīvite ko rameta—*

'Having come to the ageless and immortal ones, and knowing (the more worthy boons to be had from them), what man, living on the earth below, and himself subject to aging and death, can exult in a life of very long duration, after closely scrutinizing the enjoyments of dancing and singing?'

And so, finally, Naciketā had declared:

*Nānyaṁ tasmāt naciketā vṛṇīte—*

'Naciketā shall not, therefore, choose any other boon than this (knowledge of the immortal Self).'

### *The Soil Is Ready for the Seed*

Naciketā has chosen the hard road; for the path of the Ātman, the immortal in experience, is like walking on the edge of a razor, as Yama will indicate in the next chapter. And Yama is by now fully convinced that the young boy before him is made of stern spiritual stuff. He therefore decides to tarry no more with side issues, but go straight to the theme dear to the young seeker's heart; this forms the subject of the verses which follow, and these we shall take up in the next lecture.

NINETEEN

# KATHA UPANISAD—8

In the last discourse, we saw Yama eulogizing, in a mood of humility, the superior spiritual calibre of his student, Naciketā, which led him to spurn all worldly advancements and go straight to the quest of spiritual perfection; whereas Yama himself could not resist the temptation of external advancements. Yama saw in young Naciketā a *dhīra*, a youth of heroic mould, in whom spiritually oriented intelligence and will had been wedded to courage and strength. Such an intelligence and will alone can hope to penetrate the mystery of the Self. Yama, therefore, in verses twelve and thirteen which we shall study now, sings the glory of this science of the Self, and announces Naciketā's fitness to enter the abode of this truth of all truths and this mystery of all mysteries:

*Taṁ durdarśaṁ gūḍhamanupraviṣṭam*
*guhāhitaṁ gahvareṣṭhaṁ purāṇam;*
*Adhyātmayogādhigamena devam*
*matvā dhīro harṣaśokau jahāti—*

'The *dhīra* (wise man) relinquishes both joy and sorrow when he realizes, through meditation on the inner Self, that ancient effulgent One, hard to be seen, profound, hidden in experience, established in the cavity of the heart, and residing within the body.'

*Etat śrutvā samparigṛhya martyaḥ*
*pravṛhya dharmyam aṇum etam āpya;*
*Sa modate modanīyaṁ hi labdhvā*
*vivṛtaṁ sadma naciketasaṁ manye—*

'Mortal man rejoices, having heard and comprehended well this subtle truth, the soul of *dharma*, realized it after proper discrimination, and having attained what is verily the blissful. I consider that the house (of Truth) is wide open for Naciketā.'

### *The Characteristics of the Self*

Some of the significant characteristics of the Ātman are given in verse twelve. It is described as *durdarśam*—difficult to be seen or known. Why? *Atisūkṣmatvāt*—'because it is extremely subtle', says Śaṅkara in his comment on this verse; it is not unknown and unknowable, as viewed in all the speculative philosophies. It is unknown only to the senses, and to reason which is under the thral-

dom of the senses; but it is known to philosophical Reason, as we have seen in the last lecture. The Ātman is never the unknowable; for as the eternal Subject or Self, it is the basis and presupposition of all knowledge; as the very principle of pure awareness it is more than known and knowable; for it is in and through the Ātman that all objects, entities, and events are known. In every act of knowledge, perception, and judgement is the Ātman present: *pratibodhaviditam*, as the *Kena Upaniṣad* had expressed it.

Speaking in London in 1896 on the subject of 'The Absolute and Manifestation', Swami Vivekananda dealt with the Upaniṣadic teaching about God being unknown and unknowable in these words (*Complete Works*, Vol. II, Ninth Edition, p. 133):

'You must not go home with the idea that God *is* unknowable in the sense in which agnostics put it.... The expression is not used in the sense in which it may be said that some questions are unknown and unknowable. God is more than known. This chair is known, but God is intensely more than that, because in and through Him we have to know this chair itself. He is the Witness, the eternal Witness of all knowledge. Whatever we know we have to know in and through Him. He is the essence of our own self. He is the essence of this ego, this I, and we cannot know anything excepting in and through that I.... To know the chair you have to know it in and through God. Thus God is infinitely nearer to us than the chair, but yet He is infinitely higher. Neither known, nor unknown, but something infinitely higher than either. He is your Self.'

In spite of its ever-present nature the Self is hardly noticed; and the verse gives the reason for this: it is *gūḍham*—subtle, profound; *anupraviṣṭam*—hidden in the depth of experience; *prākṛtaviṣayavikāravijñānaiḥ pracchannam*—'hidden by the processes of ordinary sense-bound knowledge', comments Śaṅkara; and yet it is *guhāhitam*—established in the *guha*, cavity, i.e. *buddhi* or reason; it is ever present in the innermost depths of that intelligence itself; *tatra upalabhyamānatvāt*—'because it is realized there', remarks Śaṅkara. But that realization is difficult because it is *gahvareṣṭham*—present within the body but inaccessible: *viṣame anekānarthasaṅkaṭe tiṣṭhati*—'located in a difficult region, painful and hard to reach', comments Śaṅkara.

This explains the difficulty of the spiritual journey which will be characterized in the next chapter of this Upaniṣad as walking on a razor's edge. A beautiful flower growing at the top of a steep and craggy mountain is a tempting bait to a lover of beauty, but

the price to be paid for its possession is heavy; the path to it is hard, risky, and dangerous. It drives away all lovers of beauty who are timid and faint-hearted. But such a challenge steels the heart of the courageous, whom no hardship or risk, not even death itself, can hold back. Such is the lure of truth for all lovers of truth. This truth of the Ātman is *purāṇam*—ancient; *niravayavatvāt, purā api nava eveti purāṇaḥ*—'because it has no parts, it is the most ancient and yet the most modern', as Śaṅkara says, defining the word in his commentary on the *Gītā* (II. 20).

### *The Quest of the Self*

How do these heroic lovers set about this adventure, the quest of the Ātman? The verse answers this in a brief but pregnant statement: *adhyātmayogādhigamena*—through meditation on the inner Self. Bringing out the meaning of this crisp phrase, Śaṅkara says:

*Viṣayebhyaḥ pratisaṁhṛtya cetasa ātmani samādhānam*—'Withdrawing the mind from sense-objects and fixing it in tranquillity in the Ātman.'

This is the supreme technique of the spiritual life. By moral and spiritual discipline the mind sheds its finitude and merges in the infinite expanse of the Self, which is described in the verse as *devam*, self-luminous. This realization is the attainment of infinite existence, infinite knowledge, and infinite bliss; and hence the verse adds: *matvā dhīro harṣaśokau jahāti*—'the wise one, on realizing this, relinquishes both joy and sorrow.' The joys and sorrows ordinarily experienced by man belong to the sensate level of his life; these appear utterly trivial to the man of spiritual realization. At the sensate level, man is at the mercy of circumstances; his joys and sorrows have their sources outside; a little praise or a little blame, a little success or a little failure, throws him into small or large waves of happiness or misery. This is bondage, says Vedānta; the animal is satisfied with this natural state; but man, though in it, and often helpless, yearns for freedom, and rebels against chains that bind him, against circumstances that press him down. Thereby he expresses the spiritual quality of his life; thereby life reveals its tragic beauty and charm. The infinite in man, struggling to emerge through finite moulds of body, the senses, and the sensate mind, and other finite moulds of sects and creeds and political systems, is the most glorious vision of man that

science and philosophy, history and literature, art and religion, reveal.

*The Imagery of the Two Birds*

The *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* paints this spiritual journey of man from helplessness to fulfilment in a passage of surpassing poetic and spiritual charm (III. i. 1-3):

*Dvā suparṇā sayujā sakhāyā*
*samānaṁ vṛkṣaṁ pariṣasvajāte;*
*Tayoranyaḥ pippalaṁ svādvatti*
*anaśnan anyo abhicākaśīti—*

'Two birds of beautiful plumage, knit in bonds of lasting friendship, live on the self-same tree. One of them eats the tasteful fruits of the tree, while the other, not eating, sits immersed in its own glory.'

*Samāne vṛkṣe puruṣo nimagno*
*anīśayā śocati muhyamānaḥ;*
*Juṣṭaṁ yadā paśyatyanyamīśam*
*asya mahimānamiti vītaśokaḥ—*

'On the self-same tree (of life) is man immersed,
helpless, he grieves, bound in delusion's net;
But when he perceives the other, the adorable, the Lord,
all grief he casts off,
knowing himself to be only the glory of this One.'

*Yadā paśyaḥ paśyate rukmavarṇam*
*kartāramīśaṁ puruṣaṁ brahmayonim;*
*Tadā vidvān puṇyapāpe vidhūya*
*nirañjanaḥ paramaṁ sāmyam upaiti—*

'When the wise seeker realizes the effulgent Self,
the Creator, the Lord, the source of Nature all,
Cleansed then of merit and demerit
does the wise one become; and stainless,
supreme oneness does he then achieve
(with the Self of all).'

Expatiating on the message of these three verses, Swami Vivekananda says in his lecture on 'Vedānta in Its Application to Indian Life' (*Complete Works*, Vol. III, Eighth Edition, pp. 235-36):

'This is the picture of the human soul. Man is eating the sweet

and bitter fruits of this life, pursuing gold, pursuing his senses, pursuing the vanities of life—hopelessly, madly careering he goes. In other places the Upaniṣads have compared the human soul to the charioteer, and the senses to the mad horses, unrestrained. Such is the career of men pursuing the vanities of life, children dreaming golden dreams only to find that they are but vain, and old men chewing the cud of their past deeds, and yet not knowing how to get out of this network. This is the world. Yet in the life of every one there come golden moments; in the midst of the deepest sorrows, nay, of the deepest joys, there come moments when a part of the cloud that hides the sunlight moves away, as it were, and we catch a glimpse, in spite of ourselves, of something beyond—away, away beyond the life of the senses; away, away beyond its vanities, its joys, and its sorrows; away, away beyond nature, or our imaginations of happiness here or hereafter; away beyond all thirst for gold, or for fame, or for name, or for posterity. Man stops for a moment at this glimpse, and sees the other bird calm and majestic, eating neither sweet nor bitter fruits, but immersed in his own glory, self-content, self-satisfied.... Man catches a glimpse, then again he forgets and goes on eating the sweet and bitter fruits of life: perhaps after a time he catches another glimpse, and the lower bird goes nearer and nearer to the higher bird as blows after blows are received. If he be fortunate to receive hard knocks, then he comes nearer and nearer to his companion, the other bird, his life, his friend; and as he approaches him, he finds that the light from the higher bird is playing round his own plumage; and as he comes nearer and nearer, lo! the transformation is going on. The nearer and nearer he comes, he finds himself melting away, as it were, until he has entirely disappeared. He did not really exist; it was but the reflection of the other bird, who was there calm and majestic amidst the moving leaves. It was all his glory, that upper bird's. He then becomes fearless, perfectly satisfied, calmly serene.'

To hear about this truth, to grasp it through understanding, and finally to realize it in life—this is the supreme objective of human life, says Yama in verse thirteen. First comes hearing—*etat śrutvā;* how few have heard about the eternal glory of the Ātman, which is their true and inalienable nature. Man is aware from birth of his helplessness, his dependence; he need not be taught it. This helplessness makes him grief-stricken; and both are the fruits of delusion only: *anīśayā śocati muhyamānaḥ*, as the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* verse given above picturesquely puts it. The word 'gospel' means good news. The good news brought to man by religion in general, and Vedānta in particular, is that he is essentially divine; he is by nature immortal, holy, and perfect; sin and weakness, finitude and death and the pettiness and meanness,

fear and grief, arising therefrom, are not his true form; they are like passing clouds before the sun. When man under such clouds hears this good news, he looks up and becomes cheerful; hope springs up within him.

But mere hearing is not enough; its good effect will not last unless it is followed up by further steps; and this, verse thirteen indicates: *saṁparigṛhya*, having well comprehended; *aṇuṁ dharmyaṁ pravṛhya*, discriminating properly this subtle truth which is ever associated with *dharma*; *dharma* is social ethics; it is the integrating principle between man and man in society; and *etam āpya*, realizing this (Ātman). After hearing comes understanding, comprehension; this is helped by discrimination—discrimination between the real and the unreal, the eternal and the transient. The real and the eternal is ever at the back of *dharma*, that which is ethically good; the way to spiritual realization is through ethical goodness; and ethical goodness is a value which man acquires in the social context, and which sustains the social order. The *Mahābhārata* (8.49.50, Bhandarkar Edition) therefore defines *dharma* as that which sustains society, holding its members together in a unity: *dhāraṇāt dharma ityāhuḥ dharmo dhārayate prajāḥ*.

### *Dharma and Amṛta*

*Dharma* and *amṛta* are two key words in Sanskrit which convey the whole range of values sought after by man; of these, *dharma* represents the values which he seeks in association with his fellows. These values, which proceed from the motivations of profit and pleasure, are collectively known as *abhyudaya*, which, in modern language, means social security and welfare; and it is only through *dharma*, social ethics, that man can achieve this. *A high measure of social security and welfare accordingly indicates a correspondingly high level of dhārmic or socio-ethical sense in the community.*

But the range of human possibilities and values is not exhausted by the achievement of *abhyudaya*, which is but an achievement in the world of time, in the sphere of change and death. This achievement tends to generate tensions within itself, which is an indication that man's inherent urge to go beyond himself, to surpass himself, has been stifled. When the life force is thus stifled, external security turns into inner insecurity, and social welfare into spiritual emptiness. It leaves life's deepest mysteries unresolved, the mystery of the soul and the mystery of God, which embody man's hunger to reach out to his timeless and infinite

dimension. This constitutes another dimension of life, another field of human endeavour—the field of the inner life of man. And the key word that conveys the entire gamut of values in this field of search is *amṛta*, immortality.

The spiritual message of every religion is the message of immortality. If God is immortal, man also is immortal, he being a child of God, or a spark of God. The Upaniṣads speak of the Self of man as Brahman, the infinite and immortal: *Tat tvam asi*—'That thou art', as the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* (VI. viii. 7) expresses it. Conditioned by the body and the senses, man appears finite and limited; but in his true nature he is unconditioned, infinite, and free. 'God enchained is man; man unchained is God', says Sri Ramakrishna and adds: *pañcabhūter jānde brahma paḍe kānde*—'caught in the net of the five elements, Brahman weeps (as man)' The search for the Ātman is therefore the search for the Brahman ever present in man, the infinite and the unconditioned behind the finite and the conditioned. It is the search for the *amṛta*—the immortal. and this search is always inward; hence its description in verse twelve as *adhyātmayogādhigama*—attainment through the *yoga* of meditation on the inner Self. Meditation is the technique of the royal path to immortality; and in meditation, man ceases to be gregarious; he goes beyond his erstwhile state in which he was defined as a social animal; and he has the strength to digest this loneliness and spiritually benefit from it And he owes this strength to his earlier discipline in *dharma* or social ethics

### *The Marvellous Touch of the Soul*

Religion in its spiritual manifestation can therefore be defined as 'a flight of the alone to the Alone', in the words of Plotinus (*The Enneads*, VI. lx. 11). It need not, however, always involve a physical flight. Meditation leading to spiritual experience is the condition in which man realizes his spiritual nature in its fullness. Wordsworth refers to this, in his poem entitled 'Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey', as being 'laid asleep in body and become a living soul':

> That serene and blessed mood,
> In which the affections gently lead us on—
> Until, the breath of this corporeal frame
> And even the motion of our human blood
> Almost suspended, we are laid asleep
> In body and become a living soul:

While with an eye made quiet by the power
Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,
We see into the life of things.

In his lecture on 'Hints on Practical Spirituality' delivered at the Home of Truth, Los Angeles, in 1900, Swami Vivekananda spoke on meditation in these words (*Complete Works*, Vol. II, Ninth Edition, p. 37):

'The greatest help to spiritual life is meditation. In meditation we divest ourselves of all material conditions and feel our divine nature. We do not depend upon any external help in meditation.

'The touch of the soul can paint the brightest colour even in the dingiest places; it can cast a fragrance over the vilest thing; it can make the wicked divine—and all enmity, all selfishness is effaced. The less the thought of the body, the better. For it is the body that drags us down. It is attachment, identification, which makes us miserable. That is the secret: To think that I am the spirit and not the body, and that the whole of this universe with all its relations, with all its good and all its evil, is but as a series of paintings—scenes on a canvas—of which I am the witness.'

Again, in another lecture on '*Sādhanās* or Preparations for the Higher Life', he said (*ibid.*, Vol. V, Seventh Edition, p. 253):

'Meditation is the one thing. Meditate! The greatest thing is meditation. It is the nearest approach to spiritual life—the mind meditating. It is the one moment in our daily life that we are not at all material—the Soul thinking of Itself, free from all matter—this marvellous touch of the Soul!'

We shall meet with this subject of meditation when we reach the subsequent chapters of the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*. But in the present context a verse from Śaṅkara's *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi* (verse 368) will be found illuminating:

*Ekāntasthitirindriyoparamaṇe heturdamaścetasaḥ*
*saṁrodhe karaṇam śamena vilayaṁ yāyādahaṁvāsanā;*
*Tenānandarasānubhūtiracalā brāhmī sadā yoginaḥ,*
*tasmāt cittanirodha eva satataṁ kāryaḥ prayatno muneḥ—*

'The state of aloneness serves to control the sense-organs; control of the sense-organs helps to control the mind; through control of the mind the ego sense is destroyed; and this again gives the *yogī* the joy of the unbroken realization of the bliss of Brahman; therefore the only endeavour that the *muni* (thoughtful man) has to do is to strive constantly to discipline the mind.'

### *Positivism versus Religion*

A merely positivistic attitude to life may question the very necessity of religion; it may question the very validity of this search for the immortal and its technique of meditation. Modern positivism and humanism uphold the ideal of this-worldly excellence achieved through science and socio-political action, and look askance at all ideas of inwardness and transcendence. Discussing this question of the validity of religion in his lecture on 'Unity, the Goal of Religion', Swami Vivekananda says (*Complete Works*, Vol. III, p. 4):

'Now comes the question, Can religion really accomplish anything? It can. It brings to man eternal life. It has made man what he is, and will make of this human animal a god. That is what religion can do. Take religion from human society and what will remain? Nothing but a forest of brutes. Sense-happiness is not the goal of humanity. Wisdom (*jñānam*) is the goal of all life. We find that man enjoys his intellect more than an animal enjoys its senses; and we see that man enjoys his spiritual nature even more than his rational nature. So the highest wisdom must be this spiritual knowledge. With this knowledge will come bliss. All these things of this world are but the shadows, the manifestations in the third or fourth degree, of the real Knowledge and Bliss.'

### *Man in Quest of Bliss*

Illumination and the bliss flowing from it are the two fruits of the realization of the Ātman. So verse thirteen of the second chapter of the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* says: *Sa modate modanīyaṁ hi labdhvā*—'he rejoices, having attained what is verily the blissful.' What really is the blissful? Animals experience bliss through organic satisfactions. Man also seeks organic satisfactions to satisfy his craving for bliss. But in the case of man this is but the starting point. If any man is content with this and refuses to move forward, he has in effect bowed down to nature and become its bond-slave. For organic satisfactions are just plain nature; by coming under their sway man forfeits the glory of his spiritual status and freedom. Verse three of the *Īśā Upaniṣad*, we have already seen, characterizes such a man as *ātmahana*, a self-killer, one who commits suicide. How? *avidyādoṣeṇa vidyamānasya ātmanaḥ tiraskaraṇāt*—'because of the denial of the ever-present Self through spiritual blindness', as further elucidated by Śaṅkara in his commentary on that verse.

The specifically human joys are mental and not physical. But

religions insist that there is a joy higher even than the mental, and that this joy proceeds from the divine and immortal core of the human personality. Physical and mental joys have their sources without, but this one has its source entirely within. This is the bliss of the Ātman or Brahman, the bliss of God. It is the purest form of joy, because it is entirely spiritual. Mental joys, which fall intermediate between the physical and the spiritual, partake of both in varying degrees of combination, and are pure or otherwise in corresponding measure. Sri Ramakrishna speaks of three types of human joy: *viṣayānanda* or joy arising from sense objects; *bhajanānanda* or joy arising from *bhajana* or worship of God and singing His name and glories. It may also mean pure joys of the mind arising from intellectual, artistic, and moral sources; and *brahmānanda* or joy arising from God-vision. The last one is what Yama refers to in verse thirteen as *sa modate modanīyaṁ hi labdhvā*. Of these, the first, namely, the joy arising from organic satisfactions appears trivial and childish to one who has tasted divine bliss. Says the *Gītā* (V. 21-22):

*Bāhyasparśeṣu asaktātmā vindatyātmani yat sukham;*
*Sa brahmayogayuktātmā sukhamakṣayam aśnute—*

'He whose heart is unattached to external objects realizes the joy that is in the Self; he who is established in the awareness of Brahman attains happiness that is undecaying.'

*Ye hi saṁsparśajā bhogā duḥkhayonaya eva te;*
*Ādyantavantaḥ kaunteya na teṣu ramate budhaḥ—*

'Since enjoyments that are born of contact (of the senses with sense objects) are the source of misery alone, (characterized) as they are with a beginning and an end, a wise man, O son of Kuntī, does not take delight in them.'

### *The House of Truth Is Wide Open for Naciketā*

God is *Sat-Cit-Ānanda*—Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute. Naciketā is in search of this Truth. And Yama considers him far advanced on the path; hence he says to himself: *vivṛtaṁ sadma Naciketasaṁ manye*—'methinks the house (of Truth) is wide open for Naciketā.'

Yama, the teacher, is fully satisfied with Naciketā, the student. But the student is not satisfied with the way the teacher has been dodging him so far. He will not stand any more the side-tracking of the main question on the part of his teacher. He will tell him straight to instruct him in Brahman; and this forms the theme of the verses that follow, which we shall study next.

TWENTY

# KATHA UPANISAD—9

In the last discourse, we saw Yama concluding his eulogy of the knowledge of Brahman with high praise for his student, Naciketā: *vivṛtaṁ sadma naciketasaṁ manye*—'methinks, the house (of Truth) is wide open for Naciketā'. Naciketā, as we saw when studying verse two of the first chapter, was endowed with *śraddhā*, faith in himself, faith in the ultimate meaningfulness of experience. This *śraddhā* deepened as a result of the confidence in him expressed by his teacher through his eulogistic words. Both the student and the teacher are *en rapport* with the spirit of truth. The student, on his part, is impatient, expectant!

Ever since he met Yama and put him the question formulated in his third boon, relating to the problem of the survival of the soul at death, Naciketā had been receiving intense philosophical education from the words of his teacher; this had clarified his ideas and widened the scope of his question. The simple theological problem of survival had slowly assumed philosophical proportions. It was no more a personal problem on the plane of the emotions. It had become an impersonal and rational inquiry into the fundamental nature of man and the universe; a penetrating study of experience to find out whether there is a changeless reality behind the world of change, an unconditioned behind the conditioned, a unity behind the diversity revealed by the senses.

With these thought-developments behind him, we find Naciketā, in verse fourteen of chapter two, reformulating his problem in the precise language of philosophy. He asks Yama:

*Anyatra dharmāt anyatrādharmāt*
*anyatrāsmāt kṛtākṛtāt;*
*Anyatra bhūtācca bhavyācca*
*yat tat paśyasi tat vada—*

'That which is other than *dharma* (virtue) and *adharma* (vice), other than effect and cause, other than time, past and future (as also present), that (Truth) thou beholdest; please tell (me) that.'

In these simple words, Naciketā has formulated the central quest of philosophy and religion in India. It is the search for a reality which is beyond the determinism of cause and effect, beyond the relativity of virtue and vice and of time and space.

In that alone is true life, freedom, and happiness. The finite, the relative, and the conditioned cannot be the limit of man's search for knowledge and happiness. In the earnest words of Sanatkumāra in the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* (VII. xxiii. 1):

> *Yo vai bhūmā tat sukham; nālpe sukhamasti;*
> *Bhūmaiva sukham; bhūmā tveva vijijñāsitavya iti*—

'That which is Infinite is verily happiness; there is no happiness in the finite; the Infinite alone is happiness. One should therefore seek to know the Infinite alone.'

In his search for knowledge, man may get at the relative only; but his real search is for the absolute; when he finds that what he has attained is of the relative, he leaves it behind, modifies his method of approach, and continues his search for the absolute.

### *Māyā a Fact of Existence*

Indian thought discovered ages ago that whatever is conditioned by space, time, and causality belongs to the category of the relative. This conclusion is now corroborated by modern scientific thought. Thus the entire world of sense perception, thought, and even the ego, all belong to the category of the relative. They fall within the field of time and the network of cause-and-effect relation. This is the sphere of what Vedānta terms *Māyā*; all our activities and relationships, all our worldly desires, ethical strivings, and religious aspirations lie within this net of *Māyā*. Vedānta declares that whatever is within the range of speech and thought falls within the category of *Māyā*, within the net of relativity.

Says Swami Vivekananda on the nature of *Māyā* in his lecture on '*Māyā* and Illusion' (*Complete Works*, Vol. II, Ninth Edition p. 97):

'*Māyā* is not a theory for the explanation of the world: it is simply a statement of facts as they exist, that the very basis of our being is contradiction, that everywhere we have to move through this tremendous contradiction, that wherever there is good, there must also be evil, and wherever there is evil, there must be some good, wherever there is life, death must follow as its shadow, and everyone who smiles will have to weep, and *vice versa*.'

This net of relativity enfolds us and binds us on every side, without and within. The Swami says again in his lecture on '*Māyā* and the Evolution of the Conception of God' (*ibid.*, p. 112):

'This eternal play of light and darkness, indiscriminate, indistinguishable, inseparable, is always there. A fact, yet, at the same

time, not a fact; awake, and at the same time asleep. This is a statement of facts, and this is what is called *Māyā*. We are born in the *Māyā*, we live in it, we think in it, we dream in it. We are philosophers in it, we are spiritual men in it, nay, we are devils in this *Māyā*, and we are gods in this *Māyā*. Stretch your ideas as far as you can, make them higher and higher, call them infinite, or by any other name you please, even these ideas are within this *Māyā*. It cannot be otherwise, and the whole of human knowledge is generalization of this *Māyā*, trying to know it as it appears to be.'

This is great knowledge in itself; but it is not great enough for Vedānta. It wants to peer beyond even that. It seeks to realize the absolute behind the relative and go beyond time to eternity. This cannot be done at the conceptual level, for the absolute at that level is only a logical absolute; it is only a correlative of the relative.

But the modern positivist may ask: why should we seek to realize the absolute when we know that it is unattainable, since it is beyond speech and thought? Why not be content with the relative? Dealing with the inadequacy of this positivist position, Swami Vivekananda says ('*Māyā* and Illusion', *ibid.*, p. 102):

'If this is the state of things, what shall we do? Why not become agnostics? The modern agnostics also know there is no solution of this problem, no getting out of this evil of *Māyā*, as we say in our language; therefore they tell us to be satisfied and enjoy life. Here, again, is a mistake, a tremendous mistake, a most illogical mistake. And it is this. What do you mean by life? Do you mean only the life of the senses? In this, every one of us differs only slightly from the brutes. I am sure that no one is present here whose life is only in the senses. Then, this present life means something more than that. Our feelings, thoughts, and aspirations are all part and parcel of our life; and is not the struggle towards the great ideal, towards perfection, one of the most important components of what we call life? According to the agnostics, we must enjoy life as it is. But this life means, above all, this search after the ideal; the essence of life is going towards perfection. We must have that, and, therefore, we cannot be agnostics, or take the world as it appears. The agnostic position takes this life, *minus* the ideal component, to be all that exists; and this, the agnostic claims, cannot be reached, therefore he must give up the search. This is what is called *Māyā*, this nature, this universe.'

### *Beyond Māyā*

The search for what is beyond *Māyā* is the urge behind all

ethics and the search of religion. To quote Swami Vivekananda again (ibid., pp. 103-4):

'All religions are more or less attempts to get beyond nature —the crudest or the most developed, expressed through mythology or symbology, stories of gods, angels or demons, or through stories of saints or seers, great men or prophets, or through the abstractions of philosophy—all have that one object, all are trying to get beyond these limitations. In one word, they are all struggling towards freedom.... The way is not *with Māyā* but *against* it. This is another fact to learn.... The whole history of humanity is a continuous fight against the so-called laws of nature, and man gains in the end. Coming to the internal world, there, too, the same fight is going on, this fight between the animal man and the spiritual man, between light and darkness; and here, too, man becomes victorious. He, as it were, cuts his way out of nature to freedom.'

Thus beyond this *Māyā* Vedānta finds something which is not bound by *Māyā*, and getting there, man is released from the shackles of *Māyā*, and becomes truly free. From this point onwards, all conceptual thought and ethical endeavour become luminous with a new resolve—the spiritual resolve to *realize* freedom, and the further resolve to *renounce* sense life, the life in *Māyā*. The *Svetāśvatara Upaniṣad* in one of its oft-quoted verses sings of this Reality beyond *Māyā* (IV.10):

*Māyāṁ tu prakṛtiṁ viddyāt māyinaṁ tu maheśvaram;*
*Tasyāvayavabhūtaistu vyāptaṁ sarvamidaṁ jagat—*

'Know Nature to be *Māyā*, and the great God to be the lord of *Māyā*. This whole universe is pervaded by Him through beings which form His parts.'

The knowledge of the world as *Māyā* and the further knowledge of what lies beyond *Māyā* constitute the realization of Buddha under the *bodhi* tree. Apart from Buddha's own utterances on this subject, we have a clear presentation of the substance of his realization in a brief statement of one of the first five of his own disciples, Assāji. It is a fascinating episode in which we obtain this statement, and which also reveals the phenomenon of man's dissatisfaction with mere living on words and concepts, the nature of his spiritual quest, and the help he receives in this from a qualified spiritual teacher.

Buddha was camping with his disciples in the city of Rājagrha, the capital of Magadha (modern Bihar). His disciple, *Thera* (i.e.

Elder) Assāji, was on his morning round for alms. Sāriputta and Moggallāna were two prominent members of another group of spiritual seekers under a sceptic teacher by name Sañjaya; this group was also camping near Rājagṛha at the time. Both were outstanding men and great scholars, but they were deeply dissatisfied inwardly and were yearning for spiritual realization. They were in search of the 'Deathless', the 'Immortal'—*Amatam*, as the Buddhist Pali scriptures put it. The two had made an agreement between themselves: He who first realizes the 'Deathless' shall instruct the other.

Sāriputta came across Assāji when the latter was on his way back from his round for alms. Impressed by the serenity of Assāji, Sāriputta drew close to him and asked:

'Thy senses, friend, are clear; the colour of thy skin is bright and pure. On whose account, friend, hast thou renounced the sense life? Who is thy teacher? Whose *dharma* (spiritual way) dost thou profess to follow?'

Assāji replied:

'There is, friend, the great devotee, Gautama (Buddha) of the Śākya clan, who has renounced everything. Following him, I have renounced the sense life. He, the Blessed One, is my teacher. I profess to follow the way taught by him.'

Sāriputta again asked:

'Venerable sir, what does thy teacher declare?'

Assāji replied with characteristic humility:

'I am, friend, but newly ordained; I have come but recently to this way and discipline. I cannot expound these in full; but I shall tell thee briefly what they mean.'

Saying this, Assāji in a brief statement announced the essence of what Buddha had realized for himself and was teaching to others:

> *Ye dharmā hetuprabhavā teṣāṁ hetuṁ tathāgato hyavadat;*
> *Teṣāṁ ca yo nirodho; evaṁ vādi hi mahāśramaṇaḥ—*

'The *tathāgata* (Buddha) has verily explained the origin of those things which are subject to causality. Their cessation too (he has explained). This, verily, is the doctrine of the great *śramaṇa* (monk).'

The immense popularity of this brief statement of Buddha's teaching is evident from the fact that it finds frequent occurrence

in Pali and Sanskrit Buddhist books; it also occurs in innumerable inscriptions scattered in several countries of Asia.

Hearing this brief summary of Buddha's teaching, Sāriputta became deeply inspired; the truth of this message shone in his heart: Everything that is subject to the cause-and-effect relation is necessarily impermanent; by negation of this entire range of changeful phenomena one realizes the Changeless, the Deathless. Filled with joy, he went to his friend Moggallāna who, impressed by the serenity of his look, asked: 'Have you attained the Deathless?' He replied in the affirmative. Moggallāna then said to his friend: 'Let us go to where the Blessed One (Buddha) is. He shall be our teacher.' When their leader Sañjaya heard about it, he with all his followers also decided to accompany the two. Buddha received them. He recognized the spiritually advanced state of the two friends and expressed his joy in having as his disciples 'this excellent pair'—Sāriputta and Moggallāna.

'The One remains, the many change and pass', sang Shelley. The heart of spiritual realization is not the knowledge of the changeful aspects of existence, but the knowledge of the eternal Reality behind the world of change. The Upaniṣads term the latter *parā vidyā*, higher knowledge, and the former *aparā vidyā*, lower knowledge.

*Parā vidyā* is the search for that which is beyond the relativity of good and evil—*anyatra dharmāt anyatra adharmāt*, above the range of all causal determinisms—*anyatra asmāt kṛtākṛtāt*, and unlimited by time—*anyatra bhūtācca bhavyācca*. Such a reality can only be the Self of man, the eternal subject, the witness of the three states of waking, dream, and dreamless sleep. Being beyond time and causality, it is infinite and non-dual, *ekameva advitīyam* and *satyaṁ jñānam anantam*, as Vedānta expresses it. Buddha realized not only the cessation of all conditioned existence, but also the deathless and unconditioned Reality. Says Buddha (*Udāna*, VIII. 1 and 3):

'There is, O monks, an unborn, an unbecome, an unmade, an uncompounded; if, monks, there were not here this unborn, unbecome, unmade, uncompounded, there would not here be an escape from the born, the become, the made, the compounded. But because there is an unborn, an unbecome, an unmade, an uncompounded, therefore, there is an escape from the born, the become, the made, the compounded.'

In all religions, God is conceived as eternal and changeless. But while all dualistic religions place that God outside nature, outside experience, Vedānta finds Him *in* experience, as the inner Self *of* all, and proclaims the unity of Ātman, the Self of man, with Brahman, the Self of the universe. It is only in the light of this truth that we can understand the strange reply of Jesus to the question of the Jews (John, 8.57-58):

'Then said the Jews unto Him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?

'Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you; Before Abraham was, I am.'

The question asked by Naciketā in verse fourteen thus relates to the central theme of all spiritual philosophy. Yama had hinted to Naciketā his having realized this truth of all truths. Naciketā therefore requests Yama to communicate it to him. As Śaṅkara in his commentary on verse fourteen of chapter two says:

*Yadi īdṛśaṁ vastu sarvavyavahāragocarātītaṁ paśyasi, jānāsi, tadvada mahyam—*

'If you see, if you know, the reality of this description, which is beyond the grasp of all relative experience, then please tell it to me.'

### *Om: the Symbol of Total Reality*

To this pointed question, Yama gave a reply which, commencing with verse fifteen of this chapter, occupies the rest of the Upaniṣad. We shall now take up the fifteenth and the subsequent two verses, sixteenth and seventeenth, for our study:

*Sarve vedā yatpadam āmananti*
*tapāṁsi sarvāṇi ca yat vadanti;*
*Yadicchanto brahmacaryaṁ caranti*
*tat te padaṁ saṅgraheṇa bravīmi; om ityetat—*

'The goal which all Vedas proclaim, which all *tapas* (penances) declare, and desiring which they lead the life of *brahmacarya*—that goal I tell thee in brief; it is *Om*.'

*Etadhyevākṣaraṁ brahma etadhyevākṣaraṁ param;*
*Etadhyevākṣaraṁ jñātvā yo yadicchati tasya tat—*

'This syllable is verily Brahman; this syllable is verily the highest. Having known this syllable, one gets whatever one desires.'

*Etadālaṁbanaṁ śreṣṭhaṁ etadālaṁbanaṁ param;*
*Etadālaṁbanaṁ jñātvā brahmaloke mahīyate—*

'This support is the best; this support is the supreme; knowing this support, one is glorified in the world of Brahman.'

It may appear strange that to the serious question of Naciketā regarding the ultimate unconditioned Reality, Yama gave the answer that it is *Om*. But we shall see presently that it is not a mere name or word that is presented here. As explained by Śaṅkara in his comments on this verse: *Omśabdavācyam Omśabdapratīkam ca*—'it is That which is *meant* by the sound *Om*, and That which has for its symbol the sound *Om*.' A word and its meaning are inseparable, *vāgarthāviva saṁpṛktau*, as said by the poet Kālidāsa. History has shown that human knowledge in various fields has been greatly advanced by the invention and use of symbols. Language itself is a collection of symbols. Quantities and numbers become simplified when expressed through symbols. When ancient Indian scientific thought invented the numerals, including the zero sign, the algebraic symbols, and the decimal system, it helped immensely to simplify mathematics and its handling of immense physical quantities. When the Indian sages realized the Absolute and the Unconditioned in the unity of Brahman and Ātman, they felt the need for an adequate symbol to communicate so incommunicable a truth. No single personal God of the various religions, nor any physical symbol much less, could serve as a symbol for a Reality which is at once personal and impersonal, immanent and transcendent. In their search, they came across the sound symbol *Om*, which, as the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* (I. 8) informs us, had already established its usefulness for the communication of particular moods and ideas.

In the meantime, their philosophic investigation had resolved the whole universe of matter and energy, including psychical energy—*ākāśa* and *prāṇa*—into *sphoṭa* or sound, which they had also divided into the two main groups of the manifest and the unmanifest. No particular sound of the alphabet, either as a consonant or a vowel, could serve as an adequate symbol of Brahman, which is the unity of all existence. The universal cannot be expressed adequately through any one particular. It can be expressed only through something which possesses the characteristics of the universal. They analyzed this sound *Om* and discovered that, of all sounds, it possessed this quality of universality. It is composed of the sounds of the three letters of *akāra*, *ukāra*, and *makāra* of

the Sanskrit vocabulary corresponding to a, u, and m of the English vocabulary. *A*, pronounced as the letter 'o' in the word 'come', is the first vowel and letter of the Sanskrit alphabet; as the first of the guttural sounds, it is the very first sound that man can utter; as the last of the labial sounds which involves the closing of the lips, *M* is the last sound that can be produced by man; and *U*, as pronounced in the word 'uvula', is the sound produced by rolling the breath over the whole of the tongue. Hence the combination of these three sounds into *Om* is also a combination of all sounds that man can possibly utter. Though a particular, *Om* is thus universal in its sweep. As such, it is fit to be a symbol of Brahman in its immanent aspect.

*Om* in its uttered form finally merges into its unuttered form; all uttered sound merges into the silence of the soundless. This soundless or *amātra* aspect of *Om* is the symbol of Brahman in Its transcendental aspect, beyond time, space, and causality. This *amātra* aspect is indicated by the *bindu* or dot in the crescent over the syllable *Om* as written in Sanskrit: ॐ.

This *Om*, as the unity of all sound to which all matter and energy are reduced in their primordial form, is a fit symbol for Ātman or Brahman, which is the unity of all existence. These, and possibly other, considerations led the Vedic sages to accord to *Om* the highest divine reverence and worship, and treat it as the holiest *pratīka*, symbol, of divinity; they called it *nāda brahman* or *śabda brahman*, Brahman in the form of sound. It is the holiest word for all the religions emanating from India—Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism. Its nearest equivalent in the West is the Logos or the Word. As St. John's Gospel majestically expounds it (I.1):

'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.'

The *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad*, which is the briefest of the Upaniṣads with only twelve verses, reveals the truth of the Ātman through a penetrating study of experience as revealed in the three states of *jāgrat* (waking), *svapna* (dream), and *suṣupti* (dreamless sleep). It identifies each of the three letters of *Om* with the Ātman as revealed in each of the three states, and the soundless aspect of *Om* with the Ātman revealed in the *turīya* or the transcendental state. The entire universe of experience is comprehended in the three states, and the pure subject or experiencer in the *turīya*.

The Ātman as the unity of the experiencer and the experienced is the totality of all existence, and Om is its total symbol. The *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad* proclaims this truth in its two opening verses and in its eighth verse:

*Om ityetadakṣaramidaṁ sarvaṁ; tasyopavyākhyānaṁ bhūtaṁ bhavat bhaviṣyaditi sarvamoṁkāra eva; yaccānyat trikālātītaṁ tadapyoṁkāra eva—*

'*Om*; this syllable is all this (universe); a clear exposition of it (is thus): All that is past, present, and future is, indeed, *Om*; and whatever else there is beyond the threefold division of time, that also is verily *Om*.'

*Sarvaṁ hyetat brahma; ayam ātmā brahma; so'yam ātmā catuṣpād—*

'All this (existence), verily, is Brahman; this Ātman is Brahman; this same Ātman has four quarters (places of manifestation, namely, *jāgrat, svapna, suṣupti*, and *turīya*).'

*So'yamātmā adhyakṣaram oṁkāro adhimātraṁ pādā mātrā mātrāśca pādā akāra ukāra makāra iti—*

'This same Ātman is now described in relation to the syllable *Om*. *Om*, too, divided into (four) parts, is described in relation to its letters. The quarters of the Ātman (the Self as manifested in each of the three states of waking, dream, and dreamless sleep) are identical with the letters of *Om*, which are *a*, *u*, and *m*.'

The Upaniṣad further describes the fourth state or *turīya* in its last verse, verse twelve:

*Amātraḥ caturtho'vyavahāryaḥ prapañcopaśamaḥ śivo'dvaita evamoṁkāra ātmaiva saṁviśati ātmanā ātmānaṁ ya evaṁ veda—*
'The fourth (*turīya*) is without sound (or parts) and is beyond relativity; it is the cessation of all phenomena. It is the Good, the Non-dual. This *Om* is verily the Ātman. He who knows this merges himself in the Ātman.'

This is the thought-background of Yama's eulogy of *Om* as the symbol of Ātman in verses fifteen to seventeen of the second chapter of the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*. The eulogy is meant for both *Om* and Ātman, since we have seen that what fits one fits also the other. Explaining the significance of *Om* as the highest symbol of God, Swami Vivekananda says ('Bhakti Yoga', *Complete Works*, Vol. III, Eighth Edition, pp. 57-58):

'All this expressed sensible universe is the form, behind which stands the eternal inexpressible *sphoṭa*, the manifester as Logos or Word. This eternal *sphoṭa*, the essential eternal material of all ideas or names, is the power through which the Lord creates the universe. Nay, the Lord first becomes conditioned as the *sphoṭa*, and then evolves Himself out as the yet more concrete sensible universe. This *sphoṭa* has one word as its only possible symbol, and this is the *Om*. And as by no possible means of analysis can we separate the word from the idea, this *Om* and the eternal *sphoṭa* are inseparable; and therefore it is out of this holiest of all holy words, the mother of all names and forms, the eternal *Om*, that the whole universe may be supposed to have been created.... The *sphoṭa* is the material of all words, yet it is not any definite word in its fully formed state. That is to say, if all the peculiarities which distinguish one word from another be removed, then what remains will be the *sphoṭa*; therefore this *sphoṭa* is called the *nāda-brahman*, the Sound-Brahman....

'If properly pronounced, this *Om* will represent the whole phenomena of sound-production, and no other word can do this; and this, therefore, is the fittest symbol of the *sphoṭa*, which is the real meaning of the *Om*. And as the symbol can never be separated from the thing signified, the *Om* and the *sphoṭa* are one. And as the *sphoṭa*, being the finer side of the manifested universe, is nearer to God, and is indeed the first manifestation of divine wisdom, this *Om* is truly symbolic of God.'

*Sarve vedā yat padam āmananti*—'the state which all Vedas proclaim', says Yama; *padam* in Sanskrit means state as well as word, and it also means 'goal'. The Ātman and its symbol *Om* are the central theme of all the Vedas.

### *The Power of Tapas*

*Tapāṁsi sarvāṇi ca yat vadanti*—'and which is proclaimed by all *tapas* (penances)'. The word *tapas*, meaning heat, indicates effort and endeavour, which has the tendency to heat up any system, physical or organic. Its nearest equivalents in English are self-discipline, austerity, or penance, without, however, taking in the ideas of sin and penitence associated with the last two. The ideas expressed by *tapas* find, in some form or other, a place in the practical part of every religion; they find a place even in political life or scientific research. In fact, they have a place in every field where man strives for higher values. *Tapas* involves the voluntary and cheerful experiencing of a privation with a view to attaining a higher value.

By fasting, which is the commonest form of *tapas* in religion, by voluntarily giving up food, man hopes to achieve self-control

and inner purity. What is given up is always a lower value, and what is sought is always a higher value. If food is the highest value, there is no meaning in giving it up. It is the same with the entire gamut of sense pleasures. Lust emerges as love through the *tapas* of marriage. A seeker of knowledge gladly welcomes privation in the field of sense pleasures. A patriot seeking the liberation of his country from political slavery cheerfully faces physical privations and even death itself. The ethical man cheerfully undergoes physical and mental privations at the call of duty.

Throwing away an advantage already gained in order to achieve a greater advantage has been a characteristic of organic as well as cultural evolution. This is the only safeguard against stagnation and death. Life's command is 'move on'. It is especially the law of moral and spiritual evolution. The lesson here is not 'hold on', but 'give up, and move on'. This is what the *Īśā Upaniṣad* proclaims in its memorable opening verse, as we saw in our study of that Upaniṣad: *tena tyaktena bhuñjīthāḥ*—'enjoy life through *tyāgā*, renunciation'. The animal has its life entirely in the senses; man, though living in the body and in the plane of the senses, feels the urge to move on; through control of his nervous impulses, he develops his mental life. Disciplining the workings of his mind, he achieves morality and culture, science and art, philosophy and religion. *Tapas* thus plays a vital part in human evolution. It unites the citizen and the saint, the scientist and the artist in a common discipline and quest, thus bridging the gulf between the secular and the sacred.

By *tapas*, therefore, the Upaniṣads, or, for that matter, the *Gītā*, Buddha, or Jesus, never mean mere penance, austerity, or senseless mortification. By it they mean this creative impulse at the back of the evolutionary process, be it organic or mental, moral or spiritual. The Upaniṣads are particularly concerned with its contribution in the fields of the intellectual, moral, and spiritual growth of man. For that is the specific field of human evolution. In the words of Sir Julian Huxley in his lecture on 'The Evolutionary Vision', *Evolution after Darwin*, Vol. III, p. 251):

'Man's evolution is not biological but psychosocial; it operates by the mechanism of cultural tradition, which involves the cumulative self-reproduction and self-variation of mental activities and their products. Accordingly, major steps in the human phase of evolution are achieved by break-throughs to new dominant patterns of mental organization, of knowledge, ideas, and beliefs—ideological instead of physiological or biological organization.'

The Upaniṣads maintain that *tapas* is the technique by which such 'break-throughs' are initiated and stabilized. Hence the supreme importance given by them to *tapas*. If the higher life is the end, then *tapas* is the means, say the Upaniṣads; and they equate the means and the end by declaring that *tapas is* the higher life. Thus the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* sings in praise of *tapas* in one of its famous passages dealing with the knowledge of Brahman. The Upaniṣad first expounds the nature of Brahman in a majestic statement by Varuṇa, the father and teacher, to Bhṛgu, his son and disciple (III.1):

*Yato vā imāni bhūtāni jāyante; yena jātāni jīvanti; yat prayantyabhisaṁviśanti; tat vijijñāsasva; tat brahmeti*—

'That from which all these beings and entities are born; That in which, being born, they abide; and That into which, at death, they fully enter—desire to know That; That is Brahman.'

What did the disciple do on hearing this truth?

*Sa tapo'tapyata*—'he performed *tapas*', says the Upaniṣad. Explaining the word *tapas* in his commentary on this verse, Śaṅkara says, quoting a verse of the *Yājñavalkya Smṛti* in the end:

*Sarveṣāṁ hi niyatasādhyaviṣayāṇāṁ sādhanānāṁ tapa eva sādhakatamaṁ sādhanam iti hi prasiddhaṁ loke. Tasmāt pitrā anupadiṣṭamapi brahmavijñānasādhanatvena tapaḥ pratipede bhṛguḥ. Tacca tapo bāhyāntaḥkaraṇasamādhānaṁ, taddvārakatvāt brahmapratipatteḥ. 'Manasaśca indriyāṇāṁ ca hyaikāgryaṁ paramaṁ tapaḥ; tat jyāyaḥ sarvadharmebhyaḥ sa dharmaḥ para ucyate' iti smṛteḥ*—

'It is well known in the world that of all aids to the attainment of objects which can be achieved by resort to means, *tapas* is the most excellent aid. Therefore Bhṛgu resorted to *tapas* as being the means to the knowledge of Brahman, though his father did not say anything about *tapas*. And such *tapas* is the *tranquillization of the outer and inner sense organs (the senses and the mind)*, because that is the means to the attainment of Brahman. "The concentration (of the energies) of the mind and the senses is supreme *tapas*; it is greater than all virtues (*dharmas*); it is (in fact) the supreme virtue", as the Smṛti puts it.'

And in the very next passage, we find the teacher exhorting the disciple, who asks him to impart to him the knowledge of Brahman, to practise *tapas* (III.2):

*Tapasā brahma vijijñāsasva; tapo brahmeti—*

'Desire to know Brahman by *tapas*; *tapas is* Brahman.'

The Hindu Purāṇic literature tells us that this word '*tapa*' was the first sound that Brahmā, the cosmic Mind who projected this universe out of Himself, heard when He was puzzled as to how to create the universe of name and form. He alone existed at the time. Looking about for the source of the sound, He realized that it was the message to Him from the divine Self within himself. Accordingly, as the *Bhāgavata* beautifully describes it (II.ix.8):

*Atapyata sma akhilalokatāpanam*
*tapastapīyāṁstapatāṁ samāhitaḥ—*

'He, who is the greatest among all performers of *tapas*, performed such deep *tapas*, with perfect concentration, that he acquired the knowledge and capacity to create the universe.'

The universe is the fruit of the *tapas* of the Creator, a *tapas* consisting of knowledge. *Tasya jñānamayaṁ tapaḥ*—'whose *tapas* consists of knowledge or thought', says the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* (I.i.9). Commenting on this, Śaṅkara says:

*Yasya jñānamayaṁ jñānavikārameva sārvajñyalakṣaṇaṁ tapo anāyāsalakṣaṇam—*

'Whose *tapas* consists of thought; it is just a form of His knowledge, which is of the nature of omniscience; it is a *tapas* characterized by effortlessness or spontaneity.'

*Tapas* is thus at the very root of creation; it is also at the root of every creative act or achievement of man, be it literary or artistic, scientific or spiritual.

This concentration of organic and psychic energy achieved by *tapas* is the means to advance evolution to the highest summit of spiritual realization. Modern neurologists tell us that animals that acquired a capacity for thermostasis in their bodies won not only survival in the struggle for existence, but also evolutionary advance. Says W. Grey Walter (*The Living Brain*, p. 16):

'The acquisition of internal temperature control, thermostasis, was a supreme event in neural, indeed in all natural history. It made possible the survival of mammals on a cooling globe. That was its general importance in evolution. Its particular importance was that it completed, in one section of the brain, an automatic system of stabilization for the vital functions of the organism—a condition known as homeostasis. With this arrangement, other

parts of the brain are left free for functions not immediately related to the vital engine or the senses, for functions surpassing the wonders of homeostasis itself.'

Tracing the kinship of this physical principle of homeostasis with the spiritual evolution of man, Grey Walter continues (*ibid.*, p. 19):

'The experience of homeostasis, the perfect mechanical calm which it allows the brain, has been known for two or three thousand years under various appellations. It is the physiological aspect of the perfectionist faiths—*nirvāṇa*, the abstraction of the *yogi*, the peace that passeth understanding, the derided "happiness that lies within"; it *is a state of grace in which disorder and disease are mechanical slips and errors.*' (italics not author's)

*Tapas* thus is a value which creative life proclaims from every side. And *tapas* itself, says Yama to Naciketā, proclaims the glory of That which is the value of all values, the supreme end-value, namely, Ātman or Brahman: *tapāṁsi sarvāṇi ca yat vadanti.*

Yama says further: *yadicchanto brahmacaryaṁ caranti*—'desiring which they lead the life of *brahmacarya*'.

*Brahmacarya* means voluntary self-control; it is especially associated with the discipline and control of the sex impulse. It is a form of *tapas*; it is, in fact, the most vital aspect of *tapas*, according to Indian spiritual thought. There is no book on spirituality in India which does not proclaim the glory of *brahmacarya*. In its widest sense, it means the life spiritual; this is the sense in which it is used here; it is the sense in which Buddha used it in his discourses. Mahatma Gandhi gives its root meaning as that conduct which puts one in touch with God. These two values—*tapas* and *brahmacarya*—form two vital elements of Indian culture; they have imparted to it its unique features of a spiritual motive and a spiritual direction.

In verse fifteen Yama describes the goal of the spiritual quest briefly as *Om*. He sings the glory of this symbol of the Divine in verses sixteen and seventeen. *Etat ālaṁbanaṁ śreṣṭham etat ālaṁbanaṁ paraṁ*—'this support is the best, this support is the supreme', says he in verse seventeen.

After speaking about the symbol in these three verses, Yama proceeds to speak, in the remaining eight verses of the chapter, more directly about the reality signified by the symbol about which Naciketā had eagerly asked. We shall take up these verses in the next discourse.

TWENTY ONE

# KATHA UPANISAD 10

In the last discourse, dealing with verses fourteen to seventeen of the second chapter of the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, we saw Yama expounding to Naciketā the nature of the Ātman, the Self of man and of the universe, through Its symbol *Om*. In verses eighteen to twenty-five comprising the rest of the chapter, which we shall study this evening, we have Yama expounding the subject more directly, as directly as a subject such as this will permit. Verses eighteen and nineteen read:

*Na jāyate mriyate vā vipaścit*
*nāyaṁ kutaścit na babhūva kaścit;*
*Ajo nityaḥ śāśvato'yaṁ purāṇo*
*na hanyate hanyamāne śarīre—*

'The discerning man (knows that he) is not born nor does he die; he has not come into being from anything; nor has anything come into being from him. This (Self of man) is unborn, eternal, everlasting, and ancient; it is not destroyed when the body is destroyed.'

*Hantā cenmanyate hantum*
*hataścenmanyate hatam;*
*Ubhau tau na vijānīto*
*nāyaṁ hanti na hanyate—*

'If the killer thinks that he is killing, and the killed thinks that he is killed, both of them do not know that It (the Self) kills not nor is It killed.'

## *Man Viewed in Depth*

In these two verses, Yama has revealed man in his depth. As a physical entity, man is one among the innumerable physical realities of the universe. This is man viewed from the outside, through the senses. Like the innumerable physical entities of nature, man also is acted upon and moulded by forces outside of himself; his body and mind, intellect and ego are all subject to the law of causation. Caught up in the coils of the iron law of determinism, all these entities, including man, are subject to the 'sixfold waves of change', as Vedānta terms it, namely, birth, coming into the category of the existent, growth (through addition of particles or elements), transformation, decline (through detachment of par

ticles or elements), and, finally, destruction or death. The sensate view of man treats him as a machine, wound up and wound down by the hand of time. But is this the whole of man? The sense of inwardness which man—even the sensate man—experiences is what makes him a self as different from the not-self. This selfhood is the special prerogative of man. The term 'self' and its Sanskrit equivalent, ātman, carry the reflexive meaning of inwardness. The sensate view of man completely overlooks the importance of this significant value of inwardness.

Depth psychology in the West endeavours to view him from the inside, and identifies his self with his subtle body, the *sūkṣma śarīra*, apart from and beyond his gross physical body, but still within the grip of cause-and-effect determinism like the physical body and its environing world.

### *The Message of Hope*

This is still the view of man from the outside; it is accordingly a surface view. In failing to do justice to the unplumbed depths of his personality, it also twists and distorts it and makes human life denuded of intrinsic value and significance. The human heart and reason have always protested against this situation. This protest voiced by ethics and religion finds most poignant expression in the words spoken by Swami Vivekananda in the course of his address to the Chicago Parliament of Religions (*Complete Works*, Vol. I, p. 10):

'Is man a tiny boat in a tempest, raised one moment on the foamy crest of a billow and dashed down into a yawning chasm the next, rolling to and fro at the mercy of good and bad actions —a powerless, helpless wretch in an ever-raging, ever-rushing, uncompromising current of cause and effect; a little moth placed under the wheel of causation, which rolls on crushing everything in its way and waits not for the widow's tears or the orphan's cry? The heart sinks at the idea, yet this is the law of Nature.'

The discovery by the Indian sages that the true Self of man is free, that it is untrammelled by the cause-and-effect relation and beyond the network of relativity was a great discovery in the history of man's search for truth. Referring to this momentous event, Swami Vivekananda continues (*ibid.*, pp. 10-11):

'Is there no hope? Is there no escape?—was the cry that went up from the bottom of the heart of despair. It reached the throne of mercy, and words of hope and consolation came down and inspir-

ed a Vedic sage, and he stood up before the world and, in trumpet voice, proclaimed the glad tidings:

'"Hear, ye children of immortal bliss! even ye that reside in higher spheres! I have found the ancient One who is beyond all darkness, all delusion: knowing Him alone you shall be saved from death over again."

'"Children of immortal bliss"—what a sweet, what a hopeful name! Allow me to call you, brethren, by that sweet name—heirs of immortal bliss—yea, the Hindu refuses to call you sinners. Ye are the children of God, the sharers of immortal bliss, holy and perfect beings.... You are souls immortal, spirits free, blest, and eternal; ye art not matter, ye are not bodies; matter is your servant, not you the servant of matter.'

Discussing the import of this teaching for man and his destiny, Swami Vivekananda concludes (*ibid.*, p. 11):

'Thus it is that the Vedas proclaim not a dreadful combination of unforgiving laws, not an endless prison of cause and effect, but that at the head of all these laws, in and through every particle of matter and force, stands One "by whose command the wind blows, the fire burns, the clouds rain, and death stalks upon the earth".'

The Self of man is eternal, immortal; hence it is beyond the cause-and-effect determinism. This truth is known to the discerning —*vipaścit*—says Yama in verse eighteen; he knows that the death of the body, be it gross or subtle, does not involve the death of the Self. It is only the dull-witted that ascribe to the Self the happenings that fall to the body, which is clearly the not-Self. Says Śaṅkara (*Vivekacūḍāmaṇi*, verse 160):

*Deho'hamityeva jaḍasya buddhiḥ*
*dehe ca jīve viduṣastvahaṁ dhīḥ;*
*Vivekavijñānavato mahātmano*
*brahmāhamityeva matiḥ sadātmani—*

'The dull-witted man thinks "I am the body"; the learned man identifies himself with the individual soul within the body; while the great-souled man, possessed of discrimination and realization, identifies himself with the eternal Ātman, and knows "I am Brahman".'

### *The Nature of the Ātman*

Verses eighteen and nineteen of the second chapter of the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* occur in the second chapter of the *Gītā* as verses twenty and nineteen with slight modifications. The free render-

ing of the latter verse by Emerson in his poem on *Brahma* is well known:

> If the red slayer thinks he slays
> Or if the slain thinks he is slain,
> They know not well the subtle ways
> I keep and pass and turn again.

Yama now proceeds to give Naciketā a closer view of the truth of the Ātman in the next three verses, beginning with verse twenty which combines musical charm with philosophical depth:

> *Aṇoraṇīyān mahato mahīyān*
> *ātmāsya jantor nihito guhāyām;*
> *Tamakratuḥ paśyati vītaśoko*
> *dhātuprasādāt mahimānam ātmanaḥ—*

'The Ātman, smaller than the atom and greater than the cosmos, is (ever) present in the heart of this creature. One who is free from (the thraldom of) desire realizes the glory of the Ātman through purity and transparency of the senses and the mind, and (thereby becomes) free from grief.'

> *Āsīno dūraṁ vrajati śayāno yāti sarvataḥ;*
> *Kastaṁ madāmadaṁ devaṁ madanyo jñātumarhati—*

'Though sitting still, He travels far; though lying down, He goes everywhere. Who, other than myself, can know that luminous Reality, which rejoices and rejoices not?'

> *Aśarīraṁ śarīreṣu anavastheṣvavasthitam;*
> *Mahāntaṁ vibhumātmānaṁ matvā dhīro na śocati—*

'Realizing the Ātman as the bodiless in the embodied, the changeless in all changeful entities, infinite and all-pervading, the wise one does not grieve.'

Yama has expressed profound ideas through these three verses. We came across these ideas earlier in our study of the *Īśā Upaniṣad*, verses four and five. Small and big are physical conceptions arising from spatial determinations. A physical entity is either big or small; it can never be both except relatively. But this limitation does not apply to subtle realities even of the physical world. A photon is described by modern science as big enough to spread across the universe and small enough to pass through a small hole. What to speak of the inapplicability of these limitations to non-physical realities like mind and Self? *Aṇu* means atom or, more appropriately, the smallest particle of matter; the Ātman is smaller than that. *Mahat* is the cosmic totality; the Ātman is greater than

this. It is only Consciousness, pure and unconditioned, that can answer to this highly paradoxical description; and that is the nature of the Ātman, the true Self of man. The German poet Angelus Silesius sings:

> Dear me, how great is God! Dear me, how God is small!
> Small as the smallest thing, great as the troubles of all!

Says Śaṅkara in his comment on this Upaniṣadic verse:

*Aṇu mahat vā yadasti loke vastu, tat tenaiva ātmanā nityena ātmavat saṁbhavati; tadātmanā vinirmuktam asat saṁpadyate*—

'Whatever entities exist in the world, small or big, they all derive their being from this eternal Ātman; divorced from the Ātman, they become reduced to unreality.'

As the innermost essence of everything in the universe, this Ātman is naturally present in every being: *ātmā asya jantornihito guhāyām*. But they do not know this fact; because It is *nihito guhāyām*—'hidden in the *guha*, cavity', in the innermost core of their being, as the eternal witness of the changing states of waking, dream, and sleep. Though thus hidden, It has not failed to leave Its footprints on the sands of daily experience; *darśanaśravaṇamananavijñānaliṅgam*—'It ever sends out Its intimations through every act of seeing, hearing, thinking, and knowing', comments Śaṅkara. The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* in a moving passage sings the glory of the Ātman as the central 'thread of Being' (III.7.15):

*Yaḥ sarveṣu bhūteṣu tiṣṭhan, sarvebhyo bhūtebhyo antaro, yaṁ sarvāṇi bhūtāni na viduḥ, yasya sarvāṇi bhūtāni śarīraṁ, yaḥ sarvāṇi bhūtāni antaro yamayati, eṣa te ātmā antaryāmi amṛtaḥ*—

'He who exists in all beings, who is their innermost core, whom all beings do not know, whose body are all beings, who, remaining within, controls all beings, this is your Ātman, the *antaryāmi* (inner controller), the Immortal.'

### *The True Glory of Man*

The Ātman is the eternal 'within' of all the phenomena of nature; but the phenomena do not know It; nor can they ever know It. But there is one phenomenon of nature that can know the Ātman; and that is man. Says William Blake, the English poet (*Poems and Prophesies*):

'If the doors of perception were cleansed, every thing would appear to man as it is, infinite.'

In man alone has nature attained the organic development necessary for the recognition and realization of the Ātman, in his experience are available the 'footprints' of the Ātman. Tracing these footprints, he can realize the Ātman. But the ordinary man does not care to take note of the intimations that the immortal in him sends out to him, 'because they, seeing, see not, and hearing, they hear not, neither do they understand' (Matthew, 13.13). He is drowned in the things and events around and outside him. 'God is in man, but man is not in God; hence man suffers', says Sri Ramakrishna, highlighting this ever-present tragedy.

When the senses and the mind become pure through control of desire, through checking the out-going tendencies of the mind, man realizes the infinite dimension of his true being: *mahimānam ātmanaḥ*—'the glory of the Ātman'. What is this glory?: *Karmanimittavṛddhikṣayarahitaṁ paśyati; ayamahamasmīti*—'He realizes the Ātman as not subject to increase or decrease as a result of action; he realizes It as "I am He" ', comments Śaṅkara. The one theme of all the Upaniṣads is this unique glory of man. Says Swami Vivekananda (*Complete Works*, Vol. II, Ninth Edition, p. 250):

'No books, no scriptures, no science can ever imagine the glory of the Self that appears as man, the most glorious God that ever was, the only God that ever existed, exists, or ever will exist.'

All culture and civilization proclaim only this glory of man in varying measures. But it is only in the science of spirituality that this glory is fully grasped. This realization puts an end to all grief, says the verse. The Upaniṣads holds that all grief, which indicates helplessness, *anīśayā śocati*, proceeds from the attainment of only the fleeting and the finite by one who is born heir to the immortal and the infinite. Grief disappears in the peace and joy of the immortal and infinite Ātman. This is the state in which Buddhas and Christs normally live and move.

The nature of the infinite will entail descriptions often contradictory and enigmatic. It is 'smaller than the atom and bigger than the cosmos'; this is one such description. Verse twenty-one adds three more: *āsīno dūraṁ vrajati*—'though sitting still, He travels far'; *śayāno yāti sarvataḥ*—'though lying down, He goes everywhere'; and *madāmadam*—'It rejoices and rejoices not'. Commenting on these apparently contradictory descriptions of the Ātman, Śaṅkara says:

*Sthitigatinityānityādi-viruddhānekadharmopādhitvāt viruddhadharmavān viśvarūpa iva cintāmaṇivat kasyacit avabhāsate*—

'Viewed through the limiting adjuncts which possess such various and contradictory attributes such as fixity and motion, eternity and ephemerality, etc. the Ātman appears to some *as* if possessing many contradictory attributes, multiformed like the *cintāmaṇi* (a mythical gem which appears according to the fancy of the viewer).'

The universe has come from the Ātman; the inorganic and the organic constitute two features of the universe. The inorganic has no *experience*, neither joy nor sorrow; hence it is described as *amada*. The organic has such experience; hence it is described as *mada*. A reality with such contradictory features is difficult to grasp: *Kastam ... madanyo jñātum arhati*—'who but I (and men like me) can know It?' exclaims Yama. There are only a few who have realized this Ātman and Yama is one of them.

*The Self-revelation of the Ātman*

The Ātman is in all things and entities which have shape and form, because it is itself bodiless—*aśarīram*. These bodies are all subject to change; the Ātman is in them as their changeless essence: *anavastheṣvavasthitam*. *Avibhaktaṁ ca bhūteṣu vibhaktam iva ca sthitam*—'(The Ātman) exists undivided in things apparently divided,' says the *Gītā* (XIII. 16). Realizing the Ātman as It truly is—*mahāntam* and *vibhum*, great and infinite—man becomes a *dhīra*; he surpasses himself and grieves no more. *He completes the long and arduous evolutionary journey from wretchedness to blessedness.*

In the next verse, verse twenty-three, Yama speaks of the unique nature of this journey and its goal:

*Nāyamātmā pravacanena labhyo*
*na medhayā na bahunā śrutena;*
*Yamevaiṣa vṛṇute tena labhyaḥ*
*tasyaiṣa ātmā vivṛṇute tanūṁ svām—*

'This Ātman cannot be attained by study of the scriptures, nor by sharp intellect, nor by much hearing; by him is It attained whom It chooses—to him this Ātman reveals Its own (true) form.'

*Pravacana* literally means teaching; here it means study which is prior to teaching. In a narrow sense, this study refers to the study of the Vedas; in its widest sense, however, it means the study of sacred books in general. The Ātman cannot be attained by the study of the sacred books, says Yama, and adds: nor by *medhas*—sharp intelligence, nor *bahunā śrutena*—by much hearing. It is remarkable that the Vedas themselves, in several passages, say

that the Ātman cannot be attained through a mere study of them. *Few scriptures in the world have the boldness to say this of themselves; for that boldness is the product of a deep passion for spirituality and not for a dogma or creed; and it is sustained by the spirit of detachment and objectivity.* Sacred books, says Sri Ramakrishna, do not contain God, but only *information about* God, like the Hindu almanac which forecasts the rainfall of the year, but which will not yield a single drop of water if one squeezes it! The Vedas themselves speak of further steps, besides study and hearing (*śravaṇa*), for the realization of the Ātman; these are *manana*, rational understanding, *nididhyāsana*, deep meditation. We need scriptural study which enlightens us with the experiences and teachings of those who have traversed the path to God; we need sharp intelligence to grasp correctly what we study and observe; we need to hear about the Ātman and the higher life. But these are not enough; we need to apply our reason to sift what we have gathered from study and hearing; and, finally, we have to concentrate on the truth of the Ātman and dwell on it in deep meditation.

It is generally held that these varied processes constitute man's spiritual journey leading to realization of the Ātman. But, says Yama, they do not constitute the whole truth of the matter. The Ātman is not an object among objects, an item of the world of the not-self, to be discovered by carefully worked-out means. *It is the very Self of the seeker.* As the spiritual Infinite, it is not the sum of finite entities; as the Absolute, it is not the end product of the causal determination of means and ends: *nāsti akṛtaḥ kṛtena* —'the unconditioned cannot be had through the conditioned', as the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* expresses it (I.2.12.), commenting on which Śaṅkara says:

*Iha saṁsāre nāsti kaścidapi akṛtaḥ padārthaḥ; sarva eva hi lokāḥ karmacitāḥ; karmacitatvāt ca anityāḥ....Ahaṁ ca nityena amṛtena abhayena kūṭasthena acalena dhruveṇa arthena arthī, na tadviparītena—*

'In this world, there is no entity which is not subject to cause; all the worlds (terrestrial or celestial) are the products of action (of forces); and because they are products of action, they are non-eternal....What I seek, however, is the eternal, the immortal, the fearless, the changeless, the immovable, and the constant; and not what is contrary to these.'

If so much meditation, or so much other spiritual practices become the cause of the realization of the Ātman, then the Ātman becomes reduced to being an effect—relative and finite—and, therefore, non-eternal. Can a finite lamp of knowledge or awareness illumine the infinite light of knowledge or awareness? Can a torch, however big in size and however powerful, help to illumine the sun? On the contrary, it is the sun that illumines and overwhelms the torch itself; the light of the torch is but a finite expression of the comparatively infinite light of the sun. Similarly, far from the mind in meditation, however deep and profound it be, illumining or revealing the Ātman, it is the Ātman that overpowers the puny light of the mind and illumines it through and through. For the Ātman, according to the Upaniṣads, is of the nature of pure Awareness, infinite and undecaying. All the Upaniṣads ecstatically sing in chorus this characteristic of the Ātman. In this very *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, we have in verse fifteen of chapter five, which we shall study in due course, such a sublime piece of music:

*Na tatra sūryo bhāti na candra tārakam*
*nemā vidyuto bhānti kuto'yamagniḥ;*
*Tameva bhāntam anubhāti sarvam*
*tasya bhāsā sarvamidaṁ vibhāti—*

'There (in the Ātman) the sun does not shine, nor the moon, nor the stars, nor these lightnings; much less this (terrestrial) fire. When That shines, everything shines after That. By Its Light, all this (universe) is lighted.'

If such is the nature of the Ātman, it is preposterous for the human mind to hold that its realization is effected through a series of spiritual practices. After saying this, Yama therefore adds: *yamevaiṣa vṛṇute tena labhyaḥ, tasyaiṣa ātmā vivṛṇute tanūṁ svām* —'by him is It attained whom It chooses—to him this Ātman reveals Its own (true) form.'

This truth of the self-revelation of the Ātman becomes clear when we bear in mind two facts, namely, *the nature of the Ātman as pure Awareness, infinite and non-dual, and its being our very Self and not an external object or an extra-cosmic deity.* An extra-cosmic entity, however vast and lofty, can be known by our mind. But the Self, of the nature of awareness, cannot be known by the mind, because It is that in and through which the mind itself knows and functions. We have already seen, in our study of the

*Kena Upaniṣad*, that this subject forms the central theme of that Upaniṣad; we had read in its verse six of chapter one:

> *Yat manasā na manute yenāhuḥ mano matam;*
> *Tadeva brahma tvaṁ viddhi nedaṁ yadidam upāsate*—

'That which is not grasped by the mind, but which comprehends the mind itself, know That alone as Brahman, and not this which they worship here (as something objective).'

Clarifying this, Śaṅkara says in his comment on this verse:

*Antasthena caitanyajyotiṣā avabhāsitasya manaso mananasāmarthyam;...tasmāt tadeva manasaḥ ātmānaṁ pratyakcetayitāraṁ brahma viddhi*—

'The mind gets the power to think and know when it is illumined by the light of Consciousness or Awareness which is within itself. ...Therefore, know That alone to be Brahman which, as the source of consciousness within, is the Self of the mind.'

### *Grace versus Personal Effort*

The Upaniṣadic statement of the self-revelation of the Ātman is spiritually identical with the idea of divine grace upheld by religions centred in a personal God. Grace is unconditioned, whereas law and justice belong to the world of relativity. As the New Testament puts it (John, 1.17):

'For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.'

The subject of Divine self-revelation or grace *versus* personal effort is a standing problem in spiritual thought. It is an unresolved problem only in its intellectual formulation, as many such problems are; but it is resolved by spiritual life itself. Formulated by logic, it is an unresolvable contradiction like several others in the dictionary of philosophy. But the wisdom of life resolves every day many an unresolvable logical contradiction. The wisdom of lived spiritual life similarly resolves this contradiction between grace and personal effort. This wisdom finds embodiment in some of the luminous sayings of Sri Ramakrishna on the subject (*Sayings of Sri Ramakrishna*, p. 209):

'The wind of God's grace is incessantly blowing. Lazy sailors on the sea of life do not take advantage of it. But the active and the strong always keep the sails of their minds unfurled to catch the favourable wind and thus reach their destination very soon.

'You may try thousands of times, but nothing can be achieved

without God's grace. One cannot see God without His grace. Is it an easy thing to receive the grace of God? One must altogether renounce egotism; one cannot see God as long as one feels, "I am the doer". Suppose in a family a man has taken charge of the store-room; then if some one asks the master, "Sir, will you yourself kindly give me something from the store-room?" the master says to him: "There is already someone in the store-room. What can I do there?"

'God doesn't easily appear in the heart of a man who feels himself to be his own master. But God can be seen the moment His grace decends. He is the Sun of knowledge. One single ray of His has illumined the world with the light of knowledge. That is how we are able to see one another and acquire varied knowledge. One can see God only if He turns His light towards His own face.

'The police sergeant goes his rounds in the dark of night with a lantern in his hand. No one sees his face; but with the help of that light the sergeant sees everybody's face, and others, too, can see one another. If you want to see the sergeant, however, you must pray to him: "Sir, please turn the light on your own face. Let me see you." In the same way, one must pray to God: "O Lord, be gracious and turn the light of knowledge on Thyself that I may see Thy face".'

The idea of the self-revelation of God is a recurring theme in the writings of several mystics of the East and the West. Says John Ruysbroeck (*Selected Works of Jan Van Ruysbroeck*, John Watkins Edition, 1912, p. 48):

'God in the depths of us receives God who comes to us; it is God contemplating God.'

Jalāl-ud-dīn Rūmi conveys in a song the message which God sent to a devotee who began to doubt His existence, because he did not receive a clear answer to his prayers:

> Thy call 'Oh God' is my call 'I am here',
> Thy pain and praying, message mine so clear;
> And all thy strives to reach the ear of mine,
> That I am drawing thee, it is a sign.
> Thy love-woe is my grace. Why dost thou cry?
> Thy call 'Oh God' means hundred 'Here am I'.

Says Meister Eckhart:

'Suppose a man in hiding and he stirs, he shows his whereabouts thereby; and God does the same. No one could ever have found God; He gives Himself away.'

Sings a Sufi mystic (*Mantiqu't-Tair*, tr. by Fitzgerald):

All you have been, and seen, and done, and thought,
Not *you*, but I have seen and been and wrought....
Pilgrim, Pilgrimage and Road,
Was but Myself towards Myself, and your
Arrival but Myself at my own Door....
Come, you lost Atoms, to your Centre draw....
Rays that have wandered into Darkness wide,
Return, and back into your Sun subside.

*Man's Struggle to Become God-worthy*

Man may not realize God by his unaided efforts; but he has to struggle to become God-worthy. The final word may be grace; but he also has to do something from his side. This is essential, if he is to appreciate the ever-blowing wind of grace. Yama now proceeds to indicate in the next verse, verse twenty-four, what the aspirant has to do to become God-worthy:

*Nāvirato duścaritāt nāśānto nāsamāhitaḥ;*
*Nāśāntamānaso vāpi prajñānenainam āpnuyāt—*

No one who has not given up evil conduct, who is not self-restrained, who is not meditative, nor one who is unpacified in mind can attain This (Ātman), even though he has knowledge.'

A total discipline of the inner life, beginning with moral purity, is demanded of the student who is not content to know the Ātman intellectually, but seeks to realize It spiritually. Moral purity and discipline of the senses help to lead man into the stream of spirituality leading to the ocean of spiritual realization. All religions insist on inner purity as essential to God-realization. 'Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God', says Jesus (Matthew, 5.8). Discipline of the senses helps to calm the mind, for it is the clamour of the senses that distracts the mind and heart. Removal of the source of this distraction results in meditation, in which the mind, like the bee that has, after flying hither and thither, settled down on a flower and commenced to suck its honey, settles down on the Ātman and enjoys the bliss thereof. The mind is distracted not only by the clamour of the senses, but also by the clamour of the mind itself to enjoy the fruits of its calmness, says the verse: *aśāntamānaso*—'whose mind is not at rest'. *Samāhita citto'pi san samādhānaphalārthitvāt*—'Because his mind, though collected, is engaged in looking forward to the fruits of being so collected', comments Śaṅkara pointing out a subtle pitfall of the spiritual life, and adds, giving the positive trend of the verse:

*Yastu duścaritāt viratah, indriyalaulyācca, samāhitacittah, samādhānaphalādapi upāntamnasaśca, ācāryavān, prajñānena yathoktam ātmānam prāpnoti ityarthah—*

'The meaning is that he alone who has turned away from evil conduct, who has controlled the vagaries of his senses, who is of tranquil mind, whose mind is undisturbed even by the (thought of the) fruits of calmness, and who has a teacher (as guide), will attain the Ātman above described, through *prajñāna* or knowledge.'

*The Fruit of Spirituality Is Fearlessness*

Yama now refers, in verse twenty-five which concludes this second chapter, to the infinite expansion of consciousness that comes from the realization of the Ātman preceded by a total discipline of the inner life:

> *Yasya brahma ca kṣatram ca ubhe bhavata odanah;*
> *Mṛtyuryasyopasecanam ka itthā veda yatra sah—*

'Of whom, the *brahma* and the *kṣatra* are the food, and death but the pickle (to supplement it), His whereabout who, (being) thus, can know?'

How can the worldly man bereft of inner purity know the Ātman? He will not know even where to search for it, for infinite is the dimension of the Ātman. The verse expresses this idea through a homely illustration: *brahma* and *kṣatra* mean the spiritual and secular powers of the world, the Church and the State in modern terminology. Both together constitute a formidable force, from the human point of view. *At their best*, they educate and discipline man and lead him to the portals of Self-realization; *at their worst*, they suppress his spirit and twist and torture his personality. This is the anatomy of what the world calls power; the world bows to it, seeks benefits from it, dislikes it, fears it. But the world, blinded by worldliness, does not, cannot, know that this power points to a power greater than itself, namely, the power of God, of God in the heart of all men, nay, of all beings. This truth, however, is known to the unworldly, to the man of spiritual realization, in virtue of which he sheds all fear. The formidable force of Church and State cannot fail to recognize in him the manifestation of a power greater and more irresistible than themselves. This higher power is one that imparts strength to man and instals him in his true dignity and worth, unlike worldly power

which tends to reduce him to weakness and impotence. Illustrating this truth by an episode from ancient history (cf. R.C. Majumdar, *The Classical Accounts of India*, pp. 444-46), Swami Vivekananda says (*Complete Works*, Vol. III, Eighth Edition, pp. 237-38):

'Strength, strength is what the Upaniṣads preach to me from every page. This is the one great thing to remember; it has been the one great lesson I have been taught in my life; strength, it says, strength, O man, be not weak. Are there no human weaknesses?—says man. There are, say the Upaniṣads, but will more weakness heal them, would you try to wash dirt with dirt? Will sin cure sin, weakness cure weakness? Strength, O man, strength, say the Upaniṣads, stand up and be strong. Ay, it is the only literature in the world where you find the word *abhî*, "fearless", used again and again; in no other scripture in the world is this adjective applied either to God or to man. *Abhî*, fearless!

'And in my mind rises from the past the vision of the great Emperor of the West, Alexander the Great, and I see, as it were in a picture, the great monarch standing on the banks of the Indus, talking to one of our *sannyâsins* (monks) in the forest; the old man he was talking to, perhaps naked, stark naked, sitting upon a block of stone, and the Emperor, astonished at his wisdom, tempting him with gold and honour to come over to Greece. And this man smiles at his temptations and refuses; and then the Emperor standing on his authority as an Emperor says, "I will kill you if you do not come", and the man bursts into a laugh, and says: "You never told such a falsehood in your life, as you tell just now. Who can kill me? Me, you kill, Emperor of the material world! Never! For I am Spirit unborn and undecaying; never was I born and never do I die; I am the Infinite, the Omnipresent, the Omniscient; and *you* kill me, child that you are!" That is strength, that is strength!'

How to make man fearless is the one concern of the Upaniṣads —how to make him cease quaking before Church and State and the powers of nature, how to make these his servants and not his masters. Referring to this redemptive message of the Upaniṣads to all humanity, Swami Vivekananda continues (*ibid.*, p. 238):

'And the Upaniṣads are the great mine of strength. Therein lies strength enough to invigorate the whole world; the whole world can be vivified, made strong, energized through them. They will call with trumpet voice upon the weak, the miserable, and the downtrodden of all races, all creeds, and all sects, to stand on their feet and be free. Freedom, physical freedom, mental freedom, and spiritual freedom are the watchwords of the Upaniṣads.'

The power of God is the power of love. Love is more potent than hatred or fear; the Spirit is more powerful than the sword. This admission from a consummate wielder of the power of Church and State is what we get in Napoleon's reflections in St. Helena:

'There are in the world two powers—the sword and the Spirit. The Spirit has always vanquished the sword.

'Alexander, Caesar, Charlemagne, and I founded great empires. But upon what did the creations of our genius depend? Upon force. Jesus alone founded his empire upon love, and to this very day millions would die for him.'

The idea of the supreme Reality as *Sakti*, Power, occurs often in Vedāntic and other literatures of India. In this very Upaniṣad, Yama will be referring to it in the sixth chapter, the second and third verses of which read:

*Yadidaṁ kiñca jagat sarvaṁ prāṇa ejati niḥsṛtam;*
*Mahat bhayaṁ vajramudyataṁ;*
*ya etat viduḥ amṛtāste bhavanti—*

'Whatever there is in this whole manifested universe (is the product of and) vibrates within *Prāṇa* (Brahman). Like a raised thunderbolt (is Brahman), a great terror. Those who know It become immortal.'

*Bhayādasyāgnistapati bhayāttapati sūryaḥ;*
*Bhayādindraśca vāyuśca mṛtyurdhāvati pañcamaḥ—*

'From fear of Him the fire burns; from fear of Him shines the sun; from fear (of Him) Indra and Vāyu, and Death, the fifth, hasten (to perform their allotted functions).'

Here is presented Brahman as cosmic law, which not only the terrestrial but also the celestial powers obey without transgression.

We have also a reference to this aspect of the glory of Brahman in the *Mahānirvāṇa Tantra*. In one of its majestic hymns to Brahman, we read (III. 61):

*Bhayānāṁ bhayaṁ bhīṣaṇaṁ bhīṣaṇānām*
*gatiḥ prāṇināṁ pāvanaṁ pāvanānām;*
*Mahoccaiḥ padānāṁ niyantṛtvamekam*
*pareṣāṁ paraṁ rakṣakaṁ rakṣakānām—*

'(Thou art) the fear of all fears, the terror of all terrors, the refuge of all beings, the purifier of purifiers; Thou alone art the controller of those in high places; (Thou art) the highest of the high, the protector of all protectors.'

Man is subject to all sorts of fears. They subdue him and crush him; he is helpless against them. No worldly knowledge can ultimately save him from fear; when, with its help, he overcomes one fear, ten other fears arise in its place. Only spiritual

knowledge can render him absolutely fearless. Ordinary man does not know this—he does not know that in him is a power which is the power of all powers, his own Self, the infinite and immortal Ātman. It is *akutobhayam*—'the insurance against all fear', and *yat bibheti svayaṁ bhayam*—'It is the fear of fear itself', as the *Bhāgavata* aptly puts it (I.1.14).

This fearlessness is the fruit of the infinite expansion of consciousness. Then alone will death cease when we are one with existence itself. Then alone will ignorance cease when we are one with knowledge itself. Then alone will sorrows cease when we are one with bliss itself. The Self of man is infinite existence, infinite knowledge, and infinite bliss, according to Vedānta. Yama therefore rightly says, using a homely illustration, that *brahma* and *kṣatra* are but the 'food' of the Ātman; the Ātman 'eats' them and 'digests' them; and death, which is the terror of all, is only His pickle, adding to His zest in 'eating' the other two; so, it, i.e. death, is 'insufficient even as food'—*aśanatve api aparyāptaḥ*, comments Śaṅkara. Death, which eats up the whole universe, is but the sauce of the Ātman, enlivening His manifestation as the universe. Sings the *Ṛg-Veda* (X. 121.2):

> *Ya ātmadā baladā yasya viśva*
> *upāsate praśiṣaṁ yasya devāḥ;*
> *Yasya chāyā amṛtaṁ yasya mṛtyuḥ*
> *kasmai devāya haviṣā vidhema—*

'Unto Him who gives us our individuality, who gives us strength, whose commands all beings, together with the gods, obey, whose shadow is immortality as well as death, we offer our oblations.'

How can the puny mind of a worldly man understand even the whereabouts of the Ātman, his own infinite Self? How can he, much less, realize this Reality which 'eats' and 'digests' the whole world of phenomena? asks Yama. His teaching in chapter three which follows, and which we shall study next, is meant to lead man to this understanding and realization.

TWENTY TWO

# KAṬHA UPANIṢAD—11

In the last discourse, dealing with the concluding verses of the second chapter of the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, we heard Yama expounding to Naciketā the nature of the Ātman and the way to its realization. The exposition ended with the note of fearlessness as the fruit of that realization. In the third chapter, into the study of which we enter today, we are presented with further insights into the nature of our spiritual journey and the concern that the Vedāntic teacher feels for his student's spiritual welfare. In verses one and two, Yama says:

*Ṛtaṁ pibantau sukṛtasya loke*
*guhāṁ praviṣṭau parame parārdhe;*
*Chāyātapau brahmavido vadanti*
*pañcāgnayo ye ca triṇāciketāḥ—*

'Two there are who dwell within the body, in the supreme cavity of the *buddhi* (intelligence), enjoying the sure rewards of their good (and bad) deeds. The knowers of Brahman, as also those householders who have performed thrice the *Nāciketā* sacrifice, describe them as shade and light.'

*Yaḥ seturījānānām*
*akṣaraṁ brahma yat param;*
*Abhayaṁ titīrṣatāṁ pāram*
*nāciketaṁ śakemahi—*

'We are capable of performing the *Nāciketā* sacrifice which is the bridge (to heaven) for the sacrificers, and (we are also capable of knowing) the imperishable Brahman the Supreme which is sought by those who wish to cross over to the shore of fearlessness.'

### *The Kingdom of Heaven Is within You*

It is a favourite theme with the Upaniṣads and other books of the Vedāntic literature that the highest truth is within us. In the first verse, Yama refers to the *buddhi* or intelligence of man as a cave in which are the finite self of man—the *jīva* or soul—and the infinite Self of the universe—the Ātman or Brahman. These two are described as *chāya* and *ātapa*, shade and light, respectively. Brahman is the light of all lights, and the *jīva* or finite soul is Its reflection in the *buddhi* or intelligence. Brahman, being the all

and present everywhere, has no journey to perform. But the finite *jīva* has a journey to perform, the journey towards fulfilment, the journey to the infinite, which takes him through the discipline of actions which produce their fruits invariably. The verse, however, attributes such a journey to Brahman also, since it refers to the two—*jīva* and Brahman—as enjoying the reward of good and bad deeds by using the verb *pibantau*—enjoy—in the dual number. This is just a figure of speech, says Śaṅkara in his comment on the verse. It is due to the fact that Brahman also abides in man and is associated with his soul.

The Upaniṣads describe this association variously; this verse speaks of it as *chāyātapau*—'shade and light'. The *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* (III. I. 1) speaks of it as *sayujā sakhāyā*, 'ever together in friendship'. The two are present in the *buddhi* or intelligence of man, which is referred to as a *guha*, cave, in view of its depth and inaccessibility; this intelligence is designated as *parame parārdhe*—'the supreme abode of the Highest (Brahman)'; *tasmin hi paraṁ brahma upalabhyate*—'it is verily there (in the intelligence) that the supreme Brahman is experienced', comments Śaṅkara. This truth is known not only to the knowers of Brahman, the philosophers, but also to the householders who are *pañcāgnayaḥ* —those who are given to the performance of five ritual sacrifices.

Yama speaks of himself in verse two as capable of following the direct spiritual path indicated by the knowledge of Brahman, as well as the spiritual path through the worldly experience of profit and pleasure indicated by sacrificial ritual. By the latter, man crosses over, as in the case of a *setu* or bridge, to the external security of heaven. By the former, he crosses the ocean of fear, which is life in this world or in a world of heaven; he crosses over to the other shore of fearlessness through realization of Brahman, his true Self.

### *Life Is a Journey to Fulfilment*

Like Yama, every man is entitled to follow either of these two paths. Life is a journey to fulfilment. The attainment of fulfilment, however, will depend upon the path that man takes. The path of profit and pleasure, earthly or heavenly, the way of *preyas*, as we have seen while discussing the opening verses of the second chapter, can never lead to true fulfilment; though involving much action and movement, and capable of yielding gross or refined

sensate satisfactions, it is repetitive, but not creative; it tends only to increase of tension, sorrow, and fear. The Upaniṣads treat this path as unworthy of man. The path of knowledge and illumination, the way of *śreyas*, on the other hand, offers the supreme opportunity for man. And this path also, like the other path, lies through life itself, and not outside of it; it lies through life's struggles for profit and pleasure, knowledge and virtue, and through its ups and downs of joy and sorrow, victory and defeat, and all such dual throng. Guided by discrimination and detachment, life forges ahead in this path to achieve fulfilment in character and vision. Such a life alone is creative, unlike the life of mere profit and pleasure which, as we have seen, is only repetitive and stagnant.

### *The Imagery of the Chariot*

Yama now proceeds, in verses three to nine of this chapter, chapter three, to expound to Naciketā the nature of this heroic journey to the summit of character and vision through the field of life and action; in verses three and four, he first speaks of the wonderful equipments for life's journey that every human being is provided with:

> *Ātmānaṁ rathinaṁ viddhi śarīraṁ rathameva tu;*
> *Buddhiṁ tu sārathiṁ viddhi manaḥ pragrahameva ca—*

'Know the Ātman as the master within the chariot, and the body, verily, as the chariot; know the *buddhi* (intelligence) as the charioteer, and the *manas* (insipient mind), verily, as the reins.'

> *Indriyāṇi hayānāhuḥ viṣayān teṣu gocarān;*
> *Ātmendriyamanoyuktaṁ bhoktetyāhurmanīṣiṇaḥ—*

'The sense-organs, they say, are the horses, and the roads for them are the sense-objects. The wise call Him (the Ātman) the enjoyer or experiencer (when He is) united with the body, senses, and mind.'

Yama here views the human personality, consisting of the body, the sense-organs, mind, intellect, and the soul, in the light of the mighty evolutionary movement of nature; and he employs a beautiful imagery—the imagery of the chariot—to illustrate his teaching about the evolutionary advance at the human level. This imagery was later used by Plato also. Says he in 'Phaedrus' (*Dialogues of Plato*, Vol. III, p. 153, Jowett's Edition):

'To show her (soul's) true nature would be a theme of large and more than mortal discourse, but an image of it may be given in a briefer discourse within the scope of man; in this way, then, let us speak. Let the soul be compared to a pair of winged horses and charioteer joined in natural union. Now the horses and the charioteers of the gods are all of them noble and of noble descent, but those of other races are mixed. First, you must know that the human charioteer drives a pair; and next, that one of his horses is noble and of noble breed, and the other is ignoble and of ignoble breed; so that the management of the human chariot cannot but be a difficult and anxious task.'

Consider the human body as a chariot, says Yama. The very idea of the chariot, with its wheels, suggests journey; a chariot is not meant to be kept stationary in a shed, but to be put on the road. But the chariot has no motive power in itself; neither has the human body. The chariot gets its motive power from the horses yoked to it. Similarly, the body gets its motive power from the sense-organs consisting of the nervous system and the brain.

The organs of perception and the organs of action convert the animal body into a centre of the most dynamic activity in nature. But at the level of the senses themselves, this activity is mostly unco-ordinated and, therefore, not fit for purposes beyond mere organic survival. This co-ordination is found in man in a new faculty of what modern neurologists call 'imagination' or insipient mentality (Grey Walter, *The Living Brain*, p. 2). This is termed *manas* in Sanskrit; it is defined as *saṁkalpavikalpātmika*, 'consisting of an attitude of may be and may not be'; Swami Vivekananda accordingly translates *manas* as 'mind indicisive'. Indian thought treats it in its raw state as on a level with the five sense-organs of perception, and calls it the sixth sense-organ. In the imagery of the chariot, the reins stand for this *manas*.

The reins involve the charioteer; they have no meaning except in the hands of an intelligent charioteer. In the absence of the charioteer, horses without reins make better sense than horses with reins. For the horses have their own journeys, which are just physical journeys in space and time, the objectives of which are survival and sensate satisfactions. But when yoked to a chariot and reined, their movements subserve the purposes of some one other than themselves. Similarly, the combination of body, sense-organs, and *manas* points to a reality beyond themselves, a reality which has the capacity to control and direct their movements, like the charioteer in the imagery. This is *buddhi* or *vijñāna*, reason

or enlightened intelligence. 'Know *buddhi* as the *sārathi* or charioteer', says the verse.

Even the charioteer, though necessary, is not sufficient; he points to a reality beyond himself, namely, the master of the chariot. The journey is ultimately his; the chariot, the horses, the reins, and the charioteer are only the instruments of his purposes. Similarly, the *buddhi* also points to a reality beyond itself. That reality is the Ātman, the Self of man. 'Know the Ātman as the master of the chariot', says the verse.

But this statement that the Ātman is the master of the chariot and, consequently, the master of the journey needs a qualification, thinks Yama. For the Ātman is ever perfect, ever free. He does not have anything to gain from a journey. Yet the journey is there; it is a fact of experience—this journey of life, this passage from unfulfilment to fulfilment. And there is also an experiencer, a subject of this journey. If the Ātman is not this subject, who else it may be? Yama answers: *Ātmendriyamanoyuktaṁ bhoktā ityāhuḥ manīṣiṇaḥ*—'The Ātman identifying Himself with the body, sense-organs, *manas* (and *buddhi*) is the enjoyer (experiencer of the journey), so say the wise.' The Ātman so conditioned is known as *jīva*, the equivalent of 'soul' of western thought. The *jīva* is a unique entity; Vedānta terms it variously: it is the *jīvātman*—'the individual self'; it is the *vijñānātman*—'Ātman identified with *buddhi*'; it is *cit-jaḍa-granthi*—'the knot of intelligence and non-intelligence', of spirit and matter. This condition explains its finitude, its limitation as an individual self. It also explains the rationale of its journey. A journey is a going out of oneself in search of fulfilment. In this case, however, it is a search for fulfilment by one who is essentially free and perfect, but who has forgotten this ever-present fact. This is the tragedy of human life. The journey at its best constitutes a necessary education for man for the re-acquisition of his spiritual awareness and freedom. The stark *fact* of felt bondage and unfulfilment against the ever-present *truth* of inborn freedom and perfection converts the human heart into a battle-field of forces, a veritable *Kuruksetra*, and makes the human being the only restless pilgrim in God's creation. It is this pilgrimage to which Yama introduces us in these two verses.

### *Two Types of Journey*

The finite soul, satisfied in its finiteness of being, and seeking ever-increasing sensate satisfactions in the wide world of the be-

coming, is also engaged in a journey; but that journey is a movement within finitude itself. It is, in effect, a mere circular journey, ending where one started from. This stagnation at the sensate level is known as *saṁsāra*, worldliness, which is characterized by much movement with little or no spiritual progress, and in which man experiences in invariable sequence the three 'e's of entertainment, excitement, and exhaustion. The Upanisads consider this as the spiritual death of man; and Yama will refer to it in the second verse of the fourth chapter of this Upaniṣad. But the journey which Yama is expounding in the present chapter is a journey which, though conducted in and through finitude, takes man out of its confines, and leads him to infinitude and universality. This is similar to what man experiences in the physical world. Man, moving on the roads of the earth in a vehicle, may experience freedom and delight compared to the stagnation of a stay-at-home man; he will experience greater freedom and delight if a rocket were to put his vehicle successfully in an orbiting motion round the earth. But that joy of movement will still be repetitive, and that freedom will still be restricted and controlled by the gravity of the earth. He will experience full freedom from earthly bonds only if a powerful rocket were to take him beyond the earth's gravitational field into a flight in free space. The criterion of man's spiritual progress is this steady expansion towards the freedom of universality; this is the sign of what Vedānta calls spiritual intelligence; stagnation at the sensate level, on the other hand, signifies spiritual unintelligence.

This is the fruit of materialism as a consistent life philosophy. Great thinkers have protested against it both in ancient and modern times. The views of Thomas Huxley, the eminent scientific thinker of the nineteenth century and collaborator of Darwin, and R.A. Millikan, the eminent astrophysicist of this century, which I quoted in an earlier lecture, can bear repetition in this context. Says Huxley. *(Methods and Results*, pp. 164-65):

'If we find that the ascertainment of the order of nature is facilitated by using one terminology, or one set of symbols, rather than another, it is our clear duty to use the former; and no harm can accrue, so long as we bear in mind that we are dealing merely with terms and symbols.

'But the man of science, who, forgetting the limits of philosophical inquiry, slides from these formulae and symbols into what is commonly understood by materialism, seems to me to place himself on a level with the mathematician who should mistake the

*x's* and *y's* with which he works his problems for real entities - and with this further disadvantage, as compared with the mathematician, that the blunders of the latter are of no practical consequence, *while the errors of systematic materialism may paralyse the energies and destroy the beauty of a life.*' (italics not author's)

Says astrophysicist R. A. Millikan (*Autobiography*, last chapter):

'My own personal testimony is that I do not see how there can be a sense of duty or any reason for altruistic conduct that is entirely divorced from the conviction that what we call goodness is somehow worthwhile and that there is Something in the universe which gives significance and meaning to existence. Call it value if you will, but surely there can be no sense of value in mere lumps of dead matter interacting according to purely mechanical laws. *To me, a purely materialistic philosophy is the height of unintelligence.*' (italics not author's)

This journey towards universality and fulfilment through the development of spiritual intelligence forms the theme of the next four verses, verses five to eight, of the third chapter of this Upaniṣad:

*Yastvavijñānavān bhavati ayuktena manasā sadā;*
*Tasyendriyāṇi avaśyāni duṣṭāśvā iva sāratheḥ—*

'He who is devoid of right understanding and with *manas* always undisciplined, his senses become uncontrolled like the bad (uncontrolled) horses of a charioteer.'

*Yastu vijñānavān bhavati yuktena manasā sadā;*
*Tasyendriyāṇi vaśyāni sadaśvā iva sāratheḥ—*

'But he who is possessed of right understanding and with *manas* always disciplined, his senses become controlled like the good (controlled) horses of a charioteer.'

*Yastu avijñānavān bhavati amanaskaḥ sadā aśuciḥ;*
*Na sa tat padam āpnoti saṁsāraṁ ca adhigacchati—*

'And he who is devoid of right understanding, with *manas* not held and always impure, never attains that goal, but gets into the round of worldliness.'

*Yastu vijñānavān bhavati samanaskaḥ sadā śuciḥ;*
*Sa tu tat padam āpnoti yasmāt bhūyo na jāyate—*

'But he who is possessed of right understanding, with *manas* held and ever pure, reaches that goal whence there is no birth (return to worldliness) again.'

chariot = Body
Horses = Sense organs
Reins = Manas or mind
charioteer = Intellect or Buddhi
Master of the chariot = Soul or Atman



### *The Meaning of the Chariot Imagery*

These four verses bring out the meaning of the chariot imagery. The phenomenal world itself is the road for the journey —*viṣayān teṣu gocarān*, says Yama. Vedānta summons us to play the game of life; neither the play nor its final fruit is a post-mortem venture; it is all *here* and *now*, as Yama will tell us emphatically later. The world of sight and sound, of touch and taste and smell, is the environment for the journey, but it is not a physical journey outward in space. It is a spiritual journey of inward penetration, a reaching out into the heart of things.

The horses provide the motive power of the journey; but they cannot be allowed to set the pace for the journey, lest it should turn out to be *their* journey, with the charioteer and the master of the chariot becoming just helpless victims. The reins are meant to prevent this; the more energetic the horses, the tougher the reins should be. But the reins can control the horses only when they are in the firm hands of the charioteer. One of the striking representations of Energy given by the world's artistic heritage has this very theme of a reckless horse under the control of an energetic rider. It is the charioteer that should set the pace of the journey, guided by the purposes and satisfactions of the master behind. For this the charioteer has to be possessed of *vijñāna*—right understanding. It is not safe to entrust one's journey to a drunken or emotionally unstable charioteer; that will be worse than entrusting the journey to the horses themselves. The reins should be tough; if they snap at the slightest pull, it will be disastrous. The chariot, the horses, the reins, the charioteer, and the master of the chariot, each of these plays a significant part in a journey. Each succeeding member of the team is to provide the motive force for each of its preceding member or members.

### *The Emancipation of Buddhi or Reason*

Similarly, life's journey, to be successful, needs the contribution of all the constituents of the personality: the body, the senses, the *manas*, the *buddhi*, and the Self; each of these plays a significant part in this journey. *But the most important thing is to ensure that the initiative and control pass from the senses to the buddhi through the manas.* This cannot happen unless the *buddhi* and the *manas* are trained and disciplined into their true forms. The true form of the *manas* is its pure state when it is aligned with *buddhi*,

and ceases to be a mere appendage of the senses; then alone it can stand the stress and strain involved in its unique situation, namely, between the two powerful and initially opposite forces of the senses and the *buddhi*. The true form of the *buddhi* is its pure state as Reason, when it is independent of the *manas* and sense-organs. It then reflects the pure light of awareness of the Ātman behind, the true Self, and becomes possessed of discrimination and sound judgement. The *buddhi*, under inebriation of any sort, be it through wine, or through wealth, power, knowledge, or pedigree, falls from its true form, and descends to the level of the senses. Free from these inebriations, it becomes luminous and calm, steady and sure. *Such a buddhi is the best guide in life's journey. It denotes the fusion of intelligence, imagination, and will in their purest forms. Its impact on life is irresistible as well as wholesome.*

When the senses dominate the journey, life remains at the gross worldly stage, at the near-animal level. The spirit is sold in the market-place of the flesh. Life's achievements are then measured in terms of mere titillations of the nerves and survival of the body.

When the *manas*, which is naturally volatile, dominates the journey, life experiences erratic movements and intense fluctuations between luminous inspirations and low depressions, between high moral and aesthetic levitations and low selfish and worldly gravitations.

When the *buddhi* dominates the journey, life rises to the steady ethical and spiritual levels, tastes true freedom and delight, and achieves fulfilment in universality through spiritual illumination.

Yama now sums up the theme in the next verse, verse nine, in a compressed statement of utmost significance:

> *Vijñāna sārathiryastu manaḥ pragrahavān naraḥ;*
> *So'dhvanaḥ pāramāpnoti tadviṣṇoḥ paramaṁ padam—*

'He who has *vijñāna*, *buddhi* or Reason, for his charioteer and a (disciplined) *manas* as the reins—he verily attains the end of the journey, that supreme state of Viṣṇu.'

Herein is expressed the central core of the chariot imagery. When the psycho-physical energy of man is directed by intelligence, something wonderful happens; every step of his life's journey is accompanied by a steady rise in the *quality* of his life energy. His

sensate life was largely governed by the physical criterion of *quantity*; the function of his intelligence at that stage was to be a high priest of his sensate nature. It was then cribbed, cabined, and confined in physical moulds, and functioned more as physical energy and as a tool of nature than in its true spiritual form. Even in this unfree state, its services to human life are not insignificant. Civilization, with its social order and sensate refinements, constitutes the best of its gifts. These very gifts suggest the possibility of still higher gifts lying dormant in its unplumbed depths, the stirring of which may help to release those higher gifts. *But this depends upon its functioning freely*; it must cease to be the tail-end of the senses; these latter are blind; their concern is with survival and self-preservation. Intelligence, though luminous, is rendered largely blind when functioning as the servant of the senses, as the tool of nature; its own contributions, far higher than mere survival or self-preservation, are stifled. Both Vedānta and modern biology agree that the aim of human life is not mere physical survival. Says Julian Huxley (*Evolution after Darwin*, Vol. I, p. 20):

'In the light of our present knowledge, man's most comprehensive aim is seen not as mere survival, not as numerical increase, not as increased complexity of organization or increased control over his environment, but as greater fulfilment—the fuller realization of more possibilities by the human species collectively and more of its component members individually.'

The freeing of intelligence from thraldom to the senses and from the service of mere physical survival was achieved by nature in a small measure even in the pre-human stage. To quote neurologist Grey Walter (*The Living Brain*, p. 16):

'The acquisition of internal temperature control, thermostasis, was a supreme event in neural, indeed in all natural history. It made possible the survival of mammals on a cooling globe. That was its general importance in evolution. Its particular importance was that it completed, in one section of the brain, an automatic system of stabilization for the vital functions of the organism—a condition known as homeostasis. With this arrangement, other parts of the brain are left free for functions not immediately related to the vital engine or the senses, for functions surpassing the wonders of homeostasis itself.

'The matter is epitomized in a famous saying of the French physiologist, Claude Bernard: *La fixite du milieu interieur est la condition de la vie libre* ("a fixed interior *milieu* is the condition for the free life").'

### *Life under the Guidance of Buddhi*

This liberation of intelligence on the part of man is fraught with tremendous consequences for him and his civilization. It will ensure what Julian Huxley calls the enthroning of quality over quantity in the evolutionary process. It will see man surpassing himself through a reaching out to transcendental levels of existence. The glory of the infinite and the universal will shine through the finite and the trivial. Every step in the freeing of intelligence marks an advance in the spiritual journey of man, the end of which is universality, or, as Yama expresses it: *tat viṣṇoḥ paramaṁ padam*—'the supreme state of Viṣṇu'. This is the state of universality of being. Says Śaṅkara in his comment on this verse:

*Vyāpanaśīlasya brahmaṇaḥ paramātmano vāsudevākhyasya paramaṁ prakṛṣṭaṁ paraṁ sthānaṁ satattvam ityetat, yat asau āpnoti vidvān—*

'He, the wise one, attains the supreme, that is, excellent or high, state of the all-pervading Brahman, the Reality in all, which, as the supreme Self (of the universe), is designated as Vāsudeva.'

Buddhism also employs the wheel and chariot imagery to illumine its presentation of man's spiritual journey. Sings Buddha (*The Book of the Kindred Saying* [*Saṁyukta-Nikāya*], Part I, I. V. 6; Pali Text Society Edition):

> 'Straight' is the name that Road is called,
> And 'Free from Fear' the Quarter whither thou art bound.
> Thy Chariot is the 'Silent Runner' named,
> With Wheels of Righteous Effort fitted well.
> Conscience the Leaning-board; the Drapery
> Is Heedfulness; the Driver is the Norm (*Dharma*),
> I say, and Right Views, they that run before.
> And be it woman, be it man for whom
> Such chariot doth wait, by that same car
> Into *Nibbāṇa's* (Emancipation's) presence shall they come.

### *Life Itself Is Religion*

This chariot imagery brings before us the vision of life as continuous education, as a dynamic creative movement towards complete life fulfilment. In its light, we see evolution at the human level as a striving for the liberation of spiritual values; life itself becomes a unitive process of education and religion; it is a total educational process, of which the secular and the sacred become

the earlier and the later phases of a single movement. No more is spirit at loggerheads with matter, nor soul in eternal conflict with the body. The human personality, with its constituent elements of the body, the sense-organs, the *manas*, the *buddhi*, and the Self, is the finest contrivance that nature has evolved for the exploration not only into her world of facts, but also into her world of values, into the world of truth, goodness, and beauty. The privilege of being a human being is accordingly highly praised in Indian literature. This unique privilege has a double reference, namely, exploration and control of the outer world, namely, the world of fact, and exploration and control of the inner world, namely, the world of meaning and value. Modern man has unique achievements to his credit in the former. Today, however, his supreme opportunity lies in the latter. In the words of astrophysicist R. A. Millikan which, though quoted before, bears reproduction in this context (*Autobiography*, last chapter):

'It seems to me that the two great pillars upon which all human well-being and human progress rest are, first, the spirit of religion, and second, the spirit of science—or knowledge. Neither can attain its largest effectiveness without support from the other. To promote the latter, we have universities and research institutions. *But the supreme opportunity for everyone with no exception lies in the first.*' (italics not author's)

*Human Life: Its Uniqueness*

This is what the Vedāntic thinkers have been emphasizing ever since the time of the Upaniṣads. The privilege of being a member of the species called *Homo sapiens* can lead man to life fulfilment only if it is sustained by another privilege, namely, the striving for knowledge and the urge for spiritual freedom. *Homo sapiens* is a single species, the only inter-breeding species in nature. The privilege of one, therefore, is the privilege of all. Every member of the human species is equipped by nature for the exploration of both the outer and the inner worlds.

If, in spite of adequate equipments, we do not advance on the path to fulfilment or reach the end of the journey, we have to conclude that we have not either taken proper care of the equipments or used them properly. The understanding of the technical know-how in this pervasive field is much more important than in the restricted fields of economic or social productivity. Hence the Vedāntic thinkers speak of a third privilege to sustain and nourish the other two, namely, the guidance of a competent teacher. Nature

is a total *terra incognita* to a new-born infant. Its exploration of external nature begins with the help of its mother and father, teachers and elders; it advances with the further help it receives from its professors and research directors, and, eventually, by the aid of its own scientifically disciplined mind. All help from external teachers is meant to awaken the teacher that is ever within, says Vedānta. At the higher stages of all education, the mind itself becomes one's *guru*, says Sri Ramakrishna. If the external world was *terra incognita* to the child, needing guidance from an array of teachers for its exploration, the inner world is more so, not only to the child, but also to the adults. To enter on its exploration, they have to fortify themselves with a new humility and start as children with the freshness and curiosity of children. Before the great mystery of the inner life, man, be he a scientist or a scholar, a top executive or a millionaire, is but a child. Sings Tennyson expressing this chastened mood (*In Memoriam*, LIV):

> ...but what am I?
> An infant crying in the night;
> An infant crying for the light;
> And with no language but a cry.

*Sanity in Spiritual Life*

All productive activity depends upon the proper use of the tools and equipments, which, in turn, depends upon the mastery of their technical know-how. In the chariot imagery, the Upaniṣad stresses this point as applied to the field of the science of spirituality. Though our central concern in this science is with the *buddhi*, yet we are asked not to ignore the other three factors, namely, the body, the sense-organs, and the *manas*. These have to be kept in health and vigour. Their fitness is imperilled as much by senseless austerity as by foolish indulgence. We have seen, while studying the first chapter of this Upaniṣad, that Naciketā had rejected the latter on precisely this ground, namely, that it 'destroys the vigour of the sense-organs': *sarvendriyāṇāṁ jarayanti tejaḥ*. Buddha had similarly rejected the path of senseless austerity after trying it for six vain years. He then chose and followed the middle path and attained enlightenment. Afterwards, he powerfully advocated this path of sanity in spiritual life. Addressing his first disciples at Sārnāth, near Vārāṇasi,

Buddha said in his very first discourse after enlightenment (*Vinaya piṭaka, Mahāvagga*, Abridged, I. VI. 17):

'These two extremes, monks, are not to be approached by him who has renounced the world. Which two? On the one hand, that which is linked and connected with lust through sensuous pleasures, and is low, ignorant, vulgar, ignoble, and profitless; and on the other hand, that which is connected with self-mortification, and is painful, ignoble, and profitless. Avoiding both these extremes, monks, there is the middle road, which brings realization and knowledge, and leads to tranquillity, wisdom, full enlightenment, and peace.'

The *Gītā* also similarly advocates the middle path (VI. 16-17):

*Nātyaśnatastu yogosti na caikāntam anaśnataḥ;*
*Na cātisvapnaśīlasya jāgrato naivacārjuna—*

'*Yoga*, verily, is not for him who over-eats, nor for him who over-fasts, nor also for him who over-sleeps, nor also for him who over-wakes.'

*Yuktāhāravihārasya yuktaceṣṭasya karmasu;*
*Yuktasvapnāvabodhasya yogo bhavati duḥkhahā—*

'To him who is moderate in eating and recreation, who is moderate in the performance of actions, who is moderate in sleeping and waking, *yoga* becomes a destroyer of misery.'

Kālidāsa, the great poet of classical Sanskrit literature, after arguing for moderation in physical austerity, sums up the Indian wisdom on the subject in a pithy utterance (*Kumārasambhavam*, V. 33):

*Śarīram ādyam khalu dharmasādhanam*—'The body, verily, is the primary means to the higher life:'

### *Freedom Is the Birthright of All*

By proper discipline of the body, the sense-organs, and the *manas*, the *buddhi* becomes pure, free, and luminous. It then becomes capable of realizing the infinite dimension of the Ātman, of that Reality which presents itself in experience as the self of man. Man in his spiritual blindness has been identifying this self of his with the undoubtedly finite and perishable constituents of his personality, such as the body, the sense-organs, the *manas*, and the ego, separately or in combination. This had confined him to the bondage of finitude, with which, however, he had never been reconciled. Something within him had always told him, loudly or in whispers, that freedom was his birthright, that bondage was but

a fall from grace. He had accordingly been lured by the scent of freedom. This lure had made him restless and peaceless, ever seeking, ever converting every achievement into a springboard for something higher, a pilgrim ever on the move, even though he was hardly aware of his final destination. In the course of his long pilgrimage, he had achieved knowledge and virtue, civilization and culture; it had also given him an ever-expansive view of his own self. All these achievements, however, belonged to the world of time, to the sphere of becoming, to the field of relativity, where freedom was still conditioned and challenged by the brute fact of death. Freedom can never be sure of itself—it ever stands imperilled—in the world of becoming, in the region of cause and effect determinism; it is only in the world of Being that freedom can find its sure and steady form. Says Swami Vivekananda ('Inspired Talks', *Complete Works*, Vol. VII, Fifth Edition, pp. 52-53):

'No law can make you free; you *are* free. Nothing can give you freedom, if you have it not already. The Ātman is self-illumined. Cause and effect do not reach there, and this disembodiedness is freedom. Beyond what was, or is, or is to be, is Brahman. As an effect, freedom would have no value; it would be a compound, and as such would contain the seeds of bondage. It is the one real factor, not to be attained, but the real nature of the soul.'

This knowledge and this conviction help man to invest his search for freedom with a new spiritual urgency, and orient it from the outer to the inner world; it becomes transformed into a search for his true Self, a search conducted, however, in the very context of his life and action. It is specifically this inward journey, and its happy consummation in fullness of freedom through infinitude of being, that Yama has delineated in verse nine:

'He who has *vijñāna*—enlightened intelligence—for his charioteer, and *manas* for the (tough and well-controlled) reins, he reaches the successful end of the journey—the supreme achievement of universality of being.'

Swami Vivekananda brings out the significance of this chariot imagery for the elucidation of the spiritual pilgrimage of man in a marvellous passage of his lecture on 'The Real Nature of Man'. Though partially quoted in an earlier lecture dealing with verses ten and eleven of the second chapter of this Upaniṣad, it can bear full reproduction in the present context. Says he (*Complete Works*, Vol. II, pp. 81-82):

Evolution is not in the spirit. These changes which are going on—the wicked becoming good, the animal becoming man, take them in whatever way you like—are not in the spirit. They are evolution of nature and manifestation of spirit. Suppose there is a screen hiding you from me, in which there is a small hole through which I can see some of the faces before me, just a few faces. Now suppose the hole begins to grow larger and larger, and as it does so, more and more of the scene before me reveals itself, and when at last the whole screen has disappeared, I stand face to face with you all. You did not change at all in this case; it was the hole that was evolving, and you were gradually manifesting yourselves. So it is with the spirit. No perfection is going to be attained. You are already free and perfect.

'What are these ideas of religion and God and searching for the hereafter? Why does man look for a God? Why does man, in every nation, in every state of society, want a perfect ideal somewhere, either in man, in God, or elsewhere? Because that is within you. It was your own heart beating, and you did not know; you were mistaking it for something external. It is the God within your own self that is propelling you to seek for Him, to realize Him.

'After long searches here and there, in temples and in churches, in earths and in heavens, at last you come back, completing the circle from where you started, to your own soul, and find that He, for whom you have been seeking all over the world, for whom you have been weeping and praying in churches and temples, on whom you were looking as the mystery of all mysteries shrouded in the clouds, is nearest of the near, is your own Self, the reality of your life, body, and soul. That is your own nature. Assert it, manifest it. Not to *become* pure, you *are* pure already. You are not to be perfect, you are that already. Nature is like that screen which is hiding the reality beyond. Every good thought that you think or act upon is simply tearing the veil, as it were; and the purity, the infinity, the God behind, manifests itself more and more.

'This is the whole history of man.'

The sages of the Upaniṣads realized the infinite and immortal Ātman as the true Self of man. Therein alone is true life for him. And the Upaniṣads are never tired of holding up before man this high and true destiny of his and providing him with the ethical and spiritual stimulus for its realization. This forms the theme of the remaining eight verses of this chapter, which we shall study in our next two lectures.

TWENTY THREE

# KAṬHA UPANIṢAD– 12

In the last discourse, we heard the Upaniṣad expounding to us, with the aid of the chariot imagery, the ever-fascinating theme of man's journey to truth and fulfilment. The Upaniṣad is now going to tell us something more about this journey. This chapter of the Upaniṣad, the third, is unique for the practical bent in its teaching. In all the Upaniṣads, generally, what we get is pure idea, the statement of lofty truths as attained facts. It is not that they are merely *theoretical* as opposed to *practical*; they are not theoretical in this sense, for the truths expounded are drawn from experience and not derived from intellectual cogitations. But the Upaniṣads, while conveying the highest truths, expect the listeners to grasp them straightaway, since such listeners were constituted of a select group of qualified students. The struggle to grasp and realize the truths becomes reduced to a minimum when both the teacher and his students are competent; and competency in the case of spiritual truths always involves purity of heart apart from clarity of intellect. In such cases, the imparting of even the highest spiritual truths does not need the help of much practical demonstration. The sages and their pupils move, as it were, on air so thin and rare as to leave hardly any visible footprints.

### *Light on the Path*

But in this chapter of the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, as also in parts of the *Chāndogya* and *Taittirīya* Upaniṣads, they have left some footprints for the benefit of the less gifted; they have deigned to come down to the level of struggling humanity and thrown some light not only on the goal, which they have always done, but also on the path. We mark this note of concern for the struggling seeker in the verses we studied in the last lecture; we shall come across this mood, with its touch of compassion for man yearning for the light of truth, with its word of cheer and hope for the pilgrim braving mountain-high obstacles on his path, in some of the verses to follow.

Generally speaking, the body of spiritual insights of the Upaniṣads constituting Vedānta is like a lofty monument; it is intellectually impressive and spiritually alluring; and we feel tempted to reach the heights; but on going closer, we soon realize

that neither have they provided it with steps from the ground to the crest of the edifice, nor have we been provided with wings to fly to the crest. Vedānta speaks of dispassion and spiritual awareness, *vairāgya* and *bodha*, as the two wings with which man can fly to the crest, steps or no steps. Sings Śaṅkara in his immortal *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi* or the *Crest-jewel of Discrimination* (Verse 374):

*Vairāgyabodhau puruṣasya pakṣivat*
*pakṣau vijānīhi vicakṣaṇa tvam;*
*Vimuktisaudhāgratalādhirohaṇam*
*tābhyām vinā nānyatareṇa siddhyati—*

'Know, O wise one, that, for man, dispassion and spiritual awareness are like the two wings of a bird. Unless both are there none can, with the help of either one, reach Liberation that grows like a creeper, as it were, on the crest of an edifice.'

But how few have developed these sturdy wings of blessedness! For the rest, it is only wonder and admiration from a distance; or, as has sometimes happened, mere external imitation of the 'winged' ones, ending in spiritual disaster through delusive compromise. Steps are necessary, and even wayside resting places at intervals, so that spiritually inclined men and women, with ordinary moral and spiritual gifts, may venture on this journey to life-fulfilment with some hope of eventual success. This is the service that the mighty edifice of Vedānta received from some of the later spiritual teachers, and more especially, from Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the teacher of the *Gītā*.

### *The Need for Inner Penetration*

The spiritual journey, as we have already seen, is essentially an interior journey, and not an outer journey in space.

Man's physical and social life, which relates him to the external world and its events, provides just the setting for his true evolution, which is growth in moral and spiritual awareness. Man as a product of nature's evolution is a unique specimen of that evolution, holding the key to the mystery of nature, to the purpose of evolution, and to the meaning of all existence. His psycho-physical system is a miniature universe in itself; the immensity of its interior dimension is hidden and obscured by the smallness of its external physical covering or *kośa* (sheath), as Vedānta terms it. The body and the environing world constitute the gross outer fringes of reality; this is reality as revealed by the sense-organs. As we

penetrate into the interior, we come across subtler and, accordingly, more immense aspects of reality; these are revealed only by the mind. With the advance of knowledge, the conviction is borne in upon us that, if ever there is an eternal, changeless, and, accordingly, infinite dimension to reality, it must lie in the centre of consciousness; the discovery of such a centre depends on a mighty effort of inner penetration, which will also reveal the nature of the various layers or sheaths covering reality. This is what the sages did; and this is what the Upaniṣads convey to us in words which bear the stamp of authentic experience.

*Vedānta on the Inner Layers of the Universe*

Introducing verses ten and eleven of the third chapter of the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, which form a single theme and which we shall study today, Śaṅkara says in his commentary:

*Adhunā, yat padaṁ gantavyaṁ tasya indriyāṇi sthūlānyārabhya sūkṣmatāratamyakrameṇa pratyagātmatayā adhigamaḥ kartavyaḥ, ityevamartham idam ārabhyate—*

'Now, that state, which is to be attained (through the spiritual journey), a journey which begins with the sense-organs which are gross. and proceeds through comparatively subtler and subtler aspects—that state is to be realized as the *pratyagātman*, the inner Self. In order to convey this truth, the Upaniṣad proceeds as follows.'

Verses ten and eleven, which tell us of the landmarks on the journey to the Self, read thus:

> *Indriyebhyaḥ parā hyarthā arthebhyaśca paraṁ manaḥ;*
> *Manasastu parā buddhiḥ buddherātmā mahān paraḥ—*

'The sense-objects are higher than the sense-organs; the *manas* is higher than the objects; the *buddhi* is higher than the *manas*; the *mahān ātmā* (great self) is higher than the *buddhi*.'

> *Mahataḥ param avyaktam avyaktāt puruṣaḥ paraḥ;*
> *Puruṣāt na paraṁ kiñcit sā kāṣṭhā sā parā gatiḥ—*

'The *avyakta* (undifferentiated nature) is higher than the *mahat* (*mahān ātmā*); the Puruṣa (the infinite Self) is higher than the *avyakta*. There is nothing higher than the Puruṣa; that is the finale, that is the supreme goal.'

The term '*artha*' appearing in the first verse means sense-objects; here it means, however, not the objects visible to the eye,

but their nuclear dimension, the *tanmātra*, as Sāṅkhya and Vedānta term it, which is the cause of both the sense-organs and the sense-objects. In this sense, the objects are higher than the sense-organs; 'higher' in this context means, in the words of Śaṅkara, *sūkṣmāḥ, mahāntaśca, pratyagātmabhūtāśca*—'subtle, immense, and of the nature of the inner Self.' A scientific study of experience reveals its deeper and deeper layers; the three criteria of such depth, as given by Śaṅkara in the passage quoted above, are subtlety, immensity, and inwardness. Each succeeding layer is the self of the preceding one, and fills it as well as transcends it. All objects of experience, subtle or gross, are limited by space, conditioned by time, and constantly under the pressure of causality. The material objects of daily experience, according to this criterion, are the lowest in the order of reality, because they are most gross, most finite, and most external. The sense-organs are superior to them, being subtler, more immense, and more inward. Yama, however, begins his scale of evaluation not with the external objects, but with the sense-organs. The objects or *tanmātras* are higher than the organs. The *manas* is higher than the objects as also the organs. As the sixth sense, in the terminology of both Vedānta and modern scientific thought, and being subtler, more immense, and more inward, *manas* co-ordinates the activities of the five sense-organs and the movements of the *tanmātras*. The *manas* in man is only a fraction of the psychical face of the universe. Higher than the *manas* is *buddhi*, intellect or reason; it controls and regulates the *manas* and the sense-organs. The *buddhi* in man is not all the *buddhi* that is in the universe; it is only a fraction of that cosmic *buddhi* which is termed *mahān ātmā* in the verse. This *mahān ātmā* or *mahat* is higher than *buddhi*, says Yama; as the cosmic mind, it is subtler, more immense, and more inward than all the rest.

### *Modern Science on the Inner Layers of the Universe*

Vedānta and Sāṅkhya reduce the universe of objects and events, external and internal, to consciousness. This is the *mahān ātmā* or *mahat*, which is the totality of the mind and matter in the manifested universe in their subtlest form. When knowledge penetrates the universe to its depth, it reveals itself as consisting of nothing but an ocean of awareness or consciousness. Knowledge and the object of knowledge, which began as the two poles of experience at the commencement of the knowing process, in-

creasingly shed their antithetical nature as knowledge advances beyond the sensory level, and get resolved into an ocean of awareness. This is also the conclusion to which some of the outstanding representatives of modern physics have come.

This ocean of awareness, this cosmic mind, is what is designated by the term *mahat*. Modern biology discovers the presence of mind in nature through the evidence of its presence in one of nature's evolutionary products, namely, man. Sensing a fundamental unity between the physical energies of the external universe and the spiritual energies within man, the late Palaeontologist Teilhard de Chardin characterizes them as the *tangential* and the *radial* forms, respectively, of one and the same energy. Says he (*The Phenomenon of Man*, p. 63):

'Since the inner face of the world is manifest at the very base of our human understanding, and there reflects upon itself, it would seem that we have only got to look at ourselves in order to understand the dynamic relationships existing between the *within* and *without* of things at a given point in the universe.

'In fact, so to do is one of the most difficult of all things....

'Without the slightest doubt, *there is something* through which material and spiritual energy hold together and are complementary. In the last analysis, '*somehow or other* there must be a single energy operating in the world.'

Tracing this unity through the labyrinth of evolution, he says (*ibid.*, p. 146):

'Since, in its totality and throughout the length of each stem, the natural history of living creatures amounts on the *exterior* to the gradual establishment of a vast nervous system, it therefore corresponds on the *interior* to the installation of a psychic state on the very dimension of the earth. On the surface, we find the nerve fibres and ganglions; deep down, consciousness. We were looking for a simple rule to sort out the tangle of appearances. And now (entirely in keeping with our initial anticipations on the ultimately psychic nature of evolution), we possess a fundamental variable capable of following in the past, and perhaps defining in the future, the true curve of the phenomenon.'

Recognizing a layer to the world deeper than the physical and the biological, and giving that layer the name of noosphere, Chardin says (*ibid.*, p. 183):

'The greatest revelation open to science today is to perceive that everything precious, active, and progressive, originally contained in that cosmic fragment from which our world emerged, is now concentrated in and crowned by the noosphere.'

*Nature: Differentiated versus Undifferentiated*

Thus the universe of experience reveals itself at its depth, to the farthest vision of some of the modern scientific thinkers, as a noosphere. Verse ten of chapter three of this Upaniṣad refers to this as the *mahān ātmā* or *mahat*, which, though deeper than the physical, the sensory, and the merely psychical layers, is still finite nature, being within the texture of cause and effect determinism. All manifestation has non-manifestation behind it; all effect is manifestation; and all cause is non-manifestation. As the cosmic manifestation, the *mahān ātmā* points therefore to a deeper reality behind and beyond itself. Vedānta terms this reality *avyakta*, undifferentiated nature; it is the totality of the universe, material and mental, in its non-manifested form; *mahataḥ param avyaktam*—'greater than the *mahat* is *avyakta*', says verse eleven. This is one of the significant concepts of Sāṅkhya and Vedānta. These view nature in two aspects, namely, the undifferentiated and the differentiated, much as a modern physicist views energy as bottled-up and released. Clarifying this concept of *avyakta* in his comment on verse eleven, Śaṅkara says:

*Mahato'pi paraṁ sūkṣmataraṁ pratyagātmabhūtaṁ sarvamahattaram ca avyaktaṁ, sarvasya jagato bījabhūtam, avyākṛtanāmarūpaṁ satattvaṁ sarvakāryakāraṇaśaktisamāhārarūpam avyaktam; avyākṛtākāśādināmavācyaṁ paramātmani otaprotabhāvena samāśritaṁ, vaṭakaṇikāyām iva vaṭavṛkṣaśaktiḥ—*

'Greater than the *mahat* is *avyakta*, subtler, more inward, and more immense than all; as the seed-form of the whole universe, with name and form undifferentiated, this *avyakta* is (yet) a real entity, being the combined energies of all effects and causes, like the fig seed in which are all the energies of the fig tree; it is denoted by such terms as *avyākṛta*, *ākāśa*, etc., and is dependent on the supreme Self which forms its warp and woof.'

Vedānta speaks of *avyakta* as primordial nature, and *mahat* as the first evolute of nature, like the sprout from the seed. Is nature, so conceived, self-explanatory, or does it point to a truth beyond itself? This is the crucial question which divides all materialistic philosophies from spiritual ones. All nature is matter in gross and subtle forms; and *avyakta* is its subtlest form. The subtle is always the inner layer, of which the gross is the outer layer; the inner is more vast and immense than the outer. From gross sensible matter at the outer end to the *avyakta* at the inner end lie the infinite links in the chain of effects and causes, in which,

as Śaṅkara expresses it in the passage quoted earlier, the cause is always finer and more inward than the effect and, consequently, more immense in magnitude, range, and power. That is why things and forces are better known and controlled through knowledge and control of their causal forms than through themselves.

*The Concept of Personality*

This entire range of the gross and the subtle resolves itself into certain distinct layers; beginning with the physical and the sensible at the outermost reaches, nature reveals her inner faces to modern science in her biospherical, psychical, and noospherical layers in an ascending order of subtlety, immensity, and fineness, in the terminology of Śaṅkara. The noosphere, according to Chardin, is centered in a higher phase of reality which he calls the Omega, of which the central focus is the Omega Point, in view of its combining within itself, according to him, the two values of universality and personality. Says he (*The Phenomenon of Man*, pp. 262-63):

'By its structure, Omega, in its ultimate principle, can only be a *distinct Centre radiating at the core of a system of centres;* a grouping in which personalization of the All and personalizations of the elements reach their maximum, simultaneously and without merging, under the influence of a supremely autonomous focus of union. That is the only picture which emerges when we try to apply the notion of collectivity with remorseless logic to a granular whole of thoughts.'

The Omega, according to Chardin, has not only an evolutive aspect in time, but a transcendent aspect beyond time. Referring to its attributes, he says (*ibid.*, p. 271):

'Autonomy, actuality, irreversibility, and thus finally transcendence are the four attributes of Omega.'

In the Omega which, for him, forms the inner layer of the noosphere and the final category of the universal, Chardin finds the scientific equivalent of the God of Christian theology. These attributes of the Omega tally in essentials with the attributes given to *mahat* in Vedānta. As the highest reach of the value of personality, the *mahat* is known as Hiraṇyagarbha or cosmic Person, the 'Self-born', 'of whom only one quarter is (in time and) expressed in cosmic evolution, while three quarters are ever transcendent and immortal': *Pādo'sya viśvā bhūtāni tripādasyāmṛtaṁ divi* (*Ṛg-Veda*, X. 90.3).

A person is a being possessed, among other things, of the attribute of consciousness. As defined by Julian Huxley (*The Phenomenon of Man*, 'Introduction' by Julian Huxley, p. 20):

'Persons are individuals who transcend their merely organic individuality in conscious participation.'

From millions of ordinary human persons at the base to the extraordinary cosmic person at the apex, through various intermediary levels, we have a multitude of beings possessing the attribute of consciousness in varying degrees. So long as consciousness remains as the attribute of an entity, that entity or its consciousness cannot be truly universal or infinite. But the search for the infinite through the objective can yield only such an infinite—an infinite of extension, an infinite of matter and thought.

*Limitations of Personality*

Vedānta found this limitation in its *mahat* or Hiraṇyagarbha. As the unity of matter and thought, *mahat* is a great synthesis, but a synthesis which can provoke questions as to what lies beyond it. The personal God of all monotheistic religions is more unsatisfactory to reason than Hiraṇyagarbha, in view of their extra-cosmic character. The Hiraṇyagarbha and the Omega Point are satisfactory to reason from this point of view, but reason questions the adequacy or finality of the very concept of personality, whether of the personal God or of the personal man; it questions its claim to infinitude and universality.

In his 'Introduction' to Chardin's *The Phenomenon of Man* above referred to, Julian Huxley also questions the finality of the Omega concept. Says he (p. 18):

'Père Teilhard, extrapolating from the past into the future, envisaged the process of human convergence as tending to a final state, which he called "point *Omega*", as opposed to the *Alpha* of elementary material particles and their energies.'

And adding a footnote to the above, Huxley says:

'Presumably, in designating this state as Omega, he believed that it was a truly final condition. It might have been better to think of it merely as a novel state or mode of organization, beyond which the human imagination cannot at present pierce, though perhaps the strange facts of extrasensory perception unearthed by the infant science of parapsychology may give us a clue as to a possible more ultimate state.'

Personality is a concept involving not a unity of an irreducible simple, but a unity of complex elements admitting of analysis and

reduction. What is invariable in all personality, whether of man or of Hiraṇyagarbha, is the principle of intelligence or consciousness. The Vedāntic and the Buddhistic analysis of personality finds powerful endorsement in modern thought.

In the words of the authors of the monumental book *The Science of Life* (H. G. Wells, G. P. Wells, and Julian Huxley, p. 878):

'Personality may be only one of Nature's methods, a convenient provisional delusion of considerable strategic value.'

*The Impersonal behind the Personal*

The Vedāntic seers were bold enough to face this problem and explore a more promising avenue of approach to the infinite. Receiving no conclusive answer from the approach through the object end, they approached it through the subject end. Again, instead of confining their investigation to the person or entity possessed of the attribute of consciousness, they investigated the nature of consciousness itself. This brought them to the impersonal behind the personal, not impersonal in the sense in which rational inquiry in the external world through physics and other positive sciences reveals the impersonal unity of nature, the impersonal of non-intelligence, but impersonal in a higher sense; for consciousness is the *very nature* of this impersonal. It is *cit-svarūpa*, unlike the Hiraṇyagarbha and other conceptions of the personal God, as also the personal man, where consciousness is only an attribute. The infinite universal consciousness is also infinite existence and infinite bliss—*sat-cit-ānanda*. This is the impersonal-personal God of Vedānta, the One without a second—*ekameva advitīyam*—known variously as Brahman, Ātman, Puruṣa.

This is the Light of all lights, the light of pure Consciousness or Intelligence lighting up every object in the world, from the sun and stars, from unconscious mind and conscious reason, to Hiraṇyagarbha or the Omega, and even the apparent darkness of the *avyakta*. 'By Its light all these are lighted', *tasya bhāsā sarvam idam vibhāti*, as the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* (V. 15) will tell us later.

The Puruṣa is this supreme Light of intelligence, about which the *Pañcadaśi* says (1. 7):

*Māsābda yuga kalpeṣu gatāgamyeṣvanekadhā;*
*Nodeti nāstametyekā saṁvit eṣā svayaṁ prabhā—*

'In all the countless months, years, ages, and aeons, which are past and which are yet to come, *Saṁvit* (pure Consciousness), which is one and self-luminous, does neither rise nor set.'

*The Inner Layers as Kośas*

The layers spoken of in verses ten and eleven of the third chapter of the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* as covering reality are described as *kośas* or sheaths in another Upaniṣad, namely, the *Taittirīya*. There are five of them. The outermost sheath is the *annamaya*, the material or physical, constituted of the body and the physical universe revealed by the sense-organs. The next interior one is the *prāṇamaya*, followed by the *manomaya* and the *vijñānamaya kośas*. These correspond to the three layers of *indriya*, *manas*, and *buddhi* mentioned in the tenth verse, and the biospherical, psychical, and noospherical layers of the modern enumeration. The *vijñānamaya*, again, in its macrocosmic aspect, corresponds to the *mahat* or the *mahān ātmā* of the same verse. The fifth and last sheath is the *ānandamaya*, corresponding to the *avyakta* of verse eleven; it has no corresponding concept in modern western thought; but, purely from the point of view of the science of physics, the 'background material' of astrophysicist Fred Hoyle may be considered a near equivalent.

The *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* presents each of these, commencing from the second, namely, the *prāṇamaya* or the biospherical sheath, as 'another interior self'—*anyo'ntara ātmā*, and adds that the succeeding one fills the preceding one—*tena eṣa pūrṇaḥ* (*Taittirīya Upaniṣad*, II. 2). Before inquiry, man takes each of these as his self; philosophical inquiry reveals the not-self character of each of them. This forms the theme of the second discourse of Buddha to his first five disciples at Sārnāth after his enlightenment at Bodh-Gaya. The Upaniṣads had earlier come across them in their search for the true Self of man.

These sheaths, according to the Upaniṣads, are the non-intelligent aspects of reality; whatever intelligence is manifested in and through them proceeds from the Ātman or Self, the changeless, impersonal, infinite reality, of the very nature of intelligence, of which these form the *kośas* or sheaths, like a sword encased in five sheaths. This Self is to be realized, say the Upaniṣads; in that realization, knowledge reaches its highest consummation in perfect non-duality; in it, knowledge and experience become one,

Beyond the *mahat* is the *avyakta*, says verse eleven of chapter three of the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*; beyond the personality of the Hiraṇyagarbha is the apparent darkness or vacuity of cosmic non-manifestation. This *avyakta* constitutes the fifth and last inner layer or *kośa* of reality, where the entire universe of causes and effects exists in its cosmic potentiality; where time, space, and causality are entirely involuted; and where the categories of nothingness and all-thingness apply with equal force. This is the ocean in which all personality is submerged, and out of which it later emerges. This corresponds, as we have seen, to the *ānandamaya-kośa*, the *kośa* or sheath of *ānanda* or bliss, so called because of the suspension in it of all the stress and strain of the cause and effect process.

*The Changeless behind the Changing*

And beyond the *ānandamaya kośa* is the impersonal Brahman, the unchanging Self of the changing universe, beyond the cause and effect process, of the nature of pure Consciousness, one and non-dual, like the calm ocean in which all waves have subsided. This is the Puruṣa, the very *principle* of intelligence, which Vedānta sees as the ultimate reality behind man and the universe.

Vedānta, in another of its significant enumerations, classifies these five sheaths into three *śarīras* or bodies: like the sheaths, they are also one inside the other. The first and most obvious of these bodies is the *sthūla śarīra*, the gross body, constituted of the outermost sheath, the *annamaya*. This is the physical body of man, the product of *anna* or physical food, the subject of physiology and anatomy. The second, not so obvious, is called the *sūkṣma śarīra* or *liṅga śarīra*, the subtle body, constituted of the next three sheaths, namely, the *prāṇamaya*, the *manomaya*, and the *vijñānamaya*. This is the subject of neurology and psychology, and partly also of philosophy. It constitutes almost the entire content of man's personality and the focal point of the Indian theory of Karma and Reincarnation. Modern psychology, in its parapsychology field, is confronted today with the mystery of this *sūkṣma śarīra*. The third body is called the *kāraṇa śarīra*, the causal body, constituted of the fifth and last sheath, the *ānandamaya*. This is the subject of psychology and epistemology at their deepest levels. There is nothing corresponding to the *kāraṇa śarīra* in modern western thought. These three are referred to as bodies because they are the products of matter in its gross and subtle

forms. They constitute the non-spiritual vesture of the truly spiritual part of man, the Ātman. In human experience, these three bodies have their specific fields of manifestation; these are the waking state for the *sthūla śarīra*, the dream state for the *sūkṣma śarīra*, and the dreamless sleep state for the *kāraṇa śarīra*. These conclusions are the fruit of the Vedāntic study of man in depth.

Studying the phenomenon of man and seeking for the true focus of his experience of selfhood at the core of his personality, Vedānta came across the five *kośas* or sheaths and the three *śarīras* or bodies where, in the words of Dr. S. Radhakrishnan in his English translation of the *Gītā* (*The Bhagavad Gītā*, p. 177) 'there is no changeless centre or immortal nucleus in these pretenders to selfhood'. The body, the sense-organs, the mind, and the ego, all lay claim to being the Self of man. Before inquiry, man takes one or other of them as his self. But philosophical inquiry reveals their not-self character; it reveals each one of them as an object and not a subject; each is a *saṁghāta* or aggregate, in the terminology of Buddha, and, as such, subject to change and destruction.

The search for the Self must leave them behind and proceed deeper. If nothing exists beyond these changing not-self elements, man is right in resigning himself to nihilism in philosophy and pragmatism in life. Vedānta, however, finds in such a nihilism nothing but philosophic despair. It finds in the facts of experience enough intimations of a changeless reality, which justify a more penetrating investigation of experience by reason. Reason is confronted by the puzzling fact that the diverse experiences of man form a unity; and there is also the fact of memory. These presuppose a changeless centre in man; without such a changeless centre, the perceptions of change, the experience of memory, and their attribution to one and the same knowing subject will become inexplicable. Such a scrutiny of experience reveals the presence of a changeless subject or knower at the centre of the knowing process, at the core of the human personality. As Śaṅkara affirms in his *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi* (Verses 125 and 126):

> *Asti kaścit svayaṁ nityam ahaṁpratyayalaṁbanaḥ;*
> *Avasthātrayasākṣī san pañcakośavilakṣaṇaḥ—*

'There is some entity, eternal by nature, the basis of the experience of egoism, the witness of the three states (of waking, dream, and sleep), and distinct from the five sheaths.'

*Yo vijānāti sakalam jāgratsvapnasuṣuptiṣu;*
*Buddhi tadvṛtti sadbhāvam abhāvam aham ityayam—*

'Who knows everything that happens in the waking, dream, and sleep states; who is aware of the presence or absence of the mind and its functions; and who is the basis of the notion of egoism.'

*The Purification of Reason*

When man as person, and with the limitations of personality, seeks to know the infinite behind the finite, the highest that he can get at is the personal God. In the words of Swami Vivekananda (*Complete Works*, Vol. III, Eighth Edition, p. 37):

'Īśvara (the personal God), is the highest manifestation of the absolute Reality, or in other words, the highest possible reading of the Absolute by the human mind.'

But man's reason has never felt satisfied with this reading. Vedānta alone has shown that this dissatisfaction experienced by reason does not arise from the limitations of God, but is due to a limitation in reason itself. The limitations of human reason are most evident in man's common-sense knowledge of the universe. The advance of science has witnessed a steady erosion into these limitations, resulting in a clearer and truer knowledge of reality. This is glowingly demonstrated in the scientific advances of the twentieth century, which has experienced a complete break with the common-sense view. The common-sense view is what is derived from the sense-organs; and twentieth-century science has released scientific reason from thraldom to the senses and put it on the road to a knowledge of the deeper levels of reality. In the words of Sir James Jeans (*The New Background of Science*, p. 5):

"Thus the history of physical science in the twentieth century is one of a progressive emancipation from the purely human angle of vision.'

This human angle of vision comprises not only the framework of the sense-organs, but also the constitution of the mind. The mind's knowing process is conditioned and limited by the three factors of space, time, and causality. The mind's capacity to penetrate to the deeper levels of experience is dependent upon its release from these three limitations. Twentieth-century science has freed reason from thraldom to space and time, and so enabled it to discover the grand unity of the space-time continuum and effect a

unification of many of the different laws of nature with a view to the eventual unification of all its laws in a unified theory.

Vedānta has always maintained that the purification of reason is the way to the gaining of true knowledge about the universe of experience. It is through such purification that the Vedāntic reason unravelled the different layers covering reality, and proclaimed the infinite and immortal Puruṣa as the non-dual reality beyond the *avyakta*, or beyond the unity of undifferentiated nature.

The relationship of the *avyakta* to the Puruṣa is the most crucial point in this philosophy. Vedānta in its final reaches of thought tells us that the *avyakta* is the Puruṣa *when viewed non-causally*; that it is the personal aspect of the impersonal Puruṣa. This unity is revealed to reason when it sheds the last constituent of 'the human angle of vision', namely, causality. Causality, according to Vedānta, is the last impurity of reason, the most obstinate and intractable, which alone prevents reason from rising from the finite to the infinite. When it is eliminated, reason itself becomes infinite, and reveals the non-duality and unseparable unity of the Puruṣa and the *avyakta*, which is also the unity of the Self and the not-Self, the subject and the object. This is the impersonal-personal God of Vedānta, the inseparable unity of Brahman and Śakti, or Śiva and Śakti, in which the *avyakta* becomes transformed into the Energy of cosmic manifestation.

The glory of reason rising to this infinite dimension, and revealing the fundamental spiritual unity of the universe, is sung in a famous verse of the *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad Kārikā* of Gauḍapāda (IV. 1):

> *Jñānena ākāśakalpena dharmān yo gaganopamān;*
> *Jñeyābhinnena saṁbuddhaḥ taṁ vande dvipadāṁ varam*—

'I salute that best among men who, through his *jñāna* (Knowledge or Reason) which is infinite in nature and non-different from the object of knowledge, realized (Its non-difference from) the subjects which are, again, infinite in nature.'

### *The Advaitic Vision*

Vedānta upholds the unity of the macrocosm and the microcosm. Says Swami Vivekananda in his lecture on 'Cosmology' (*Complete Works*, Vol. II, Ninth Edition, p. 440):

'The whole of the universe is built upon the same plan as a part of it. So, just as I have a mind, there is a cosmic mind. As in the individual, so in the universal. There is the universal gross body; behind that, a universal fine body; behind that, a universal mind; behind that, a universal intelligence. And all this is in nature, the manifestation of nature, not outside of it.'

This is the Ātman, the true Self of man, which is also the Self of the universe. 'The Puruṣa is higher than the *avyakta*', *avyaktāt puruṣaḥ paraḥ*, says verse eleven, and concludes with the statement: *Puruṣāt na paraṁ kiñcit, sā kāṣṭhā sā parā gatiḥ*—'There is nothing higher than the Puruṣa; that is the finale, that is the supreme goal.'

From this Everest of spiritual vision, man and nature, spirit and matter, the One and the many, are all seen as one. The sheaths and layers which were left behind, when knowledge was forging ahead in its search for the infinite and the eternal, are now seen, in the strange new light of the Ātman, as of the very stuff of the Ātman. Sense-knowledge, mental intuitions, and rational judgements were but attempts to reveal this infinite universal Consciousness, which alone lights up every activity of the senses, the mind, and the intellect. Hence the Upaniṣads speak of the Ātman as 'That from which speech recoils along with mind unable to reveal It', *yato vāco nivartante aprāpya manasā saha* (*Taittirīya Upaniṣad*, II. 4). This is the main theme of the *Kena Upaniṣad*, as we have seen when we were studying that Upaniṣad. The infinite Self appears as finite and subject to the laws of time, space, and causality, when It is viewed through the limited moulds of the knowing apparatus. The Upaniṣads again and again invite us to realize the Ātman as one's own self. 'The Kingdom of Heaven is within you', exhorts Jesus. The Puruṣa represents the innermost reach of this inward penetration, where finite *knowing* becomes transformed into infinite *being*; hence the statement: 'There is nothing higher than the Puruṣa; that is the finale, that is the supreme goal.'

The word '*puruṣa*' in Sanskrit means man: it also means the soul; it thus denotes personality. When applied to the ultimate Reality, it emphasizes its *cit* or consciousness aspect and reveals it as an impersonal-personal Reality. Śaṅkara derives the etymological meaning of the word as 'that which fills everything', *sarvapūraṇāt*.

The Puruṣa is the ultimate Reality; and the Vedāntic books sing its glory. Being the unity of subject and object, It is the

totality of reality; hence the statement: 'There is nothing higher than the Puruṣa.' Behind the personal God and the personal man, Vedānta sees the unity of the impersonal-personal Brahman. *Puruṣa evedaṁ viśvam*—'The Puruṣa alone is all this universe'; *Brahmaivedam amṛtam*—'This (manifested universe) is only Brahman, the Immortal'; *Idam sarvaṁ yad ayam ātmā*—'This Ātman is all this (manifested universe)', proclaim the Upaniṣads (*Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*, II. 1.10; II. 2.11; *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, VII. 25.2). This is the central theme of the lofty philosophy of Advaita, the philosophy of non-duality. Whereas modern physical science upholds a materialistic *advaita*, the Upaniṣads uphold a spiritual *advaita*. And modern biology in its philosophical reaches is steadily tending in the latter direction.

### *Its Impact on Religion*

Dealing with the enrichment that the concept of the personal God receives from this idea of the impersonal, Swami Vivekananda says in his second lecture on 'Practical Vedānta' delivered in London in 1896 (*Complete Works*, Vol. II, Ninth Edition, pp. 319-20):

'The impersonal God is a living God, a principle. The difference between personal and impersonal is this, that the personal is only a man, and the impersonal idea is that He is the angel, the man, the animal, and yet something more which we cannot see, because impersonality includes all personalities, is the sum total of everything in the universe, and infinitely more besides. "As the one fire coming into the world is manifesting itself in so many forms, and yet is infinitely more besides (*Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, V. 9)", so is the impersonal.'

In his third lecture on 'Practical Vedānta', he further says (*ibid.*, p. 333):

'What is the outcome of this philosophy? It is that the idea of the personal God is not sufficient. We have to get to something higher, to the impersonal idea. It is the only logical step that we can take. Not that personal idea would be destroyed by that, not that we supply proof that the personal God does not exist, but we must go to the impersonal for the explanation of the personal, for the impersonal is a much higher generalization than the personal. The impersonal only can be infinite, the personal is limited. Thus we preserve the personal and do not destroy it. Often the doubt comes to us that, if we arrive at the idea of the impersonal God, the personal will be destroyed; if we arrive at the idea of the impersonal man, the personal will be lost. *But the Vedāntic idea is not the destruction of the individual, but its real preservation.* We cannot prove the individual by any other means but by referring to the universal, by proving that this individual is really the universal. If we think of the individual as separate

from everything else in the universe, it cannot stand a minute. Such a thing never existed.'

Speaking on the subject of 'The Absolute and Manifestation' in London in 1896, Swami Vivekananda refers to the beneficent impact of this impersonal idea of the Advaita Vedānta on religion (*ibid.*, p. 141):

'Another peculiarity of the Advaita system is that from its very start it is non-destructive. This is another glory, the boldness to preach, "Do not disturb the faith of any, even of those who through ignorance have attached themselves to lower forms of worship". That is what it says, do not disturb, but help everyone to get higher and higher; include all humanity. This philosophy preaches a God who is a sum total. If you seek a universal religion which can apply to everyone, that religion must not be composed of only the parts, but it must always be their sum total and include all degrees of religious development.'

*Man: the Perennial Theme of Vedānta*

Man, his growth, development, and realization, is the perennial theme of Vedānta. Exploring the 'within' of the universe through the human personality, the Vedāntic sages discovered the Puruṣa or Brahman—the Immortal behind the mortal, the Infinite behind the finite. In verses ten and eleven, which we have been studying today, we have listened to Yama expounding to Naciketā the various layers or sheaths which cover Brahman, the penetration of which constitutes not only man's spiritual journey, but also his intellectual journey. While reading the exposition, the spiritual student experiences, even at this distance of time from Yama and Naciketā, a stirring of the deeper levels of his own personality. When a great teacher utters a profound truth even in whispers, it will reverberate through the corridors of space and time. It was said of Vivekananda in our own time by a great thinker that, even when Vivekanandas speak to themselves, they address the whole of humanity. The truths that the Upaniṣads proclaimed ages ago are of contemporary interest in every age, because they are the fruits of a detached and rational, sustained and sincere pursuit of truth, and because they are addressed to man as such, and not to any group or section thereof, and have a profound bearing on his growth, development, and fulfilment. In the remaining six verses of this third chapter, which we shall be taking up next, we shall experience this intimate communion of minds, and feel the impact of Yama's summons to man, as powerfully rendered by Swami Vivekananda in our own age, to 'arise, awake, and stop not till the goal is reached!'

TWENTY FOUR

# KAṬHA UPANIṢAD—13

In the last discourse, we listened to Yama expounding to Naciketā the various layers covering the truth of the Ātman. Starting from the body and the environing world, each succeeding inner layer was shown as being more subtle and, accordingly, more immense and inward than the preceding one. All these layers are finite and subject to change. At the innermost core of them all is the Ātman or the Puruṣa, the ever pure, ever free, ever awake, and infinite Self of man, which is also the infinite Self of the universe.

The discovery of this Immortal behind the mortal is the universal 'gospel' or good news which the Upaniṣads have left as their immortal legacy to all humanity. It was not just an intellectual discovery; it was a spiritual realization, holding at the same time vast possibilities for the intellectual and moral life of man. It underwrites and guarantees the precious value of freedom of the human spirit. Being a spiritual discovery, it is announced to the world at large not as an *intellectual formula* to be *believed in*, but *a spiritual fact* to be *realized* by every human being. The discovery by a few is to be translated into a re-discovery by the many; for it is the birthright of one and all. This makes it a compelling message to all men.

### *The 'Imprisoned Splendour'*

Yama was aware of the universal appeal of this message. In verse twelve of the third chapter, with which we are to commence our study today, we find Yama spelling out the *universality* of this truth of the Ātman, and its *verifiability* in life:

> *Eṣa sarveṣu bhūteṣu gūḍho ātmā na prakāśate;*
> *Dṛśyate tvagryayā buddhyā sūkṣmayā sūkṣmadarśibhiḥ—*

'This Ātman, (being) hidden in all beings, is not manifest (to all). But (It) can be realized by all who are accustomed to inquire into subtle truths by means of their sharp and subtle reason.'

Bringing out the gist of the previous two verses, Yama tells us in this verse that this Ātman is present in every being. It is not an object, but the subject or knower. As the eternal subject, it is an ever-present datum of experience and not a mere logical

construction. But it does not reveal itself as such to one and all. Not to speak of ordinary people, even great scholars fail to comprehend the Ātman. The verse gives the reason: *gūḍhaḥ*—'it is subtle, hidden'. It is a mysterious presence; it is a splendour, but imprisoned, in the language of Robert Browning in his poem *Paracelsus*; and therefore *na prakāśate*—'it is not manifest'; *asaṁskṛtabuddheḥ avijñeyatvāt*—'since (it is) unknown to him whose *buddhi* (reason) is not refined (purified)', comments Śaṅkara. It is not present on the surface of experience; it is hidden in its depth. In verse seven of the second chapter, Yama had already told us this and had added that the teacher and the student of this subject should be of the extraordinary type:

*Śravaṇāyāpi bahubhiryo na labhyaḥ*
*śṛṇvanto'pi bahavo yaṁ na vidyuḥ;*
*Āścaryo vaktā kuśalo'sya labdhā*
*āścaryo jñātā kuśalānuśiṣṭaḥ—*

'Even to hear of It is not available to many; many having heard of It cannot comprehend. Wonderful is Its teacher and (equally) talented Its pupil. Wonderful indeed is he who comprehends It taught by a talented preceptor.'

*The Splendour Can be Released*

In the first part of verse twelve, Yama throws light on this mystery by explaining why people do not comprehend the Ātman even after hearing about it, and, in its second part, he reveals the nature of that extraordinary discipline which helps the student to penetrate into the heart of this profoundest of all mysteries. Though a mystery, the Ātman shall not always remain so; though an unknown, Vedānta does not treat it as an unknowable. *Dṛśyate*—'It can be seen, realized', says Yama, since it is an ever-present datum of experience. To the logical reason, the Ātman will ever remain a mystery, an unknown and unknowable. But when certain conditions are satisfied, *buddhi* or philosophical Reason achieves the break-through. What is that Reason which achieves this? This is set forth in the second half of the verse—*agryayā buddhyā sūkṣmayā*—'by *buddhi* which is sharp and subtle.'

While discussing the implications of verse nine of chapter two of this Upaniṣad, we had dealt with the subject of the limitations of logical and scientific reason and its development into unfettered philosophical Reason. Philosophical Reason is reason freed from

thraldom to the limited universe revealed by the senses and the sense-bound mind. Every effort to free reason thus renders it more and more one-pointed and capable of seeing subtler and subtler truths. The dullest reason is that which believes that what is seen by the senses is alone true. It is accepted by science that the senses are highly limited in their perception of reality; that they conceal more than they reveal reality. Reason in this case functions as the tail-end of the senses and transfers their dullness to itself. Every step in freeing reason is a step towards increasing its range and penetration. It thus develops the capacity to dive to the depths of experience. The stage-by-stage fruit of such diving is the knowledge of the various inner layers or sheaths of reality, which Yama expounded to us in verses ten and eleven of the third chapter. As the innermost core of all is revealed the Puruṣa or the Ātman. The subtler the layer of reality, the subtler should be the reason which seeks and discovers that reality. This subtlety is the measure of its purity and strength; it is also the source of its power of penetration. This power in its extraordinary form is what makes reason in man capable of realizing the Ātman. Such a person is the best among those who belong to the class known as *sūkṣmadarśī*, 'perceiver of subtle truths', says Yama. Explaining the meaning of this word in his comment on this verse, Śaṅkara says:

*'Indriyebhyaḥ parā hyarthā' ityādiprakāreṇa sūkṣmatāpāraṁparyadarśanena paraṁ sūkṣmaṁ draṣṭuṁ śīlaṁ yeṣāṁ te sūkṣmadarśinaḥ—*

'They are *sūkṣmadarśinaḥ*—"subtle seers"—who are accustomed, through seeing subtler and subtler realities as mentioned in the passage "the objects are higher than the sense-organs" etc. (verses ten and eleven), to see the supremely subtle reality (of the Puruṣa or the Ātman).'

Yama will give us a little insight into the technique of this inner penetration in the next verse, verse thirteen, and into the rationale of it in the opening verse of the next chapter.

In equating the Puruṣa of verse eleven with the Ātman of verse twelve, the Upaniṣad emphasizes the truth that the highest reality is not external, but is the innermost self of man. But then the idea of a journey, which involves space and time, becomes meaningless. And the Upaniṣad, with the help of its chariot imagery, has been expounding just such a journey to the Ātman.

What then does the Upaniṣad mean by the phrase *so'dhvanaḥ pāram āpnoti*—'he attains the end of the road (or journey)' of verse nine? In his comment on verse twelve, Śaṅkara explains this apparent contradiction. Though quoted in part earlier, during our study of verses ten and eleven of chapter two, it can bear a requoting in full in the present context:

*Sarvasya pratyagātmatvāt avagatireva gatirityupacaryate. Pratyagātmatvaṁ ca darśitam indriyamanobuddhiparatvena. Yo hi gantā so'yam aprātyagrūpaṁ gacchati anātmabhūtaṁ, na vindati svarūpeṇa. Tathā ca śrutiḥ—anadhvagā adhvasu pārayiṣṇavaḥ*—'Since the Ātman is the inner Self of all, *avagati* (knowledge or realization) is alone spoken of figuratively as *gati* (a going or journeying). That the Ātman is the inner Self is shown by its description (in the previous two verses) as higher than the sense-organs, *manas*, and *buddhi*. He who is a goer is one who goes *away* from his inner Self and *towards* the not-self; (by this, he) never realizes himself as he truly is. Accordingly, the Śruti (one of the Upaniṣads) also (says): "They (knowers of the Ātman) travel by no road who go to the other shore (of *saṁsāra* or relativity)".'

Speaking on the subject of 'Steps to Realization', Swami Vivekananda says (*Complete Works*, Vol. I, Eleventh Edition, p. 412):

'All knowledge is within us. All perfection is there already in the soul. But this perfection has been covered up by nature; layer after layer of nature is covering this purity of the soul. What have we to do? Really, we do not *develop* our souls at all. What can develop the perfect? We simply *take the veil off*; and the soul manifests itself in its pristine purity, its natural, innate freedom.'

### *The Pre-eminence of Adhyātmavidyā*

Yama proclaims the capacity of *buddhi* or philosophical Reason to realize the Ātman, when it is trained in concentration and in the perception of subtle truths. That such discipline increases the power of penetration of the human mind is well demonstrated in the fields of education, science, and culture. That it has the still more extraordinary power of penetrating the ultimate mystery of existence is upheld in Vedānta. The opening verse of the next chapter will tell us about this power and the extraordinary technique to be employed for its gaining. Our experience with the phenomenon of radiation helps to illustrate this truth. Ordinary light

has very little power of penetration; it can be obstructed even by a piece of paper. But this light gets the power to penetrate thick masses of matter when it is developed into the various types of high-frequency radiations. Similarly, we have in air an element which is flimsy by ordinary standards, but which develops the power of cutting into masses of rock or metal under the discipline of compression. All effective mental training, says Vedānta, is training in concentration; it is the development of a capacity for penetration, the penetration through the darkness of ignorance into the light of knowledge. Referring to this penetrative power of the trained mind, Swami Vivekananda says (*ibid.*, pp. 130-31):

'How has all the knowledge in the world been gained but by the concentration of the powers of the mind? The world is ready to give up its secrets if we only know how to knock, how to give it the necessary blow. The strength and force of the blow come through concentration. *There is no limit to the power of the human mind.* The more concentrated it is, the more power is brought to bear on one point; that is the secret.'

'There is no limit to the power of the human mind.' This is significant. Who can put a limit to its capacity? Whatever limitations we see arise from the limitations of the fields and methods of inquiry and their terms of reference. Vedānta exhorts us ever to remember that at the very back of the inquiring *buddhi* or Reason is the Infinite Ātman. Physics, astronomy, and chemistry have their own terms of reference; so have biology and other sciences of life and mind. At the higher reaches, the separate areas of these sciences tend to merge into a unified field; and their separate terms of reference blend into the broad philosophical quest for the One *behind* the many, for the One *in* the many. *Vedānta sees in this fact clear evidence of the increasing impact of the Ātman behind the mind on the mind's own search for knowledge and certitude.* And it felt impelled long ago to investigate this phenomenon; the fruit of that investigation is the great *adhyātmavidyā*, the science of the Ātman, first developed in the Upaniṣads. Indian thought treats it as 'the pre-eminent science', *adhyātmavidyā vidyānām*, as the *Gītā* puts it; or as 'the science of sciences', *sarvavidyā pratiṣṭhā*, as the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* expresses it in its opening verse.

### *Yoga as the Science and Art of the Spiritual Life*

Referring to the methods and results of the extraordinary Vedāntic discipline of the mind, which is collectively known by the

term '*yoga*' and to which Yama will refer in verses ten and eleven of chapter six of this Upaniṣad, Swami Vivekananda says in a luminous utterance (*Complete Works*, Vol. VI, Sixth Edition, p. 124):

'When the mind is concentrated and turned back on itself, all within us will be our servants, not our masters. The Greeks applied their concentration to the external world, and the result was perfection in art, literature, etc. The Hindu concentrated on the internal world, upon the unseen realms in the Self, and developed the science of *yoga*. Yoga is controlling the senses, will, and mind. The benefit of its study is that we learn to control instead of being controlled. Mind seems to be layer on layer. Our real goal is to cross all these intervening strata of our being and find God. The end and aim of *yoga* is to realize God. To do this, we must go beyond relative knowledge, go beyond the sense-world. The world is awake to the senses; the children of the Lord are asleep on that plane. The world is asleep to the Eternal; the children of the Lord are awake in that realm.'

Yama now proceeds to expound in the next verse, verse thirteen, this extraordinary Vedāntic discipline for the realization of the Ātman:

*Yacchet vāk manasī prājñaḥ*
*tat yacchet jñāna ātmani;*
*Jñānam ātmani mahati niyacchet*
*tat yacchet śānta ātmani—*

'Let the *prājña* (wise man) merge the speech in the *manas*, and the *manas* in the *buddhi*; let him merge the *buddhi* in the great self (*mahat*), and that great self, again, in the Self of peace (the Ātman or the Puruṣa).'

*Vāk* or speech refers to the organ of speech, the brain centre controlling the function of speech. Here, it is used in an illustrative sense, meaning all the sense-organs. If the Ātman is a mystery hidden in the heart of all, it logically follows that the method of its investigation and realization is through the discipline and control of man's inner life. This is achieved, says Vedānta, by two paths, namely, *jñāna*, the path of negation, and *karma* (including *bhakti* or devotion), the path of affirmation. The first one, the philosophical and the more difficult one, is what is specially developed and stressed in the Upaniṣads. 'Merge the speech (and all the sense-organs) in the *manas*', exhorts Yama, 'the *manas* in the *jñāna ātman* or the *buddhi*, the *jñāna ātman* in the *mahat*,

and the *mahat*, again, in the *śānta ātman*, in the peace of the infinite Self.'

The Ātman is significantly characterized as consisting of *śānti*, peace. Commenting on this, Śaṅkara says:

*Śānte sarvaviśeṣapratyastamitarūpe avikriye sarvāntare sarvabuddhipratyayasākṣiṇi mukhya ātmani—*

'In the peace of the primary (or real) Ātman, (which is) characterized by the complete cessation of all differentiation (phenomena), the innermost reality of all, and the witness of all the pulsations of *buddhi*.'

If the innermost Self is all peace, the outermost or the *annamaya* or the physical self is all noise and distraction. The farther we are from our centre in the Ātman, the more become the noise and distraction of our lives. Peace is not in things outside, but within man himself. This peace has to be realized by the development of the capacity for inner penetration through inner discipline. The structure of human life becomes steady when it is founded on the rock of the eternal Ātman within.

Here is the practical side of that philosophy of reality which was expounded in verses ten and eleven, in which, through a penetrating analysis, the Ātman was shown as the 'eternal within' of man and the universe. The inner, it was shown there, is more subtle and more immense than the outer. As man penetrates deeper and deeper into himself, he realizes wider and wider dimensions of his being. This is the spiritual paradox referred to by Jesus as gaining life by losing it. By losing life at the outer levels, we gain it in its inner depths; we lose life which is finite and trivial, and gain life which is infinite and immortal.

### *Jñāna Yoga: The Awesome Yet Fascinating Path*

This piece of second-hand knowledge, say the Upaniṣads, must become first-hand experience—immediate and direct—through a mighty effort of reason and will, backed by moral purity and intense desire to be spiritually free. The knowledge, 'Ātman is', is mere information, says Vedānta; it must be transformed into the conviction, 'I am the Ātman'. While expounding, in an earlier discourse, verse four of chapter two of the *Kena Upaniṣad*, I had given a moving illustration of this awesome yet fascinating path of *jñāna* in the glowing story of Sri Ramakrishna's discipleship under

Totapuri. Expounding in gripping words the glory of this path in his lecture on 'The Ideal of Universal Religion', Swami Vivekananda says (*Complete Works*, Vol. II, p. 394):

'We lastly come to the *jñāna-yogī*, the philosopher, the thinker, he who wants to go beyond the visible. He is the man who is not satisfied with the little things of this world. His idea is to go beyond the daily routine of eating, drinking, and so on; not even the teaching of thousands of books will satisfy him. Not even all the sciences will satisfy him; at the best, they only bring this little world before him. What else will give him satisfaction? ... His soul wants to go beyond all that into the very heart of being, by seeing Reality as It is; by realizing It, by being It, by becoming one with that universal Being. That is the philosopher. To say that God is the Father or the Mother, the Creator of this universe, its Protector, and Guide, is to him quite inadequate to express Him. To him, God is the life of his life, the soul of his soul. God is his own Self. Nothing else remains which is other than God. *All the mortal parts of him become pounded by the weighty strokes of philosophy and are brushed away.* What at last truly remains is God Himself.'

Again, speaking on 'The Free Soul', he says (*ibid.*, Vol. III, Eighth Edition, p. 11):

'It is very hard to come to *jñāna*. It is for the bravest and most daring, who dare to smash all idols, not only intellectual, but in the senses.'

In the history of India, it was the great Buddha who illustrated in the most glowing manner this Upaniṣadic path of *jñāna* in his spiritual struggle and realization.

The raising of consciousness from lower to higher levels, and finally taking it out of the network of relativity, is the hardest task that man can set for himself. The gravitational pulls of the non-spiritual parts of his being make this path out of bounds for any but the most heroic of men—the *dhīra*—as Yama will describe this type in the opening verse of the next chapter.

Yama now proceeds, in verse fourteen, to sound the clarion call of struggle and alertness:

*Uttiṣṭhata jāgrata prāpya varān nibodhata;*
*Kṣurasya dhārā niśitā duratyayā*
*durgaṁ pathastat kavayo vadanti—*

'Arise! Awake! enlighten yourself by resorting to the great (teachers); like the sharp edge of a razor is that path, so say the sages, difficult to tread and hard to cross.'

Here is sounded the bugle for the march, the summons for the greatest adventure of human life, namely, scaling the heights of the Mount Everest of experience. *No thinking human being can help being fascinated by the tremendous vista of human fulfilment herein presented by Vedānta.* The prospect held out is as much hope-inspiring and pleasing as awe-inspiring and forbidding. Most people may have to content themselves by reverentially bowing down to the peak from a distance unless they are provided with external aids. In the Vedāntic path of affirmation, namely, the paths of *karma* and *bhakti*, such aids are provided; but not in the Vedāntic path of negation, the path of *jñāna*. Nor are such aids needed by the few who are truly entitled to tread this path. And there are, among men and women everywhere, such morally gifted and spiritually daring ones, to whom the lure of such an adventure is irresistible, and who depend entirely on their inner resources.

### *Arise, Awake, O Man!*

Yama, however, sends out his clarion call to one and all—to the hesitant as much as to the daring, to the weak as well as to the strong. For *implicit in this philosophy is the fulfilment of the hopes of one and all to reach the summit,* since that fulfilment, forming his very Self, is built into each and every human being. What is needed is only man's awakening to this inalienable heritage of his—his inborn divinity—as expounded in verse twelve earlier. Awakened thus, each may follow the path that suits him best. And Vedānta provides, as we have already seen, different paths to suit different types of mind and mood, of endowment and capacity.

Ordinary man is immersed in his sense life; he treats it as the be-all and the end-all of existence. The search for truth, the quest for the meaning of existence, does not disturb the humdrum routine of his life. He is blissfully unaware of the triviality of his world of hopes and achievements and the immensity of the inner spiritual world lying *at hand*, within. But a time comes when he becomes ripe for awakening, when a mere suggestion is enough to awaken him from the stagnation of sense life to the dynamism of spiritual life. It is such a galvanic touch that Yama administers by the first two words of his utterance: *Uttiṣṭhata jāgrata*—'Arise, Awake!'

A similar clarion call is given by Buddha; himself awakened, he sends forth this message of awakening to fellow human beings (*Itivuttakam*, II. 10):

*Jāgarantā suṇāthetam*
*ye suttā te pabujjhatha;*
*Suttā jāgaritaṁ seyyo*
*nātthi jāgarato bhayam—*

'Let the awakened ones hear this (message); they who are asleep, let them awake. To be awake is more beneficial than to be asleep; to the awakened, there is no fear.'

*The Philosophy of Spiritual Awakening*

The philosophy of this spiritual awakening of man expounded in the Upaniṣads has been beautifully portrayed by Swami Vivekananda in a passage of his lecture on 'Vedānta and Indian Life' (*Complete Works*, Vol. III, pp. 235-36). Though rather long, the passage bears reproduction in full in this context, in view of its illumining the utterances of the ancient master minds by a modern master mind, and in view of its moving exposition of two relevant verses from another Upaniṣad—the *Muṇḍaka* (III. 1.1-2):

'Where can you find a more perfect expression of the whole philosophy of the world, the gist of what the Hindus ever thought, the whole dream of human salvation, painted in language more wonderful, in figure more marvellous than this?:

*Dvā suparṇā sayujā sakhāyā*
*samānaṁ vṛkṣaṁ pariṣasvajāte;*
*Tayoranyaḥ pippalaṁ svādvat-*
*tyanaśnan anyo abhicākaśīti.*

*Samāne vṛkṣe puruṣo nimagno*
*anīśayā śocati muhyamānaḥ;*
*Juṣṭaṁ yadā paśyatyanyamīśam*
*asya mahimānamiti vītaśokaḥ.*

'Upon the same tree, there are two birds of beautiful plumage, most friendly to each other, one eating the fruits, the other sitting there calm and silent without eating; the one on the lower branch eating sweet and bitter fruits in turn and becoming happy and unhappy, but the other one on the top, calm and majestic; he eats neither sweet nor bitter fruits, cares neither for happiness nor misery, immersed in his own glory.

'This is the picture of the human soul. Man is eating the sweet and bitter fruits of this life, pursuing gold, pursuing his senses, pursuing the vanities of life—hopelessly, madly careering he goes. In other places, the Upaniṣads have compared the human soul to the charioteer, and the senses to the mad horses unrestrained. Such is the career of men pursuing the vanities of life, children dreaming golden dreams only to find that they are but vain, and

old men chewing the cud of their past deeds, and yet not knowing how to get out of this network.

'This is the world. Yet in the life of every one, there come golden moments; in the midst of the deepest sorrows, nay, of the deepest joys, there come moments when a part of the cloud that hides the sunlight moves away, as it were, and we catch a glimpse, in spite of ourselves, of something beyond—away, away beyond the life of the senses; away, away beyond its vanities, its joys, and its sorrows; away, away beyond nature, or our imaginations of happiness here or hereafter; away beyond all thirst for gold, or for fame, or for name, or for posterity.

'Man stops for a moment at this glimpse, and sees the other bird calm and majestic, eating neither sweet nor bitter fruits, but immersed in his own glory, self-content, self-satisfied.... Man catches a glimpse, then again he forgets, and goes on eating the sweet and bitter fruits of life; perhaps after a time, he catches another glimpse, and the lower bird goes nearer and nearer to the higher bird, as blows after blows are received. If he be fortunate to receive hard knocks, then he comes nearer and nearer to his companion, the other bird, his life, his friend; and as he approaches him, he finds that the light from the higher bird is playing round his own plumage; and as he comes nearer and nearer, lo! the transformation is going on. The nearer and nearer he comes, he finds himself melting away, as it were, until he has entirely disappeared. He did not really exist; it was but the reflection of the other bird, who was there calm and majestic amidst the moving leaves. It was all his glory, that upper bird's. He then becomes fearless, perfectly satisfied, calmly serene.'

### *The Need for a Teacher*

The awakening is to be followed by the march; but the spiritual path is an unfamiliar path. The sense-bound intellect or reason, which is highly esteemed in the sense life, becomes an unsure guide in this strange new field of experience. It has to seek help and guidance from the insights of a higher reason which has traversed the path and gleaned the truth. Such guidance is available to a seeker either occasionally from a living teacher, or always from the living thoughts of teachers gone by. *The river of spiritual tradition is an ancient ever-flowing stream augmented from time to time by the contributions of realized souls.* This constitutes the central core of the world's religious tradition, which is perennial and universal, as distinguished from its peripheral non-essential elements, which are temporary and local. Indian thought refers to the first as Śruti and the second as Smṛti. The Śruti content of the Indian spiritual tradition is represented by the

literature of the Upaniṣads and by books such as the *Bhagavad-Gītā* which follow in their wake.

Yama exhorts the seeker to 'learn the truths of spiritual life from these master minds': *prāpya varān nibodhata*. Seeking such help is not mandatory, just as eating is not mandatory; one eats when one is hungry; similarly, one seeks such help when one feels the need for it. If, however, one refuses, from a foolish sense of self-esteem or smug self-satisfaction, to seek help from such available competent sources, it is sure to make one's spiritual journey end up in a state of learned ignorance or, what Aldous Huxley calls, 'intelligent foolishness', or in much fuss and movement with no advance to light and truth. For spiritual life is not meant to fatten man's false ego, but to annihilate it, so that he may shine in his true self. The pitfalls in the path are many. It is not strewn with roses, but with stones and thorns. In the words of Yama: *Kṣurasya dhārā niśitā duratyayā durgaṁ pathastat kavayo vadanti*—'Like the sharp edge of a razor is that path, so say the sages, difficult to tread and hard to cross.' As expressed by another great teacher, Jesus Christ (Matthew, 7. 13-14):

'Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in threat:

'Because strait is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.'

None can hope to advance in spiritual life if he enters on it absent-mindedly. An awakened alert mind is necessary, for the journey is hard going. This warning of Yama and other great spiritual teachers is especially necessary in the modern age, when the tendency is strong to seek easy and comfortable ways in religion, which is the product not of the true spiritual mood, but of the contemporary tyranny of the sensate life. Religion then becomes equated either with a new form of sensation or with, what Swami Vivekananda termed, 'not-thinking-carelessness'.

### *The Vedāntic Concern for Man*

Since the commentary of Śaṅkara on this verse has captured in an ecstatic passage the spiritual depth and human concern of the Upaniṣad, it will be appropriate to reproduce it in part in this context:

*Evaṁ puruṣa ātmani sarvaṁ pravilāpya ... svātmayāthātmyajñānena ... svasthaḥ praśāntaḥ kṛtakṛtyo bhavati yataḥ. ataḥ*

*taddarśanārtham anādyavidyāprasuptā uttiṣṭhata, he jantavaḥ, ātmajñānābhimukhā bhavata; jāgrata, ajñānanidrāyā ghorarūpāyāḥ sarvānarthabījabhūtāyāḥ, kṣayaṁ kuruta. Kathaṁ? Prāpya, upagamya, varān, prakṛṣṭān ācāryān, tatvavidaḥ; tadupadiṣṭaṁ sarvāntaram ātmānam aham asmi iti nibodhata, avagacchata. Na hi upekṣitavyam iti śrutiḥ anukaṁpayā āha mātṛvat, atisūkṣmabuddhiviṣayatvāt jñeyasya—*

'Since by thus merging everything in the Puruṣa, which is the Self, and realizing the true nature of oneself, man becomes self-established, supremely tranquil, and fulfilled (literally, achieving what ought to be achieved), therefore, in order to realize that, Arise! O creatures immersed in the sleep of beginningless ignorance; may you turn in the direction of the knowledge of the Self! Awake from this sleep of unknowing, which is terrible and the seed of all troubles. Destroy it! How? By resorting to the great ones—the excellent teachers who have realized the truth. And instructed by them, realize (for yourself) the innermost Ātman as "I am (That)". This is not to be neglected; hence exhorts the Śruti (the Upaniṣad) out of compassion, like a mother; since the truth to be known is such as can be realized only by the most subtle reason.'

### *Diving to the Depth*

Yama now proceeds to show in the next verse, verse fifteen, the extremely subtle nature of the truth of the Ātman which we are in search of:

*Aśabdam asparśam arūpam avyayam*
*tathārasaṁ nityam agandhavacca yat;*
*Anādyanantaṁ mahataḥ paraṁ dhruvam*
*nicāyya taṁ mṛtyumukhāt pramucyate—*

'By realizing that Ātman which is soundless, touchless, formless, imperishable, similarly without taste, eternal, without smell, beginingless and endless, (even) beyond the *mahat*, and immutable, one is liberated from the jaws of death.'

Something wonderful happens when man succeeds in stilling the sense-organs and the mind; it brings him face to face with the mystery of his own true self. Just as in physical science we study the behaviour of matter under various conditions such as under extremely high or extremely low temperatures, and the resulting phenomena are wonderful, similarly, in the science of our inner life, which Vedānta developed into what Julian Huxley calls a

'science of human possibilities', we have a study of man under various conditions of inner discipline, which has yielded results more wonderful and significant than those in the physical sciences. The highest result of such discipline of the energies of the inner life is total illumination—*jñāna*, man attaining the state of spiritual incandescence.

### *The Conquest of Death*

This verse describes this unique phenomenon, whereby mortal man becomes immortal by realizing his infinite, eternal dimension. *Mṛtyumukhāt pramucyate*—'is liberated from the jaws of death', says Yama in a picturesque phrase of the verse. Time consumes everything; but the infinite Ātman, beyond the reach of time, space, and causality, consumes time itself, as also space and causality. In the last verse of chapter two of this Upaniṣad, Yama had earlier described death or time as but the 'pickle' of the Ātman—*mṛtyuryasya upasecanam*. Vedānta technically describes the whole world of phenomena, physical as well as non-physical, as 'death'. It describes the ignorance which takes these phenomena to be the sole reality also as 'death'. And it characterizes the Ātman, and also the knowledge of it, as that which 'eats and digests' all these phenomena.

When Buddha met his first five disciples at Sārnāth after his enlightenment at Bodh-Gaya, he accosted them thus: 'Hearken, monks, the Immortal has been gained (by me).'

This illumination with its fruit of immortality is the consummation of evolution, according to Vedānta. This immortality does not mean the soul's survival at death; nor is it the doubtful product of magical rites or incantations. It is the product of illumined reason and is realized *here* and *now*, as Yama will be emphasizing in verses fourteen and fifteen of chapter six.

### *The Spiritual Basis of Character-Development*

Yama's exhortation to 'merge speech in *manas* and *manas* in *buddhi*' has deep significance for the development of human intellect and character. Speech and other sense-organs are good as servants, but not so good, and often positively bad, as masters. When disciplined by *manas* and *buddhi*, they become efficient tools in the pursuit of truth and life-excellence. By the word 'merge' is meant this discipline by which the self-cancelling energies of

the sense-organs are transmuted and unified into the higher energy of *buddhi* or Reason. When this transformed energy next finds expression through the sense-organs, it manifests the quality of scientific detachment and precision, and moral purity and character-efficiency. *Satyapūtāṁ vadet vācyaṁ manaḥ pūtaṁ samācaret*—'Utter speech that is purified by truth and adopt behaviour that is purified by mind (thought)', says Manu (*Manu-Smṛti*, VIII. 46). The objective of character-development is the transformation of life-energy into its purest and highest form; physical energy gets transformed into moral and intellectual energy, and that again into spiritual energy. The finer the quality of the energy, the greater is its power of impact and the wider its scope and range of action. This is the explanation of the enormous energies manifested by the world's spiritual giants like Buddha and Jesus, Ramakrishna and Vivekananda.

*In Praise of Wisdom*

The Upaniṣad now, in the last two verses of this chapter, verses sixteen and seventeen, proceeds to conclude in its own words this section of its teaching:

> *Nāciketamupākhyānaṁ mṛtyuproktaṁ sanātanam;*
> *Uktvā śrutvā ca medhāvī brahmaloke mahīyate*—

'The intelligent person, having heard and related this perennial story of Naciketā as told by Death (Yama), is glorified in the world of Brahman.'

> *Ya imaṁ paramaṁ guhyaṁ śrāvayet brahmasaṁsadi;*
> *Prayataḥ śrāddhakāle vā tadānantyāya kalpate,*
> *tadānantyāya kalpata iti*—

'He who relates, with great devotion, this profound mystery to an assembly of spiritual seekers, or at the time of the *śrāddha* ceremony, makes himself fit for the Infinite, ay, makes himself fit for the Infinite.'

The Upaniṣad, in these two verses, eulogizes the wisdom gained by Naciketā from his teacher Yama. By receiving this story from a teacher and by communicating it to others who are spiritually ready to receive it, man, says the verse, becomes glorified in the world of Brahman. *Śrāddha* is the annual ceremony prescribed by the Hindu religion for the remembrance of one's immediate ancestors. The time of *śrāddha* is mentioned as propitious for the imparting and receiving of this message, because it is associated

with the crisis of death, which is more likely to impart depth to human thinking than other occasions. The repetition of the sentence 'makes himself fit for the Infinite' twice in the text indicates the end of the chapter or the end of the section.

The world of Brahman is the world of universal Consciousness. Ordinary man takes that as his highest glory which proceeds from the achievement either of physical strength, material possessions, worldly power, or intellectual knowledge. But these are passing and trivial compared to that inalienable glory which is his by his very nature as the infinite Brahman. At the lowest end is man considering himself as a collection of specks of dust, and at the highest end is man realizing himself as infinite universal Consciousness. The sages of the Upaniṣads realized this inborn glory of man as Brahman. And they seek to awaken all men and women to an awareness of this glory of theirs. In the stirring words of Swami Vivekananda (*Complete Works*, Vol. III, p. 193):

> Teach yourselves, teach everyone his real nature; call upon the sleeping soul and see how it awakes. Power will come, glory will come, goodness will come, purity will come, and everything that is excellent will come, when this sleeping soul is roused to self-conscious activity.'

The realization of Brahman, the Self of man and the universe, the unity of the 'within' and the 'without', is the consummation of all knowledge into wisdom. This vision of the unity of all existence and the training of the mind for its realization form the main theme of Yama's teaching to Naciketā in the next chapter, into the study of which we shall enter when we meet next Saturday.

TWENTY FIVE

# KAṬHA UPANIṢAD—14

In the previous discourse, we listened to the momentous utterance of Yama in verse twelve of the last chapter, chapter three, that man is essentially divine, that this truth is a profound mystery hidden in the depths of experience, and that, though thus present in experience as a given datum, it is not manifest to all—*na prakāśate*. Yama had also added reassuringly that it *could* be *realized* and made manifest: *dṛśyate*. By whom and how? *Agryayā buddhyā sūkṣmayā sūkṣmadarśibhiḥ*—'by those who are accustomed to inquire into subtle truths by means of their subtle intellect or reason' The Upaniṣads present Brahman, the *ultimate* reality of the universe, as Ātman, the most *intimate* reality in man, his very Self.

*The Divergent Paths of Death and Deathlessness*

Yama now proceeds to tell us, in verses one and two of the fourth chapter which we shall study today, why the Ātman is not manifest to all, as also the technique for its realization:

*Parāñci khāni vyatṛṇat svayambhūḥ*
*tasmāt parāṅpaśyati nāntarātman;*
*Kaścit dhīraḥ pratyagātmānamaikṣat*
*āvṛttacakṣuḥ amṛtatvamicchan—*

'The Self-existent Lord created the sense-organs (including the mind) with the defect of an out-going disposition; therefore (man) perceives (things) outwardly, but not the inward Self. A certain *dhīra* (wise man), desirous of immortality, turned his senses (including the mind) inward and realized the inner Self.'

*Parācaḥ kāmānanuyanti bālāḥ*
*te mṛtyoryanti vitatasya pāśam;*
*Atha dhīrāḥ amṛtatvaṁ viditvā*
*dhruvam adhruveṣviha na prārthayante—*

'Children (men of immature understanding) pursue the external pleasures and they (thus) fall into the outstretched snare of death. The *dhiras* (wise ones), on the contrary, having realized the eternally immortal, do not crave for the non-eternal things here (in the world of relativity).'

Here is presented, in a few bold strokes, an arresting picture of human knowledge and human destiny—man's sense-bound limit-

ations leading him to finitude and death, on the one side, and his growth into an unfettered state yielding the fruits of infinitude and immortality, on the other.

### *The Phenomenon of Awareness*

In the evolution of the sense-organs, from the simple unicellular organism to the complex multicellular human body, science traces a gradual increase of awareness; but this awareness is awareness of the external environment only. Progress in the defining and co-ordinating of this awareness is registered as advance in knowledge; as the *Devīmāhātmyam* cryptically puts it (I. 47):

*Jñānamasti samastasya jantor viṣayagocare*—'the knowledge of all creatures is confined to the world of sense-objects'.

Knowledge at the level of the sense-organs is always knowledge of the external world, of a world which is in the clutches of time and subject to change, which is in the grip of 'the outstretched snare of death', as Yama more forcefully expresses it in verse two of this chapter.

With the appearance of the higher brain, however, evolution registers an advance by way of increased knowledge of, and control over, the external environment on the part of the organisms gifted with this new device of the cerebral system, which is endowed with the power not only to co-ordinate efficiently the activities of the different sense-organs, but also to consciously direct them to deliberately chosen purposes and goals. The primary urge behind all these activities is sensate satisfaction and survival. All physical life is a race against death, foredoomed to failure from the very commencement. The organism experiences, however, a vicarious satisfaction of this urge for survival through its offspring, achieving thereby a sort of biological immortality. This is all what is possible at the sensate level.

### *Human Immaturity versus Maturity*

The cerebral system in man, though capable of experiencing higher visions and pursuing nobler aims, still largely functions at the sensate level in the case of most people. These higher visions and nobler aims, which raise man to the moral and spiritual level of existence, proceed from a dimension of the human personality deeper than the sensate level. While the latter relates him to the temporal order, the former relates him to the eternal

order. Progress at the human stage of evolution is measured partly in terms of the growth and development of the sensate individual through control and manipulation by him of the sensible external universe, but largely in terms of the emergence of the spiritual man through inner discipline. The first, without the second accompanying it, reduces human life to a state of enhanced animal existence with spiritual death as its destiny. This is sheer childishness, says Yama in verse two: *parācaḥ kāmān anuyanti bālāḥ*. Those who pursue only external pleasures are just children, are but unformed men; they are not men yet, but only candidates to humanity. And if they refuse to move forward, if they fail to continue the evolutionary march in the specifically human line of evolutionary advance—the psycho-social, moral, and spiritual line—they face annihilation; 'they enter the widespread net of (spiritual) death', says Yama: *te mṛtyoryanti vitatasya pāśam*.

If this is immaturity, what then constitutes maturity? The spiritually mature person is significantly called *dhīra* in the Upaniṣads; in him is achieved the rare union of knowledge and courage, the union of penetrating intelligence, powerful will, and disciplined emotion. About mental maturity so shaped, Yama says:

*Atha dhīrāḥ amṛtatvaṁ viditvā dhruvam adhruveṣu iha na prārthayante*—'The *dhīras*, on the contrary, having realized the eternally immortal, do not crave for the non-eternal things here (in the world of relativity).'

The *dhīra* does not equate human destiny with either organic satisfaction or organic survival, or with biological immortality; much less does he crave for a dubious immortality in a heaven. Having experienced the stirrings of the immortal within himself and becoming rationally convinced that change and more change is the characteristic of the external world, he has directed his search for the immortal and the eternal from the world of the 'without' to the world of the 'within'.

### *Equipping Reason for the Higher Life*

This is man in search of values, in search of quality, in search of the moral, aesthetic, and spiritual depths of his own Self. In him, the newly acquired cerebral system has risen to a higher field of functioning than the sensate, and become capable of experiencing higher visions and nobler aims. He feels himself spiritually related to the eternal order of the 'within' of the universe, as he

had all along felt physically related to the temporal order of its 'without'. This marks the development of his knowledge or reason not as the tail-end of his sense-organs, but as the unfettered agent of life's advance to spiritual truth, with character-excellence as its corollary.

This advance to spiritual truth is a unique journey. It is, first of all, an inward journey; secondly, it is faced with more stupendous obstacles than any journey in the outer world; thirdly, it is a journey which takes man from the bondage of finitude, delusion, and death to the freedom of universality, illumination, and immortality; and fourthly, every advance in this journey registers a corresponding advance even in the journey of man's outer life, steadying his steps and enriching his heart.

We had already learnt from Yama about this inner journey when we studied the first nine verses of the third chapter of this Upaniṣad. In its indirect and slow forms, in and through life's other struggles and achievements, it is this inner journey that is revealed in human culture, in the ethical, moral, and religious life of humanity. It is the source of the integrating forces, what Indian thought terms *dharma*, that hold human society together, binding man to man with the non-physical force of love.

*The Direct Technique of the 'Study of the Book Within'*

But what is this inner journey in its pure form, in and by itself? What is its technique in its straight and direct expression? It is this question that Yama answers in the first verse of this chapter. If your quest is for the immortal, seek within; if it is for perishable objects and passing pleasures, seek without; this is the clear guidance given by the Upaniṣads to all humanity. In the words of Swami Vivekananda (*Complete Works*, Vol. VI, Sixth Edition, p. 81):

'Religion deals with the truths of the metaphysical world, just as chemistry and the other natural sciences deal with the truths of the physical world. The book one must read to learn chemistry is the book of nature. The book from which to learn religion is your own mind and heart. The sage is often ignorant of physical science, because he reads the wrong book—the book within; and the scientist is too often ignorant of religion, because he, too, reads the wrong book—the book without.'

The technique of this 'study of the book within', concentrated and direct, is what Yama gives in this first verse. The sense-

organs of man, including his mind, have one constitutional defect, says Yama; it is that they are, all of them, out-going in their propensity; therefore, they give man experience of the external world, but not of the inner world, nor of the inner Self. As explained by Śaṅkara in his comment on this verse:

*Tasmāt parāṅ, parāgrūpān, anātmabhūtān śabdādīn paśyati, upalabhate, upalabdhā na antarātman*—'Therefore (they, the sense-organs) see, i.e. experience, the external, i.e. the outer world of sound etc. which are the not-self, but not the inner Self, i.e. the experiencer.'

This is the state of man in nature; nature within him, namely, his propensities and cravings, takes him through his nervous system out of himself, often in spite of himself, through the hundreds of stimuli that pour in on him every minute from nature outside. This is man the automaton, a bundle of conditioned reflexes, man upheld in modern behaviouristic psychology. His mind or reason is hardly distinguishable from his sense-organs.

*India and the 'Science of Human Possibilities'*

It is one thing to say that this is man as we see him around us in the world; but it is quite a different thing to assert further that this is all of man, that this is his final destiny. Twentieth-century psychology and even neurology are redeeming man from this false and dismal view of himself. Without disputing the fact that in every normal man the sway of conditioned reflexes, centred in the 'old brain', is vast and effective, twentieth-century scientific thought protests vigorously against the 'nothing but' view of the behaviouristic and other schools, which equate man to *nothing but* an animal and both to *nothing but* a machine, and is reaching out, in the words of Julian Huxley, to 'a science of human possibilities', through a study of the implications of the 'new brain' for human life and destiny.

The Upaniṣads, in ancient India, had taken up this study of human possibilities, not just theoretically, but experimentally, and developed a comprehensive science of human possibilities with its theoretical and practical aspects. The fruits of this study were threefold: the independence of the mind or reason of man of his sensory apparatus was the first fruit of this science; the control and manipulation of the psycho-physical energies in man, resulting in an emotionally stable inner *milieu* within him, was its second

fruit. And man's advance to spiritual awareness resulting in the realization of his true Self, the infinite and immortal Ātman, and in the manifestation in life and action of his inalienable divine nature, was its third fruit. The first and second fruits are known as *sama* and *dama* in all Indian spiritual literature. As a technique, they are also known as *tapas* in the Upaniṣads, which proclaim it as the one great and sure means of all higher human attainments, moral, intellectual, or spiritual. As defined by the *Yājñavalkya Smṛti*, which Śaṅkara quotes in his commentary on the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* (III. 1) which I had quoted in an earlier lecture:

*Sarveṣāṁ hi niyatasādhyaviṣayāṇāṁ sādhanānāṁ tapa eva sādhakatamaṁ sādhanam iti hi prasiddhaṁ loke....Tacca tapo bāhyāntaḥkaraṇasamādhānaṁ, taddvārakatvāt brahmapratipatteḥ.*

*'Manasaśca indriyāṇāṁ ca hyaikāgryaṁ paramaṁ tapaḥ;*
*Tajjyāyaḥ sarvadharmebhyaḥ sa dharmaḥ para ucyate',*
*iti smṛteḥ*—

'It is well known in the world that, among all the means which are sure of leading to ends, *tapas* is the most capable one....Such *tapas*, again, consists in the tranquillization of the external and internal sense-organs, which is the means for the realization of Brahman (the ultimate Reality). "The concentration of (the energies of) the mind and the sense-organs is the supreme *tapas*; it is superior to all other *dharmas* (ethical and spiritual disciplines); it is said to be the supreme *dharma*", so says the *Smṛti*.'

### *The Self: Lower versus Higher*

The natural man, as we have seen, is an out-going individual in search of organic satisfactions and organic survival; he functions in the context of keen competition and struggle, where satisfactions and survival belong to the organically fittest. When this man rises to the ethical level, he learns to check his outgoing impulses, soften the competition and struggle, and ensure the fitting, not only of himself, but also of as many of his fellow-beings as possible, for satisfactions and survival. *It is this check or limitation of the natural man and the consequent expression of a higher dimension of the human personality that illumines the phenomenon of law, both civil and moral, and makes for civilization and culture.* Every check on an outgoing impulse turns the energy of the impulse back on the self in a reflexive action. All ethics and morality imply the distinction between a lower self and a higher self in

man, corresponding more or less with the physiological distinction between his lower brain and higher brain. This checking and disciplining of the lower self is the *sine qua non* for the manifestation of the higher self. If that check is a moral check, the impulse, in its reflexive movement, reaches the region of the higher self, thence to move out, purified, as a moral impulse and action. In every moral action therefore, the energy and direction of the impulse behind the action proceeds from the higher self of man. The word 'self' in English and its Sanskrit equivalent, *ātman*, connote this reflexive energy movement in the human personality.

The importance, for evolutionary advance, of this inner tranquillization, such as is achieved by *śama* and *dama*, is stressed in modern biology in its physiological concept of homeostasis. All evolutionary advance is preceded by a stabilization at the already achieved level. The first of such significant evolutionary achievements was physical thermostasis in mammals.

*Homeostasis and Evolution*

Though quoted in part earlier, in the course of our studies of verses fourteen to seventeen of chapter two and one to nine of chapter three of this Upaniṣad, the observations of the neurologist Grey Walter will bear reproduction in this context (*The Living Brain*, p. 16):

'The acquisition of internal temperature control, thermostasis, was a supreme event in neural, indeed in all natural history. It made possible the survival of mammals on a cooling globe. That was its general importance in evolution. Its particular importance was that it completed, in one section of the brain, an automatic system of stabilization for the vital functions of the organism—a condition known as homeostasis. *With this arrangement, other parts of the brain are left free for functions not immediately related to the vital engine or the senses, for functions surpassing the wonders of homeostasis itself*'. (Italics not author's)

After explaining that, through homeostasis, 'the upper brain is freed from the menial tasks of the body, the regulating functions being delegated to the lower brain' (*ibid.*, p. 17), Grey Walter significantly concludes (pp. 18-19):

'For the mammals all, homeostasis was survival; for man, emancipation....

'The experience of homeostasis, the perfect mechanical calm which it allows the brain, has been known for two or three thousand years under various appellations. It is the physiological aspect of all the perfectionist faiths—*nirvāṇa*, the abstraction of the

*yogī*, the peace that passeth understanding, the derided "happiness that lies within"; *it is a state of grace in which disorder and disease are mechanical slips and errors.*' (Italics not author's)

### *Emergence of the Higher Mind*

This tranquillization of the inner *milieu* of human life, consisting of the energies of the sense-organs and the lower brain, is the one pre-condition for the advance of man to emancipation, to the heights of spiritual freedom. It is only under this condition that the higher brain of man becomes truly higher, and becomes released 'for functions not immediately related to the vital engine or the senses, for functions surpassing the wonders of homeostasis itself', as expressed by Grey Walter. It becomes converted into a fit instrument to strive for and to achieve his life-fulfilment in spiritual emancipation.

This whole process is culture, as distinct from mere civilization, in the true sense of the term, in which man achieves, according to Indian thought, a spiritual depth to his personality through a steady advance to the immortal divine centre of his being. *Only when not stuck up in worldliness does the higher brain become truly higher*; it then acquires a lucidity and a mobility arising from purity, which enables its fortunate possessor to employ it effectively in any field of investigation, external or internal. This is what finds expression as the pure mind emphasized in the higher religions of the world. This is the mind of which Jesus spoke, when he uttered what for man is one of the most hope-inspiring messages: 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall *see* God.' It is the *buddhi* or the *vijñāna* which Yama had referred to, in verses three and nine of chapter three of this Upaniṣad, as the most efficient charioteer for life's journey to truth and fulfilment. With such a mind for companion, the highest spiritual realization becomes, in the words of Śaṅkara, as palpable 'as a fruit in the palm of one's hand'.

### *The Way of the Dhīra*

This is the third and finest fruit of India's investigation into the 'science of human possibilities', as referred to earlier. The inner discipline fit for such an investigation is of an extraordinary character. It was a team of such extraordinary spiritual investigators known as *ṛṣis*, sages, that gave to humanity the scientific spiritual tradition bequeathed by the immortal Upaniṣads, a

tradition which has been re-tested and re-verified by an unbroken line of such *ṛṣis* down to our own times.

Referring to the advance attained by ancient India in this 'science of human possibilities', Max Müller observes (*Three Lectures on the Vedānta Philosophy*, London, 1894, p. 7):

'But if it seem strange to you that the old Indian philosophers should have known more about the soul than Greek or medieval or modern philosophers, let us remember that however much the telescopes for observing the stars of heaven have been improved, the observatories of the soul have remained much the same.'

The Upaniṣad gives the title of *dhīra* to the fortunate possessor of such an inner *milieu* mentioned earlier. In common parlance, the word *dhīra* means a hero. Heroes in any field of achievement possess minds of more than ordinary toughness and manoeuvrability. And they can be graded according to the quality of their mental constitution. Among all such heroes, however, says Vedānta, the one who scales the Mount Everest of Experience, who realizes the infinite and immortal Ātman behind the finite and mortal constituents of the personality, is unique and peerless. For he chooses an entirely new line of advance which is a veritable *terra incognita* to most people, including scholars; he is in search of his own Self, the centre of his consciousness; his reason is in search of the *subject* of all knowledge, the knower, the seer, and not the *objects* of knowledge or perception. And the discipline he gives himself and the technique he adopts are also unique and revolutionary.

### *The Dhīra of the Upaniṣads*

Who was the first of this team of extraordinary spiritual investigators and discoverers? The Upaniṣads furnish us with no historical information on this point. In them we move in a world of thought, intense, rarefied, and pure, in which atmosphere even the personalities of the thinkers get melted into the impersonal; moving on air, so thin and rare, the *ṛṣis* have hardly left any visible footprints; their personalities have become fused with the truths which they discovered; and what we get out of them is only a body of truths, *apauruṣeya* or impersonal, and therefore universal. The *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*, however, in its opening verse, makes a mythical reference to Brahmā, the first-born, the personal aspect of the impersonal Absolute, as the first teacher of this wisdom to man. This means, in effect, that the Ātman dwelling in

the heart of all is alone the teacher of this science of the Ātman to man. It is difficult to name the pioneers in many significant fields of human achievement ranging from the discovery of the use of fire or of the wheel to the discovery of the immortal divine Self of man. Yama, therefore, in the opening verse of the fourth chapter of this Upaniṣad, refers to him as *kaścit dhīraḥ*—'a certain *dhīra* (wise man)'. What was extraordinary about him? He turned the energy of his senses and mind inward: *āvṛttacakṣuḥ*. What was his intention? What was he seeking there? Immortality: *amṛtatvam icchan*. And what did he find there? The inner Self of man: *pratyagātmānam aikṣat*.

This *dhīra* must have been a living pulsating individual; but soon, he became the first of a type drawn from the earth's bravest, purest, and best, irrespective of caste, creed, or sex, or historical circumstance, since the same Ātman is in all. Accordingly, he may be any wise man who, as defined by the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* (VII.1.3), seeks to go beyond mere scholarship, and social refinement through civilization, to the realization of the Ātman through unwearying inner culture, convinced that in that realization alone lies the ending of all sorrow and tension arising from unfulfilment; or, as indicated by Bertrand Russell (*Impact of Science on Society* p. 121), seeks to go beyond sorrow by going beyond knowledge to wisdom; or as characterized by Socrates, is in search of wisdom, being dissatisfied with much knowledge and information. The term fits surprisingly well the modern seekers of truth, the spiritually earnest among them, who, dissatisfied with all the knowledge and power of the contemporary scientific civilization, and not wedded to any scientific dogma such as materialism, are in earnest search after the spiritual meaning of the universe and the true destiny of man.

### *The Dhīra: The Modern Courageous Type*

Let us picture to ourselves one such modern seeker who has behind him a long record of earnest truth-seeking. He has been in search of knowledge all his life, verified, conclusive, unifying knowledge. The first field of his investigation was obviously the world of external nature, the world revealed by his sense-organs, the world which first impinges on the senses of every new-born babe. Through his trained mind, disciplined in scientific detachment, objectivity, and precision, he has penetrated, along with his team of fellow scientists, far into the heart of this external world through the physical and biological sciences, and gained a large measure of

and experience. This is the stature of Vedānta among the thought-systems of the world; being a synthesis of the science of the 'without' and the science of the 'within', a grand science of the totality of reality, Vedānta invites the modern truth-seeker not to silence his reason and become a defeatist, compromising with what his reason shows up as mere shadows, but to forge ahead in search of the light behind all substances and shadows—the light of Awareness, the infinite Self of man.

Referring to the nature and scope of this search into the depth of experience, Swami Vivekananda says (*Complete Works*, Vol. III, Eighth Edition, p. 253):

'Beyond (waking) consciousness is where the bold search. Consciousness is bound by the senses. Beyond that, beyond the senses, men must go in order to arrive at truths of the spiritual world, and there are even now persons who succeed in going beyond the bounds of the senses. These are called *ṛṣis* (sages) because they come face to face with spiritual truths.'

Those who dare to do this belong to the category of the *dhīra* and join the team, may be even as humble camp followers, of that first pioneer to whom Yama refers as *kaścit dhīraḥ* in this Upaniṣad. In the words of Romain Rolland (*The Life of Ramakrishna*, Fourth Impression, p. 6):

'It is the quality of thought and not its object which determines its source and allows us to decide whether or not it emanates from religion. If it turns fearlessly towards the search for truth at all costs with single-minded sincerity prepared for any sacrifice, I should call it religious; for it presupposes faith in an end to human effort higher than the life of the individual, at times higher than the life of existing society, and even higher than the life of humanity as a whole. Scepticism itself when it proceeds from vigorous natures true to the core, when it is an expression of strength and not of weakness, joins in the march of the Grand Army of the religious soul.'

### *The Avṛttacakṣu*

The technique that this pioneer *dhīra* adopted was revolutionary, unique. Anyone who has tried it will know how difficult is the control and manipulation of the psycho-physical energies of man. The mental and moral life of an average person demands of him only a fraction of this discipline. The higher reaches of mental and moral life demand a greater measure of this discipline. But all this discipline involved in morality and the good life even up to its highest reach is just ordinary compared to what is demanded

of one who wants to pierce to the depth of the mystery of man. He is required to do nothing less than giving a right-about turn to his inner energies. This is the meaning of the term *āvṛttacakṣu* used by Yama in the verse; and this is precisely what this pioneer attempted, *and achieved.*

Referring to the inherent out-going tendency of the sense-organs and the mind, and the complete overcoming of this tendency by this spiritual pioneer, Śaṅkara says in his thought-provoking comment on this verse:

*Evaṁsvabhāve api sati lokasya, kaścit nadyāḥ pratisrotaḥ-pravartanam iva, dhīro, dhīmān, viveki, pratyagātmānaṁ...āvṛttacakṣuḥ—āvṛttaṁ vyāvṛttaṁ cakṣuḥ śrotrādikam indriyajātam aśeṣaviṣayāt yasya sa āvṛttacakṣuḥ—sa evaṁ saṁskṛtaḥ pratyagātmānaṁ paśyati. Na hi bāhyaviṣayâlocanaparatvaṁ pratyagātmekṣaṇaṁ ca ekasya saṁbhavati.*

*Kimarthaṁ punaḥ itthaṁ mahatā prayāsena svabhāvapravṛttinirodham kṛtvā dhīraḥ pratyagātmānaṁ paśyati iti, ucyate; amṛtatvam, amaraṇadharmatvaṁ nityasvabhāvatvam icchan ātmanaḥ—*

'Even though people are of this nature, yet, like (the technique of) making some rivers flow in the opposite direction, the *dhira*, the one endowed with intelligence, with discrimination, realizes the inner Self by becoming *āvṛttacakṣu*; one who completely turns away all his sense-organs like eyes, ears, etc. from all sense-objects is *āvṛttacakṣu*. Thus becoming purified, he realizes the inner Self. It is, verily, not possible for one and the same person to be absorbed in the thought of external sense-objects and realize the inner Self.

'For what purpose, then, does the *dhīra*, restraining thus with enormous effort his natural propensities, realize the inner Self? The answer is: desirous of immortality, deathlessness, which is one's own eternal nature.'

The question posed by Śaṅkara in the above passage is very significant: 'For what purpose, then, does the *dhira*, restraining thus with enormous effort his natural propensities, realize the inner Self?' Men are always prepared to undertake hazardous jobs, undergo extreme hardships, face disappointments, defeats and losses, if they consider the prize to be had high enough; that prize may be material wealth; or fame, or intellectual knowledge, or spiritual realization. They are all in the grip of a madness of love which can soften all hardships. When a gold mine is dis-

covered in an inaccesible place, no prospect of hardship deters the gold-lovers from the adventure.

When Sri Ramakrishna was passing through a God-intoxicated state in the temple of Dakshineswar, several people around him called him insane. When he reported this to Bhairavi Brahmani, one of his *gurus*, her reply, as given by Swami Vivekananda in his lecture on 'My Master', was significant (*Complete Works*, Vol. IV, Eighth Edition, pp. 171-72):

'My son, blessed is the man on whom such madness comes. The whole of this universe is mad—some for wealth, some for pleasure, some for fame, some for a hundred other things. They are mad for gold, or husbands, or wives, for little trifles, mad to tyrannize over somebody, mad to become rich, mad for every foolish thing except God. And they can understand only their own madness. When another man is mad after gold, they have fellow-feeling and sympathy for him, and they say he is the right man, as lunatics think that lunatics alone are sane.... That is why they call you mad; but yours is the right kind of madness. Blessed is the man who is mad after God. Such men are very few.'

The history of the world has shown that this type of madness is the supreme source of whatever sanity there is in the world.

This turning away of the sense-organs from the sense-objects in the direction of the inner Self is the standard technique of the science of religion.

We are now in a better position to appreciate Yama's earlier characterization of this spiritual journey, in verse fourteen of chapter three, as 'walking on the edge of a razor'.

Yama had also indicated to us the milestones on the road of this inner penetration in verses thirteen and fifteen of that chapter. Every religious system which advocates closing the eyes and shutting out all the senses in meditation as a spiritual discipline, bears, knowingly or unknowingly, the impress of this technique and vision of this first spiritual pioneer, the *kaścit dhīraḥ* of Yama.

We listen to the powerful echoes of this vision in the orientation given by Jesus to the Semitic concept of the kingdom of God (St. Luke, 17, 20-21):

'And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation:

'Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you.'

The spiritual significance of 'Man, know thyself' of ancient Greek thought also becomes revealed in the light of this technique and vision. We keep our eyes open in the waking state and experience the world of phenomena; we close them in the state of sleep which, temporarily shutting us away from all phenomena, refreshes us to face the demands of the next waking state. But when we close our eyes in meditation, we go beyond waking and sleeping states and learn to *see* in a more fundamental sense and *get refreshed* in a more permanent way. *We then become asleep to the phenomenal* and *awake to the eternal*. In the classical utterance on the subject by the *Gītā* (II. 69):

*Yā niśā sarvabhūtānāṁ tasyāṁ jāgarti saṁyamī;*
*Yasyāṁ jāgrati bhūtāni sā niśā paśyato muneḥ—*

'That which is night to all beings, there the self-controlled one is awake; where all beings are awake, that is night to the enlightened seer.'

*The Senses Conceal More than They Reveal*

This turning away from the sense-organs is based on the conviction that they, even with the aid of the best instruments, reveal only very little of reality. In going out through the sense-organs in search of reality, even the most disciplined mind is doing only its first lessons of the book of knowledge. When one commences one's study of the book of knowledge, one is excited by the wonderful vista opened up by the senses; at this stage, his senses *reveal* reality to him. As he advances in his lessons and moves closer to the heart of reality, he begins, however, to experience more and more their cramping effects; at the end of these first lessons, he finds himself armed with the conviction that they *conceal* more than they *reveal*.

In revealing some of the surface waves of the ocean, his senses had concealed from him the vast ocean itself. The next lessons must relate to a study of the ocean itself after withdrawing the attention from the waves, fascinating though they be. But they will not be forsaken for ever; after understanding the nature of the ocean, there can be a second look at them. What a revelation it will then be! No more mysterious, the waves now reveal themselves as what they are and what they have always been essentially, namely, the ocean.

*Concentration of Mind*

With this discovery of the changeable character of all phenomena revealed by the senses, the truth-seeker takes leave of the

positive sciences and enters the domain of the science of the inner world, namely, religion, to continue his quest for the unconditioned and the changeless, for the One behind the many. Change is the characteristic of much of the world of the 'within' as well; for much of that within, according to Vedānta, is also matter, not-self, matter in its finer forms; but he will penetrate to the truly 'within' by going beyond all that is not-self. If at the end nothing changeless comes into view, he will boldly conclude and proclaim that causality and determinism are the ultimate categories and immortality and freedom are a sham. As he takes leave of the external phenomena, he takes leave also of his sense-organs; for they are of no use to him in this new field; and unless kept under strict discipline by the technique of *śama* and *dama* referred to earlier, they may be positively harmful as well; for at this stage, they distract the concentration of the mind; and concentration is the supreme technique of the science of religion. Yama will refer to it as *yoga* in the sixth and last chapter of this Upaniṣad.

The purer the mind the more easily it is concentrated; this purity is the measure of the mind's release from thraldom to the sense-organs. The mind thus released is the most wonderful instrument that man can have. Referring to this technique of *yoga*, Swami Vivekananda says (*Complete Works*, Vol. I, Eleventh Edition, p. 135):

'The mind is constantly changing and vacillating, and can, when perfected, either attach itself to several organs, to one, or to none. ... The perfected mind ... has the reflexive power of looking back into its own depths. This reflexive power is what the *yogi* wants to attain; by concentrating the powers of the mind, and turning them inward, he seeks to know what is happening inside. There is in this no question of mere belief.'

### *Buddha: A Glowing Example*

The whole technique and its fruit expounded by Yama in the opening verse of this chapter is found re-authenticated in a later age by Buddha. This was what this great spiritual teacher of the seventh-sixth century B.C. attempted and attained in one night under the *bodhi* tree at Bodh-Gaya. The scientific thoroughness and practicality of the method and the loftiness of the results attained come out in some of his later discourses to his disciples. He controlled his sense-organs, quietened his mind, and turned their energies inward in search of the Immortal behind the mortal. By the end of the night, he had achieved *bodhi*, enlightenment, which has reference to the true nature of all conditioned phenomena, includ-

ing the ego of man, and to the true nature of man as the unconditioned, immortal, and non-dual Self beyond them. As he got up from his meditation, he expressed in a few words the content of his inexpressible experience (*Majjhima Nikāya, Sutta* 26):

'And the realization (*jñānam*) now as a thing seen arose in me: "My liberation is unshakable; this is my last birth; there will now be no rebirth for me".'

Again, a few days later at Sārnāth, accosting, in a tone of authority, his first five disciples, who were hesitating to accord him a welcome due to a perfect teacher, Buddha said (*ibid*):

'Hearken, monks, the Immortal (*amatam*) has been realized by me. I teach, I make plain the *dhamma* (the Truth and the Path to It). If you follow as I teach, you will ere long, and in this very life, learn fully for yourselves, verify for yourselves, and, having attained, abide in the supreme fulfilment of the holy life.'

The Advaita *sādhanā* of Sri Ramakrishna under his *guru* Totapuri, which I had occasion to narrate during our study of verse four of chapter two of the *Kena Upaniṣad*, provides another glowing illustration, and that from the modern age, of the unbroken spiritual tradition initiated by the *kaścit dhīra* referred to by Yama.

*Blessedness: the Fruit of the Science of Religion*

The path is hard and long, but the goal is sure; it is immortality, blessedness, fulfilment. Every step thereto tends to enhance the *quality* of human life. Observes Swami Vivekananda (*Complete Works*, Vol. I, Eleventh Edition, p. 130):

'When by analysing his own mind, man comes face to face, as it were, with something which is never destroyed, something which is, by its own nature, eternally pure and perfect, he will no more be miserable, no more unhappy. All misery comes from fear, from unsatisfied desire. Man will find that he never dies, and then he will have no more fear of death. When he knows that he is perfect, he will have no more vain desires, and both these causes being absent, there will be no more misery—there will be perfect bliss, even while in this body.'

The fruits of such a life are peace, universal love, and compassion. These are the fruits that will sweeten all other fruits of life. In the light of the knowledge of the true nature of man as the *nitya-suddha-buddha-mukta svabhāva paramātman*—ever-pure, ever-illumined, ever-free, and infinite Self, in the terminology of Vedānta, life and its processes appear in a new light. This forms the theme of Yama's teaching in the remaining thirteen verses of this chapter, chapter four, which we shall study next.

TWENTY SIX

# KATHA UPANISAD—15

In the last discourse, Yama told us about the *kaścit dhīra*, his extraordinary feat of turning the senses and the mind inward, and the discovery by him of the immortal divine Self within. The whole theme of such a momentous achievement was conveyed to us by this Upaniṣad in one brief utterance. The diverse aspects of this great theme find, however, more elaborate treatment in some other Upaniṣads, notably the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka*. Through a penetrating study of the nature of knowledge and awareness, that Upaniṣad reveals to us not only that the Self of man is of the nature of pure consciousness and immutable, but also that it is infinite and non-dual. The fundamental unity of the universe derives from the unity of the spiritual reality behind the universe. The tireless search for this reality through the phenomenon of man lays bare not only the relativity and finitude of all external sense-objects, but also of all internal ego-sense, as also of the knowing process conditioned by the subject-object relation. What remains is the self-luminous, unconditioned consciousness, beyond speech and thought, infinite and therefore non-dual. This is the Ātman of the Upaniṣads, the true Self of man, which, in virtue of its infinitude, is known also as Brahman, the Self of the universe, the ultimate unity of its 'within' and 'without'. In the light of this vision, man, who appears in normal experience as finite and trivial in knowledge and awareness, is but like the tip of an immense rock projecting above the surface waves of the ocean.

### *The Many in the Light of the One*

What is man and his life processes, what is nature and her myriad manifestations, in the light of this spiritual vision of all-comprehending unity? This is the main theme of Yama's teachings in the remaining thirteen verses of this chapter, verses three to fifteen, which we shall study today. It is also the main theme of the rest of this Upaniṣad, in its fifth and sixth chapters. From a search for the vision of the one *behind* the many, of the changeless *behind* the changing, Yama now leads us on to a vision of the one *in* the many, of the changeless *in* the changing; the world of relativity stands transformed and transfigured when we take this second look at it.

Verses three to five refer to Ātman as the immutable principle of intelligence, beyond time, but controlling the processes of time, and the ever-present witness of the ever-changing phenomena without and within man:

*Yena rūpaṁ rasaṁ gandhaṁ śabdān sparśān ca maithunān;*
*Etenaiva vijānāti kimatra pariśiṣyate?*
*Etat vai tat—*

'That by which man cognizes form, taste, smell, sounds, and the sex contacts is This alone. What remains here (unknown to That)? This is verily That.'

*Svapnāntaṁ jāgaritāntaṁ cobhau yenānupaśyati;*
*Mahāntaṁ vibhum ātmānaṁ matvā dhīro na śocati—*

'Having realized that great, all-pervading Ātman by which one witnesses all objects in the dream and waking states, the *dhīra* does not grieve.'

*Ya imaṁ madhvadaṁ veda ātmānaṁ jīvamantikāt;*
*Īśānaṁ bhūtabhavyasya na tato vijugupsate.*
*Etat vai tat—*

'He who knows this Ātman, the enjoyer of honey (fruits of actions), the sustainer of life, ever near, and the lord of the past and the future, accordingly hates no one. This is verily That.'

The Upaniṣadic search for the true subject of all experience revealed the immutable Self of man as the knower behind all acts of knowing, as the perceiver behind all acts of perception. This is the subject which is ever the subject and never the object; all other subjects are sometimes the subject and sometimes the object, relative to the particular contexts against which they are viewed. This inquiry into the nature of the Self as the one immutable subject forms the theme of the *Kena Upaniṣad* which we studied earlier.

Introducing verse three of this chapter, Śaṅkara says in his comment:

*Yadvijñānāt na kiñcit anyat prārthayante brāhmaṇāḥ, kathaṁ tadadhigama iti, ucyate*—'How is that to be known by realizing which knowers of Brahman do not crave for anything (in the world of relativity)? This is explained'

To grasp the significance of this verse, we can do no better than listen to Śaṅkara. Explaining its meaning, Śaṅkara continues:

*Yena vijñānasvabhāvena ātmanā rūpam rasaṁ gandhaṁ śabdān sparśān ca maithunān, maithunanimittān sukhapratyayān, vijānāti, vispaṣṭaṁ jānāti, sarvo lokaḥ.*

*Nanu naivaṁ prasiddhiḥ lokasya, ātmanā dehādivilakṣaṇena ahaṁ vijānāmi iti; dehādi saṅghāto ahaṁ vijānāmi iti tu sarvo loko avagacchati.*

*Na tvevam; dehādisaṅghātasyāpi śabdādisvarūpatvāviśeṣāt, vijñeyatvāviśeṣāt ca, na yuktaṁ vijñātṛtvam. Yadi hi dehādisaṅghāto, rūpādyātmakaḥ san, rūpādīn vijānīyāt, tarhi, bāhyā api rūpādaya anyonyam svaṁ svaṁ rūpaṁ ca vijānīyuḥ. Na ca etadasti.*

*Tasmāt dehādilakṣaṇāṁśca rūpādīn etenaiva, dehādivyatiriktenaiva, vijñānasvabhāvena ātmanā, vijānāti lokaḥ. Yathā, yena loho dahati, so'gniriti, tadvat—*

'By which, i.e. the Ātman, who is of the nature of consciousness, all the world clearly knows form, taste, sounds, touches, and the sex contacts, i.e. the pleasurable feelings caused by sex contacts.

'It may be objected that, what is commonly experienced by the world is not in the form "I know (these) through an Ātman which is separate from the body etc." On the contrary, the whole world thinks in the form "I who am a compound of body etc. know (these)".

'It is, however, not so. It is not reasonable to attribute knowership even to the aggregate of body etc. which is indistinguishable in its nature from sound and the rest, and which is (like them) a knowable. If, in spite of being of the nature of form and the rest, the aggregate of body etc. could know form and the rest, then it will follow that even form and the rest, which are external, can know their own mutual forms as well as other forms. But this, however, is not a fact.

'Therefore, the world knows the attributes of the body etc., and forms and the rest, only through this, i.e. only through the Ātman which is distinct from the body etc. and which is of the nature of consciousness. It is just like "that by which the metal burns is fire".'

There is nothing in all experience which is not known or perceived by the Ātman, the one immutable consciousness. '*Kim atra pariśiṣyate*—'What remains here (unknown to That)?' asks Yama,

with a negative answer implied in the question itself. Such a knower must be non-dual and omniscient. So Yama affirms: *Etat vai tat*—'This is verily That'. These three phrases will appear often in refrain in the verses to follow.

*Experience discloses many pretenders to selfhood*; philosophical inquiry, however, reveals the objective, mutable, and not-self character of all of them; they are subjects in one context and objects in another. The Ātman is the true subject, being immutable, eternal, and a singular. It is ever the subject and never an object in any context. In the words of the opening verse of the *Dṛgdṛśyaviveka:*

*Rūpaṁ dṛśyaṁ locanaṁ dṛk taddṛśyaṁ dṛk tu mānasam;*
*Dṛśyā dhīvṛttayaḥ sākṣī dṛgeva, na tu dṛśyate—*

'Form is the seen (object), eye is the seer (subject); that (the eye) is the seen, the seer then is the mind; the modifications of the mind are the seen; the *sākṣī* (the witness, namely, the Ātman) is the seer only, and never the seen.'

The same truth is expressed by the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (III. 7. 23) in a majestic utterance:

*Adṛṣṭo draṣṭā, aśrutaḥ śrotā, amato mantā, aviijñāto vijñātā; nānyo atosti draṣṭā, nānyo atosti srotā, nānyo atosti mantā, nānyo atosti vijñātā; eṣa te ātmā antaryāmī amṛtaḥ; ato anyadārtam—*

'He is never seen, but is the Seer; He is never heard, but is the Hearer; He is never thought, but is the Thinker; He is never known, but is the Knower. There is no other seer but Him, no other hearer but Him, no other thinker but Him, no other knower but Him. He is the *antaryāmī* (inner Ruler), your own immortal Self. Everything else but Him is mortal.'

The Ātman as the immutable and eternal consciousness is the witness of the changing states of waking and sleep. Yama emphasizes this aspect of the Ātman in verse four.

The Upaniṣads arrive at the purity, immutability, and non-duality of the Ātman, and its character as the light of all lights, the light of pure awareness, through a penetrating inquiry into the universal phenomena of the three states of waking, dream, and dreamless sleep. Apart from the two large Upaniṣads, the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* and the *Chāndogya*, in which this subject finds prominent treatment, there is one Upaniṣad in which it forms the exclusive theme. This is the *Māṇḍūkya*, the shortest of all the

Upaniṣads with only twelve verses, whose brief but pregnant utterances have been clarified and amplified by a later sage and philosopher of about the seventh century A.D., namely, Gauḍapāda, in his famous *Māṇḍūkyakārikā*. The nature of the Ātman revealed by an investigation into the three states has been expounded to us in a luminous verse of this *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad*, verse seven:

*Nāntaḥprajñaṁ, na bahiḥprajñaṁ, nobhayataḥprajñaṁ, na prajñānaghanaṁ, na prajñaṁ, nāprajñam, adṛśyam, avyavahāryam, agrāhyam, alakṣaṇam, acintyam, avyapadeśyam, ekātmapratyayasāraṁ, prapañcopaśamaṁ, śāntaṁ, śivam, advaitam caturthaṁ manyante, sa ātmā, sa vijñeyaḥ—*

'Not conscious of the internal (i.e., the Ātman is not the self in the dream state), nor conscious of the external (the self in the waking state), nor conscious of both (the self of reverie), not a mass of consciousness (deep sleep), not consciousness, nor unconsciousness, unseen (by the sense-organs), beyond the texture of all relations, incomprehensible (by the sense-bound mind), without any distinguishing mark (uninferable), unthinkable, indescribable, of the essence of the consciousness of the unity of the Self, the very cessation of the world of relativity, peaceful, blissful, and non-dual—this is what is known as the Fourth (with respect to the three states). This is the Ātman, and it has to be realized.'

Introducing the above verse, Śaṅkara writes in his commentary:

*Sarvaśabdapravṛttinimittaśūnyatvāt tasya śabdānabhidheyatvam iti viśeṣapratiṣedhenaiva turīyaṁ nirdidikṣati—*

'Since the Turīya or the Ātman, being beyond all operations of speech, cannot be brought under the purview of any utterance, the Upaniṣad desires to describe It by the negation of all attributes.'

This is the reality that reveals itself to the discerning eye as the unchanging witness of all the changing subjects and objects of the various states. Since it is not limited by any one state as the ego is, it is described by Yama in verse four of chapter four of the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* as *mahāntaṁ vibhum*—great or infinite and all-pervading. It is to be realized by every one in Its true form as one's own self. How can sorrow or delusion affect one who realizes himself as the Ātman? This is stressed by the verse: *matvā dhīro na śocati*. While studying the *Īśā Upaniṣad* earlier,

we had come across the classic expression of this truth in its seventh verse:

*Yasmin sarvāṇi bhūtāni ātmaivābhūt vijānataḥ;*
*Tatra ko mohaḥ kaḥ śokaḥ ekatvam anupaśyataḥ—*

'What delusion, what sorrow, can there be for that wise man who realizes the unity of all existence by perceiving all beings as his own Self?'

### *Fearlessness*

Absense of fear and, consequently, of hatred is another fruit of this realization, as stated in verse five of chapter four: *na tato vijugupsate.*

The Ātman is described as *madhvadam,* 'eater of honey', the word 'honey' here standing for the fruits of actions. This refers to the lower self of man, which is conscious of agency and enjoyership, being subject to blindness of attachment. The Ātman is referred to as the *Jīvam,* life principle, as the energies of life ultimately derive from the Ātman only, which the *Kena Upaniṣad* therefore describes as *prāṇasya prāṇam,* the *prāṇa* of the *prāṇa,* the word '*prāṇa*' standing for the life force. The verse also describes the Ātman as *antikāt,* very near; in fact, it is the nearest. What can be nearer to man than his own Self? This is the higher Self of man in relation to his lower self. This relationship is expressed in three beautiful verses of the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* (III. i.1-3), which I had referred to in detail while expounding verses twelve and thirteen of the second chapter of the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad.* Comparing them to two birds on a tree, the Upaniṣad had referred to them as *sayujā sakhāyā,* 'knit in bonds of lasting friendship', the lower bird eating the sweet and bitter fruits of the tree, while the higher bird sitting calmly, immersed in its own glory. Being of the nature of immutable consciousness, the Ātman is the lord of time: *Īśāno bhūtabhavyasya.* The experience of time obtains at the level of mind and below. The Ātman is beyond mind, and therefore above time. Fear is inescapable for beings caught in the flow of time. To know that one is not so caught is the only way to fearlessness.

*Na vijugupsate* may mean 'does not hate' or 'does not seek to protect, defend, or hide oneself'. Referring to this, Śaṅkara says in his comment:

*Tat vijñānāt ūrdhvam, ātmānaṁ na vijugupsate, na gopāyitum icchati, abhyaprāptatvāt. Yāvaddhi bhayamadhyastho anityam ātmānaṁ manyate, tāvat gopāyitum icchati ātmanaḥ. Yadā tu nityam advaitam ātmānaṁ vijānāti, tadā kaḥ kiṁ kuto vā gopāyitum icchet?*—'After this realization, one does not seek to protect oneself, because of the attainment of the state of fearlessness. Verily, it is only so long as one lives in the midst of fear, thinking oneself to be impermanent, that one desires to protect oneself. When, however, one realizes oneself to be eternal and non-dual, then who will desire to protect what, and from whom?'

All ideas of hatred, self-protection, self-defence, or hiding proceed from fear, from a feeling of inadequacy with respect to the environment. Realization of the Ātman means realization of one's infinite dimension and of one's spiritual unity with all; its fruit is infinite love and infinite strength. There is then no scope for hatred or fear or self-defence; this is the force in Śaṅkara's interrogative phrase: *tadā kaḥ kiṁ kuto vā gopāyitum icchet?*'

### *The Footprints of the Ātman in Experience*

The Upaniṣad proceeds, in the next four verses, verses six to nine, to present the truth of the Ātman through different approaches, sometimes using the earlier Vedic myths and their terminologies:

> *Yaḥ pūrvaṁ tapaso jātam adbhyaḥ pūrvam ajāyata;*
> *Guhāṁ praviśya tiṣṭhantaṁ yo bhūtebhirvyapaśyata.*
> *Etat vai tat—*

'He, who was born of *tapas* (the austerity of knowledge) in the beginning (of creation), born (even) prior to the waters (the primordial elements), and who dwells having entered the heart, is found existing amidst the primordial (material) elements. This is verily That.'

> *Yā prāṇena saṁbhavati aditiḥ devatāmayī;*
> *Guhāṁ praviśya tiṣṭhantīṁ yā bhūtebhiḥ vyajāyata.*
> *Etat vai tat—*

'Aditi, the self of the cosmic powers, who manifested herself in the form of *prāṇa* (cosmic energy), who dwells having entered the

heart, is found existing amidst the primordial (material) elements. This is verily That.'

*Araṇyornihito jātavedā garbha iva subhṛto garbhiṇībhiḥ;*
*Dive diva īḍyo jāgṛvadbhirnaviṣmadbhirmanuṣyebhir-agniḥ.*
*Etat vai tat—*

'Like the foetus well preserved by the pregnant mother, *agni* (cosmic energy), lodged in the two *araṇis* (fire sticks), is worshipped every day by the awakened men and the sacrificial offerers. This is verily That.'

*Yataścodeti sūryo'stam̐ yatra ca gacchati;*
*Tam̐ devā sarve arpitāḥ tadu nātyeti kaścana.*
*Etat vai tat—*

'That from which the sun rises and into which it merges again, That in which are established all the cosmic powers, That, verily, none can transcend. This is verily That.'

Introducing verse six, Śaṅkara says in his commentary:

*Yaḥ pratyagātmeśvarabhāvena nirdiṣṭaḥ sa sarvātmā iti ityetat darśayati*—'He who is described as *pratyagātman* (the inner Self), and Īśvara (the Lord or Ruler of the world), is the Self of all; this is being shown now.'

Yama refers in verse six to what the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* (1.1.9) describes as the projection of the personal God, the Śakti aspect of Brahman, from Brahman, the impersonal Absolute, through *tapas*, austerity; this *tapas* is *jñānamayam*, 'consisting of knowledge'. This Śakti or the personal God is the 'I AM' of the Old Testament (Exodus, 3.14):

'And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel. I AM hath sent me unto you.'

This 'I AM' was prior to the universe. This is accepted by every religion; *but the Upaniṣads say something more*: that there is an impersonal behind the personal and that the impersonal and the personal are one; that this 'I AM', this personal God, is the universe and its living beings, and that It has entered into the heart of every being, has become the inner Self, the *pratyagātman*, of every being: *guhām̐ praviśya tiṣṭhantam*; and, as such, He is not only beyond nature, but also *in* nature: *yo bhūtebhiḥ vyapaśyata.*

This truth of the presence of Brahman in man and nature forms the theme of a whole section of the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (III. 7.15). Verse fifteen of this section thus sums up the gist of the whole section:

*Yaḥ sarveṣu bhūteṣu tiṣṭhan, sarvebhyo bhūtebhyo antaraḥ, yaṁ sarvāṇi bhūtāni na viduḥ, yasya sarvāṇi bhūtāni sarīraṁ, yaḥ sarvāṇi bhūtāni antaro yamayati, eṣa te ātmā antaryāmī amṛtaḥ*—'He who inhabits all beings, who is within all beings, whom all (these) beings do not know, whose body is all beings, and who controls all beings from within—this is thy immortal Self, the internal Ruler (of all).'

*The Non-difference of Cause and Effect*

Brahman is in all beings; He is also outside all beings. He therefore is all beings. As proclaimed in a famous hymn of the *Bhāgavatam* (VIII. 3.3):

*Yasminnidaṁ yataścedam*
*yenedaṁ ya idaṁ svayam;*
*Yo'smāt parasmāt ca paraḥ*
*taṁ prapadye svayaṁbhuvam*—

'I take refuge in that self-existent Being in whom is this universe, from whom is this universe, by whom is this universe, who Himself is this universe, and who is beyond this (differentiated universe) as also beyond that (undifferentiated Nature).'

If the whole universe is the product of a self-evolving cause, as Vedānta and modern science uphold, then that cause must be present in all its evolutionary products, which then can have no reality apart from it. This corollary follows whether that cause is viewed as an intelligent principle as in Vedānta or as a non-intelligent principle as in modern science. That one cause must account not only for all the *objects* of experience, but also for all the *subjects* of experience. The solar system being a product of the sun, the food that we eat, as much as the human metabolic energy which digests it, are but solar energy in two different manifestations. Identifying himself as the non-dual Ātman, the sage in the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* could accordingly proclaim (III. 10.6): 'I am food; I am the eater of food.' Yama therefore says in verse six that Brahman is present in the objects of the world: *yo bhūtebhiḥ vyapaśyata;* and also within the innermost core of man: *guhāṁ pravisya tiṣṭhantam. Guhā,* meaning a cave, refers to a place

hidden and inaccessible. Brahman is in man; but if we are to realize Him, we have to seek Him not in man's obvious sensate experiences, but in the depth of his *buddhi*, intelligence, which is the highest product of evolution, being the most luminous. Therein is He to be sought through meditation, says Vedānta, which also helps the seeker with fascinating symbols like the lotus, to stand for *buddhi* or intelligence, and, as verse thirteen of this chapter will tell us later, a smokeless flame, to stand for the Ātman.

*Evolution Presupposes Involution*

'What is the most evolved notion that man has of this universe?', asks Swami Vivekananda (Lecture on 'The Cosmos', *Complete Works*, Vol. II. Ninth Edition, pp. 209-10), and proceeds:

'It is intelligence, the adjustment of part to part .... At the beginning, that intelligence becomes involved; and in the end, that intelligence gets evolved. The sum total of the intelligence displayed in the universe must, therefore, be the involved universal intelligence unfolding itself. This universal intelligence is what we call God. Call it by any other name, it is absolutely certain that in the beginning there is that infinite cosmic intelligence. This cosmic intelligence gets involved, and it manifests, evolves itself, until it becomes the perfect man, the "Christ-man", the "Buddha-man". Then it goes back to its own source. That is why all the scriptures say, "In Him we live and move and have our being". That is why all the scriptures preach that we come from God and go back to God. Do not be frightened by theological terms; if terms frighten you, you are not fit to be philosophers. This cosmic intelligence is what the theologians call God.'

Clarifying his use of the word 'God', he continues (*ibid.*, p. 210):

'I have been asked many times, "Why do you use that old word 'God'?" Because it is the best word for our purpose; you cannot find a better word than that, because all the hopes, aspirations, and happiness of humanity have been centred in that word. It is impossible now to change that word. Words like these were first coined by great saints who realized their import and understood their meaning. But as they become current in society, ignorant people take these words, and the result is that they lose their spirit and glory....

'Use the old word, only use it in the true spirit, cleanse it of superstition, and realize fully what this great ancient word means. If you understand the power of the laws of association, you will know that these words are associated with innumerable majestic and powerful ideas; they have been used and worshipped by millions of human souls and associated by them with all that is highest and best, all that is rational, all that is lovable, and all that is

great and grand in human nature. And they come as suggestions of these associations and cannot be given up. If I tried to express all these by only telling you that God created the universe, it would have conveyed no meaning to you. Yet, after all this struggle, we have come back to Him, the ancient and supreme One.'

### *Unity of Matter and Energy*

*Aditi* of verse seven is the soul of the entire range of cosmic powers which bifurcate in the course of evolution into *prāṇa* or cosmic energy, on the one side, and *ākāśa* or cosmic primordial matter, the primal state of what the verse refers to as the *bhūtas*, on the other. The whole creation is the product of the vibration of *prāṇa* in *ākāśa*, as verse two of chapter six will tell us later.

Verse eight further reveals the Vedāntic vision of the unity of all the energies in the universe. *Agni* in ordinary parlance means fire. Its most obvious manifestation is what obtains in every household. Invisible in its essential state, it became visible, tangible, and serviceable to the ancient Indo-Aryans through friction between two *araṇis* or firesticks, as it has become visible, tangible, and serviceable to modern man through a variety of chemical, electrical, and nuclear means. The Upaniṣadic sages, even in so early an age of human thought development, discovered the unity of this domestic fire with all the energy systems of the cosmos *and even with the spiritual energy within man himself*. Every inductive jump discloses the fusion of intellect and vision. Among such inductive jumps this one belongs to a high order. The domestic fire worshipped by the performers of sacrifices and the spiritual fire generated within themselves by the awakened ones through meditation are but different forms of Brahman or Ātman *Etat vai tat*—'This is verily That'.

The Ātman is the universe of effects and causes; the Ātman also transcends the universe. No effect, however, can transcend its cause; says Yama, therefore, in verse nine: *tad u nātyeti kaścana*.

### *Vision of Unity in Diversity*

Giving the gist of the seven verses, verses three to nine, Śaṅkara remarks in his commentary:

*Tadetat sarvātmakaṁ brahma. Tadu nātyeti, na atītya tadātmakatāṁ, tadanyatvaṁ, gacchati kaścana, kaścidapi*—'This is

Brahman, the Self of all. Nothing verily transcends That, does not ever become cut off, or apart from, That.'

Yama proceeds to sum up in the next two verses, verses ten and eleven, the central theme of the preceding seven verses, the theme of unity:

*Yadeveha tadamutra yadamutra tadanviha;*
*Mṛtyoḥ sa mṛtyumāpnoti ya iha nāneva paśyati—*

'Whatever is here, that is there; what is there, that again is here. He who sees here as different, goes from death to death.'

*Manasaivedamāptavyaṁ neha nānāsti kiñcana;*
*Mṛtyoḥ sa mṛtyuṁ gacchati ya iha nāneva paśyati—*

'By mind alone is this to be comprehended that there is no difference here. He who sees here as different goes from death to death.'

Brahman is the unity of all experience. Differences between the objects, between the objects and the subject, and between the subjects themselves, which common sense reveals and which provide the starting point, and act as the challenge, to knowledge, are overcome in the unity of Brahman, say the Upaniṣads. 'Knowledge leads to unity and ignorance to diversity', says Sri Ramakrishna. All progress of knowledge in science and religion confirms that diversity is on the surface, but deep down is unity. And unity, unlike uniformity, does not eliminate diversity. Knowledge only reveals, but does not add to, or take away from, reality Vedānta therefore proclaims the message of unity in diversity, and upholds that as wisdom which expresses this vision.

The word *iha* in the verse means 'here', in this world of change, in this sphere of relativity, and *amutra* means 'there', in the world of the changeless, in the sphere beyond relativity. The distinction between 'here' and 'there' commenced when early man recognized the limitations of the world of sensate experience and reached out to something beyond. This is at the back of the dualistic awareness involved in the concepts such as this world and the other world, earth and heaven, death and immortality, and the secular and the sacred, as upheld by the world's religions, and the relative and the absolute, the time-bound and the eternal, and the deterministic and the indeterministic, as upheld in the world's philosophies. These distinctions are valid in limited universes of discourse and for specific purposes, says Vedānta. But they are not ultimately true. It is harmful to press them too far. Reality itself does not know such distinctions.

This knowledge of reality in its fullness is termed *vijñāna* by Sri Ramakrishna; it is, as he puts it, seeing God as much with eyes open as with eyes closed. It reveals human life and the environing world in a fascinating new light. This is brought out by Sister Nivedita in a passage in her 'Introduction' to *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Vol. I. p. xv). Though quoted before in a previous lecture, it bears reproduction in this context:

'If the many and the One be indeed the same Reality, then it is not all modes of worship alone, but equally all modes of work, all modes of struggle, all modes of creation, which are paths of realization. No distinction, henceforth, between sacred and secular. To labour is to pray. To conquer is to renounce. Life is itself religion. To have and to hold is as stern a trust as to quit and to avoid.'

And referring to the impact of Vivekananda's philosophy of Advaita (Non-duality) on human knowledge, she continues (*ibid.*, p. xvi):

'All his words, from one point of view, read as a commentary upon this central conviction. "Art, science, and religion", he said once, "are but three different ways of expressing a single truth. But in order to understand this, we must have the theory of Advaita".'

Human knowledge and human life must be grounded in this vision of total reality, says Vedānta, if they are to be true and wholesome. Names such as the Atlantic, the Pacific, the Indian, the Arctic, or the Antarctic oceans are valid from the utiliatarian point of view, but they cannot violate the truth of the unity of the one ocean surrounding the earth. If such distinctions do violate that ever-present truth, they are notions not only untrue, but, what is more serious, harmful as well. This is what Yama points out in the second half of the two verses: *mṛtyoḥ sa mṛtyumāpnoti ya iha nāneva paśyati*—'he goes from death to death who sees here as different'.

Through the positive sciences we seek for unity in the diversity of the world of outer nature. This search may be conducted at the purely intellectual level. But when we carry that search into the world of inner nature, of the self, such an intellectual approach becomes inadequate and misleading. For here, we are in the most intimate field of experience, *where all true knowing ever seeks to find its consummation in being*, and where mere intellectual knowledge leaves us far far away from our true self. Such self-realization, as it penetrates deeper spiritually, steadily

breaks down the barrier between man and man outwardly. Here self-knowledge can only be self-realization.

This basic truth of non-separateness is to be realized by the mind, says verse eleven: *manasaivedam āptavyam*; not by the sense-bound mind, which is impure, but by the sense-free mind, which is pure. There are two categories of mind, says Vedānta—one which is under the thraldom of the sense-organs and hence unfree, and the other which controls the sense-organs and hence free. The first is termed impure, and the second pure. The latter alone is a fit instrument for the pursuit of self-knowledge. And Vedānta holds that, at the highest reach of this self-knowledge, it becomes the knowledge of Brahman, the unity of all experience, the perfect unity of the outer and the inner. This is the *advaita* or non-dual experience, the glory of which the Upaniṣads proclaim in language at once rational and poetic. It finds a lucid elucidation in the following verse of the great seventh century philosopher and spiritual teacher, Gauḍapāda (*Māṇḍūkyakārikā*, II.38):

> *Tattvamādhyātmikaṁ dṛṣṭvā tattvaṁ dṛṣṭvā ca bāhyataḥ;*
> *Tattvībhūtastadārāmaḥ tattvādapracyuto bhavet—*

'Realizing the Truth within the self and realizing the Truth externally (in the not-self), and becoming one with the Truth and delighting in It, one never deviates from the Truth.'

In human life, individual and collective, the stress on separateness has been the one source of hatred, violence, and war. Through it, God has been subjected to crucifixion more than once, and man has experienced death again and again. It is through a purification of human knowledge and awareness that man transcends this false view of separateness and overcomes its evil effects. By saying *manasaivedam āptavyam*, the Upaniṣad emphasizes the need for the right training of the mind. It emphasizes that this truth must come to us through the educational process right from childhood. It is thus that the mind is conditioned in the direction of the ultimate truth of non-duality; and as the child grows into the man, this awareness grows with him. Wrong conditioning of children, which instils into them false ideas of inferiority or superiority based on caste, race, sex, nationality, or religious differences, has done immense harm in the past. The following nursery rhyme, taught to white children in the southern states of the U.S.A. to rouse pity or contempt for the

neighbouring Negro child for her black colour, is not an isolated wickedness of one country:

God made Helen,
made her in the night;
Made her in a hurry,
and forgot to paint her white.

### *Three Types of Knowledge*

Classifying *jñāna*, knowledge, under the three categories of *sattva* (luminous), *rajas* (passionate), and *tamas* (dark), the *Gītā* says (xviii, 20-22):

*Sarvabhūteṣu yenaikaṁ bhāvamavyayamīkṣate;*
*Avibhaktaṁ vibhakteṣu tat jñānaṁ viddhi sāttvikam—*

'That by which the one inexhaustible reality is seen in all things, undivided in things (apparently) divided, know that knowledge to be *sāttvika*.'

*Pṛthaktvena tu yat jñānaṁ nānābhāvān pṛthakvidhān;*
*Vetti sarveṣu bhūteṣu tat jñānaṁ viddhi rājasam—*

'But that knowledge which sees in all things different entities separate from each other, know that knowledge as *rājasika*.'

*Yat tu kṛtsnavadekasmin kārye saktam ahaitukam;*
*Atattvārthavadalpaṁ ca tat tāmasamudāhṛtam—*

'That knowledge, on the other hand, which is confined to one single effect, as if it were the whole, unsupported by reason, unfounded in truth, and trivial—that is declared as *tāmasika*.'

### *The Evils of Separateness in Religion*

No field of human life more fittingly illustrates the evil of separateness, and the truth of the remark of Jesus that the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth everlasting life, than that of religion. History demonstrates that the knowledge expressed in such convictions as 'the one true God', 'the only true religion', and 'the chosen people' has been mostly of the *tāmasika* and occasionally of the *rājasika* types. Such convictions have not tasted the sweetness of *sāttvika* knowledge. Attachment to the letter of the dogma has been the breeding ground of exclusiveness, which has brought bigotry and violence in its train. This violence is there always in thought even today, though its expression in action is much inhibited by modern world conditions.

*Emergence of the Unifying Vision in Religion in the Modern Age*

It is the science of comparative religion which has helped to raise religious knowledge in the modern world to the *sāttvika* level by a dispassionate study of the religions of the world, primitive and advanced, and discovering the underlying spiritual unity behind them; such a study reveals the universality of the religious consciousness and the multiple ways of its expression. This knowledge helps to generate a sense of mutual respect and fellow-feeling among religions. The ethical exhortation, 'love thy neighbour as thyself', which had become watered down to love of one's sect, denomination, or creed under the influence of the *rājasika* and the *tāmasika* elements in religious knowledge, bids fair to experience a breaking of all barriers to neighbourliness through the modern application of scientific outlook and methods to religion, leading to the emergence of the religious knowledge of the *sāttvika* type.

*The Indian Heritage of This Unifying Vision*

And this has been the contribution of Vedānta to religion, as also to other fields of life, in India; the impact of this touch of *sāttvika* knowledge generated a pervasive mood of active tolerance and harmony, and saved India from religious persecutions and wars to an extent unknown in any other part of the world. Indian religions, especially the Yoga system and Buddhism, enjoin on their followers to send waves of love and friendly feelings to all quarters of the globe during meditation. Religious persecution entered India in a big way only through religions which had their origins outside her philosophical and geographical *milieu*. Her own view of religion cannot accept or nourish the idea that the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church. Says Dr. Radhakrishnan (*Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, p. 314):

'The attitude of the cultivated Hindu and the Buddhist to other forms of worship is one of sympathy and respect, and not criticism and contempt for their own sake. This friendly understanding is not inconsistent with deep feeling and thought. Faith for the Hindu does not mean dogmatism. He does not smell heresy in those who are not entirely of his mind. It is not devotion that leads to the assertive temper, but limitation of outlook, hardness, and uncharity. While full of unquestioning belief, the Hindu is at the same time devoid of harsh judgement. It is not historically true that, in the knowledge of truth, there is of necessity great intolerance.'

Again (*ibid.*, p. 302):

'The emphasis on the goal of spiritual life bound together worshippers of many different types and saved the Hindus from spiritual snobbery.'

Contrasting the rigid dogmatism nourished by Western religion with the free and rational pursuit of truth nourished by Western science, Toynbee says (*An Historian's Approach to Religion*, p. 184):

'Recent Western experience had shown that the specifications for a Kingdom of Heaven on Earth were a subject of acrimonious and interminable dispute between rival schools of theologians. On the other hand, the differences of opinion between practical technicians or between experimental scientists would be likely to remain at a low emotional temperature and would be certain to be cleared up, before long, by the findings of observation, and of reasoning about the results of observation, on which there would be no disagreement.'

### *Emergence of This Unifying Vision in Human Relations in the Modern Age*

The *sāttvika* touch is brightening the horizon not only of modern religion, but of modern socio-political and cultural life as well. Exclusive nation-states and self-sufficient cultural groups which have, under the influence of separatist philosophies, indulged in mutual hostility and destruction, are yielding to the benign influences of a unifying philosophy and outlook engendered by modern science and humanism. Race is a concept which had erected unbreakable walls of separation between man and man and driven millions of human beings to spiritual and physical death throughout history. Even in this century, it did not fail to find millions of passionate adherents in the Nazi movement. Though that movement officially perished in the Second World War, it has left its powerful outposts in countries like South Africa and the southern states of the U.S.A. In the latter, however, it is very heartening to find its back broken by recent federal legislation and energetic implementation measures.

One of the greatest contributions of twentieth-century biology is the destruction of the myth of racial superiority. It has proved the utterly false as well as dangerous character of the racial theories upheld in the nineteenth century by scientists and laymen alike. Twentieth-century anthropology has risen to the *sāttvika* level in the conclusions on the subject of race reached by an inter-

national team of scientists conferring under the auspices of the UNESCO. This conference of ethnologists and anthropologists from seventeen countries, held in Moscow in 1964, studied the biological aspects of race and issued a unanimous 13-point declaration, which is meant to provide the biological elements for a further study and declaration in 1966 on the social and ethical elements of the problem. Points 1, 2, and 13 of the declaration will help to illumine the Vedāntic conviction of the unity and solidarity of man (*vide The Unesco Courier*, April 1965):

'1. All men living today belong to a single species, Homo-sapiens, and are derived from a common stock. There are differences of opinion regarding how and when different human groups diverged from this common stock.

'2. There is great genetic diversity within all human populations. Pure races—in the sense of genetically homogeneous populations—do not exist.

'13. ...The peoples of the world today appear to possess equal biological potentialities for attaining any civilization level. Differences in the achievements of different peoples must be attributed solely to their cultural history.

'Certain psychological traits are at times attributed to particular peoples. Whether or not such assertions are valid, we do not find any basis for ascribing such traits to hereditary factors, until proof to the contrary is given.

'Neither in the field of hereditary potentialities concerning the overall intelligence and the capacity for cultural development, nor in that of physical traits, is there any justification for the concept of "inferior" and "superior" races.'

Introducing the 13-point declaration, Georghi F. Debetz, in his article on 'Biology Looks at Race' in the same issue, writes:

'Racism is the expression of a system of thought which is fundamentally antirational. Hate and racial strife feed on scientifically false ideas, and live on ignorance. They can also derive from scientifically sound ideas which have been distorted or taken out of context, leading to false implications.'

The ethical value of neighbourliness is the product of the spiritual vision of *advaita*, non-separateness, unity. This is brought out by Dr. Paul Deussen, the great German orientalist, in a speech which he gave in Bombay at the end of his Indian visit in 1892:

'The Gospels quite correctly establish as the highest law of morality, "Love your neighbour as yourselves". But why should I do so since by the order of nature I feel pain and pleasure only in myself, not in my neighbour? The answer is not in the Bible

...but it is in the Veda, in the great formula "That art Thou", which gives in three words the combined sum of metaphysics and morals. You shall love your neighbour as yourselves because you are your neighbour.'

Increasing liberation of this value of non-separateness is the most important criterion of cultural progress, as contrasted with mere educational progress. That the modern world is moving in this direction was voiced in powerful accents by Swami Vivekananda even so early as the last decade of the nineteenth century. In a lecture on 'Vedānta and Its Application to Indian Life', delivered in Madras in 1897, he says (*Complete Works*, Vol. III., Eighth Edition, pp. 240-41):

'The second great idea which the world is waiting to receive from our Upaniṣads is the solidarity of our universe. The old lines of demarcation and differentiation are vanishing rapidly. Electricity and steam power are placing the different parts of the world in intercommunication with each other, and, as a result, we Hindus no longer say that every country beyond our own land is peopled with demons and hobgoblins, nor do the people of Christian countries say that India is only peopled by cannibals and savages. Our Upaniṣads say that the cause of all misery is ignorance; and that is perfectly true when applied to every state of life, either social or spiritual. It is ignorance that makes us hate each other, it is through ignorance that we do not know and do not love each other. As soon as we come to know each other, love comes, *must* come, for are we not one? Thus we find solidarity coming in spite of itself. Even in politics and sociology, problems that were only national twenty years ago can no more be solved on national grounds only. They are assuming huge proportions, gigantic shapes. They can only be solved when looked at in the broader light of international grounds. International organizations, international combinations, international laws are the cry of the day. That shows the solidarity.'

If stress on separateness is the way to death and more death, to suffering and more suffering, as Yama expresses it in verses ten and eleven: *mṛtyoḥ sa mṛtyumāpnoti ya iha nāneva paśyati*, stress on unity and solidarity is the way to life and more life, as the *Īśā Upaniṣad* (verse eleven), which we studied earlier, says: *avidyayā mṛtyuṁ tīrtvā vidyayā amṛtam aśnute*—'Overcoming death through the sciences of external nature, man achieves immortality through the science of the (unity of the) Self.'

### *Training the Mind in This Unifying Vision*

Yama had said in verse eleven: *manasaivedam āptavyam*—'this truth is to be comprehended by the mind only'. The human mind

gets the necessary training for this comprehension, so far as the outer field of his life is concerned, from the discipline of science, with its mood of detachment and passion for truth, and the discipline of society, with its opportunities for love and service. This discipline is both an ethical and an intellectual one. It is through such discipline, as we have seen earlier, that man has progressively raised his knowledge from the *tāmasika* and *rājasika* levels to the *sāttvika* level, and is increasingly overcoming barriers to neighbourliness in the religious, social, and political fields, and experiencing for the first time, in a tangible way, a glimpse of a *mankind awareness*. This is 'Practical Advaita', in the words of Swami Vivekananda; it is the *advaita* vision in its application to collective human life and destiny.

The aims and programmes of international organizations like the U.N., and more especially its specialized agencies like the UNESCO, as also of all progressive trends of thought and aspiration everywhere, bear the inspiring touch of this *advaita* vision. The widest diffusion of this vision in human society is the one condition of human progress, and even of human survival, in the modern world.

Towards the same end, but designed more directly to penetrate to the root of that vision, the Upaniṣad now offers, in two verses, verses twelve and thirteen, another discipline relevant to the inner field of human life, namely, the discipline of meditation:

> *Aṅguṣṭhamātraḥ puruṣaḥ madhya ātmani tiṣṭhati;*
> *Īśānaṁ bhūtabhavyasya na tato vijugupsate.*
> *Etat vai tat—*

'Puruṣa (the Self), of the size of the thumb, dwells within the body; (He is) the lord of the past and the future; (Realizing Him), thenceforth, one fears no more. This is verily That.'

> *Aṅguṣṭhamātraḥ puruṣaḥ jyotiriva adhūmakaḥ;*
> *Īśāno bhūtabhavyasya sa evādya sa u śvaḥ.*
> *Etat vai tat—*

'Puruṣa (the Self), of the size of the thumb, is like a light without smoke. (He is) the lord of the past and the future. He (is) verily the same today and He (is the same) tomorrow. This is verily That.'

Vedānta advocates the need to fortify the inner and the outer defences of life together. Political and social manipulations of hu-

man life cannot by themselves improve human nature. They nourish only the outer life, and leave the inner life, if not starved, at least ill-nourished. This conviction is shared by progressive post-war organizations like the UNESCO, which proclaims in its very preamble that 'since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed'.

This inner discipline and inner nourishment constitutes the science of religion, according to Vedānta, and forms a continuation and deepening of that ethical education which man has earlier given himself in the field of his outer life. And *meditation forms the central technique of this inner spiritual education.* The theme of meditation in Vedānta is Brahman, the Self of all, the divine thread of unity behind the world of diversity. This is God in his universal dimension, bereft of all tribal and other limitations imposed by the human mind. It is not just an intellectual concept, but a living reality *given in experience*, as proclaimed by all the Upaniṣads. It is the *sākṣāt aparokṣāt brahma ya ātmā sarvāntarah*—'Brahman, immediate and direct, who is the innermost Self of all', as the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* majestically proclaims.

God, so understood, is the only fit theme for meditation, says Vedānta; for He is the only free entity, if He can be so called, in the whole range of experience, being beyond all causality and determinism. As explained by Rāmānuja, one of the outstanding Vedāntic philosophers and saints of the eleventh century, in his *Śrī Bhāsya* (I. 1. 1), quoting a verse of an ancient teacher from 'Viṣṇu Dharma', a section of the *Bhaviṣyat Purāṇa*:

*Ābrahmastambaparyantā jagadanturvyavasthitāḥ*
*prāṇinaḥ karmajanitasaṁsāravaśavartinaḥ;*
*Yatastato na te dhyāne dhyāninām upakārakāḥ*
*avidyāntargatāḥ sarve te hi saṁsāragocarāḥ*—

'From Brahmā (the creator God) down to a clump of grass, all beings that live in the world are within the sway of *saṁsāra* (the wheel of birth and death) caused by *karma* (effect of actions); therefore they cannot be helpful as objects of meditation to a student of meditation, because they are all in *avidyā* (spiritual blindness) and within the sphere of relativity.'

### *The Use of Symbols in Meditation*

But meditation on Ātman or Brahman, the Light of infinite Consciousness, the Self of our self, is extremely difficult for the

finite human mind. Vedānta therefore aids the seeker with various symbols, personal and non-personal. Unlike some religions, it does not offer to man a stereotyped view or symbol of God. Infinite is God and infinite are the ways to reach Him, says Sri Ramakrishna. After suggesting several symbols for meditation, Patañjali says in the end (*Yoga-Sūtra*, I.39):

*Yathābhimatadhyānāt vā*—'Or by the meditation (on anything) according to one's choice'.

The Ātman is to be meditated upon within the body itself in the form of a 'smokeless light' and 'of the size of the thumb', say the two verses. Clarifying this mention of size, Śaṅkara says in his comment:

*Aṅguṣṭhaparimāṇam hṛdayapuṇḍarīkam, tacchidravartyantaḥkaraṇopādhiḥ aṅguṣṭhamātraḥ, aṅguṣṭhamātravaṁśaparvamadhyavartyambaravat*—'The lotus of the heart is of the size of the thumb: "of the size of the thumb" (in the text) refers to the Ātman as conditioned by the mind manifesting through the space within the heart, like the space within a bamboo of the size of the thumb'

Truly speaking, the Ātman is not of that size even within the body, but it is so conceived for the purposes of meditation only; the word *puruṣa* in the text, as explained by Śaṅkara, indicates this: *pūrṇam anena sarvam iti*—'it is that by which the whole universe is filled'.

This light within the heart is not any physical radiation, but the light of pure Consciousness. It is *adhūmakaḥ*, 'smokeless', free from ignorance, delusion, and sorrow. In the words of Patañjali (*Yoga-Sūtra*, I.36): *Viśokā vā jyotiṣmati*—'Or (by meditation on) the effulgent Light which is beyond all sorrow.' The most persistant search of the human heart is for light. In the *Gāyatri*, the greatest prayer of the Indo-Aryans, man prays for the light of understanding: *dhiyo yo naḥ pracodayāt*; in another, he prays to be redeemed from darkness to light: *tamaso mā jyotirgamaya*. The perfect man is known as Buddha, the illumined one. The apparently limited light in man and the infinite light of God which kindles the universe are one and the same, says Vedānta. By penetrating to the light in one's heart, man can reach the light that lights the hearts of all, 'the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world', in the beautiful words of St. John's Gospel (I.9). In the last verse of the next chapter of this Upaniṣad, chapter five, Yama will describe the Ātman to us, in the

most sublime language, as the light of all lights, the light 'by which this whole universe is lighted': *tasya bhāsā sarvamidaṁ vibhāti*. The meditation on the Ātman as the light in one's heart is not meant to imprison us in our little selves, but to release us into the light of all lights, the light by which 'the whole universe is lighted'.

### *The Glory of this Unifying Vision*

In the next two verses, verses fourteen and fifteen, which close this chapter, Yama contrasts the evil effect of self-centredness with the glorious fruits of the *advaita* vision of non-separateness:

> *Yathodakaṁ durge vṛṣṭaṁ parvateṣu vidhāvati;*
> *Evaṁ dharmān pṛthak paśyan tānevānuvidhāvati—*

'As the rain-water, falling on a high peak, runs down the hills variously, even so, one who sees beings as different, runs after them (in their separate forms).'

> *Yathodakaṁ śuddhe śuddhamāsiktaṁ tādṛgeva bhavati;*
> *Evaṁ munervijānata ātmā bhavati gautama—*

'As pure water poured into pure water becomes the same, in the same way becomes the Ātman (self) of the *muni* (sage), O Gautama, who knows (the unity of the Ātman).'

The rain water falling on the peak does not get accumulated in its pure state; it does not join drop to drop to grow into the immensity of an ocean of pure water, but gets scattered, to run down the hills, mixed up with impure materials in the process; similarly, men who take themselves and others as separate entities, unnegotiated by a central thread of being, run after each other in attachment or hatred, collide against each other like billiard balls, in the words of Bertrand Russell, and get destroyed. This is the state of man in the raw state, 'short, nasty, and brutish', in the language of Hobbes, when he is uninspired by spiritual vision and thereby sundered from the central thread of spiritual unity which binds man to man with the cord of love.

The spiritually enlightened man, on the other hand, knows his self not as the ego conditioned and limited by the psycho-physical organism, but as the infinite universal Ātman, which is the Self of all. In virtue of this realization, he has learnt the art of digging his affections deep into the hearts of others, and achieved the true greatness and glory of man, the greatness and glory of uni-

versality. He is pure; Brahman is pure; and in him the pure has merged in the pure, to become an ocean of purity, blessedness, and strength. The *Gītā* sings this supreme glory of man in one of its memorable verses (V. 19):

> *Ihaiva tairjitaḥ sargo yeṣāṁ sāmye sthitaṁ manaḥ;*
> *Nirdoṣaṁ hi samaṁ brahma tasmāt brahmaṇi te sthitāḥ*—

'Even in this very life, they have conquered *sarga* (relativity) whose minds are firmly fixed in *sāmya* (equality); for Brahman, verily, is equal (in all) and free from imperfection. Therefore they are established in Brahman.'

This *advaita* vision forms the main theme of the next chapter of the Upaniṣad, chapter five, which we shall take up when we meet again.

TWENTY SEVEN

# KATHA UPANIṢAD—16

In the last discourse, Yama told us of the unifying *advaita* vision which yields the fruits of spiritual freedom and equality. These are the fruits that primarily sustain man in his evolution to total life fulfilment. In the fifth chapter of the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, into the study of which we shall enter today, Yama continues to dwell on this vision and its implications for human life and destiny. In the course of the exposition of this blessed theme, the Upaniṣad rises to heights of spiritual beauty and sublimity, as we shall presently see.

In the first and second verses of the chapter, Yama again reverts to the truth of the one immortal divine Self within man and in the universe outside. Being the central theme of all the Upaniṣads, and in view of the extreme difficulty of its comprehension by the human mind, this truth finds repetitive mention in the Upaniṣads, each time from a different approach. Too much repetition of the same idea has been acknowledged as a fault in literature. But what is a fault in all other literature is not a fault in spiritual literature, precisely for the reason that the subject is not only difficult of comprehension, being outside the pale of normal human experience, but is also of vast concern to him and his experience. In view of this, the ancient Mīmāṁsaka thinkers of India propounded the following dictum which Śaṅkara refers to in his comment on verse five of the *Īśā Upaniṣad*:

*Na mantrāṇāṁ jāmitā asti*—'Repetition is not a fault with respect to *mantras* (statements of spiritual truth).'

## *The City of the Unborn*

Introducing the opening verse of the fifth chapter of the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, Śaṅkara accordingly says in his comment:

*Punarapi prakārāntareṇa brahmatattvanirdhāraṇārtho ayamārambho, duravijñeyatvāt brahmaṇaḥ*—'Again, this (chapter) is commenced to elucidate the truth of Brahman from a different approach, Brahman being difficult of comprehension.'

The chapter opens with the verse:

*Puramekādaśadvāram ajasyāvakracetasaḥ;*
*Anuṣṭhāya na śocati vimuktaśca vimucyate.*
*Etat vai tat—*

'The city of the Unborn, (Ātman), of undimmed intelligence, is of eleven gates. Having meditated upon Him (and realizing Him), one grieves no more. Liberated (from all bonds of ignorance), one becomes free (from relativity and finitude). This is verily That.'

To the question, where shall we primarily seek for Brahman or God? Vedānta gives the answer: here, in man himself. This follows from its definition of Brahman as given in the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* (III.1) as 'That from which the universe of entities and beings arises, That in which it rests, and That unto which it returns in the end'. The universe includes man. In fact, in the search for the truth of the universe and the meaning of existence, man is the most significant item for study in all nature, being the finest product of its evolution. *Hence Vedānta chose to peep into the depths of man in its search for the truth and meaning of existence.* The Upaniṣads record the high rewards obtained by that venture.

This is what Yama introduces us to in the opening verse where he compares the psycho-physical energy system, which is the body of man, to a city of eleven gates or openings: *puram ekādaśadvāram.* Ten of these are well known: the seven apertures in the head, the navel as the eighth, and the two lower ones. Indian thought speaks of an eleventh aperture called *brahma-randhra* situated at the top of the head, *yatrāsau keśānto vivartate*—'where the parting of the hair divides' (*Taittirīya Upaniṣad*, I.6), which remains ordinarily closed. The more common enumeration is nine as given in the *Gītā* (V. 13), which eliminates the navel and the *brahma-randhra.*

The *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* (VIII. 1.1) refers to the human body as *brahmapura*, 'city of God'.

A city is constituted of its multitude of dwellings and dwellers, on the one side, and the ruler or central authority, on the other. The central unifying principle in the case of the eleven-gated city of the body is the Ātman, which Yama refers to as *aja*, unborn, and *avakracetasa*, of undimmed intelligence; *avakra* literally means 'not crooked'. As explained by Yama earlier, in the opening verse of chapter four, *this is the great truth lying in wait for any heroic*

*seeker daring to peep into the depths of man.* And what is the fruit of that discovery? *Anuṣṭhāya na śocati, vimuktaśca vimucyate,* answers Yama. It is freedom from all delusion and sorrow, and the destruction of all bonds; and this arises from meditation on, and realization of, that which informs and sustains everything in the universe. 'This is verily That'—the immortal divine Ātman

Says Śaṅkara in his comment on the verse of the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* (III.1) quoted earlier:

*Annaṁ śarīraṁ, tadabhyantaraṁ ca prāṇam attāraṁ, upalabdhisādhanāni cakṣuḥ śrotraṁ mano vācam, ityetāni brahmopalabdhau dvārāṇyuktavān....Utpattisthitilayakāleṣu yadātmatāṁ na jahāti bhūtāni, tat etat brahmaṇo lakṣaṇaṁ....Yadevaṁ lakṣaṇaṁ brahma tadannādidvāreṇa pratipadyasva ityarthaḥ*—'Food (which here means) the body, and the vital energy within it, which is the eater (of food), (as also) the instruments of knowledge such as eye, ear, mind, (and) speech—these, it was said, are the doorways for the knowledge of Brahman. This Brahman has been defined as that from which the universe of entities and beings is never found separated in its states of origination, sustenance, and dissolution. Brahman so defined is to be known through (the already known entities) such as food etc.'

*The Uniqueness of Man*

The importance of man as the sole doorway to the mystery of existence has been stressed in the Vedāntic literature.

The *Aitareya Āraṇyaka,* after proclaiming the glory of man as the abode of Brahman: *ayaṁ puruṣo brahmaṇo lokaḥ* (II.1.3), proceeds to elucidate the same in what is perhaps, even from the point of view of modern thought, the most comprehensive utterance on the uniqueness of man, and in words remarkable for their scientific precision and philosophic insight (II. 3.2-3):

*Tasya ya ātmānam āvistarāṁ veda aśnute ha āvirbhūyaḥ; oṣadhivanaspatayo yacca kiñca prāṇabhṛt sa ātmānamāvistarāṁ veda; oṣadhivanaspatiṣu hi raso dṛśyate, cittaṁ prāṇabhṛtsu; prāṇbhṛtsu tveva āvistarām ātmā, teṣu hi raso'pi dṛśyate, na cittam itareṣu; puruṣe tveva āvistarām ātmā, sa hi prajñānena saṁpannatamo vijñātaṁ vadati, vijñātaṁ paśyati, veda śvastanaṁ, veda lokālokau, martyena amṛtam īpsati, evaṁ saṁpannaḥ; athetareṣāṁ paśūnāmaśanāpipāse eva adhivijñānam, na vijñātaṁ vadanti, na vijñātaṁ paśyanti,*

*na vidur śvastanam, na lokālokau, ta etāvanto bhavanti. Yathā prajñam hi sambhavāḥ.*

*Sa eṣa puruṣaḥ samudraḥ sarvam lokam ati. Yaddha kiñca aśnute, atyenam manyate—*

'He who knows more and more clearly the self, obtains fuller being. There are plants and trees and animals, and he knows the self more and more clearly (in them). In plants and trees, verily, sap only is seen, in animals consciousness. In animals the self becomes more and more clear, because in them sap also is seen, while thought is not seen in others (in some animals). The self is more and more clear in man. For he is most endowed with intelligence, he says what he has known, he sees what he has known, he knows tomorrow, he knows the world and what is not the world. By the mortal he desires the immortal, being thus endowed. As for the others, (namely,) animals, hunger and thirst comprise their power of knowledge. They say not what they have known, they see not what they have known. They know not tomorrow, they know not the world and what is not the world. They go so far. The experiences of beings are according to the measure of their intelligence.

'This man is the sea (a reservoir of unsatisfied desires); he is above all the world. Whatever he reaches, he desires to be beyond it.' (Adapted from A Berriedale Keith's translation).

Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the teacher of the *Gītā*, whom the Hindus regard as the greatest incarnation of God, says, in what is considered to be his last message, conveyed to man through his teaching to his disciple Uddhava in the *Bhāgavatam* (XI.7.22-23):

*Ekadvitricatuṣpādo bahupādastathāpadaḥ;*
*Bahvyaḥ santi purāḥ sṛṣṭā tāsāṁ me pauruṣī priyā—*

'Many are the "cities" (bodies) projected by Me, one-footed, two-footed, three-footed, four-footed, many-footed, and also without any feet; among these, the human (city) is very dear to Me.'

*Atra māṁ mārgayantyaddhā yuktā hetubhiriśvaram;*
*Gṛhyamāṇairguṇairliṅgaiḥ agrāhyam anumānataḥ—*

'Here (in this human body), yogis seek and realize clearly, through the clues which reason finds in normal human experience, Me, who am the Lord (of all) and beyond the grasp of (mere) logical inference.'

The Ātman is in the sun, air, and fire; He is in man, in gods, and in the sacrifice. He is in the sky; He is born as the aquatic creatures; He is born as the insects, reptiles, and mammals of the earth; He is born as the fruits of sacrifice; He is the rivers flowing from the mountains. He is *ṛtam*, the True, and He is *mahat*, the Great. He is the abiding one in the changing phantasmagoria of existence. He is the infinite one in whom the immensities of time and space become reduced to mere trifles.

Giving the gist of the verse, Śaṅkara says in his comment:

*Sarvavyāpi eka eva ātmā jagato, na ātmabheda iti mantrārthaḥ*

—'The meaning of the verse is that the entire universe has only one Ātman; there is no possibility of a plural in the Ātman.'

Though quoted before in an earlier lecture, the words of the great physicist Erwin Schrödinger bears reproduction in the present context (*What is Life*? Epilogue, pp. 90-91):

'Consciousness is never experienced in the plural, only in the singular....Consciousness is a singular of which the plural is unknown; that there *is* only one thing and that what seems to be a plurality is merely a series of different aspects of this one thing, produced by a deception (the Indian *māyā*).'

The Ātman is 'smaller than the atom and bigger than the cosmos', as Yama had earlier told us in verse twenty of chapter two of this Upaniṣad. The universe becomes transfigured in the light of this vision. Says the *Bhāgavatam* (XI.7.41):

*Khaṁ vāyumagniṁ salilaṁ mahīṁ ca*
*jyotīṁṣi sattvāni diśo drumādīn;*
*Saritsamudrāṁśca hareḥ śarīraṁ*
*yat kiñca bhūtaṁ praṇamet ananyaḥ—*

'The sky, air, fire, water, and earth, the luminous constellations, creatures, the quarters, trees etc., rivers and oceans—whatever entities and beings there be, are to be honoured as non-separate from oneself, knowing them to be the body of Hari (the indwelling God).'

The above vision of the Vedic sages has found responsive echoes in the literature of all peoples. Often ignorantly caricatured as pagan and pantheistic in the West, it has not failed to move the hearts and minds of men powerfully. The moving lines of Wordsworth in his *Tintern Abbey* are typical of such passages in other literatures of the world:

And I have felt
A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man:
A motion and a spirit, that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things.

### *The Ātman, the Integrating Principle in Man*

The 'city' of the human body reveals the presence of the Ātman through its vital and psychical processes. This is emphasized by Yama in the next three verses, verses three to five:

*Ūrdhvaṁ prāṇamunnayatyapānaṁ pratyagasyati;*
*Madhye vāmanamāsīnaṁ viśve devā upāsate—*

'(He) sends the *prāṇa* (one aspect of the vital energies) upward and throws the *apāna* (another aspect of the vital energies) downward. All the *devas* (sense-organs) serve that adorable one seated in the centre (of the personality).'

*Asya visraṁsamānasya śarīrasthasya dehinaḥ;*
*Dehāt vimucyamānasya kimatra pariśiṣyate?*
*Etat vai tat—*

'When freed from the body (at the time of death), what else remains here (in the body) of that owner of the body, of Him who dwells within it? This is verily That.'

*Na prāṇena na apānena mártyo jīvati kaścana;*
*Itareṇa tu jīvanti yasminnetāvupāśritau—*

'Mortal man never lives by *prāṇa* or *apāna* (alone); mortal men live by something else on which these two depend.'

The mention of *prāṇa* and *apāna* is only illustrative. All the vital energies in the system are subordinate to a reality behind them and above them, a reality which is spiritual in nature and truly independent. This is the Ātman. These vital energies are held together by a force apart from themselves. Positive sciences will be driven more and more, by the compelling logic of facts, to recognize a non-material, spiritual reality behind all vital forces.

Even then, apart from hinting at such a possibility, these sciences, limited as they are by their methods, cannot hope to unravel its mystery. The phenomena of aging and death cannot be fully explained in terms of physical and vital energies and their processes. Yama asks in verse four: when the spiritual force is withdrawn from the body at death, does anything of it remain in the body—*kim atra pariśiṣyate?* It is a question containing its own negative answer. No; nothing of it is left in the body. Why? Because, the body begins to disintegrate soon after. And so Yama concludes in verse five that man lives not by *prāṇa* or *apāna*, or any of the other vital energies, but by something else on which they all depend. This is the Ātman, the true Self of man.

The body with its psycho-physical energies is what Vedānta calls a *saṁhata* (*saṅghāta* by Buddhism), an aggregate of parts. A *saṁhata*, being non-intelligent in itself, Vedānta further says, can never be a self-explanatory and self-sufficient reality; it always points to a self-subsisting intelligent principle beyond itself as the source of its meaning and significance. Śaṅkara often refers to this dictum of the Sāṅkhya philosophers (*Sāṅkhya Darśanam*, I. 66):

*Saṁhataparārthatvāt, puruṣasya*—'All aggregates imply an intelligent principle (which is a non-aggregate) for which they are meant.'

All things of utility are subordinate to things without utility. Referring to this truth with respect to *prāṇa* and other vital energies in man, Śaṅkara says in his comment on verse five:

*Na hi eṣāṁ parārthānāṁ saṁhatyakāritvāt jīvanahetutvam upapadyate. Svārthena asaṁhatena pareṇa kenacidaprayuktaṁ saṁhatānām avasthānaṁ na dṛṣṭaṁ, yathā gṛhādīnāṁ loke; tathā prāṇādīnām api saṁhatatvāt bhavitum arhati*—

'Because they are aggregates, these (*prāṇa* etc.), which serve the purposes of entities other than themselves, cannot be considered as the ultimate life principle. Experience does not disclose the existence of any aggregate which is not energized by a something which is a self-subsisting non-aggregate superior (to it); just as a house etc. in the world. Similar is the case also with entities like *prāṇa* etc., they being aggregates.'

*Immortal Ātman and Mortal Man*

Yama now tells us in the next three verses, verses six to eight, about the infinite Brahman above causality, and the finite human soul caught up in the causal net:

*Hanta ta idaṁ pravakṣyāmi guhyaṁ brahma sanātanam;*
*Yathā ca maraṇaṁ prāpya ātmā bhavati gautama—*

'Well then, I shall tell thee this, O Gautama, the profound (truth of) Brahman, the eternal, and also what happens to the soul of man after meeting death.'

*Yonim anye prapadyante śarīratvāya dehinaḥ;*
*Sthāṇum anye'nusaṁyanti yathā karma yathā śrutam—*

'Some souls enter the womb to get embodied, others go to the plants—according to (their) action and according to (their) knowledge.'

*Ya eṣa supteṣu jāgarti*
*kāmaṁ kāmaṁ puruṣo nirmimāṇaḥ;*
*Tadeva śukraṁ tat brahma tadevāmṛtamucyate;*
*tasmin lokāḥ śritāḥ sarve tadu nātyeti kaścana.*
*Etat vai tat—*

'This Self who remains awake creating (all sorts of objects of) desires even while (the man is) asleep—That verily is the Pure; That is Brahman; That alone is called the Immortal; all the worlds are established in That; none can ever transcend That. This is verily That.'

We may recall that Yama's discourse to Naciketā in this Upaniṣad began with the latter's searching question to the former, conveyed in verse twenty of chapter one, as to whether man survives bodily death: 'When a man dies, there is this doubt: some say that he exists; some (others) say that he does not exist. This I should like to know, being taught by you. Of the boons, this is (my) third boon.' This question about death on the part of an earnest seeker of truth is the surest indication that the search for truth has turned from the world of external nature to the world of internal nature. *It is the necessary prelude to an understanding of life in depth and, through that, to a total philosophy of life.*

This spiritual depth is the special contribution of the Upaniṣads to Indian culture and thought. In this, ancient Greek thought and culture, great and glorious though it was, stands in sharp contrast. Its Mystery Religions, and even its great Platonic

thought, unlike its socio-political religious cults, never got integrated with the distinctively Greek outlook and thought. Its gifted thinkers did not experience the urge to subject the spiritual phenomena of these Mystery Religions to that rational investigation which they so diligently and passionately applied to social and political phenomena, and in which their contributions were to become unique and lasting. What the ancient Greeks neglected became, on the other hand, the ruling passion of the ancient Indians. In the words of Lowes Dickinson (*The Greek View of Life*, p. 68):

'The more completely the Greek felt himself to be at home in the world, the more happily and freely he abandoned himself to the exercise of his powers, the more intensely and vividly he lived in action and in passion, the more alien, bitter, and incomprehensible did he find the phenomena of age and death. On this problem, so far as we can judge, he received from his religion but little light and still less consolation. The music of his brief life closed with a discord unresolved; and even before reason had brought her criticism to bear upon his creed, its deficiency was forced upon him by his feeling.'

We have seen how Yama reacted to the occasion of Naciketā's question in the truly philosophical way by utilizing it to expound to his highly gifted student, and through him, to humanity at large, the ever-fascinating subject of *Ātmavidyā*, the science of the Self, which is the basis and presupposition of all other sciences, namely, the sciences of the not-Self.

### *Karma and Rebirth*

Vedānta teaches the truth of the survival of the soul at death and its rebirth *as a part* of its total philosophy of the Self. Hence this aspect of the question put by Naciketā in verse twenty of the first chapter receives a direct answer from Yama—and a brief answer at that—only in this fifth chapter in its verse eight. Yama had earlier referred to this theme in verse six of chapter two, and I had discussed its implications in my lecture expounding verses seven, eight, and nine of that chapter.

If man is primarily a physical body, with his apparently non-physical traits arising from the physical body as its by-products or epiphenomena, then there can be no question of survival or rebirth. But if man is essentially a non-physical reality which manufactures the physical body for its own self-manifestation, then survival and rebirth follow as a matter of course. In the words

of Swami Vivekananda (*Complete Works*, Vol. IV, Eighth Edition, p. 12):

'In Western countries, as a rule, people lay more stress on the body aspect of man; those philosophers who wrote on *bhakti* (love of God) in India laid stress on the spiritual side of man; and this difference seems to be typical of the Oriental and the Occidental nations. It is so even in common language. In England, when speaking of death, it is said, a man gave up his ghost; in India, a man gave up his body. The one idea is that man is a body and *has* a soul; the other that man is a soul and *has* a body.'

Materialistic thought accepts man's capacity to control external sense-objects; moral experience reveals man's capacity to control the internal sense-organs as well. *All such control involves the independence of the controlling subject of the controlled object;* the independence of the self of the not-self. All moral phenomena thus disclose the essentially spiritual nature of man and its domination in varying degrees over his body and sense-organs. This, says Vedānta, is the promise of his spiritual redemption, which becomes fully realized when he realizes himself as the Ātman, ever free, ever pure, ever perfect, and immortal. Rebirth ceases to have any relevance for such a man. But till one attains such realization, one is under the pull of the body and the sense-organs, and it is this pull—the *yathā karma yathā śrutam* of the verse—that gravitates the soul to new physical formations, 'to work out its *karma*', in the phraseology of Vedānta. Knowledge of the Ātman is compared by Vedānta to fire in which all seeds of future births are burnt; but seeds not so burnt cannot escape the succession of sowings and harvestings.

The experience of the soul's detachment from the physical body is the beginning of man's moral and spiritual life. This experience gets deepened as one progresses in his spiritual life; it becomes complete in spiritual realization. Death in the case of such a man has been compared by Vedāntic sages to the casting-off of its slough by a snake (*Vivekacūḍāmaṇi* 549). The worldly man, in whom body consciousness is predominant, is compared by Sri Ramakrishna to a green cocoanut in which the kernel sticks to the shell, and scooping the kernel involves scooping a bit of the shell as well. He compares a spiritually realized man to a ripe cocoanut in which there is a complete separation of the kernel from the shell. Such people are dead to the body even while they are physically alive, and their knowledge of their own deathless Self takes away all sting from physical

death. In the words of Socrates (*The Dialogues of Plato*, Vol. I, B. Jowett's Edition, p. 414):

'For I deem that the true votary of philosophy is likely to be misunderstood by other men; they do not perceive that of his own accord he is always engaged in the pursuit of dying and death; and if this be so, and he has had the desire of death all his life long, why when his time comes should he repine at that which he has been always pursuing and desiring?'

And further (*ibid.*, p. 418):

'And the true philosophers, and they only, are ever seeking to release the soul. Is not the separation and release of the soul from the body their especial study?'

The body is like a pillow-case, in the words of Sri Ramakrishna, with the pillow standing for the real man. The *Gītā* (II. 22) compares rebirth to man's changing of his worn-out clothes to new ones.

The soul—the *sūkṣma śarīra* or subtle body, in the stricter scientific terminology of Vedānta—does survive physical death and manufacture new physical bodies for itself, says Yama in verse eight of this chapter. The impelling force for this is provided by the actions it had done and the knowledge it had gained in its previous life: *yathā karma yathā śrutam*. This impelling force is also known as *vāsanā* or *saṁskāra*, innate tendency or disposition, which may be said to constitute the subconscious and the unconscious of modern psychology. This is what gives meaning to Plato's dictum that 'our learning is simply recollection' which, 'if true, also necessarily implies a previous time in which we have learned that which we now recollect' (*ibid.*, p. 425).

*Śrutam* literally means what is heard. Here, however, it means the state of a man's awareness resulting from the deposits of life's experiences, the level at which his consciousness functions. *Karma* means action; here it means also the fruits of action. Every action produces a change in the ratio of forces not only in the world of external nature, but also in the inner world of the doer. The latter reveals action as an educative force, as a character-forming force. Such education, says Vedānta, may be wholesome or unwholesome depending upon the *śrutam*, knowledge or awareness, generated. It is wholesome if it tends to the spiritual liberation of man, if it helps to manifest the infinite and immortal Self behind the finite and mortal dimension of the human personality. It is unwholesome if it binds tighter the bonds of finitude

and mortality on man, if it thickens the veil that hides the infinite and immortal dimension of his personality. The human body is the *kṣetra* or field in which we sow the seeds of our desires and reap the harvest of our lives; the harvest is according to the seed sown and the care bestowed thereafter; and both this sowing and harvesting constitute an unending chain of cause and effect, the chain of *saṁsāra*, in the technical language of Vedānta; the gentle but steady erosion of this chain is what is achieved by spiritual education, and its complete destruction by spiritual realization. Slow as this erosion is, it needs for its operation not one but many physical manifestations. This is what the verse refers to in the statement: *yonim anye prapadyante śarīratvāya.*

The verse further says that such remanifestation may be not only in human and animal bodies, but also in plants and trees: *sthāṇum anye anusaṁyanti.* This is too much for some modern people even for some among them who otherwise accept rebirth. Much of the objection, however, arises not from rational but sentimental considerations. Some minds, *humanly* prejudiced, react: How can rational man be reduced to plants and trees or even animals? Other minds, still more sentimental and *sectionally* prejudiced, protest against the requirement of a high caste brāhmaṇa being born as a low caste śūdra, or a white man being born as a black man. Vedānta, however, did not view this subject from the angle of racial or social prejudices. If we uphold causal determinism in the field of moral life, as we uphold it in all fields of physical and biological phenomena, we have also to accept its consequences without being deflected by our human prejudices. The theory does not demand that a rational human being *should* be born in the lower order; it only says that if the effects of a man's actions and his state of awareness be such as to need an animal or plant body for their appropriate manifestation or working out and not a human body, no prejudice or protest can stall it.

The possibility of a man's rebirth is conditioned only by the *sāttvika, rājasika,* or *tāmasika* nature of his actions and the state of consciousness produced by them. Apart from differences in the evolutionary levels, the scientific mind cannot accept an unbridgeable gulf between man and the lower orders of life.

This causal determinism affects only the *sūkṣma śarīra*, the subtle body of man, which is itself a complex, causally determined entity. As I had said earlier, this is the equivalent of the English

word 'soul'. But this is only the *vijñānamaya ātman*, the conditioned self, but not the *paramātman*, the true Self of man. His true Self is ever pure, ever free, beyond the causal network, beyond birth and hence beyond death, and therefore infinite. This is the Ātman or Brahman. Swami Vivekananda proclaims the glory of this Self of man in one of the verses of his famous philosophical poem, 'The Song of the *Sannyāsin*' (*Complete Works*, Vol. IV, Eighth Edition, p. 393):

> 'Who sows must reap', they say, 'and cause must bring
> The sure effect; good, good; bad, bad; and none
> Escape the law. But whoso wears a form
> Must wear the chain.' Too true; but far beyond
> Both name and form is Ātman, ever free.
> Know thou art That, *sannyāsin* bold! Say—
> *'Om Tat Sat, Om!'*

*Brahman Revealed in Experience*

The Upaniṣads, as we have seen before in an earlier lecture, approach this highest reality in man through an investigation into experience which occurs in three planes, namely, waking, dream, and dreamless sleep. It is difficult to grasp the Ātman in the waking state, because in this state it is far too inextricably mixed up with the not-self elements of experience. Yet man does get intimations of this reality even in the waking state, more especially in its moments of calmness and introspection. But it discloses itself a little more distinctively in the dream and sleep states. Hence Vedānta considered an inquiry into the data of these states as indispensable to the full knowledge of the Self. In the dream state, the Self is truly the creator and the created, as well as the perceiver of both. In the dreamless sleep state, It is merely the seer or witness, without projecting objects of perception. When the data of the three states are co-ordinated and *philosophically* investigated, says Vedānta, the true Self of man stands revealed as infinite and immortal, being beyond the cause and effect determinism, and as the one unchanging basis of all the changing phenomena of experience.

This is what Yama conveys in verse eight: *tadeva śukraṁ tat brahma tadevāmṛtamucyate*—'That, verily, is the pure; That is Brahman; That alone is called the immortal.' The infinite dimension of the Self so revealed is emphasized: *tasmin lokā śritā sarve tadu*

*nātyeti kaścana*—'all the worlds are established in That; nothing ever transcends That.' And, to focus attention on the truth that the phenomenon of the finite man itself reveals the infinite Brahman, adds the refrain: *etat vai tat*—'This is verily That.'

### *Unity in Diversity*

Having revealed Brahman through finite human experience, the Upaniṣad now proceeds, in the remaining seven verses of this chapter, verses nine to fifteen, to sing the glory of Brahman as the One behind the many, the Eternal among the non-eternals, and as the Light of pure consciousness lighting up the whole universe.

Introducing this group of verses, and explaining why the Upaniṣad repeats itself in projecting, again and again, its vision of the unity of the Self, Śaṅkara says in his comment:

*Anekatārkikakubuddhivicālitāntaḥkaraṇānāṁ pramāṇopapannam api ātmaikatvavijñānam, asakṛducyamānam api, anṛjubuddhīnāṁ brāhmaṇānāṁ cetasi nādhīyata iti, tat pratipādana ādaravatī punaḥ punaḥ āha śrutiḥ*—

'Though based on the canons of right knowledge, the realization of the (truth of the) unity of the Self does not, in spite of constant reiteration, dawn on the minds of (those) *brāhmaṇas* (truth seekers) whose *buddhi* (reason) is not straightforward (is not drawn to truth alone), whose mind is distracted by the many false reasonings of logicians; accordingly, the Upaniṣad, deeply imbued with a concern for man, communicates this (truth) again and again.'

Says Yama in verses nine and ten:

> *Agniryathaiko bhuvanaṁ praviṣṭo*
> *rūpaṁ rūpaṁ pratirūpo babhūva;*
> *Ekastathā sarvabhūtāntarātmā*
> *rūpaṁ rūpaṁ pratirūpo bahiśca*—

'As one fire, having entered the world, assumes various forms according to the different objects (through which it manifests), so the one inner Self of all beings (appears) in various forms according to the different objects (through which It manifests), and (exists) also outside (these forms, in Its transcendent aspect).'

> *Vāyuryathaiko bhuvanaṁ praviṣṭo*
> *rūpaṁ rūpaṁ prati-rūpo babhūva;*
> *Ekastathā sarvabhūtāntarātmā*
> *rūpaṁ rūpaṁ pratirūpo bahiśca*—

'As one air, having entered the world, assumes various forms according to the different objects (through which it manifests), so the one inner Self of all beings (appears) in various forms according to the different objects (through which It manifests) and (exists) also outside (these forms, in Its transcendent aspect).'

Though manifesting itself in various forms in the diverse phenomena of nature, air or fire is just one principle only; and it is not exhausted in any one of its manifestations or even in all of its manifestations taken together. Apart from its immanent forms, it has also a transcendent form. The same is the case with the Ātman. This truth is expressed by the one word '*bahiśca*' occurring at the end of the two verses. The Ātman is both immanent and transcendent. This at once shows how wrong is the interpretation of those western scholars who equate Vedānta with pantheism; behind such interpretation is ignorance of the deeper meaning of the texts and, not unoften, theological prejudice.

In the next verse, verse eleven, Yama explains, through an illustration, how the Ātman is unaffected by the limitations of the forms through which It finds manifestation:

*Sūryo yathā sarvalokasya cakṣuḥ*
*na lipyate cākṣuṣairbāhyadoṣaiḥ;*
*Ekastathā sarvabhūtāntarātmā*
*na lipyate lokaduḥkhena bāhyaḥ—*

'Just as the sun, the eye of the whole world, is never sullied by the external faults of the eyes (of creatures), so the one inner Self of all beings is never sullied by the miseries of the world, as It (in Its own form) is also transcendent.'

The problem posed in this verse is common to Vedānta and modern science, in fact, to all systems of thought which uphold a non-dual reality behind all existence. To the confirmed dualists, all evil belongs to a devil and all good to a god, and the twain shall never meet. The verse gives an apt illustration: the sun, the source of almost all the energies in the solar system which penetrate every pore of that system, is not affected by the evils in that system; it is not affected by the defects in the eyes of creatures, eyes whose very existence and functioning depend on the sun itself. The Ātman stands in the same relation to the manifested universe. Evil, in the light of this thought, is not an absolute but only a relative value.

In the beautiful words of Socrates on the subject of the other pair of opposites, namely, pleasure and pain (*The Dialogues of Plato, op. cit.*, pp. 409-10):

'How singular is the thing mankind call pleasure, and how curiously related to pain, which might be thought to be the opposite of it; for they are never present to a man at the same instant, and yet he who pursues and gets either is generally compelled to get the other; their bodies are two, but they are joined by a single head.'

The Ātman is not affected by either the misery or other evils, or even by the happiness or other good values in the manifested universe. They are the manifestations of the Ātman in limited universes of discourse. They cannot exist apart from the Ātman; but the Ātman is independent of all of them. Evil in the created is not evil in the creator; the poison in the fangs of the snake is evil from the point of view of the snake's victims, but, from the point of view of the snake itself, it is just a part and parcel of its physical constitution. This very poison can be extracted and used also to save the life of man in certain forms of sickness. Human ignorance and misery do not tarnish the perfection of the divine reality behind man, says the verse.

### *Realization*

In the next two verses, verses twelve and thirteen, Yama brings this Ātman close to us and exhorts us to find our peace in the Ātman:

*Eko vaśī sarvabhūtāntarātmā*
*ekaṁ rūpaṁ bahudhā yaḥ karoti;*
*Tamātmasthaṁ ye'nupaśyanti dhīrāḥ*
*teṣāṁ sukhaṁ śāśvataṁ netareṣām—*

'The one (supreme) Controller (of all), the inner Self of all beings, who makes His one form manifold—those *dhīras* (wise men) who realize Him as existing in their own self, to them belongs eternal happiness and to none else.'

*Nityo'nityānāṁ cetanaścetanānām*
*eko bahūnāṁ yo vidadhāti kāmān;*
*Tamātmasthaṁ ye'nupaśyanti dhīrāḥ*
*teṣāṁ śāntiḥ śāśvatī netareṣām—*

'The Eternal among the non-eternals, the Intelligence among the intelligent, who, though one, fulfils the desires of the many—those *dhīrās* who perceive Him as existing within their own self, to them belongs eternal peace and to none else.'

Eternal happiness and eternal peace belong to that *dhīra* or heroic soul who realizes the Ātman; the verse describes the Ātman in a few significant phrases: *eko vaśī, sarvabhūtāntarātmā, nityo'nityānām, cetanaścetanānām*, and *eko bahūnāṁ yo vidadhāti kāmān*—'the one (supreme) Controller (of all)', 'the inner Self of all beings', 'the Eternal among the non-eternals', 'the Intelligence among the intelligent', and 'who, though one, fulfils the desires of the many'. The Ātman is the one supreme Controller; but not in the anthropomorphic sense, like a mighty sovereign whose subjects we are. Like autocratic rulers on earth, such a god cannot escape, and has not escaped, rebellion and dethronement by the subjects. All serious atheism is rebellion not against god, but against the concept of this extra-cosmic, autocratic, personal god, which is entirely the product of man's fears and hopes; the Upaniṣads have nothing to do with such a god. So Yama adds to *eko vaśī* the significant additional feature: *sarvabhūtāntarātmā*—the inner Self of all beings. God is not extra-cosmic and autocratic; He is the very Self of all; He is not an outsider with whom our relations may be anything from submission to rebellion. He is our very inner Self, the one immutable and immortal Consciousness in a world of perishing entities and objects, all estrangement from whom, on the part of mortal man, leads but to darkness and sorrow, and all communion to light and peace. It is only about a god so understood that the words of the prayer can properly apply: 'Our hearts are restless till they rest in Thee'; or of one of the Psalms of the Old Testament ('Psalms', 42. 1-2):

'As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God.

'My soul thirsteth for God, for the *living* God: When shall I come and appear before God?'

Vedānta proclaims the eternal glory of the Self of man. Referring to this truth in the course of his speech on 'The Ātman' delivered in the United States of America, Swami Vivekananda says (*Complete Works*, Vol. II, Ninth Edition, p. 250):

'No books, no scriptures, no science can ever imagine the glory of the Self that appears as man, the most glorious God that ever existed, exists, or ever will exist.'

Again, speaking on 'The Real and the Apparent Man', the Swami says (*ibid.*, p. 279):

'In worshipping God, we have been always worshipping our own hidden Self.'

It is this fact that makes possible the *realization* of God and not mere *belief in His existence*. The two verses emphasize this: *tam ātmastham ye'nupaśyanti dhīrāḥ*—'those *dhīras* who realize Him existing in their own self'. And the fruits of such realization are: *sukham śāśvatam* and *śāntiḥ śāśvatī*—'eternal happiness' and eternal peace'; eternal, because it is *svātmabhūta*—'identical with one's own Self', in the words of Śaṅkara.

Verse thirteen also adds: *eko bahūnāṁ yo vidadhāti kāmān*—'though one, He fulfils the desires of the many'. Being the infinite Self of all, the Ātman can be 'all things to all men'. This alone justifies the sentiments of Abraham Lincoln expressed in the course of his touching farewell speech to the fellow citizens of his native town: commending you all to the care of Him who can go with me and yet abide with you.

### *The Light of All Lights*

Yama now refers in the next verse, verse fourteen, to the profundity and incommunicability of this realization:

> *Tadetat iti manyante anirdeśyaṁ paramaṁ sukham;*
> *Kathaṁ nu tat vijānīyāṁ kimu bhāti vibhāti vā—*

'(Sages) realize that indefinable supreme happiness "as That is This"! How can I *know* That? Does It shine (in Its own light), or does It shine (in reflection)?'

To the pure in heart, It is a living presence. They do not and need not try to *know* It; knowledge is objectification. The Ātman being the very Self of the seeker, to objectify It means to limit It. In the words of Swami Vivekananda (*Complete Works*, Vol. II, Ninth Edition, p. 134):

'All attempts of language, calling Him father, or brother, our dearest friend, are attempts to objectify God, which cannot be done. He is the eternal *subject* of everything. I am the subject of the chair; I see the chair; so God is the eternal subject of my soul. How can you objectify Him, the Essence of your souls, the Reality of everything? Thus, I would repeat to you once more, God is neither knowable nor unknowable, but something infinitely higher than either. He is one with us; and that which is one with us is neither knowable nor unknowable.... You cannot know your own self; you cannot move it out and make it an object to look at, because you *are* that, and cannot separate yourself from it. Neither is it unknowable, for what is better known than yourself? It is really the centre of our knowledge. In exactly the same sense

God is neither unknowable nor known, but infinitely higher than both; for He is our real Self.'

The above words help to put in proper perspective the question posed by Yama: *kimu bhāti vibhāti vā*—'Does the Ātman shine in Its own light or is It revealed by some other light?' If It shines in Its own light, It becomes the infinite light of knowledge, one and non-dual; but if It is revealed by some other light, It becomes reduced to a finite substance, endowed, may be, with the value of being or existence, but essentially bereft of the two other values of knowledge and bliss. This question gets an answer from Yama in the next verse, verse fifteen, which is the closing verse of this chapter, which occurs also in another Upaniṣad, the *Muṇḍaka*, and which is one of the most sublime passages in all the Upaniṣads:

*Na tatra sūryo bhāti na candratārakam*
*nemā vidyuto bhānti kuto'yamagniḥ;*
*Tameva bhāntam anubhāti sarvam*
*tasya bhāsā sarvamidaṁ vibhāti*—

'There (in the Ātman) the sun does not illumine, nor the moon and the stars; nor do these lightnings illumine (there); and much less this (domestic) fire. When That shines, everything shines after That. By Its light, all this (manifested universe) is lighted.'

### *The Vision Sublime*

To grasp the deep significance of this verse, and its philosophic background, we can do no better than listen to its exposition by another sage, Swami Vivekananda. Says he in his lecture on 'Vedānta and Indian Life' (*Complete Works*, Vol. III, Eighth Edition, pp. 234-35):

'Apart from all its merits as the greatest philosophy, apart from its wonderful merit as theology, as showing the path of salvation to mankind, the Upaniṣadic literature is the most wonderful painting of sublimity that the world has. Here comes out in full force that individuality of the human mind, that introspective, intuitive Hindu mind. We have paintings of sublimity elsewhere in all nations, but almost without exception you will find that their ideal is to grasp the sublime in the muscles. Take for instance, Milton, Dante, Homer, or any of the Western poets. There are wonderfully sublime passages in them; but there, it is always a grasping at infinity through the senses, the muscles, getting the ideal of infinite expansion, the infinite of space. We find the same attempts made in the (pre-Upaniṣadic) Saṁhitā portion. You know some of those wonderful *ṛks* (hymns of the *Ṛg-Veda*) where crea-

tion is described; the very heights of expression of the sublime in expansion and the infinite in space are attained.

'But they found out very soon that the infinite cannot be reached in that way, that even infinite space, and expansion, and infinite external nature could not express the ideas that were struggling to find expression in their minds; and so they fell back upon other explanations. The language became new in the Upaniṣads; it is almost negative, it is sometimes chaotic, sometimes taking you beyond the senses, pointing out to you something which you cannot grasp, which you cannot sense, and at the same time you feel certain that it is there. What passage in the world can compare with his: *Na tatra sūryo bhāti na candratārakaṁ nemā vidyuto bhānti kuto'yamagniḥ*—"There the sun cannot illumine, nor the moon, nor the stars, the flash of lightning cannot illumine the place, what to speak of this mortal fire?" '

In the opening verse of the present chapter we heard the Upaniṣad describing the human body as the city of the immortal Brahman. Earlier, in its third chapter, the Upaniṣad had compared life to a journey in a chariot and the Ātman as the master of the chariot. And in the next chapter, the sixth and last, into the study of which we shall enter when we meet next, the Upaniṣad will be communicating to us the Vedāntic vision of the Tree of Existence in its opening, and the assurance of universal redemption in its closing, verses.

TWENTY EIGHT

# KATHA UPANISAD—17

In the last discourse, we heard the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* closing its fifth chapter with its song of the sublime glory of the Ātman, the Self of man, the Light of infinite consciousness, 'by Whose light all this is lighted'. In this sixth and closing chapter of the Upaniṣad, into the study of which we shall enter today, Yama opens his teaching with a description of Brahman as the Tree of Existence:

*Ūrdhvamūlo'vāk śākhaḥ eṣo'śvatthaḥ sanātanaḥ;*
*tadeva śukraṁ tat brahma tadevāmṛtamucyate;*
*Tasmin lokāḥ śritāḥ sarve tadu nātyeti kaścana.*
*Etat vai tat—*

This eternal *aśvattha* tree has its root above and branches below; That verily (is the) pure; That (is) Brahman; That alone is called the immortal. In That rest all the worlds; and none, verily, ever transcends That. This is verily That.'

## *The Sacredness of Trees in Indian Culture*

The 'tree of existence' is a favourite simile in Indian literature. Living in forests in close communion with nature, early man everywhere experienced not only love, but also reverence for trees. They were not only his mundane friends, but his spiritual support as well, being the abode of his gods. This is specially revealed in all the subsequent developments of that culture. We find each culture selecting, in the early stages of its development, one or more trees as the special focus of its reverence. In the case of India, these are the *aśvattha* or *ficus religiosa* and the *vaṭa* or *ficus indica*. The former is also called *pippala* or peepal, and the latter *nyagrodha* or banyan (*nyag*=downward; *rodha*=growing). A third sacred tree is the *uḍumbara* or *ficus glomearata* which, however, did not eventually attain the same status as was attained by the other two.

The *Ṛg-Veda* refers to a *supalāśa* tree at the top of which is a sweet *pippala* fruit and on which two *suparṇa* birds live. The *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* (III. 1. 1) compares God and the human soul to two birds living on a *pippala* tree, the latter eating its sweet fruits, while the former sits immersed in its own glory without caring to eat or drink. The *Atharva-Veda* speaks of the *aśvattha*

tree as the home of the gods. According to Bal Gangadhar Tilak (*Gītā-Rahasya*, Vol. II, p. 1136), the *pippala*, which was originally known as *aśvattha*, was the tree of Sūrya, the Sun, and the *nyagrodha* or *vaṭa* was the tree of Varuṇa, and early Indian tradition had accepted both *aśvattha* and *vaṭa* as capable of being represented as the tree of existence. The *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* (VI. 6) refers to the world-tree, only to emphasize the truth of Brahman above and beyond it. The *Mahābhārata* (Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute Edition, 3.186.81-83) relates the story of the sage Mārkaṇḍeya seeing the supreme Being in the form of an infant on the branch of an *avyaya* or imperishable *nyagrodha* tree at the time of the dissolution of the universe. The Chinese Buddhist pilgrim Hiuen Tsang, who visited India in the seventh century A.D., refers to a highly venerated and ancient *vaṭa* or banyan tree at Allahabad, at the confluence of the Gaṅgā and the Yamunā, bearing the significant name of *akṣaya vaṭa* or imperishable banyan. It still exists in spite of the vandalism perpetrated on it by a fanatic Muslim ruler of Medieval India, and receives the same veneration. According to the *Padma Purāṇa*, Viṣṇu once took birth as an *aśvattha* tree following a curse from the sage Ambarīṣa. The divine incarnation, Kṛṣṇa, speaks of Himself in the *Gītā* (X.26) as the *aśvattha* among all the trees: *aśvatthaḥ sarvavṛkṣāṇām*.

During the time of Buddha, in the sixth century B.C., the sacredness of some of these trees as the abode of gods or spirits was a well-established fact; and much of popular religion centred round the worship of such trees. Buddha himself chose an *aśvattha* tree to sit under and meditate and attain *bodhi* or enlightenment. This act of his undoubtedly raised to the highest level the already recognized sacredness of this tree, which thereafter began to be called by the Buddhists the bo-tree, the tree of *bodhi* or enlightenment. According to the *Śabdakalpadruma* (Vol. II, p. 462), the bo-tree was also called *caityavṛkṣa*, sanctuary tree.

### *Its Philosophical Orientation*

With the development of Indian philosophical thought and the elevation of the causality principle to the cosmic dimension, the popular idea of the sacredness of tress due to their being the abode of the gods received a philosophical orientation. The uni-

verse as a world of effects was recognized to have a unitary cause, be it primordial non-intelligent nature, as in the Sāṅkhya, or Brahman, the very principle of intelligence, as in the Vedānta. There is unity of being behind the diversity of becoming; and since cause and effect are essentially non-different, similar must be the relation between Brahman and the world. Most pagan and Indian cosmological ideas, in fact, most non-Semitic cosmological theories, uphold a unitary view of all existence. In the effort to picture to itself the nature of a cosmos so conceived, the human mind developed the imagery of the tree of existence, much as modern biology has developed the imagery of the tree of life.

### *The Tree of Existence: Scandinavian*

Apart from the Indian, the most impressive account of this imagery is found in the Scandinavian mythology. In the words of Carlyle (*On Heroes and Hero-Worship*, 1910, pp. 27-28):

'I like, too, that representation they have of the Tree Igdrasil. All life is figured by them as a tree. Igdrasil, the Ash-tree of Existence, has its roots deep down in the kingdoms of Hela or Death; its trunk reaches up heaven-high, spreads its boughs over the whole universe: it is the Tree of Existence. At the foot of it, in the Death-Kingdom, sit three *Nornas*, Fates—the Past, Present, Future, watering its roots from the Sacred Well. Its "boughs", with their buddings and disleafings—events, things suffered, things done, catastrophes—stretch through all lands and times. Is not every leaf of it a biography, every fibre there an act or word? Its boughs are Histories of Nations. The rustle of it is the noise of Human Existence, onwards from of old. It grows there, the breath of Human Passion rustling through it; or stormtost, the stormwind howling through it like the voice of all the gods. It is Igdrasil, the Tree of Existence. It is the past, the present, and the future; what was done, what is doing, what will be done; "the infinite conjugation of the verb *To do*".'

### *The Tree of Existence: Indian*

It will be instructive to compare this Scandinavian imagery with the Indian one, which appears in its fully developed form, first, in this opening verse of the sixth chapter of the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* and, later, in an amplified form, in the first four verses of the fifteenth chapter of the *Gītā*, which forms part of the tenth book of the *Mahābhārata*, and again, in the fourteenth book of the same epic. The following are the *Gītā* verses:

*Ūrdhvamūlam adhaḥśākham aśvatthaṁ prāhuravyayam;*
*Chandāṁsi yasya parṇāni yastaṁ veda sa vedavit—*

'They speak of an eternal *aśvattha* tree with its root above and branching below, whose leaves are the Vedas; he who knows it, knows the Vedas.'

*Adhaścordhvaṁ prasṛtāstasya śākhā*
*guṇapravṛddhā viṣayapravālāḥ;*
*Adhaśca mūlānyanusantatāni*
*karmānubandhīni manuṣyaloke—*

'Below and above spread its branches, nourished by the *guṇas* (nature's three constituent modes of *sattva, rajas,* and *tamas*). Sense-objects are its buds; and below in the world of men stretch forth the roots in the shape of the consequences of (human) action.'

*Na rūpamasyeha tathopalabhyate*
*nānto na cādirna ca saṁpratiṣṭhā;*
*Aśvatthamenaṁ suvirūḍhamūlam*
*asaṅgaśastreṇa dṛḍhena chitvā—*

'Its true form, however, is not perceived here, neither its end, nor its origin, nor its support. Having cut asunder this firm-rooted *aśvattha* with the strong weapon of non-attachment;'

*Tataḥ padaṁ tat parimārgitavyaṁ*
*yasmin gatā na nivartanti bhūyaḥ;*
*Tameva cādyaṁ puruṣaṁ prapadye*
*yataḥ pravṛttiḥ prasṛtā purāṇī—*

'Then, (saying to oneself) "I seek refuge in that primal Person from whom has streamed forth (this) ancient (cosmic) process", that goal is to be sought for, going whither they (the wise) do not return again (to *saṁsāra* or relative existence).'

### *The Uniqueness of the Aśvattha Imagery*

In spite of many similarities, there is one striking difference between the Indian and the Scandinavian imageries; the Scandinavian tree of existence has its roots, conceived in the plural, below in the world of Hela or Death, whereas the Indian tree has its root, conceived in the singular, the tap-root, above in the world of the immortal and infinite Brahman—*ūrdhvamūlam adhaḥ śākham aśvattham*. The concept of the universe of beings and entities originating from one infinite, immortal, and spiritual reality—the Brahman—is a unique Indian idea which she derived from her

Upaniṣadic sages. The world of time, *saṁsāra*, is rooted in the world of eternity, Brahman. The Upaniṣads realized this Brahman as the innermost Self of man. And what the Scandinavian sages described as the roots below in the world of Death are but the secondary roots according to the Indian sages. These secondary roots are accepted by Vedānta also as many and as below: *adhaśca mūlāni anusantatāni karmānubandhīni manuṣyaloke*—'in the world of men below stretch forth the roots in the shape of the consequences of (human) action', as the *Gītā* verse quoted above expresses it, or 'the infinite conjugation of the verb *To do*', as vividly expressed by Carlyle in the passage quoted earlier.

As the *aśvattha* or peepal tree does not usually drop down aerial roots to take fresh roots in the earth, the *vaṭa* or banyan tree, being specially characterized by this arresting phenomenon, answers better to the demand of this aspect of the imagery. But the concept of the *unity* of the primary root and of its being *above*, meaning thereby above the world of time, is the uniquely Indian vision, with, perhaps, no counterpart anywhere else. India viewed her tree of existence from the two points of view of Brahman, or the invisible root *above* time, and *saṁsāra*, or the visible shoot *below* in the world of time, designating it accordingly as *Brahma-vṛkṣa* or the tree of Brahman and *Saṁsāra-vṛkṣa* or the tree of the cosmos, respectively.

### *The Tree Imagery and the Philosophy of Reality*

It was in the effort to expound the interrelation between Brahman (the spiritual Absolute) or Prakṛti (undifferentiated nature), on the one side, and the differentiated cosmos, on the other, that the Indian sages discovered the relevancy of the tree imagery.

The emanation of the vast and variegated universe from Brahman or Prakṛti appeared to these sages to be similar to a large tree coming out of a tiny seed. Energy coiled up becomes energy released. All evolution is a movement from the undifferentiated to a differentiated state. The *Anu-Gītā* in the fourteenth book of the *Mahābhārata* (Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute Edition, 14. 47.12-13) contains the following picturesque description of the tree of existence in the light of the theory of cosmic evolution expounded by the Sāṅkhya philosophy and accepted by Vedānta and all other Indian systems:

*Avyaktabījaprabhavo buddhiskandhamayo mahān;*
*Mahāhaṅkāraviṭapa indriyāntara koṭaraḥ—*

'Undifferentiated nature is its seed, the cosmic mind is its (sprout and) trunk, the cosmic ego is its main foliage, the mind and the sense-organs are the hollows inside its trunk.'

*Mahābhūtaviśākhaśca viśeṣapratiśākhavan;*
*Sadā parṇaḥ sadā puṣpaḥ śubhāśubha phalodayaḥ—*

'The subtle primordial elements are its large branches and the gross primordial elements are its sub-branches. It is always covered with leaves, flowers, and wholesome and unwholesome fruits.'

*Ajīvaḥ sarvabhūtānāṁ brahmavṛkṣaḥ sanātanaḥ—*

'(It is) the nourishment of all beings—such is the eternal *brahmavṛkṣa*, Tree of Brahman.'

By seeing the seed, it is difficult for a child to grasp that the mighty tree is contained within so small a dimension. Similarly, seeing a tree, the child-mind cannot grasp the existence and importance of the invisible tap-root behind the visible tree. Children and unthinking minds are dazzled by mere size and cannot go, and do not care to go, beyond the visible and the tangible. They are under the tyranny of the immediate present and in the jaws of time or death, as Yama had earlier told us in verse two of chapter four of the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*.

Behind the tree *is* its root, and behind the tree and its root *was* the seed. The thinking mind is impressed with the arresting fact that the tiny seed contains all the potentialities of the mighty tree. If the words of the Genesis were *philosophically* formulated, they would read thus:

In the beginning was the divine seed, and the seed became the tree of existence.

The seed transforms itself into the root and the tree with the appearance of the tree. The root is what nourishes and sustains the tree and what continues to exist even while the tree with its leaves and flowers and fruits continually arises and disappears. Any knowledge of the tree apart from its root is therefore partial and insufficient. The knowledge of the nature of the tree must lead one to the inquiry into the nature of its root. With the knowledge of the root gained, the knowledge of the tree becomes complete and sufficient.

### *Being and Becoming*

What is the seed or the root with respect to the tree of existence? This was the question the Upaniṣads asked; and the answers they received have an undying quality about them. The *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* (VI. 2. 1-3) majestically proclaims through a teacher-student dialogue:

*Sadeva somya idam agra āsīt ekamevādvitīyam; taddhaika āhuḥ asadevedam agra āsīt ekamevādvitīyam. Tasmādasataḥ sajjāyata*—
'In the beginning, my dear, this (universe) was *Sat* (Being) alone, one only, without a second. Some say that in the beginning this (universe) was *asat* (non-being) alone, one only, without a second; and from that non-being, being was born.'

*Kutastu khalu somya evaṁ syāt iti hovāca; katham asataḥ sat jāyeta iti. Sattveva somya idam agra āsīt ekamevādvitīyam*—
'"But how, indeed, my dear, could it be thus?" said he, "how could being be produced from non-being? Being alone, on the contrary, was this (universe) in the beginning, one only, without a second."'

*Tadaikṣata bahu syāṁ prajāyeyeti*—
'That (One) thought: "May I be many; may I grow forth".'

The *Chāndogya* further takes the illustration of the *nyagrodha* (banyan) tree to demonstrate, through the same teacher-student dialogue, the difficulty of comprehending the nature of the one Being behind the multiple becoming and the need for faith in what lies beyond the sense level of experience (VI. 12. 1-3):

*Nyagrodhaphalam ata āhara iti; idaṁ bhagava iti; bhindhi iti, bhinnaṁ bhagava iti; kimatra paśyasi iti; aṇvya iva imā dhānā bhagava iti; āsām aṅga ekāṁ bhindhi iti; bhinnā bhagava iti; kimatra paśyasi iti; na kiñcana bhagava iti*—
'"Bring hither a fruit of that *nyagrodha* tree." "Here it is, venerable Sir." "Break it." "It is broken, venerable Sir." "What do you see there?" "These extremely atom-like (subtle) seeds, venerable Sir." "Break one of these, my son." "It is broken, venerable Sir." "What do you see in it?" "Nothing at all, venerable Sir."'

*Taṁ hovāca: yaṁ vai somya, etam aṇimānaṁ na nibhālayase. etasya vai, somya, eṣo'ṇimna evaṁ mahān nyagrodhastiṣṭhati; śraddhasva, somya*—
'Then he (the teacher) said to him: "My dear, this subtle essence

which you do not perceive, verily, my dear, due to this very subtle essence this great *nyagrodha* tree exists. Have faith, my dear."'

*Sa ya eṣo aṇimā, aitadātmyam idaṁ sarvaṁ; tat satyaṁ; sa ātmā; tat tvam asi, Śvetaketo—*

'That which is the subtle essence, this whole world has That for its Self. That is the True; that is the Ātman (Self). That thou art, O Śvetaketu.'

From the known to the unkown is the way of all scientific quest for knowledge. Introducing the opening verse of this last chapter of the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, Śaṅkara says in his commentary:

*Tūlāvadhāraṇenaiva mūlāvadhāraṇaṁ vṛkṣasya yathā kriyate loke, evaṁ saṁsārakāryavṛkṣāvadhāraṇena tanmūlasya brahmaṇaḥ svarūpāvadidhārayiṣayā iyaṁ ṣaṣṭhī vallī ārabhyate—*

'Just as, in the world, the *mūla* or root of the tree (which is unseen) is ascertained by ascertaining the nature of its *tūla* or panicle of the flower (which is seen), this sixth chapter is begun with the object of ascertaining the nature of Brahman, which is (the unseen) cause (of the world), by ascertaining the nature of the effect, namely, the tree of the world.'

### *Brahman and Śakti Inseparable*

The root of this unique *aśvattha* or world-tree is *ūrdhvam*, above, says the opening verse; it is above the visible and the tangible universe. And the world-tree itself stretches downward, in the world of time and space: *avāk śākhāḥ*. The world-tree is described also as *sanātanaḥ*, eternal. *Idantayā brahma sadaiva rūpyate*—'Brahman ever assumes the form of the *idam* (the manifested universe)', says Śaṅkara in his *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi* (verse 136). This *idam* aspect is the Śakti of Brahman, the personal aspect of the impersonal, and inseparable from It. These two are like energy coiled up and energy released. As there can be no Śakti without Brahman, there cannot be Brahman also without Śakti. 'That alone is the pure, that is Brahman, that alone is called the immortal', *tadeva śukram, tat brahma, tadeva amṛtamucyate*, says the verse, and significantly adds:

*Tasmin lokā śritā sarve; tadu nātyeti kaścana. Etat vai tat*—'In That rest all the worlds; nothing, verily, transcends That. This verily is That.'

### *The Vedāntic Vision of Reality: Its Immense Sweep*

Defining Brahman, Śaṅkara says in his commentary on the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* (III. 1):

*Utpattisthitilayakālesu yadātmatāṁ na jahāti bhūtāni, tat etat brahmaṇo lakṣaṇam*—

'Brahman is defined as that Reality from which beings do not get separated during the time of their origin, maintenance, or dissolution.'

*Tasmin lokā śritāḥ sarve*—'In That rest all *lokas* or worlds'. The word *loka* is defined by Śaṅkara as *lokyante iti*—'what is seen, experienced'. The *loka* of an organism with one sense-organ is different from that of man with five sense-organs. If a man were to develop a sixth sense-organ, his *loka* will be different from that of the rest of mankind. *Loka*, therefore, is the product of what science calls 'perspective'. If a quantity of fine black powder is thoroughly mixed with a quantity of fine white powder, the colour of the resulting powder, from the human perspective, will be grey. But to a microscopic organism moving in the powder, it will not be grey, but a mixture of black and white grains. By the term *loka*, therefore, Vedānta means not only the objective physical universe revealed by the senses of man, but also the worlds within worlds experienced by all beings. They constitute the various readings of reality by the awareness of beings. And what is so read is Brahman, the infinite Awareness, which comprehends all of them; nothing is outside Brahman: *tad u nātyeti kaścana*. And the verse adds: *etat vai tat*—'this (Self of man) is verily That (Brahman).'

The personal god of monotheistic religions and the absolute of speculative philosophy and science appear as limited conceptions by the side of the infinite majesty of Brahman so presented. They are limited, because they are the products of viewing the infinite from the outside, from the point of view of one *loka* or universe of experience from among an infinite number of *lokas* or universes. *It is necessary for us to grasp the immense sweep of reality conveyed by the Brahman of the Upaniṣads.* We get a glimpse of it from a passage in Vivekananda's first of two lectures on this Upaniṣad under the title, 'Realization', delivered in London in 1896. Though a bit long, it merits reproduction in this context. Says he (*Complete Works*, Vol. II, p. 156):

'Such a solution of the universal problem as we can get from the outside labours under this difficulty that, in the first place, the universe we see is our own particular universe, our own view of the Reality. That Reality we cannot see through the senses; we cannot comprehend It. We only know the universe from the point of view of beings with five senses. Suppose we obtain another sense, the whole universe must change for us. Suppose we had a magnetic sense, it is quite possible that we might then find millions and millions of forces in existence which we do not now know, and for which we have no present sense or feeling. Our senses are limited, very limited, indeed; and within these limitations exists what we call our universe; and our God is the solution of that universe; but that cannot be the solution of the whole problem.

'But man cannot stop there. He is a thinking being and wants to find a solution which will comprehensively explain all the universes. He wants to see a world which is at once the world of men, and of gods, and of all possible beings, and to find a solution which will explain all phenomena.

'We see, we must find the universe which includes all universes. We must find something which, by itself, must be the material running through all these various planes of existence, whether we apprehend it through the senses or not. If we could possibly find something which we could know as the common property of the lower as well as of the higher worlds, then our problem would be solved. Even if by the sheer force of logic alone we could understand that there must be one basis of all existence, then our problem might approach to some sort of solution. But this solution certainly cannot be obtained only through the world we see and know, because it is only a partial view of the whole.

'*Our only hope then lies in penetrating deeper*. The early thinkers discovered that the farther away they were from the centre, the more marked were the variations and differentiations; and that the nearer they approached the centre, the nearer they were to unity. . . . We first, therefore, want to find somewhere a centre from which, as it were, all the other planes of existence start, and standing there we should try to find a solution. This is the proposition. And where is that centre? *It is within us*. The ancient sages penetrated deeper and deeper until they found that in the innermost core of the human soul is the centre of the whole universe. All the planes gravitate to that one point. That is the common ground, and standing there alone can we find a common solution.'

Brahman is the unity of all existence; and no part of the manifested universe can exist apart from Brahman, as no part of the tree can exist apart from the root. And *etat vai tat*—'this (Self of man) is verily That (Brahman)'.

*Śaṅkara's Vision of the World-tree*

In his comment on this verse, Śaṅkara puts flesh and blood, as it were, into the bare Upaniṣadic imagery and makes its tree of existence pulsate with life and movement. In view of this, I quote it in full:

*Avicchinna-janma-jarā-maraṇa-śokādyanekānarthātmakaḥ; pratikṣaṇam anyathāsvabhāvo; māyāmarīcyudakagandharvanagarādivat dṛṣṭanaṣṭasvarūpatvāt, avasāne ca vṛkṣavat abhāvātmakaḥ; kadalīstambavat niḥsāro; aneka-śata-pākhaṇḍabuddhi-vikalpāspadaḥ; tattvavijijñāsubhiḥ anirdhārita idam-tattvo; vedāntanirdhārita parabrahmamūlasāraḥ; avidyākāmakarma avyaktabijaprabhavaḥ; aparabrahmavijñāna kriyāśaktidvayātmaka hiraṇyagarbhāṅkuraḥ; sarvaprāṇiliṅgabhedaskandhaḥ; tat tat tṛṣṇājalāsekodbhūtadarpo; buddhīndriyaviṣayapravālāṅkuraḥ; śrutismṛtinyāyavidyopadeśapalāśo; yajñadānatapa ādi anekakriyāsupuṣpaḥ; sukhaduḥkhavedanānekarasaḥ; prāṇyupajīvyānantaphalaḥ; tat tṛṣṇāsalilāvaseka-prarūḍha jaṭilīkṛta dṛḍhabaddhamūlaḥ; satyanāmādisaptaloka brahmādibhūta-pakṣikṛtanīḍaḥ; prāṇisukhaduḥkodbhūta harṣaśokajāta nṛtyagītavāditra kṣvelitāsphoṭita hasitākrṣṭaruditā hā hā muñcamuñcetyādi anekaśabdakṛta tumulībhūtamahāravo; vedāntavihita-brahmātmadarśana asaṅgaśastrakṛtoccheda eṣa saṁsāravṛkṣo aśvattho, aśvatthavat kāmakarmavāterita nityapracalitasvabhāvaḥ—*

'This *aśvattha* tree, consisting of unbroken and manifold miseries of birth, death, and grief; changing its nature every moment like (the products of) magic, waters of the mirage, (or) a city formed by cloud-formations in the sky etc.; being of such nature as these, to be perceived only to vanish again and become ultimately non-existent like a tree; insubstantial like the stem of the plantain tree; the subject of doubt-ridden conclusions by the intellects of many hundreds of sceptics; the mysterious unascertained phenomenal Fact to seekers of scientific truth; receiving its substantiality (reality) from the supreme Brahman, as ascertained by Vedānta; issuing from the seed of *avyakta* (undifferentiated nature) constituted of *avidyā* (ignorance), *kāma* (desire), and *karma* (action); having for its sprout *hiraṇyagarbha* (cosmic mind), which is Brahman in Its manifested form, and which combines in itself the two powers of knowledge and action; having for its trunk the various subtle bodies of all living beings; acquiring its pride of stature through getting irrigated by the waters of the respective sense-desires of these living beings; having for its tender buds the objects perceived by the in-

tellect and sense-organs; having for its leaves (the knowledge contained in) the Śrutis (Vedas), the Smṛtis (books on religious and social law and duty), *nyāya* (logic and scientific method), *vidyā* (the sciences collectively), and *upadeśa* (spiritual instruction); with lovely flowers consisting of sacrifice, charity, austerity, and various other deeds; endowed with diverse tastes such as the experiences of joy and sorrow; having innumerable fruits on which living beings subsist; with its (secondary) roots (consisting of tendencies) well grown through being irrigated by the waters of the respective desires of beings, and fastened firm by intertwining; with the "nests" built by "birds", namely, the seven worlds beginning with what is called *satya* (the plane of Truth) built by all living beings from Brahmā (the cosmic mind) downwards; reverberating with the diverse and tumultuous sounds arising from the joys and sorrows of beings due to their pleasures and pains resulting from dancing, vocal singing, instrumental singing, joking, clapping on the shoulders, laughing, pulling, crying with exclamations of "release me", "release me", etc.; this tree of *saṁsāra* (relative existence), whose nature is such as to rustle constantly, like (the leaves of) the *aśvattha* tree, due to the wind of desire and action, is to be destroyed by the weapon of non-attachment forged by the realization of the unity of Brahman and Ātman as taught by Vedānta.'

### *Life: True and False*

The world-tree is in the sphere of time; it is subject to birth and death. By attachment to it and engaged in the incessant pursuit of profit and pleasure, man remains ignorant of his true dimension and in the grip of bondage to finitude and death. That is his false life. His true life begins when he develops the spirit of non-attachment to his sense-bound life and enters on the search for the root of the world-tree in Brahman through a penetration into the spiritual core of his own being. Destroying the world-tree means destroying attachment to the world-tree as conjured up by the sense-bound mind. The world-tree itself cannot be destroyed, for it is Brahman, *sanātana*, eternal, *śukram*, pure, and *amṛtam*, immortal. Once Brahman, the *ūrdhvamūlam* of the world-tree, is realized, the world-tree becomes transformed from a vale of tension and tears into a mansion of peace and joy. It is, in the words of Sri Ramakrishna, like the transformation of a string of zeros when the figure one is placed behind it. *Ahaṁ vṛkṣasya reriva*—'I am the inspirer of the tree (world-tree, as its inner Self),' sings the

sage Triśaṅku of the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* (I. 10), after attaining the realization of Brahman. Vedānta also describes Brahman as the root of the tree of *dharma*, righteousness or the moral order of the world: *mūlaṁ dharmataroḥ*.

### *Brahman as Cosmic Order*

Yama now proceeds, in verses two and three, to present the invisible and intangible Brahman as cosmic order and rhythm whose operations, discovered as laws by the human mind, fall within the bounds of human experience, just as the invisible root of the tree manifests itself as the law of growth of the visible tree:

> *Yadidaṁ kiñca jagat sarvaṁ prāṇa ejati niḥsṛtam:*
> *mahadbhayaṁ vajramudyatam*
> *Ya etat viduramṛtāste bhavanti—*

'The whole universe, whatever exists here, springs from and vibrates in *prāṇa* (cosmic energy). (It is) the great fear (like) the upraised thunderbolt. Those who know this become immortal.'

The next verse amplifies the meaning of the second half of this verse:

> *Bhayādasyāgnistapati bhayāt tapati sūryaḥ;*
> *Bhayādindraśca vāyuśca mṛtyurdhāvati pañcamaḥ—*

'From fear of Him the fire burns, from fear (of Him) the sun gives heat; and from fear (of Him) proceed Indra (the lord of the gods), *vāyu* (air), and *mṛtyu* (death), the fifth, to their respective functions.'

Vedānta uses the term *prāṇa* to indicate primarily the primordial energy of the universe, of which all other energies—all physical energies like electricity, magnetism, and gravitation, all biological energies behind metabolism and nerve impulses, and all psychical energies like thought and memory—are but diverse manifestations. Expounding this important Vedāntic concept, Vivekananda Says (*Complete Works*, Vol. III, Eighth Edition, p. 399):

'What is *prāṇa*? *Prāṇa* is *spandana* or vibration. When all this universe shall have resolved back into its primal state, what becomes of this infinite force? Do they think that it becomes extinct? Of course not. If it became extinct, what would be the cause of the next wave, because the motion is going in wave forms, rising, falling, rising again, falling again? Here is the word "*sṛṣṭi*" which expresses the universe. Mark that the word does

not mean creation. I am helpless in talking English; I have to translate the Sanskrit words as best as I can. It is *sṛṣṭi*, projection. At the end of a cycle, everything becomes finer, and is resolved back into the primal state from which it sprang, and there it remains for a time quiescent, ready to spring forth again. That is *sṛṣṭi*, projection. And what becomes of all these forces, the *prāṇas*? They are resolved back into the primal *prāṇa*, and this *prāṇa* becomes almost motionless—not entirely motionless; and that is what is described in the Vedic *sūkta*: "It vibrated without vibration" —*ānīdavātam*....And what becomes of what you call matter? The forces permeate all matter; they all dissolve into *ākāśa*, from which they again come out; this *ākāśa* is the primal matter. Whether you translate it as ether, or anything else, the idea is that this *ākāśa* is the primal form of matter. This *ākāśa* vibrates under the action of *prāṇa*; and when the next *sṛṣṭi* is coming up, as the vibration becomes quicker, the *ākāśa* is lashed into all these wave forms which we call suns and moons and systems.

'We read again: *yadidaṁ kiñca jagat sarvaṁ prāṇa ejati niḥsṛtam*—"Everything in this universe has been projected, *prāṇa* vibrating". You must mark the word *ejati*, because it comes from *ejṛ*—to vibrate. *Niḥsṛtam*—projected; *yadidaṁ kiñca*—whatever (there is) in this universe.'

### *Brahman Is to Be Realized Here and Now*

Yama now, in verses four and five, exhorts us to *realize* Brahman; we should not remain satisfied with a mere *intellectual* knowledge of Brahman as the root of the world-tree, much less with the world-tree as it is:

> *Iha cedaśakat boddhuṁ prāk śarīrasya visrasaḥ;*
> *Tataḥ sargeṣu lokeṣu śarīratvāya kalpate—*

'If one is able to realize (Brahman) *here* (*in this very world*) before the fall of the body, (one achieves true life fulfilment). (But if one fails in this) then one has (perforce) to get embodied (again) in the worlds of manifestation.'

> *Yathādarśe tathātmani yathā svapne tathā pitṛloke;*
> *Yathāpsu parīva dadṛśe tathā gandharvaloke;*
> *Chāyātapayoriva brahmaloke—*

'(Brahman is realized) in one's own self as (one sees oneself) in a mirror, in the world of the *pitṛs* (the spirits of the dead) as in a dream, in the world of *gandharvas* as (reflected) in water, (and) in the world of Brahmā (the cosmic mind) as light and shade.'

Brahman is to be *realized*; this is the constant exhortation of Vedānta. And It *can* be realized, because It is the Self of our

self; the human body and mind cannot be put to a nobler purpose. And Yama has been all along engaged in imparting this knowledge and stimulus to Naciketā and through him to all humanity. This realization is the supreme goal of man; and everyone will achieve it some day. If we fail to get it in this life, we shall have further embodiments in which to continue the noble search.

### *The Concept of Planes of Existence*

*Sargeṣu lokeṣu* means created worlds, worlds of manifestation. Repeated embodiments in created worlds is rated low in Vedānta, because it is bondage, involving as it does reduction again and again to the status of a 'creature', which means an organism that has no freedom of choice either when getting embodied or thereafter. *Vedānta finds the dignity and glory of man expressed when he, even in the state of being a creature, strives to overcome his creatureliness by manifesting the ever-present focus of freedom within him, his inalienable divine nature.*

The glory of life in the human body is that it is in this body that this realization is achieved in its clearest and fullest form, just as one sees oneself in a mirror: *yathā ādarśe tathā ātmani*. In the disembodied state, this vision is hazy as in a dream: *yathā svapne tathā pitṛloke*. A little higher than that is the world of the *gandharvas*, a type of celestial beings, where the vision of Brahman is like one's reflection in water: *yathā apsu parīva dadṛśe tathā gandharvaloke*; and finally, in the *brahmaloka*, the world of the cosmic Mind, the vision is near perfect, being clearly demarcated like light and shade: *chāyātapayoriva brahmaloke*.

The vision of Brahman in *pitṛloka* is compared to a dream. The same applies to what one gets in the *gandharvaloka* also. In fact, all experiences of Reality in the planes intermediate between the human world and the *brahmaloka* are treated by Vedānta as unsatisfactory, in view of their dream-like haziness in varying degrees. For the same reason, Vedānta does not rank spiritually high dreams of a religious nature experienced by seekers. If backed by the spiritual awareness of the waking state, such dreams may have some value as indicators of spiritual trends. Even then, Vedānta insists that true spirituality is a waking experience, with the waking awareness progressively annexing all other states to itself so as to result in a blazing light of spiritual awareness.

The *brahmaloka* is the subtlest and purest of the planes of existence; it is also known as *satyaloka*, the world of truth. In it the vision of Reality is very clear; but it is extremely difficult to attain, says Śaṅkara in his comment, as it involves an extraordinary fund of pure knowledge and action: *sa ca duṣprāpo, atyantaviśiṣṭakarmajñānasādhyatvāt.*

*The Supreme Excellence of the Human Plane*

If the fullest spiritual realization is to be had only in the *brahmaloka*, then the chances of most men getting it become very very remote. But the Upaniṣads constantly proclaim not only that it is every man's very birthright, but also that its attainment raises a man above all celestial and terrestrial beings. Vedāntic salvation, therefore, is not a post-mortem possibility, but a living actuality. Many *have* attained the highest spiritual realization. In the words of the *Gītā* (IV. 10), where God in His incarnation as Kṛṣṇa proclaims this fact:

*Vītarāgabhayakrodhāḥ manmayā mām upāśritāḥ;*
*Bahavo jñānatapasā pūtā madbhāvamāgatāḥ—*

'Freed from attachment, fear, and anger, absorbed in Me, taking refuge in Me, (and) purified by the fire of knowledge, many have attained My Being.'

The same is affirmed by Gauḍapāda in his *Māṇḍūkyakārikā* (II. 35) in almost identical language:

*Vītarāgabhayakrodhaiḥ munibhiḥ vedapāragaiḥ;*
*Nirvikalpo hyayaṁ dṛṣṭaḥ prapañcopaśamo' dvayaḥ—*

'Verily, this *nirvikalpa* (unconditioned) state, in which relative existence is ended, and which is non-dual, has been realized by the wise who are free from attachment, fear, and anger, and who have gone beyond the (letter) of the Vedas (scriptures).'

Referring to the relative values of these different planes with respect to man's search for fulfilment, Swami Vivekananda, in his second lecture on this Upaniṣad under the title, 'Unity in Diversity', delivered in London in 1896, says (*Complete Works*, Vol. II, Ninth Edition, pp. 184-85):

'Various heavens are spoken of in the Brāhmaṇa portions of the Vedas, but the philosophical teaching of the Upaniṣads gives up the idea of going to heaven. Happiness is not in this heaven or in that heaven; it is in the soul; places do not signify anything. ...The highest heaven, of which the Hindus conceive, is called the

*brahmaloka*; and in this, the Truth is seen much more clearly, like light and shade, but not yet quite distinctly. But as a man sees his own face in a mirror, perfect, distinct, and clear, so is the Truth shining in the soul of man. The highest heaven, therefore, is in our own souls; the greatest temple of worship is the human soul, greater than all heavens, says Vedānta, for in no heaven, anywhere, can we understand the Reality as distinctly and clearly as in this life, in our own soul.

'Changing places does not help much. I thought while I was in India that the cave would give me clearer vision. I found it was not so. Then I thought the forest would do so, then Vāraṇāsi (the holy city of Banaras). But the same difficulty existed everywhere, because we make our own worlds. If I am evil, the whole world is evil to me. That is what the Upaniṣad says. And the same thing applies to all worlds. If I die and go to heaven, I should find the same, for until I am pure it is no use going to caves, or forests, or to Vāraṇāsi, or to heaven; and if I have polished my mirror, it does not matter where I live; I get the Reality just as it is. So it is useless, running hither and thither, and spending energy in vain, which should be spent only in polishing the mirror.'

The teaching of Jesus with regard to the kingdom of God is in tune with this Vedāntic idea. In the words of the Gospel according to Luke (17. 20-21):

'And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, the kingdom of God cometh not with observation.

'Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, Lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you.'

In the remaining thirteen verses of this Upaniṣad, which we shall study when we meet next, Yama will tell us something more about the realization of this kingdom of God within us, and conclude with what today we may call a universal declaration of human right to spiritual realization.

TWENTY NINE

# KAṬHA UPANIṢAD—18

In the previous discourse, the Upaniṣad struck the hopeful note of the comparative excellence of the human body as the supreme venue of all spiritual enlightenment. All celestial existences are inferior to this, Yama had said in verse five of chapter six. All the Upaniṣads speak of this as the unique glory and privilege of man, and of man alone. Herein is the consummation, according to Vedânta, of what Julian Huxley calls 'the science of human possibilities'.

## *Spiritual Realization and Its Utility*

The Upaniṣad now proceeds, in verse six and the remaining twelve verses of this sixth and concluding chapter of the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, to tell us, through its dialogue between Yama and Naciketā, something more about this science, its technique, and its fruits. Says Yama in verses six to eight:

*Indriyāṇāṁ pṛthakbhāvam*
*udayāstamayau ca tat;*
*Pṛthagutpadyamānānāṁ*
*matvā dhīro na śocati—*

'The wise one does not grieve having known that the sense-organs which are separately produced, and which have their rising and setting, are different (from his Self).'

*Indriyebhyaḥ paraṁ mano*
*manasaḥ sattvamuttamam;*
*Sattvādadhi mahān ātmā*
*mahato'vyaktamuttamam—*

'Superior to the sense-organs is *manas* (mind); more excellent than *manas* is buddhi (reason); higher than *buddhi* is *mahat* (the cosmic mind); more excellent than *mahat* is *avyakta* (undifferentiated nature).'

*Avyaktāt tu paraṁ puruṣo*
*vyāpako'liṅga eva ca;*
*Yaṁ jñātvā mucyate jantuḥ*
*amṛtatvaṁ ca gacchati—*

'Superior even to *avyakta* is Puruṣa (the Self), all-pervading and

entirely devoid of any indicative mark, knowing whom (every) creature is emancipated and attains immortality.'

Verse five, which we studied in the last discourse, had said that the Ātman is realized in one's own self as clearly as one sees oneself in a mirror; and that this realization is superior to all the pleasing heavens. Introducing verse six, Śaṅkara says in his comment:

*Katham asau boddhavyaḥ kim vā tadavabodhe prayojanam ityucyate—*

'How is This (Ātman) to be realized and what, again, is the utility of such realization; this is (now) being said.'

Prakṛti or primodial nature evolves, according to both Vedânta and modern science, into the objects of the universe, on the one hand, and the sense-organs of the living beings, on the other; these sense-organs have the capacity to 'experience' those objects. The evolution of the sense-organs, therefore, marks the emergence of a new and significant category in evolution, namely, the category of *experience*; this introduces for the first time a division in the unity of cosmic nature, that between the subjective and the objective, the experiencer and the experienced. This division, hazy and inconspicuous in the early stages of organic evolution, becomes more and more pronounced as evolution advances until, in man, it becomes self-conscious, and discloses its significance as the starting-point of a new evolutionary advance from the organic to the moral and spiritual levels. This advance is characterized by an increasing recognition by man of his subject-hood or self-hood and the progressive shedding of all not-subject or not-self elements from his self-awareness. When evolution becomes self-aware in man, the entire process of pre-human organic evolution is also seen, in its light, as a progressive achievement of self-awareness through the changes evolution achieves in the organism and the environment. In its *Pañcakośavidyā*, 'the science of the five *kośas* or sheaths', the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*, in its second book, speaks of man and nature revealing five sheaths, one inside the other. The outermost is the physical, followed by the vital, the psychical, the rational, and the blissful at the deeper levels. Each preceding sheath is infilled by each succeeding sheath: *Tenaiṣa pūrṇaḥ* as the *Taittirīya* puts it (II.2). We get an echo of this idea, with respect to the first three sheaths, in twentieth-century

biology. In the words of the noted biologist, George Gaylord Simpson (*The Meaning of Evolution*, p. 312):

'A broad classification of the sciences into physical, biological, and social corresponds with three levels of organization of matter and energy, and not levels only, but also quite distinct kinds of organization. The three are of sharply increasing orders of complexity and each includes the lower grades. Vital organization is more intricate than physical organization, and it is added to and does not replace physical organization, which is also fully involved in vital organization. Social organization retains and sums the complexities of both these and adds its own still greater complexities.'

When man is subject to the pressures of his physical life, when he is under the tyranny of profit and pleasure, his self-awareness remains centred in his sense-organs, which, as understood in Vedānta, includes also *manas* or incipient mind, as the sixth sense, as the agency for coordinating the work of the other sense-organs. When the same man begins to discipline and control his sense-organs in response to his newly achieved moral awareness, he shifts the focus of his self-awareness to deeper spiritual levels within himself; and Vedānta traces the various stages of this inward spiritual journey of man and its final end in the realization by him of the infinite, immortal, ever-illumined, and non-dual Ātman as his true Self. At every stage of this journey, what is achieved is not the addition of something to the stature of his self, but eliminating what is not-self from his self-awareness, revealing more and more the ever-present majesty and glory of the true Self of man.

A struggle to achieve individuality on the part of the subject is characteristic of all organic nature which has risen to the level of 'experience' containing its two poles of the subjective and the objective. This individuality is centred in the body to begin with; with the progress of man's spiritual journey, it later becomes centred successively in the sense-organs, mind, and intellect. But at all these levels, man fails to achieve true individuality, since each such centre is but a complex of changing ephemeral forces; and the ego centred in them and sustained by them is also a fleeting, fugitive entity. True individuality lies not at the level of the finite ego, but at the level of the infinite Ātman. *Man is truly individual only when he becomes universal.* He has to transcend the false individuality of the ego to realize his true individuality in the

Atman. To the question, 'When shall I be free?', Sri Ramakrishna gives the straight answer, 'When "I" shall cease to be'. To gain true life, we have to lose our false life first, says Jesus.

This is the profound truth that Yama emphasizes in verse six. The sense-organs of man, says Yama, are changing centres of physical forces, ever rising from them, and ever falling and dissolving into them: the true Self of man is separate from them:

*Indriyāṇāṁ pṛthak bhāvam udayāstamayau ca yat: pṛthagutpadyamānānāṁ*—'The sense-organs, which are separately produced and which have their rising and setting, are different from the Atman.'

Rising and setting here mean activity and non-activity. They function in the state of waking, but cease to function in the states of dream and deep sleep; even in the waking state, they have their moments of black-out. Being of such nature, they do not deserve to be treated as the Self except by the ignorant and the undiscriminating. The wise one, *dhīra*, on the other hand, realizes his Self as different from them; and, through that realization, he overcomes all delusion and sorrow: '*pṛthakbhāvaṁ matvā dhīro na śocati.*'

### *Rising from Knowledge to Wisdom*

This is the truth that another Upaniṣad, the *Chāndogya*, expounds in its seventh chapter through a dialogue between much-learned but peaceless Nārada, the spiritual seeker, and illumined and calm Sanatkumāra, the spiritual teacher. Sanatkumāra is one of the four *kumāras* or children, eternal children of the Spirit, of early Indian spiritual tradition. Though quoted in part in an earlier lecture, this dialogue bears fuller reproduction here.

In spite of his vast learning, Nārada was full of sorrow and tension. Hearing of a wise and illumined teacher, Sanatkumāra by name, Nārada approached him in all humility and said: *Adhīhi bhagava iti*—'Please teach (me), O blessed one.' Sanatkumāra said in reply: *Yadvettha tena mo'pasida, atah ūrdhaṁ vakṣyāmi*—'Tell me what you already know; then I shall speak about what remains to be known.'

Giving a list of the subjects he had studied—a long list—covering the entire range of contemporary positive knowledge, Nārada humbly submitted (VII. 1.3):

*So'haṁ bhagavo mantravidevāsmi, nātmavit; śrutaṁ hyeva me bhagavaddṛśebhyaḥ tarati śokam ātmavit iti. So'haṁ bhagavaḥ śocāmi. Taṁ mā bhagavan śokasya pāroṁ tārayatu—*

'Yet (in spite of all this knowledge), O blessed one, I am only a knower of words and not a knower of the Ātman (the Self). I have heard from great ones like you that (only) the knower of the Ātman crosses (the ocean of) sorrow. Therefore (since I do not know the Ātman), I am full of sorrow, O blessed one. Take me, O blessed one, across that (ocean of) sorrow.'

Sanatkumāra was not only wise, but also compassionate. He had realized the Ātman; his heart was full. Such hearts ever overflow with compassion to fill other seeking hearts which are unfulfilled. About such, Śaṅkara says (*Vivekacūḍāmaṇi*, 37-38):

*Śāntā mahānto nivasanti santo*
*vasantavat lokahitaṁ carantaḥ;*
*Tīrṇāḥ svayaṁ bhīmabhavārṇavaṁ janān*
*ahetunānyān api tārayantaḥ—*

'There are (some) good people, calm and great-souled, who go about doing good to the world as does the spring; having themselves crossed this mighty ocean of (relative) existence, they help others also to cross the same without any (selfish) motive whatsoever.'

*Ayaṁ svabhāva svata eva yat para*
*śramāpanodapravaṇaṁ mahātmanām—*

'This is the inherent nature of all *mahātmās* (great souls) that they always move of their own accord to remove the strain of other people.'

Nārada's predicament is also the predicament of modern man as voiced by Bertrand Russell (*Impact of Science on Society*, p. 121):

'Broadly speaking, we are in the middle of a race between human skill as to means and human folly as to ends....It follows that, unless men increase in wisdom as much as in knowledge, increase of knowledge will be increase of sorrow.'

All positivistic knowledge is knowledge of the not-Self; it is valid and necessary, but not sufficient; such knowledge, whether in its limited range as in Nārada's time over four thousand years ago, or in its unlimited range as in the modern age, is yet folly, if it is not fulfilled and sustained by the knowledge of the Self, in

the light of which alone does all knowledge become transformed into wisdom.

Finding in Nārada a sincere seeker of what lies above and beyond all positivistic knowledge, and with a view to helping him to rise above knowledge to wisdom and gain inner peace, the great teacher Sanatkumāra said to him (*ibid.*, VII. 1.3):

*Yad vai kiñca etat adhyagīṣṭhā, nāma eva etat*—'Whatever, verily, you have so far learnt and understood is "name" only.'

It is only knowledge of name and form, knowledge of the changing, perishable aspect of reality. 'And yet, in regard to the nature of things, this knowledge is only an empty shell—a form of symbols. It is knowledge of structural form, and not knowledge of content', as astrophysicist Eddington sums up the predicament of modern scientific knowledge, and continues (*Space, Time, and Gravitation*, last page):

'All through the physical world runs that unknown content which must surely be the stuff of our consciousness. Here is a hint of aspects deep within the world of physics, and yet unattainable by the methods of physics.'

### *'Seek Ye the Infinite'*

Leading Nārada through an investigation of the various categories of experience disclosed by all positive knowledge, and pointing out their limitations and insufficiency, Sanatkumāra exhorted him to rise above all finite categories and seek for the infinite in experience (VII. 23.1):

*Yo vai bhūmā tat sukham; nālpe sukhamasti; bhūmaiva sukham; bhūmā tveva vijijñāsitavyaḥ*—

'That, verily, which is *bhūmā* (infinite) is happiness; there is no happiness in the *alpa* (finite); the *bhūmā* alone is happiness; the *bhūmā* alone is to be inquired into (and realized).'

Sanatkumāra then pronounced the supreme truth of non-duality as the critique of the Infinite (VII. 24.1):

*Yatra nānyat paśyati, nānyat śṛṇoti, nānyat vijānāti, sa bhūmā. Atha yatra anyat paśyati, anyat śṛṇoti, anyat vijānāti, tat alpam. Yo vai bhūmā tat amṛtam; atha yat alpaṁ tat martyam*—

'Where one does not see another, does not hear another, does not know another, that is *bhūmā* (infinite). On the other hand, where one sees another, hears another, knows another, that is *alpam*

(finite). That which is *bhūmā*, that verily is *amṛtam* (immortal); on the other hand, that which is *alpam* (finite), that is *martyam* (mortal).'

Proceeding further, Sanatkumāra showed Nārada that the reality satisfying the above criterion is only the Ātman, the infinite and immortal Self of man, which is also the Self of the universe; this is the universal divine principle disclosed when philosophy dives to the depth of experience (VII. 25.2):

*Athāta ātmādeśa eva: ātmaiva adhastāt, ātmopariṣṭāt, ātmā paścāt, ātmā purastāt, ātmā dakṣiṇataḥ, ātmottarataḥ ātmaivedaṁ sarvam—*

'Now, therefore, this teaching about the Ātman: the Ātman alone is below, the Ātman is above, the Ātman is in the west, the Ātman is in the east, the Ātman is to the south, the Ātman is to the north, the Ātman alone is all this (universe).'

Pointing out the fruit of this realization as total fulfilment, Sanatkumāra concluded (*ibid.*):

*Sa vā eṣa evaṁ paśyan, evaṁ manvānaḥ, evaṁ vijānan, ātmaratiḥ ātmakrīḍaḥ, ātmamithunaḥ, ātmānandaḥ, sa svarāṭ bhavati; tasya sarveṣu lokeṣu kāmacāro bhavati.*

*Atha ye anyathāto viduḥ anyarājānaḥ te kṣayyalokā bhavanti; teṣāṁ sarveṣu lokeṣu akāmacāro bhavati—*

'One who realizes thus, thinks thus, understands thus, delights in the Ātman, sports in the Ātman, finds the joy of all human company in the Ātman, experiences bliss in the Ātman. He becomes sovereign; he achieves freedom of movement in all planes of experience.

"While those that know otherwise become dependent on others; they achieve perishable worlds; they have no freedom of movement in all planes of experience.'

### *Landmarks on the Spiritual Journey*

The *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* concludes this fascinating dialogue with a majestic utterance setting forth in three brief lines the whole scope of man's spiritual life, its methods and results, and, in a fourth significant line, its fulfilment in Nārada (VII. 26.2):

*Āhāraśuddhau sattvaśuddhiḥ;*
*Sattvaśuddhau dhruvā smṛtiḥ;*
*Smṛtilambhe sarvagranthīnāṁ vipramokṣaḥ—*

'When *āhāra* (food, that is, what is gathered into the physical and mental system of man), becomes pure, the *sattva* (mind) becomes pure;

'When the *sattva* becomes pure, the *smṛti* (memory, in this case, of one's divine nature) becomes steady;

'When (this) *smṛti* is achieved, all the knots (of the heart) become completely destroyed.'

*Tasmai mṛditakaṣāyāya tamasaspāraṁ darśayati bhagavān sanatkumāraḥ—*

'To him (Nārada) whose (heart's) impurities had been destroyed, the blessed Sanatkumāra demonstrated (the supreme truth of the Ātman) beyond the darkness (of all ignorance and delusion).'

Tensions and sorrows disappear when the Ātman is realized, said Yama in verse six: *matvā dhīro na śocati*. This realization is not easy; it demands of man extraordinary intelligence, courage, and endurance; this is the *dhīra* whose glory is sung in all the Upaniṣads. Many can float on the surface of the sea; they may pick up cheap shells from below their feet. But only a few can dive to its depths, lured by the precious gems lying there. Fewer still dare to dive to the depth of experience, even though the prize to be gained, namely, Self-realization, is unique and incomparable.

In verses seven and eight, Yama tells of the different landmarks of this depth-dive to reach the Ātman. These two verses are slightly modified forms of verses ten and eleven of chapter three of the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, which we had studied earlier. Above and beyond the various layers of experience, whose landmarks are the sense-organs, *manas*, *buddhi*, *mahat*, and *avyakta*, is the Puruṣa, the true Self of man which is *vyāpaka*, i.e. pervades all of them, and which is *aliṅga*, without any of the indicative marks by which the mind usually grasps objects of experience. In logic, *liṅga* refers to the invariable sign which forms the basis of inference. If an object has any indicating marks which unites it with similar objects to form a class and differentiates it from other objects dissimilar to it, it is within the actual or possible grasp by the human mind. But the Ātman is not an object among objects; it is the *subject* of all experience, *the seer* behind all acts of seeing

the *knower* behind all acts of knowing; and, as such, it is one and non-dual. And it is *vyāpaka;* it pervades all seeing, knowing, and all other processes of living. Realizing Him as his own Self, adds Yama, man becomes truly free from all limiting conditions and, consequently, becomes also immortal: *yaṁ jñātvā mucyate jantuḥ amṛtatvaṁ ca gacchati.* The word used for man here is *jantu*, literally, creature; all creatureliness denotes helplessness, dependence. Vedānta holds that, in spite of his enormous and ever-growing knowledge of the not-Self and the power conferred by it, man will not shed his creatureliness substantially and become truly free till he achieves *Ātmajñāna*, knowledge of the Ātman.

### *The Technique of Yoga*

Yama now proceeds to tell us in three verses—verses nine to eleven—how the Ātman, which was described as *aliṅga* and *vyāpaka*, can be realized:

> *Na saṁdṛśe tiṣṭhati rūpamasya*
> *na cakṣuṣā paśyati kaścanainam;*
> *Hṛdā manīṣā manasābhiklṛpto*
> *ya etat viduḥ amṛtāste bhavanti—*

'His form is not within the field of sight; none can see Him with the eye. He is revealed in (the cavity of) the heart by the *manas* that is fully under the control of the *buddhi*. Those who realize this become immortal.'

> *Yadā pañcāvatiṣṭhante jñānāni manasā saha;*
> *Buddhiśca na viceṣṭate tāmāhuḥ paramāṁ gatim—*

'When the five sense-organs of knowledge remain steady along with the *manas*, and even the *buddhi* does not act—that is the supreme state, say (the sages).'

> *Tāṁ yogamiti manyante sthirāṁ indriyadhāraṇām;*
> *Apramattaḥ tadā bhavati yogo hi prabhavāpyayau—*

'They (the sages) consider that as *yoga*—the steady control of the sense-organs; the *yogī* must then be vigilant; for *yoga* can be acquired and lost.'

The Ātman cannot be known through the eye or any of the other senses, says verse nine. The sense-organs, which Vedānta terms *bāhyakaraṇas*, external instruments, namely, sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch, give us knowledge of the external world, of the not-self; even that knowledge is nothing but blurred and

confused *information* till the mind, which Vedānta terms *antaḥkaraṇa*, inner instrument, brings order, clarity, and precision into it. The *Kena Upaniṣad*, which we studied earlier, had expounded this subject of the limitations of the sense-organs with respect to the realization of the Ātman.

But it is otherwise with the mind; in its sense-bound state, which is its normal condition, it is very limited so far as the inner world is concerned, and cannot know or realize the Ātman. In this condition, it is not truly mind but only an additional sense-organ, the sixth; it then often functions as the tail-end of the sense-organs. That is its impure state, says Vedānta, where it is largely mixed up with non-mind ingredients. This is true of all aspects of the mind, namely, intellect, emotion, and will, which are all initially tied to the apron-strings of the sensate man. When the mind becomes freed from thraldom to the senses, it comes to itself and develops a 'weightlessness' and translucence, and a natural tendency to move 'upwards', or to be affected by what we may call the gravitational pull of the inner Self, and to be integrated at a high level. This higher integration of intellect, will, and emotion reaches its consummation in pure *buddhi* which, as Śaṅkara describes it, is *nediṣṭhaṁ brahma*, 'closest to Brahman'. What the senses fail to achieve, namely, realization of the Ātman, is achieved by this *buddhi*. The *Gītā* describes the Ātman as *buddhigrāhyam*, 'grasped by the *buddhi*'. It then ceases to be an organ among organs; beginning in the form of a limited inner faculty or organ as the dim light of reason, it grows and develops, through intellectual, moral, and spiritual discipline, into the blazing but soothing light of *bodhi* or spiritual illumination, merging the illuminating subject, the mind, and the illumined object, the Self, into an ocean of undivided Existence, Consciousness, and Bliss, the *saccidānanda*. The pure *manas* is the same as pure *buddhi*, which is the same as pure Ātman, says Sri Ramakrishna.

This is what is sought to be conveyed by Yama in the second half of verse nine: *hṛdā manīṣā manasābhiklṛpto*. Commenting on this, Śaṅkara says:

*Kathaṁ tarhi taṁ paśyet, ityucyate: hṛdā, hṛtsthayā buddhyā; manīṣā, manasaḥ saṅkalpādirūpasya iṣṭe niyantṛtveneti manīṣ, tathā manīṣā, avikalpayitryā buddhyā. Manasā, mananarūpeṇa samyagdarśanena; abhiklṛpto, abhisamarthito, abhiprakāśita ityetat—*

'How, then, can He be realized, is thus explained. *Hṛdā*, by the *buddhi* within (the cavity of) the heart; *manīṣā*, *manīṣ* means the ruler, in the sense of controller, of *manas* in its form as volition etc.; by such *manas*; that is, by the steady *buddhi*. *Manasā*, by true knowledge in the form of meditation; *abhiklṛpto*, well comprehended, meaning thereby, clearly revealed.'

From *manas* are derived the terms *manīṣā*, meaning wisdom, and *manīṣi*, meaning a wise man. This points to the control of unsteady *manas*, mind, by steady *buddhi*, Reason. The Upaniṣads hold this to be the sign of true wisdom, where Reason reigns supreme, meaning by 'Reason' not the familiar sense-bound intellect or reason which is confined to and conditioned by the waking state, but *reason that has the light of the Ātman playing upon it, that embraces the totality of experience, and that takes into account the data of the states of waking, dream, and dreamless sleep.*

*Hṛdā* means what is in the heart. For the purposes of meditation, Vedānta gives a location to the Ātman in spite of its being *vyāpaka*, all-pervasive by nature. That location is the heart, by which is meant not the physical heart, but that of which it is the physical symbol, namely, the vital organ of the personality. It is conceived as a *guha* or cave which is infilled by *buddhi* or Reason. The Ātman is in the very centre of this *buddhi*, where It becomes self-revealed.

All meditation is a withdrawal from the periphery of the personality to its centre. It is a voluntary *gathering in* of the normally *scattered* energies of the psycho-physical system of man. The *Gītā* (VIII. 12) refers to this process as:

*Sarvadvārāṇi saṁyamya mano hṛdi nirudhya ca*—'Controlling all the sense-organs and restraining the *manas* in the heart.'

When the *manas* controls the sense-organs, it absorbs their energies into itself. When the *manas*, again, is restrained in the heart, the latter—in this case, the *buddhi* that is in the latter—absorbs all the energies of the *manas* into itself. It is by this *buddhi*—*hṛdā manīṣā manasā*—now ablaze with the light of the Ātman, the light of pure Consciousness, that the Ātman is said to be revealed—*abhiklṛpto*. And 'those who realize this become immortal', *amṛtāste bhavanti*, adds the verse.

When the *manas* is restrained in the heart, it ceases to be the tail-end of the sense-organs, which it normally is. By such restraint,

its energies are transmuted into a higher form by being absorbed into the *buddhi*. *Mano hṛdi nirudhya ca* specifically refers to this attainment in the state of meditation. *But it has a more general reference for character as a whole.* For, when the *manas* gets this training, its natural stimulus-response reactions become changed into stimulus-*reason*-response reactions. The inter-position of reason between stimulus and response makes the *manas* that is revealed in the response purer and steadier than the *manas* revealed in the stimulus. This transformation imparts far-sight and foresight to life and strength and steadiness to character.

This state in which the mind succeeds in stilling the clamour of the senses and itself becomes concentrated, steady, and pure is called *yoga: tāṁ yogam iti manyante sthirām indriyadhāraṇām*, says verse eleven. This is the state which spiritual seekers throughout the ages have striven to attain, which many have attained, and which India has made into a thorough science and art, the science and art of spirituality. When the mind is so stilled, the mind as hitherto known to us dies and the ego also dies with it. This is what the mystics refer to as 'the death of the old man within us'. The new man that *is* born in us then is the infinite universal man, birthless and deathless, and non-separate from all existence. Every religion has produced a few such men who were ablaze with divinity; and as far as India is concerned, these have been the most creative personalities of her long history. It is a faint glimpse of this vision of man that has been caught and expressed by man's art and literature at their highest reaches.

### *Need for Alertness*

This state of concentration needs for its sustenance supreme alertness and vigilance, says the verse: *apramattaḥ tadā bhavati*; because *yoga*, as is well known to those who practise it, even though acquired, may be lost through inadvertance, except at its highest reach: *yogo hi prabhavāpyayau*; such loss arises from the still lingering pull of the sense-organs which the seeker had over-looked or belittled; such pulls may come directly from the sense-organs or indirectly from the *saṁskāras*, also called *vāsanās*, i.e. impressions of earlier sense experiences. Spiritual teachers warn all spiritual aspirants not to belittle these sleeping inner forces. *Balavān indriyagrāmo vidvāṁsamapi karṣati*—'Powerful are the sense-organs; they drag down even the wise', says India's hoary law-giver, Manu (*Manusmṛti*, II. 215). The fear of a set-back, however, is com-

pletely removed when one attains realization of the Ātman. Burnt in the fire of spiritual knowledge, the seeds of thoughts and actions which the *vāsanās* are, cease to have the power to sprout out into new thoughts and actions. The classic statement on this profound truth of the inner life is contained in the *Gītā* (II. 59):

> *Viṣayā vinivartante nirāhārasya dehinaḥ;*
> *Rasavarjaṁ rasopyasya paraṁ dṛṣṭvā nivartate—*

'Sense attractions fall away from a person who practises abstinence, but leaving intact (however) the appetite (for them). (But) even this appetite is overcome when the Supreme (Self) is realized.'

All seekers of truth, whether in the field of the physical sciences or the science of religion, prize this virtue of alertness; it is highly praised by Buddha. *Apramāda* (*appamāda* in Pali), alertness or wakefulness, forms the theme of a whole chapter of the *Dhammapada*, chapter two, which bears the very title of *Appamādavagga*, chapter on alertness. Says its opening verse:

> *Appamādo amataṁ padaṁ*
> *pamādo maccuno padam;*
> *Appamattā na mīyanti*
> *ye pamattā yathā matā—*

'Wakefulness is the way to immortality; heedlessness is the way to death. Those who are wakeful die not, the heedless are already dead.'

The same conviction is expressed by the sage Sanatkumāra in the *Sanatsujātīya* section of the *Mahābhārata* (V. 42. 4, Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute Edition):

> *Pramādaṁ vai mṛtyuraham bravīmi;*
> *Sadāpramādāt amṛtatvaṁ bravīmi—*

'Heedlessness alone is death, I say; through constant wakefulness, I proclaim, is immortality (gained).'

### *Yoga: the Highest State of Existence*

The struggle to go beyond the sensate man and realize the spiritual man needs to be supported by a stable moral life; only when this base is secured can a man carry the struggle direct into the inner world and fashion relevant disciplines and forge newer instruments, of which pure *buddhi* is the most important. This is the specifically spiritual field of human endeavour. The discipline for the forging of this *buddhi* out of the given psycho-physical

energies of man begins at the level of sense-organs, and is carried steadily forward to the level of *buddhi*. This is referred to by Yama in verse ten:

> *Yadā pañcāvatiṣṭhante*
> *jñānāni manasā saha;*
> *Buddhiśca na viceṣṭate—*

'When the five sense-organs of knowledge along with the *manas* become still and the *buddhi* also does not act.'

*This results in the conversion of the inner life of man into a laboratory for some mighty purpose*; alluding to this, the verse concludes: *tāṁ āhuḥ paramāṁ gatim*—'that, say (the sages), is the supreme state.'

To the question: 'Then must not true reality be revealed to her (the soul) in thought, if at all?', Socrates answered in the affirmative and added (*The Dialogues of Plato*, Vol. I, p. 416, B. Jowett's Edition):

'And thought is best when the mind is gathered into herself and none of these things trouble her—neither sounds nor sights nor pain, nor again any pleasure—when she takes leave of the body, and has as little as possible to do with it, when she has no bodily sense or desire, but is aspiring after true being.'

This is to be 'laid asleep in body and become a living soul', as described by Wordsworth in his *Tintern Abbey*.

*Taṁ āhuḥ paramāṁ gatim*—'That, say (the sages), is the supreme state.' This is endorsed by Swami Vivekananda, an outstanding sage of our own time, who, in a talk given to a select group in the West on '*Sādhanās* or Preparations to Higher Life', says (*Complete Works*, Vol. V, Seventh Edition, p. 253):

'So, then, this tremendous determination to struggle, a hundredfold more determination than that which you put forth to gain anything which belongs to this life, is the first great preparation.

'And then, along with it there must be meditation. Meditation is the one thing. Meditate! The greatest thing is meditation. It is the one moment in our daily life that we are not at all material —the Soul thinking of Itself, free from all matter—this marvellous touch of the Soul!'

### *Homeostasis and Evolution*

Modern biology speaks of the phenomenon of homeostasis as the supreme event in all organic evolution. In the history of liv-

ing organisms, the first important manifestation of homeostasis was the acquisition of internal temperature control, thermostasis, which made possible the survival of mammals on a cooling globe. Though quoted in part in an earlier lecture, the words of the neurologist, Grey Walter, will bear fuller reproduction in this context (*The Living Brain*, p. 16):

'That was its general importance in evolution. Its particular importance was that it completed, in one section of the brain, an automatic system of stabilization for the vital functions of the organism—a condition known as homeostasis. With this arrangement, other parts of the brain are left free for functions not immediately related to the vital engine or the senses, *for functions surpassing the wonders of homeostasis itself.*' (Italics not author's)

*Characteristics of Homeostasis*

Stabilization at the lower level, namely, the physiological, led to the development of life at higher levels, namely, the mental and the spiritual.

Quoting the words of the great French physiologist Claude Bernard that 'a fixed interior *milieu* is the condition for the free life,' Grey Walter continues (*ibid.*, pp. 16-17):

'Those who had the privilege of sitting under Sir Joseph Barcroft at Cambridge owe much to him for his expansion of this dictum and its application to physiological research. We might otherwise have been scoffers: for "the free life" is not a scientific expression. He translated the saying into simple questions and guided us to the answers. "What has the organism gained", he asked, "by the constancy of temperature, constancy of hydrogen-ion concentration, constancy of water, constancy of sugar, constancy of oxygen, constancy of calcium, and the rest?" With his gift for quantitative expression, it was all in the day's work for him to demonstrate the individual intricacies of the various exquisitely balanced feedback mechanisms. But I recall in his manner a kind of modest trepidation, as if he feared we might ridicule his flight of fancy, when he gave this illustration of homeostasis and its peculiar virtue:

' "How often have I watched the ripples on the surface of a still lake made by a passing boat, noted their regularity and admired the patterns formed when two such ripple-systems meet;... but *the lake must be perfectly calm*....To look for high intellectual development in a *milieu* whose properties have not become stabilized, is to seek...ripple-patterns on the surface of the stormy Atlantic." '

### *Homeostasis versus Yoga*

To this, the Upaniṣads merely add that to look for high spiritual development in an inner *milieu* whose properties have not become stabilized by what verse ten told us as 'stilling the clamour of the sense-organs and the *manas*, and the steadying of the *buddhi*', is to look for the impossible.

Homeostasis as a fixed interior *milieu* is not an end in itself; it is just a condition, a necessary condition, for life forging ahead to higher evolution; and the highest level to be reached is the perfect freedom of the human spirit. To emphasize this sense of the upward flow of life energy, zoologist C. H. Waddington has suggested the use of a new term, namely, *homeorhesis*, using a derivative of the Greek word for 'flow', in place of homeostasis, in order to replace 'stasis', which implies standing still. What the mammals achieved on the physical plane, man seeks to achieve on the mental and spiritual planes. To quote Grey Walter again (*ibid.*, pp. 18-19):

'Only isolated and intermittent evidence of any higher significance is found in the ripple-systems of other brains than that of man. For the mammals all, homeostasis was survival; for man emancipation....

'The perfect calm of Barcroft's lake was to be stirred by still stranger ripple-systems....

'And once again, as new horizons open, we become aware of old landmarks. The experience of homeostasis, the perfect mechanical calm which it allows the brain, has been known for two or three thousand years under various appellations. It is the physiological aspect of all the perfectionist faiths—*nirvāṇa*, the abstraction of the *yogi*, the peace that passeth understanding, the derided "happiness that lies within"; *it is a state of grace in which disorder and disease are mechanical slips and errors.*' (Italics not author's)

### *Characteristics of Yoga*

The characteristics of this state of *yoga*, the *paramām gati* or supreme state as verse ten describes it, have been expounded by the *Gītā* in six verses of remarkable clarity and penetration (VI. 18-23):

*Yadā viniyatam cittam*
*ātmanyevāvatiṣṭhate;*
*Niḥspṛhaḥ sarvakāmebhyo*
*yukta ityucyate tadā—*

'When the completely disciplined mind rests in the Ātman alone, free from longing after all desires, then is one called steadfast in *yoga*.'

*Yathā dīpo nivātastho*
*neṅgate sopamā smṛtā;*
*Yogino yatacittasya*
*yuñjato yogamātmanaḥ—*

'As a lamp in a place sheltered from wind does not flicker, even so is the simile used for a *yogī* of disciplined mind, practising concentration in the Ātman.'

*Yatroparamate cittaṁ*
*niruddhaṁ yogasevayā;*
*Yatra caivātmanātmānaṁ*
*paśyannātmani tuṣyati—*

'When the mind, fully restrained by the practice of *yoga*, attains quietude, and when, seeing the Self by the self, one is satisfied in the Self';

*Sukhamātyantikaṁ yat tat*
*buddhigrāhyam atīndriyam;*
*Vetti yatra na caivāyaṁ*
*sthitaścalati tattvataḥ—*

'When he realizes that infinite bliss which is grasped by the (pure) *buddhi*, and which is beyond (the reach of) the sense-organs, and established wherein he never wavers from the truth (of the Self)';

*Yaṁ labdhvā cāparaṁ lābhaṁ*
*manyate nādhikaṁ tataḥ;*
*Yasmin sthito na duḥkhena*
*guruṇāpi vicālyate—*

'And having obtained which, (he) regards no other gain superior to that, and wherein established, he is not shaken even by very heavy sorrow';

*Taṁ vidyāt duḥkhasaṁyoga-*
*viyogaṁ yogasaṁjñitam;*
*Sa niścayena yoktavyo*
*yogo'nirviṇṇacetasā—*

'Let that be known as the state called *yoga*—a state of disunion from (all) union with sorrow. This *yoga* should be practised with determination, undisturbed by depression of heart.'

*Existence as the Ultimate Category*

In the next two verses of the Upaniṣad, verses twelve and thirteen, Yama points out the difficulty in comprehending the truth of the Ātman and how it should be approached:

*Naiva vācā na manasā*
*prāptuṁ śakyo na cakṣuṣā;*
*Astīti bruvato'nyatra*
*kathaṁ tat upalabhyate—*

'(The Ātman) can never be reached by even speech, or *manas*, or the eyes (and the other sense-organs). How can It be realized otherwise than from those who say that It exists?'

*Astītyevopalabdhavyaḥ*
*tattvabhāvena cobhayoḥ;*
*Astītyevopalabdhasya*
*tattvabhāvaḥ prasīdati—*

'Between the two (views of Reality as existence and non-existence), Reality is to be realized as existence alone. Its true nature becomes revealed to him only who realizes It as existence.'

Introducing verse twelve, Śaṅkara says in his comment:

*Buddhyādiceṣṭāviṣayaṁ cet brahma, idaṁ tat iti viśeṣato gṛhyeta; buddhyādyuparame ca grahaṇakāraṇābhāvāt anupalabhyamānaṁ nāstyeva brahma. Yaddhi karaṇagocaraṁ tat asti iti prasiddhaṁ loke; viparītaṁ ca asat iti. Utaśca anarthako yogo, anupalabhyamānatvāt vā, nāsti iti upalabdhavyaṁ brahma, iti evaṁ prāpte idam ucyate—*

'If Brahman (the ultimate Reality) is an object of the processes of *buddhi* etc. It (Brahman) should be specially comprehended as "this is that"; and when the *buddhi* etc. cease to function, It does not come within the purview of experience in view of the absence of an organ for Its perception. This means in effect that Brahman is non-existent. It is well known in the world that that alone exists which is experienced by an organ of perception; and that what is otherwise is non-existent. And, accordingly, *yoga* is meaningless; or that since Brahman cannot be experienced, It should be comprehended as non-existent. To such a possible objection, the following reply is advanced.'

The truth of Brahman or Ātman is never grasped by speech or sight or any of the sense-organs including the *manas*. This is iterated in the Upaniṣads again and again. Even the words 'Āt-

*PS.1.*

On p. 263 (of the *Message*), the Swami gives a splendid definition of what education ought to be, and sometimes is. But my visits to India showed me that the aim of a large number of Indian undergraduates was not to enjoy an education of this sort, but to pass examinations and obtain a degree, which was useful in getting jobs.

*PS.2.*

Somewhere (in the *Message*), the Swami rightly mentions that nations and cultures often become decadent and unjust, etc. But he fails to point out that the faults of the culture often stimulate .. reaction, even a revolution, which then engenders a new and generally improved pattern of life.

* * *

Surrey, England.
June, 14, 1970.

Dear Sir Julian,

Thank you for your interesting letter of the 12th June. Your comments are thought-stimulating and I am forwarding them on to Swami Ranganathananda in India, who is sure to appreciate your attitude. Indeed, discussions of this kind and on these subjects are his very life-blood. Unless he is again lecturing somewhere abroad, he should be replying before long....

Sincerely yours,
G.F.

* * *

To:
Sir Julian Huxley,
31, Pond Street,
Hampstead,
London, N.W.3.

From:
Swami Ranganathananda
C/o Advaita Ashrama
5 Dehi-Entally Road
Calcutta 14, (India).
August 10, 1970.

My dear Sir Julian Huxley,

Mr. G.F. has sent me a photostat copy of your letter to him dated 12th June 1970, conveying your appreciation and critical

man' and 'Brahman' do not comprehend It. Says Śaṅkara (commentary on the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, I. 4. 7):

'The truth of the Ātman is really beyond the scope of the term and the concept of "Ātman".'

As the Self of all, It is ever the *subject* and never the object. As the subject, It is not only within the purview of experience, but forms the very basis of all experiences and judgements even in the objective field. Knowledge of the Self is the only *immediate* knowledge, all else is *mediate* and remote. 'Consciousness is the first and direct thing in experience; all else is remote inference', says astrophysicist Eddington. There are those who *realize* the Ātman and not merely *believe* in It; it is only from them that the rest of the world can get the knowledge of It. *Astīti bruvato'nyatra kathaṁ tat upalabhyate*: 'Except from those who say "Ātman is" (from direct realization), how can this knowledge be obtained from any other source?' asks Yama in verse twelve.

'Therefore', says Yama in verse thirteen, 'between the two categories of existence and non-existence, the Ātman is to be comprehended as existence only': *astītyevopalabdhavyaḥ tattvabhāvena cobhayoḥ*; and adds:

'He who comprehends the Ātman as existence, to him the real form of the Ātman reveals itself': *astītyevopalabdhasya tattvabhāvaḥ prasīdati*.

He realizes the Ātman not as a god in an extracosmic heaven, not as an absolute arrived at by logical speculation, but as his very Self, if he is devoted to Its impersonal aspect, or as the Self of his self, the *Antaryāmin*, the inner Ruler, of all beings, if he is devoted to its personal aspect; that is the *tattvabhāva*, the real form, of the Ātman.

We had earlier studied, while studying the *Kena Upaniṣad*, the subject covered by these two verses; in fact, this was the central theme of that Upaniṣad.

### *Realization Here and Now*

In the next two verses, verses fourteen and fifteen, Yama communicates to us the important Vedāntic truth of the realization by man of his immortal divine nature *in this very life*:

*Yadā sarve pramucyante*
*kāmā ye'sya hṛdi śritāḥ;*
*Atha martyo amṛto bhavati*
*atra brahma samaśnute—*

'When all the desires that dwell in his heart are destroyed, then mortal man becomes immortal and attains Brahman here (*in this very life*).'

*Yadā sarve prabhidyante*
*hṛdayasyeha granthayaḥ;*
*Atha martyo amṛto bhavati*
*etāvaddhyanuśāsanam—*

'When here (*in this very life*) all the knots of the heart are rent asunder, then mortal man becomes immortal—this much alone is the teaching (of all Vedānta).'

The heart of man is the abode of all sorts of desires for earthly and heavenly pleasures; this makes his mind outgoing in its disposition. The feeling of want within is the driving force behind this disposition and all the activities that it gives rise to. When he is thus living and moving within the sphere of the not-Self, of the perishable, man is within the jurisdiction of death. For death, when closely looked into, is not so much the final fall of the body as the ever-present spiritual blindness in which men live and conduct their lives. Seekers of truth fear the latter death more than the former. Under the discipline of ethical and moral life, these activities, and the disposition behind them, tend to develop an inward direction generating in its wake a feeling of a vague new hunger within; this is the spiritual hunger, a hunger that has afflicted man throughout the ages, a hunger that ensures the freshness of his creative spirit, a hunger that carries with it an intimation that the kingdom of heaven, the state of deathlessness, is within us. Vedānta emphasizes the spiritual character of all moral impulses. They indicate the emergence in man of an awareness of his inborn spiritual nature and its predominance over his physical nature and appetites. Throwing light on these two forces in man, Swami Vivekananda says (*Complete Works*, Vol. I, Eleventh Edition, pp. 85-86):

'Here are two Sanskrit words. The one is *pravṛtti*, which means revolving towards, and the other is *nivṛtti*, which means revolving away. The "revolving towards" is what we call the world, the "I and mine"; it includes all those things which are always enriching that "me" by wealth and money and power, and name and fame, and which are of a grasping nature, always tend-

ing to accumulate everything in one centre, that centre being "myself". That is the *pravṛtti*, the natural tendency of every human being: taking everything from everywhere and heaping it around one centre, that centre being man's own sweet self. When this tendency begins to break, when it is *nivṛtti* or "going away from", then begin morality and religion.'

This *nivṛtti* is renunciation. This renunciation is a heroic virtue which presents a picture of man as poised for a mighty inward spiritual adventure, like Everest-climbing, after he has established a homeostatic condition, through the moral virtues of *śama*, calm detachment of mind, and *dama*, control of all sense-organs, at the base, the base camp of the sensate level of his life. In the early stages of this new journey, man will feel the drag of his not-yet-overcome worldly nature; he will find his speed slowed by the weight of the sensate baggage still on him. Every man on this journey has to reckon with this baggage on and about him, heavy or light, including often the 'primeval slime' of his long evolutionary past; and he will have to shed it more and more if he hopes to gain speed at the higher and higher reaches of the arduous road. Such shedding becomes joyous and natural when the spirit of renunciation and lure of the spiritual peak ahead are bright and strong.

### *Man: Mortal versus Immortal*

The word *kāma* in verse fourteen refers to this baggage and its drag. Though ostensibly journeying towards the Ātman, man is often assailed by doubts as to the worthwhileness of his adventure, he more often stops and casts fond glances on the sensate hungers and satisfactions left behind. But in spite of such setbacks, he advances and feels refreshed by the creative adventure. When this drag is eventually removed completely, then something wonderful happens: 'mortal man becomes immortal', *atha martya amṛto bhavati*, and realizes Brahman *here*, in this very life, *atra Brahma samaśnute*, as verse fourteen puts it. The same idea is emphasized in verse fifteen also with a slight modification. When the realization of the Ātman destroys all the knots of the heart—and nothing else can destroy them root and branch—all deposits of undigested experiences, all the complexes buried in the subconscious and unconscious levels, which originate and sustain all the tensions and distortions in the life of man, become destroyed: *yadā sarve prabhidyante hṛdayasyeha granthayaḥ*. When this happens, then this very mortal man becomes immortal: *atha martyo amṛto bhavati*.

The Upaniṣads emphasize the need for renunciation, the joyous rising above the sense-life in search of the truth underlying all life and existence, in order to enable man to experience the immortal dimension of his personality. After explaining to his wife, Maitreyī that wealth is the means to a decent social existence only —the means to what Jung calls *achievement* in which field man is but *the instrument of nature*, and by rising above which alone can he experience the true freedom of his spirit, which Jung designates *personality or culture* (*Modern Man in Search of a Soul*, p. 126)—Yājñavalkya emphatically tells her (*Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, IV.5.3):

*Amṛtatvasya na āśā asti vittena—*

'There is, however, no hope of immortality through wealth.'

In the stirring words of the *Kaivalya Upaniṣad* (Verse two):

*Tasmai sa hovāca pitāmahaśca*
*śraddhā-bhakti-dyānayogād avaihi;*
*Na karmaṇā na prajayā dhanena*
*tyāgenaike amṛtatvamānaśuḥ—*

'(Brahma), the grandsire (of the whole world) said to him (Aśvalāyana, the student): Seek to know (the infinite Self) by faith, devotion, and the yoga of meditation. Not by action, not by progeny, not by wealth, but by renunciation alone does one experience the immortal.'

The picture of man, full within as a result of his realization of the Ātman, because of which he ceases to be the slave of desires, is graphically portrayed by a verse in the *Gītā* in its group of verses describing the characteristics of the *sthitaprajña*, man of steady wisdom (II. 70):

*Āpūryamāṇam acalapratiṣṭhaṁ*
*samudramāpaḥ praviśanti yadvat;*
*Tadvat kāmā yaṁ praviśanti sarve*
*sa śāntimāpnoti na kāmakāmī—*

'As into the ocean, brimful and steady, flow the waters (rivers), the man into whom enter all desires like this, he attains to peace, and not the one who runs after desires.'

Mortal man is mortal only because he considers himself to be the finite ego conditioned by the body, the senses, and the mind. In his true nature he is the Ātman, immortal, unconditioned, and infinite. This is to be *realized* by each individual for himself or

herself. Through his joys and his sorrows, his successes and his defeats, through all the ups and downs of his life, if man can move steadily forward towards this consummation, that indeed is life truly lived. *All the mortal parts of him become pounded by the weighty strokes of this philosophy and its discipline and are brushed away.* What at last truly remains is the immortal divine Self. In the words of the *Mahābhārata* (XII. 169. 28, Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute Edition):

*Amṛtaṁ caiva mṛtyuśca*
*dvayaṁ dehe pratiṣṭhitam;*
*Mṛtyurāpadyate mohāt*
*satyenāpadyate'mṛtam—*

'Immortality as well as mortality are both established in the body (of everyone); by (the pursuit of) delusion, one reaches death; by (the pursuit of) truth, one attains immortality.'

### *The Central Message of Vedānta*

And verse fifteen concludes: *etāvaddhyanuśāsanam*—'this much alone is the teaching (of all Vedānta)'; this is its central message, a message which it has been conveying to man for thousands of years with a deep passion for his welfare, 'with a loving human concern more than that of thousand mothers and fathers put together', *mātṛpitṛsahasrebhyo api hitaiṣiṇā vedena*, as Śaṅkara picturesquely and feelingly expresses it (commentary on the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, IV. 15). Vedānta is not interested in serving a bundle of dogmas and creeds, or a set of socio-political do's and don'ts, to spiritually hungry humanity. It lovingly seeks to help man to grow to his infinite spiritual dimension. This central message was given a concise formulation by the outstanding Vedāntic teacher of our own times, Swami Vivekananda (*Complete Works*, Vol. I, Eleventh Edition, p. 124):

'Each soul is potentially divine.

The goal is to manifest this Divine within by controlling nature, external and internal.

Do this either by work, or worship, or psychic control, or philosophy—by one, or more, or all of these—*and be free*.

This is the whole of religion.

Doctrines, or dogmas, or rituals, or books, or temples, or forms, are but secondary details.'

Illustrating this central Vedāntic teaching through a story, Śaṅkara says (commentary on the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, II. 1. 20):

'In this connexion, knowers of the Vedāntic tradition narrate the following parable:

'A certain prince, discarded by his parents as soon as he was born, was brought up in a butcher's home. Not knowing his princely descent, he considered himself to be a butcher and pursued the duties appropriate to the butcher class, not those of the king as he would if he knew himself to be such. When, however, a certain supremely compassionate man, knowing the fitness of the prince for attaining the fortune of a kingdom, told him whose son he was—that he was not a butcher but the son of such and such a king, and that by some chance, he had come to live in the butcher's home—he, thus informed, gave up the notion and the duties of the butcher class and, realizing that he was a king, adopted his own status gained by him from his ancestors.

'Similarly, this self of man, which is of the same category as the supreme Self, but separated from It like a spark of fire (from the fire), has entered this wilderness of the body, sense-organs, etc. and, although really beyond all relativity and finitude, takes on the attributes of the body and the sense-organs, which are characterized by relativity and finitude, and thinks itself to be this aggregate of body and sense-organs, thinks itself to be lean or stout, happy or miserable—for it does not know itself as the supreme Self. But when taught by the Vedāntic teacher that it is not the body etc., but the supreme Brahman, beyond all relativity and finitude, then it gives up the pursuit of the threefold desires (for progeny, wealth, and heaven), and realizes that it is nothing but Brahman. When it is told that it has suffered a fall from its true status as the supreme Brahman, like a spark (from the fire), it is firmly convinced that it is Brahman, as the prince was of his royal status.'

Verse fourteen told us that realization of the Ātman brings man freedom *here* and *now;* there is therefore no question of where a knower of the Ātman goes after death. There is no coming or going in the infinite and non-dual Ātman. This is the conclusion of Vedānta *philosophy*. Its *theological* view on the matter, however, is presented in the next verse, verse sixteen. We had discussed this subject while dealing with verse twelve of the third chapter of this Upaniṣad.

The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* proclaims in a majestic utterance (IV. 4. 6) the glory of this highest *yoga* as upheld in the *philosophy* of Vedānta:

*Atha akāmayamānaḥ: yo akāmo, niṣkāma, āptakāma, ātmakāmo, na tasya prāṇā utkrāmanti; brahmaiva san brahmāpyeti—*

'Now about the man who does not desire: of him who is without desires, who is free from desires, who has fulfilled all his desires, and to whom all objects of desire are but the Ātman, his vital airs do not depart. Being but Brahman (while alive), he merges in Brahman (at the death of the body).'

But it is legitimate to ask what happens after death to those who have not thus realized the Ātman. Every theology deals with this question in its eschatology. The Upaniṣads also contain various views on the matter. In the next verse, verse sixteen, Yama refers to one of these views:

*Śataṁ caikā ca hṛdayasya nāḍyaḥ*
*tāsāṁ mūrdhānam abhiniḥsṛtaikā;*
*Tayordhvamāyan amṛtatvameti*
*viṣvaṅṅanyā utkramaṇe bhavanti—*

'Hundred and one are the nerves of the heart; of them one has extended towards the crown of the head. Going out by it upwards (at death), man attains immortality; (going out) through others, leads to different forms of rebirth.'

*Yogīs* speak of a subtle nerve going to the crown of the head known as *suṣumṇā* which is located in the centre of the spinal column. When the life energy of a *yogī*, it is believed, passes through this *suṣumṇā* and goes out through the aperture in the crown of the head, known as *brahmarandhra* or 'the opening leading to Brahman', he will not be reborn in the world, but will steadily reach *brahmaloka*, the world of the cosmic Mind, by stages and be absorbed in the immortal Brahman at the final dissolution of the universe. This is the theory of *kramamukti*, gradual emancipation. The path thus traversed is known as 'the northern path' or 'the path of light'. This *brahmarandhra* remains ordinarily closed in the case of all people and opens only for this type of *yogī* who stands only next in spiritual eminence to the highest *yogī* mentioned earlier, the one who realizes Brahman and achieves spiritual freedom and universality *here* and *now*. Except these two, all others depart through either 'the southern path', known also as 'the path of smoke', or through a 'third path' leading to lower existences, and have to be reborn after spending varying periods in heavens or in less edifying planes of existence, 'depending on

the quality of actions done and knowledge gained by each during his or her earthly life': *yathā karma yathā śrutam*, as verse seven of chapter five of this Upaniṣad told us before.

In the next verse, verse seventeen, Yama concludes his teaching to Naciketā with a reference to a type of meditation on the Ātman with the aid of a symbol and to the need to detach the Ātman from the body and the sense-organs:

*Aṅguṣṭhamātraḥ puruṣo'ntarātmā*
*sadā janānāṁ hṛdaye sanniviṣṭaḥ;*
*Taṁ svāccharīrāt pravṛhet*
*muñjādiveṣīkāṁ dhairyeṇa.*
*Taṁ vidyāt śukramamṛtaṁ;*
*taṁ vidyāt śukramamṛtamiti—*

'The Puruṣa, the inner Self, of the size of a thumb, always dwells in the heart of beings. One should separate Him from one's own body with steady courage as (one separates the tender) stalk from a (blade of) grass. One should know Him as the luminous, as the immortal; yea, as the luminous, as the immortal.'

For the purposes of meditation, the Ātman which is infinite can be conceived as small or big. Meditation within the personality is spiritually higher than meditation without. This needs a small size; hence the mention of the size of the thumb. Yama had earlier suggested in verse thirteen of chapter four the symbol of a smokeless flame of the size of the thumb. Physical light is an apt symbol for the light of pure Consciousness. By such meditation, one learns to discriminate the Self from the not-Self. This is a very delicate process like separating the tender stalk from a blade of grass without injuring either. This needs to be done with courage and perseverance—*dhairyeṇa*. This courage and perseverance will only come when the seeker is convinced that what lies in store for him at the end of the arduous search is the highest and best that man can aspire for and get, namely, illumination and immortality; that is the spoken and unspoken prayer of the human heart. Yes, concludes Yama in emphatic refrain, the Ātman *is* illumination and immortality. And it is *always* present in the heart of all beings as their true nature: *sadā janānāṁ hṛdaye sanniviṣṭaḥ*.

In the next verse, verse eighteen, which is the last verse of this Upaniṣad, the Upaniṣad concludes its account of the fascinat-

ing dialogue between Yama and Naciketā with a note of universal hope:

*Mṛtyuproktāṁ nāciketo'tha labdhvā*
*vidyāmetāṁ yogavidhiṁ ca kṛtsnam;*
*Brahmaprāpto virajo'bhūt vimṛtyuḥ*
*anyopyevaṁ yo vidadhyātmamevam—*

'Receiving from the teaching of *Mṛtyu* (Death, i.e. Yama) this knowledge (of the Ātman) and the entire discipline of *yoga*, Naciketā became free from all impurities and from death, and attained Brahman. *And so will attain anyone else also who will thus realize (Brahman) as his own inner Self.*'

Naciketā did not come to philosophy with just an intellectual curiosity; he had, as we have seen in the first chapter of this Upaniṣad, a burning passion to *realize* the truth about human life and destiny, and had burnt all his worldly desires to that end. And *philosophy in India has ever borne this impress given to it by this eternal child of the spirit and other similar spirits of the Upaniṣads.* Naciketā received from his teacher this science, *vidyā*, and its entire technical know-how: *yogavidhiṁ ca kṛtsnam.* With the help of these, he *realized* Brahman and became pure and spotless and immortal, and joined the unbroken procession of India's eternal children of the spirit. To this impressive procession belonged Buddha and Śaṅkara in the historic period and Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda in our own time. In his life is exemplified, says the verse, the full science of the spiritual life with its twin aspects of *vidyā* and *yoga*, the *lucifera* and the *frucifera* of this science. And the verse generously adds: *anyopyevaṁ yo vidadhyātmam evam*—'and so will attain anyone else also who will thus realize (Brahman) as his own inner Self.' This blessing is not the special prerogative of Naciketā and other specially gifted ones. It is a blessing pronounced on all humanity by nature and her indwelling God.

This blessing finds a forceful expression in a passage of the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (I. 4. 10).

Commenting on that passage where it is similarly stated that the realization of Brahman attained by a great sage by the name of Vāmadeva is open to anyone else also among gods, sages, or men to attain, Śaṅkara says:

'Even before the realization of Brahman, all beings, being Brahman, are really always one with all others; but ignorance

superimposes on them the idea that they are not Brahman, that they are not one with all....

'Someone may think that the gods, who are great, attained this identity with all through the knowledge of Brahman because of their extraordinary power; but those of this age, particularly human beings, can never attain it owing to their limited power. In order to remove this notion the text says: "and to this day whoever...in like manner knows It", namely, the Brahman under consideration...as "I am Brahman",...becomes all this....For *there is no difference as regards Brahman or the realization of It between giants like Vāmadeva and the human weaklings of today.*'

During the last eight months, we have been engaged in a study of the Upaniṣads and what they mean to us of the modern age. Of the ten authentic Upaniṣads, we selected for our study the first three as given in all classical enumerations, namely, *Īśā*, *Kena*, and *Kaṭha*. They contain, in a concentrated form and with the least amount of extraneous matter, all the salient ideas and insights of the vast Upaniṣadic literature. These ideas and insights, as we have seen in these lectures, seek to impart to human life the spirit of strength and fearlessness, unity and harmony, love and service. The central message of the Upaniṣads is the message of freedom and equality, inner as well as outer; and that message is addressed as much to the intelligence and reason of man as to his heart and feeling.

It is necessary to point out that, though produced and nourished by the Indian spirit, the Indian people have yet to assimilate in an adequate manner the wonderful insights of the Upaniṣads, which today have not only India but also the whole world for their receptive audience. And modern India is dedicated to this task of forging a Vedāntic body-politic to her undying soul. This is the mission of the *Practical Vedānta* taught by Swami Vivekananda.

The new world emerging before our eyes, on the other hand, is a world physically unified but yearningly in search of a pure and luminous soul for itself. In order to convey succinctly what the Upaniṣads mean to the emerging world order and to all modern men and women—theists or atheists, believers or agnostics—I cannot, while concluding this series of lectures today, do anything better than quote a moving passage, almost prophetic in spirit, from a lecture of Swami Vivekananda on 'The Necessity of Religion' delivered in London in 1896 (*Complete Works*, Vol. II, Tenth Edition, pp. 67-68):

'As the human mind broadens, its spiritual steps broaden too. The time has already come when a man cannot record a thought without its reaching to all corners of the earth; by merely physical means, we have come into touch with the whole world; so the future religions of the world have to become as universal, as wide.

'The religious ideals of the future must embrace all that exists in the world and is good and great, and, at the same time, have infinite scope for future development. All that was good in the past must be preserved; and the doors kept open for future additions to the already existing store. Religions must also be inclusive and not look down with contempt upon one another because their particular ideas of God are different. In my life I have seen a great many spiritual men, a great many sensible persons, who did not believe in God at all, that is to say, not in our sense of the word. Perhaps they understood God better than we can ever do. The Personal idea of God or the Impersonal, the Infinite, the Moral Law, or the Ideal Man—these all have to come under the definition of religion. And when religions have become thus broadened, their power for good will have increased a hundredfold. Religions having tremendous power in them have often done more injury to the world than good simply on account of their narrowness and limitations.

'...Religious ideas will have to become universal, vast, and infinite, and then alone we shall have the fullest play of religion, for the power of religion has only just begun to manifest in the world. It is sometimes said that religions are dying out, that spiritual ideas are dying out of the world. To me it seems that they have just begun to grow. The power of religion, broadened and purified, is going to penetrate every part of human life. So long as religion was in the hands of a chosen few or of a body of priests, it was in temples, churches, books, dogmas, ceremonials, forms, and rituals. But when we come to the real, spiritual, universal concept, then and then alone religion will become real and living; it will come into our very nature, live in our every movement, penetrate every pore of our society, and be infinitely more a power for good than it has ever been before.'

# APPENDIX

(Text of the Three Upaniṣads in Devanagarī Script)

## ईशा उपनिषत्

ॐ पूर्णमदः पूर्णमिदं पूर्णात् पूर्णमुदच्यते ।
पूर्णस्य पूर्णमादाय पूर्णमेवावशिष्यते ॥ ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ॥

ॐ ईशा वास्य इदं सर्वं यत्किञ्च जगत्यां जगत् ।
तेन त्यक्तेन भुञ्जीथा मा गृधः कस्यस्विद्धनम् ॥ १ ॥

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

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

अनेजदेकं मनसो जवीयो नैनद्देवा आप्नुवन् पूर्वमर्षत् ।
तद्धावतोऽन्यानत्येति तिष्ठत् तस्मिन्नपो मातरिश्वा दधाति ॥ 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 एकत्वं अनुपश्यतः ॥ ७ ॥

स पर्यगात् शुक्रमकायमव्रणं अस्नाविरं शुद्धमपापविद्धम् ।
कविर्मनीषी परिभूः स्वयंभूर्याथातथ्यतोऽर्थान् व्यदधात् शाश्वतीभ्यः समाभ्यः ॥ ८ ॥

अन्धं तमः प्रविशन्ति येऽविद्यामुपासते ।
ततो भूय इव ते तमो य उ विद्यायां रताः ॥ ९ ॥

अन्यदेवाहुर्विद्यया अन्यदाहुरविद्यया ।
इति शुश्रुम धीराणां ये नस्तद्विचचक्षिरे ॥ १० ॥

विद्यां चाविद्यां च यस्तद्वेदोभयं सह ।
अविद्यया मृत्युं तीर्त्वा विद्यया अमृतमश्नुते ॥ ११ ॥

अन्धं तमः प्रविशन्ति येऽसम्भूतिमुपासते ।
ततो भूय इव ते तमो य उ सम्भूत्यां रताः ॥ १२ ॥

अन्यदेवाहुः सम्भवात् अन्यदाहुरसम्भवात् ।
इति शुश्रुम धीराणां ये नस्तद्विचचक्षिरे ॥ १३ ॥

सम्भूतिं च विनाशं च यस्तद्वेदोभयं सह ।
विनाशेन मृत्युं तीर्त्वा सम्भूत्या अमृतमश्नुते ॥ १४ ॥

हिरण्मयेन पात्रेण सत्यस्यापिहितं मुखम् ।
तत् त्वं पूषन्नपावृणु सत्यधर्माय दृष्टये ॥ १५ ॥

पूषन्नेकर्षे यम सूर्य प्राजापत्य व्यूह रश्मीन् समूह ।
तेजो यत् ते रूपं कल्याणतमं तत् ते पश्यामि योऽसावसौ पुरुषः सोऽहमस्मि ॥ १६ ॥

वायुरनिलममृतं अथेदं भस्मान्तं शरीरम् ।
ॐ क्रतो स्मर कृतं स्मर क्रतो स्मर कृतं स्मर ॥ १७ ॥

अग्ने नय सुपथा राये अस्मान् विश्वानि देव वयुनानि विद्वान् ।
युयोध्यस्मज्जुहुराणमेनो भूयिष्ठां ते नम उक्तिं विधेम ॥ १८ ॥

# केन उपनिषत्

ॐ सह नाववतु सह नौ भुनक्तु सह वीर्यं करवावहै।
तेजस्विनावधीतमस्तु मा विद्विषावहै॥ ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः॥
ॐ आप्यायन्तु ममांगानि वाक्प्राणश्चक्षुः श्रोत्रं
अथो बलमिन्द्रियाणि च सर्वाणि।
सर्वं ब्रह्मौपनिषदं माहं ब्रह्म निराकुर्यां
मा मा ब्रह्म निराकरोत् अनिराकरणं अस्तु अनिराकरणं मेऽस्तु।
तदात्मनि निरते य उपनिषत्सु धर्माः
ते मयि सन्तु ते मयि सन्तु॥ ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः॥

## प्रथमः खण्डः

केनेषितं पतति प्रेषितं मनः केन प्राणः प्रथमः प्रैति युक्तः।
केनेषितां वाचमिमां वदन्ति चक्षुः श्रोत्रं क उ देवो युनक्ति॥ १॥

श्रोत्रस्य श्रोत्रं मनसो मनो यत्
वाचो ह वाचं स उ प्राणस्य प्राणः।
चक्षुषश्चक्षुः अतिमुच्य धीराः
प्रेत्यास्माल्लोकादमृता भवन्ति॥ २॥

न तत्र चक्षुर्गच्छति न वाग्गच्छति नो मनो
न विद्मो न विजानीमो यथैतदनुशिष्यात्॥ ३॥

अन्यदेव तत् विदितात् अथो अविदितात् अधि।
इति शुश्रुम पूर्वेषां ये नस्तद्व्याचचक्षिरे॥ ४॥

यद्वाचाऽनभ्युदितं येन वागभ्युद्यते।
तदेव ब्रह्म त्वं विद्धि नेदं यदिदमुपासते॥ ५॥

यन्मनसा न मनुते येनाहुर्मनो मतम्।
तदेव ब्रह्म त्वं विद्धि नेदं यदिदमुपासते॥ ६॥

यच्चक्षुषा न पश्यति येन चक्षूंषि पश्यति।
तदेव ब्रह्म त्वं विद्धि नेदं यदिदमुपासते॥ ७॥

यच्छ्रोत्रेण न शृणोति येन श्रोत्रमिदं श्रुतम्।
तदेव ब्रह्म त्वं विद्धि नेदं यदिदमुपासते॥ ८॥

यत्प्राणेन न प्राणिति येन प्राणः प्रणीयते ।
तदेव ब्रह्म त्वं विद्धि नेदं यदिदमुपासते ॥ ९ ॥

## द्वितीयः खण्डः

यदि मन्यसे सुवेदेति दभ्रमेवापि नूनम् ।
त्वं वेत्थ ब्रह्मणो रूपं यदस्य त्वं यदस्य देवेष्वथ नु मीमांस्यमेव ते मन्ये विदितम् ॥ १ ॥

नाहं मन्ये सुवेदेति नो न वेदेति वेद च ।
यो नस्तद्वेद तद्वेद नो न वेदेति वेद च ॥ २ ॥

यस्यामतं तस्य मतं मतं यस्य न वेद सः ।
अविज्ञातं विजानतां विज्ञातं अविजानताम् ॥ ३ ॥

प्रतिबोधविदितं मतं अमृतत्वं हि विन्दते ।
आत्मना विन्दते वीर्यं विद्यया विन्दतेऽमृतम् ॥ ४ ॥

इह चेदवेदीत् अथ सत्यमस्ति
न चेदिहावेदीत् महती विनष्टिः ।
भूतेषु भूतेषु विचित्य धीराः
प्रेत्यास्माल्लोकात् अमृता भवन्ति ॥ ५ ॥

## तृतीयः खण्डः

ब्रह्म ह देवेभ्यो विजिग्ये
तस्य ह ब्रह्मणो विजये देवा अमहीयन्त ।
अत ऐक्षन्त अस्माकमेवायं विजयो
अस्माकमेवायं महिमेति ॥ १ ॥

तद्धैषां विजज्ञौ तेभ्यो ह प्रादुर्बभूव
तन्न व्यजानत किमिदं यक्षमिति ॥ २ ॥

तेऽग्निमब्रुवन् जातवेद एतद्विजानीहि किमेतत् यक्षमिति तथेति ॥ ३ ॥

तदभ्यद्रवत् तमभ्यवदत् कोऽसीति
अग्निर्वा अहमस्मीत्यब्रवीत् जातवेदा वा अहमस्मीति ॥ ४ ॥

तस्मिंस्त्वयि किं वीर्यमिति अपीदं सर्वं दहेयं यदिदं पृथिव्यामिति ॥ ५ ॥

तस्मै तृणं निदधौ एतद्दहेति तदुपप्रेयाय सर्वजवेन तन्न शशाक दग्धुम् ।
स तत एव निववृते नैतदशकं विज्ञातुं यदेतद्यक्षमिति ॥ ६ ॥

अथ वायुमब्रुवन् वायव एतद्विजानीहि किमेतत् यक्षमिति तथेति ॥ ७ ॥

तदभ्यद्रवत् तमभ्यवदत् कोऽसीति वायुर्वा
अहमस्मीत्यब्रवीत् मातरिश्वा वा अहमस्मीति ॥ ८ ॥

तस्मिंस्त्वयि किं वीर्यमिति अपीदं सर्वमादद्यां यदिदं पृथिव्यामिति ॥ ९ ॥

तस्मै तृणं निदधौ एतदादत्स्वेति तदुपप्रेयाय सर्वजवेन तन्न शशाकादातुं
स तत एव निववृते नैतदशकं विज्ञातुं यदेतत् यक्षमिति ॥ १० ॥

अथेन्द्रमब्रुवन् एतद्विजानीहि किमेतत् यक्षमिति
तथेति तदभ्यद्रवत् तस्मात्तिरोदधे ॥ ११ ॥

स तस्मिन्नेवाकाशे स्त्रियमाजगाम
बहुशोभमानां उमां हैमवतीं तां होवाच किमेतत् यक्षमिति ॥ १२ ॥

## चतुर्थः खण्डः

सा ब्रह्मेति होवाच ब्रह्मणो वा एतद्विजये
महीयध्वमिति ततो हैव विदाञ्चकार ब्रह्मेति ॥ १ ॥

तस्माद्वा एते देवा अतितरां इवान्यान्देवान् यदग्निर्वायुरिन्द्रः
ते ह्येनत् नेदिष्ठं पस्पर्शुः ते ह्येनत्प्रथमो विदाञ्चकार ब्रह्मेति ॥ २ ॥

तस्माद्वा इन्द्रोऽतितरां इवान्यान्देवान् स ह्येनन्नेदिष्ठं
पस्पर्श स ह्येनत्प्रथमो विदाञ्चकार ब्रह्मेति ॥ ३ ॥

तस्यैष आदेशो यदेतत् विद्युतो व्यद्युतदा इति
इतीत् न्यमीमिषदा इत्यधिदैवतम् ॥ ४ ॥

अथाध्यात्मं यदेतत् गच्छतीव च मनो अनेन
चैतदुपस्मरति अभीक्ष्णं सङ्कल्पः ॥ ५ ॥

तद्ध तद्वनं नाम तद्वनमित्युपासितव्यं स य एतदेवं
वेद अभिहैनं सर्वाणि भूतानि संवाञ्छन्ति ॥ ६ ॥

उपनिषदं भो ब्रूहीति उक्ता त उपनिषद्
ब्राह्मीं वाव त उपनिषदं ब्रूमेति ॥ ७ ॥

तस्यै तपो दमः कर्मेति प्रतिष्ठा वेदाः
सर्वाङ्गानि सत्यमायतनम् ॥ ८ ॥

यो वा एतामेवं वेद अपहत्य पाप्मानं अनन्ते स्वर्गे
लोके ज्येये प्रतितिष्ठति प्रतितिष्ठति ॥ ९ ॥

# कठ उपनिषत्

ॐ सह नाववतु सह नौ भुनक्तु सह वीर्यं करवावहै ।
तेजस्वि नावधीतमस्तु मा विद्विषावहै ॥ ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ॥

## प्रथमा वल्ली

उशन्ह वै वाजश्रवसः सर्ववेदसं ददौ ।
तस्य ह नचिकेता नाम पुत्र आस ॥ १ ॥

तं ह कुमारं सन्तं दक्षिणासु नीय-
मानासु श्रद्धाऽऽविवेश सोऽमन्यत ॥ २ ॥

पीतोदका जग्धतृणा दुग्धदोहा निरिन्द्रियाः ।
अनन्दा नाम ते लोकास्तान्स गच्छति ता ददत् ॥ ३ ॥

स होवाच पितरं तत कस्मै मां दास्यसीति ।
द्वितीयं तृतीयं तं होवाच मृत्यवे त्वा ददामीति ॥ ४ ॥

बहूनामेमि प्रथमो बहूनामेमि मध्यमः ।
किस्विद्यमस्य कर्त्तव्यं यन्मयाऽद्य करिष्यति ॥ ५ ॥

अनुपश्य यथा पूर्वे प्रतिपश्य तथाऽपरे ।
सस्यमिव मर्त्यः पच्यते सस्यमिवाजायते पुनः ॥ ६ ॥

वैश्वानरः प्रविशत्यतिथिर्ब्राह्मणो गृहान् ।
तस्यैता शान्तिं कुर्वन्ति हर वैवस्वतोदकम् ॥ ७ ॥

आशाप्रतीक्षे सङ्गतं सूनृतां चेष्टापूर्ते पुत्रपशूंश्च सर्वान् ।
एतद्वृङ्क्ते पुरुषस्याल्पमेधसो यस्यानश्नन्वसति ब्राह्मणो गृहे ॥ ८ ॥

तिस्रो रात्रीर्यदवात्सीर्गृहे मे अनश्नन्ब्रह्मन्नतिथिर्नमस्यः ।
नमस्तेऽस्तु ब्रह्मन्स्वस्ति मेऽस्तु तस्मात्प्रति त्रीन्वरान्वृणीष्व ॥ ९ ॥

शान्तसङ्कल्पः सुमना यथा स्यात् वीतमन्युर्गौतमो माऽभि मृत्यो ।
त्वत्प्रसृष्टं माऽभिवदेत्प्रतीत एतत्त्रयाणां प्रथमं वरं वृणे ॥ १० ॥

यथा पुरस्ताद्भविता प्रतीत औद्दालकिरारुणिर्मत्प्रसृष्टः ।
सुखं रात्रीः शयिता वीतमन्युः त्वां ददृशिवान् मृत्युमुखात्प्रमुक्तम् ॥ ११ ॥

स्वर्गे लोके न भयं किञ्चनास्ति न तत्र त्वं न जरया बिभेति ।
उभे तीर्त्वाऽशनायापिपासे शोकातिगो मोदते स्वर्गलोके ॥ १२ ॥

स त्वमग्निं स्वर्ग्यमध्येषि मृत्यो प्रब्रूहि त्वं श्रद्दधानाय मह्यम् ।
स्वर्गलोका अमृतत्वं भजन्त एतद् द्वितीयेन वृणे वरेण ॥ १३ ॥

प्र ते ब्रवीमि तदु मे निबोध स्वर्ग्यमग्निं नचिकेतः प्रजानन्।
अनन्तलोकाप्तिमथो प्रतिष्ठां विद्धि त्वमेतं निहितं गुहायाम् ॥ १४ ॥

लोकादिमग्निं तमुवाच तस्मै या इष्टका यावतीर्वा यथा वा।
स चापि तत्प्रत्यवदद् यथोक्तं अथास्य मृत्युः पुनरेवाह तुष्टः ॥ १५ ॥

तमब्रवीत् प्रीयमाणो महात्मा वरं तवेहाद्य ददामि भूयः।
तवैव नाम्ना भविताऽयमग्निः सृङ्कां चेमामनेकरूपां गृहाण ॥ १६ ॥

त्रिणाचिकेतस्त्रिभिरेत्य सन्धिं त्रिकर्मकृत्तरति जन्ममृत्यू।
ब्रह्मजज्ञं देवमीड्यं विदित्वा निचाय्येमां शान्तिमत्यन्तमेति ॥ १७ ॥

त्रिणाचिकेतस्त्रयमेतद्विदित्वा य एवं विद्वान् चिनुते नाचिकेतम्।
स मृत्युपाशान्पुरतः प्रणोद्य शोकातिगो मोदते स्वर्गलोके ॥ १८ ॥

एष तेऽग्निर्नचिकेतः स्वर्ग्यो यमवृणीथा द्वितीयेन वरेण।
एतमग्निं तवैव प्रवक्ष्यन्ति जनासः तृतीयं वरं नचिकेतो वृणीष्व ॥ १९ ॥

येयं प्रेते विचिकित्सा मनुष्ये अस्तीत्येके नायमस्तीति चैके।
एतद्विद्यामनुशिष्टस्त्वयाऽहं वराणामेष वरस्तृतीयः ॥ २० ॥

देवैरत्रापि विचिकित्सितं पुरा न हि सुज्ञेयमणुरेष धर्मः।
अन्यं वरं नचिकेतो वृणीष्व मा मोपरोत्सीः अति मा सृजैनम् ॥ २१ ॥

देवैरत्रापि विचिकित्सितं किल त्वं च मृत्यो यन्न सुज्ञेयमात्थ।
वक्ता चास्य त्वादृगन्यो न लभ्यो नान्यो वरस्तुल्य एतस्य कश्चित् ॥ २२ ॥

शतायुषः पुत्रपौत्रान्वृणीष्व बहून्पशून्हस्तिहिरण्यमश्वान्।
भूमेर्महदायतनं वृणीष्व स्वयं च जीव शरदो यावदिच्छसि ॥ २३ ॥

एतत्तुल्यं यदि मन्यसे वरं वृणीष्व वित्तं चिरजीविकां च।
महाभूमौ नचिकेतस्त्वमेधि कामानां त्वा कामभाजं करोमि ॥ २४ ॥

ये ये कामा दुर्लभा मर्त्यलोके सर्वान्कामान् छन्दतः प्रार्थयस्व।
इमा रामाः सरथाः सतूर्या न हीदृशा लम्भनीया मनुष्यैः।
आभिर्मत्प्रत्ताभिः परिचारयस्व नचिकेतो मरणं माऽनुप्राक्षीः ॥ २५ ॥

श्वोभावा मर्त्यस्य यदन्तकैतत् सर्वेन्द्रियाणां जरयन्ति तेजः।
अपि सर्वं जीवितमल्पमेव तवैव वाहास्तव नृत्यगीते ॥ २६ ॥

न वित्तेन तर्पणीयो मनुष्यो लप्स्यामहे वित्तमद्राक्ष्म चेत्त्वा।
जीविष्यामो यावदीशिष्यसि त्वं वरस्तु मे वरणीयः स एव ॥ २७ ॥

अधीर्वेतामनुतानामुपेत्य जीर्यन्मर्त्यः क्वधःस्थः प्रजानन्।
अभिध्यायन् वर्णरतिप्रमोदान् अतिदीर्घे जीविते को रमेत॥ २८॥

यस्मिन्निदं विचिकित्सन्ति मृत्यो यत्साम्पराये महति ब्रूहि नस्तत्।
योऽयं वरो गूढमनुप्रविष्टो नान्यं तस्मान्नचिकेता वृणीते॥ २९॥

## द्वितीया वल्ली

अन्यत् श्रेयो अन्यदुतैव प्रेयः ते उभे नानार्थे पुरुषं सिनीतः।
तयोः श्रेय आददानस्य साधु भवति हीयतेऽर्थाद् उ प्रेयो वृणीते॥ १॥

श्रेयश्च प्रेयश्च मनुष्यमेतः तौ संपरीत्य विविनक्ति धीरः।
श्रेयो हि धीरोऽभिप्रेयसो वृणीते प्रेयो मन्दो योगक्षेमाद्वृणीते॥ २॥

स त्वं प्रियान् प्रियरूपांश्च कामान् अभिध्यायन्नचिकेतोऽत्यस्राक्षीः।
नैतां सृङ्कां वित्तमयीमवाप्तो यस्यां मज्जन्ति बहवो मनुष्याः॥ ३॥

दूरमेते विपरीते विषूची अविद्या या च विद्येति ज्ञाता।
विद्याभीप्सिनं नचिकेतसं मन्ये न त्वा कामा बहवोऽलोलुपन्त॥ ४॥

अविद्यायामन्तरे वर्तमानाः स्वयं धीराः पण्डितं मन्यमानाः।
दन्द्रम्यमाणाः परियन्ति मूढा अन्धेनैव नीयमाना यथान्धाः॥ ५॥

न साम्परायः प्रतिभाति बालं प्रमाद्यन्तं वित्तमोहेन मूढम्।
अयं लोको नास्ति पर इति मानी पुनः पुनर्वशमापद्यते मे॥ ६॥

श्रवणायापि बहुभिर्यो न लभ्यः शृण्वन्तोऽपि बहवो यं न विद्युः।
आश्चर्यो वक्ता कुशलोऽस्य लब्धा आश्चर्यो ज्ञाता कुशलानुशिष्टः॥ ७॥

न नरेणावरेण प्रोक्त एष सुविज्ञेयो बहुधा चिन्त्यमानः।
अनन्यप्रोक्ते गतिरत्र नास्ति अणीयान्ह्यतर्क्यमणुप्रमाणात्॥ ८॥

नैषा तर्केण मतिरापनेया प्रोक्ताऽन्येनैव सुज्ञानाय प्रेष्ठ।
यां त्वमापः सत्यधृतिर्बतासि त्वादृङ्नो भूयान्नचिकेतः प्रष्टा॥ ९॥

जानाम्यहं शेवधिरित्यनित्यं न ह्यध्रुवैः प्राप्यते हि ध्रुवं तत्।
ततो मया नाचिकेतश्चितोऽग्निरनित्यैर्द्रव्यैः प्राप्तवानस्मि नित्यम्॥ १०॥

कामस्याप्तिं जगतः प्रतिष्ठां क्रतोरनन्त्यं अभयस्य पारम्।
स्तोमं महदुरुगायं प्रतिष्ठां दृष्ट्वा धृत्या धीरो नचिकेतोऽत्यस्राक्षीः॥ ११॥

तं दुर्दर्शं गूढमनुप्रविष्टं गुहाहितं गह्वरेष्ठं पुराणम्।
अध्यात्मयोगाधिगमेन देवं मत्वा धीरो हर्षशोकौ जहाति ॥ १२ ॥

एतच्छ्रुत्वा सम्परिगृह्य मर्त्यः प्रवृह्य धर्म्यमणुमेतमाप्य।
स मोदते मोदनीयं हि लब्ध्वा विवृतं सद्म नचिकेतसं मन्ये ॥ १३ ॥

अन्यत्र धर्मात् अन्यत्राधर्मात् अन्यत्रास्मात्कृताकृतात्।
अन्यत्र भूताच्च भव्याच्च यत्तत्पश्यसि तद्वद ॥ १४ ॥

सर्वे वेदा यत्पदमामनन्ति तपांसि सर्वाणि च यद्वदन्ति।
यदिच्छन्तो ब्रह्मचर्यं चरन्ति तत्ते पदं संग्रहेण ब्रवीमि ओं इत्येतत् ॥ १५ ॥

एतद्ध्येवाक्षरं ब्रह्म एतद्ध्येवाक्षरं परम्।
एतद्ध्येवाक्षरं ज्ञात्वा यो यदिच्छति तस्य तत् ॥ १६ ॥

एतदालम्बनं श्रेष्ठं एतदालम्बनं परम्।
एतदालम्बनं ज्ञात्वा ब्रह्मलोके महीयते ॥ १७ ॥

न जायते म्रियते वा विपश्चित् नायं कुतश्चिन्न बभूव कश्चित्।
अजो नित्यः शाश्वतोऽयं पुराणो न हन्यते हन्यमाने शरीरे ॥ १८ ॥

हन्ता चेन्मन्यते हन्तुं हतश्चेन्मन्यते हतम्।
उभौ तौ न विजानीतो नायं हन्ति न हन्यते ॥ १९ ॥

अणोरणीयान् महतो महीयान् आत्मास्य जन्तोर्निहितो गुहायाम्।
तमक्रतुः पश्यति वीतशोको धातुः प्रसादात् महिमानमात्मनः ॥ २० ॥

आसीनो दूरं व्रजति शयानो याति सर्वतः।
कस्तं मदामदं देवं मदन्यो ज्ञातुमर्हति ॥ २१ ॥

अशरीरं शरीरेषु अनवस्थेष्ववस्थितम्।
महान्तं विभुमात्मानं मत्वा धीरो न शोचति ॥ २२ ॥

नायमात्मा प्रवचनेन लभ्यो न मेधया न बहुना श्रुतेन।
यमेवैष वृणुते तेन लभ्यः तस्यैष आत्मा विवृणुते तनूं स्वाम् ॥ २३ ॥

नाविरतो दुश्चरितात् नाशान्तो नासमाहितः।
नाशान्तमानसो वाऽपि प्रज्ञानेनैनमाप्नुयात् ॥ २४ ॥

यस्य ब्रह्म च क्षत्रं च उभे भवत ओदनः।
मृत्युर्यस्योपसेचनं क इत्था वेद यत्र सः ॥ २५ ॥

## तृतीया वल्ली

ऋतं पिबन्तौ सुकृतस्य लोके गुहां प्रविष्टौ परमे परार्धे।
छायातपौ ब्रह्मविदो वदन्ति पञ्चाग्नयो ये च त्रिणाचिकेताः ॥ १ ॥

यः सेतुरीजानानां अक्षरं ब्रह्म यत्परम्।
अभयं तितीर्षतां पारं नाचिकेतं शकेमहि ॥ २ ॥

आत्मानं रथिनं विद्धि शरीरं रथमेव तु।
बुद्धिं तु सारथिं विद्धि मनः प्रग्रहमेव च ॥ ३ ॥

इन्द्रियाणि हयानाहुः विषयान् तेषु गोचरान्।
आत्मेन्द्रियमनोयुक्तं भोक्तेत्याहुर्मनीषिणः ॥ ४ ॥

यस्त्वविज्ञानवान् भवति अयुक्तेन मनसा सदा।
तस्येन्द्रियाण्यवश्यानि दुष्टाश्वा इव सारथेः ॥ ५ ॥

यस्तु विज्ञानवान्भवति युक्तेन मनसा सदा।
तस्येन्द्रियाणि वश्यानि सदश्वा इव सारथेः ॥ ६ ॥

यस्त्वविज्ञानवान्भवति अमनस्कः सदाऽशुचिः।
न स तत्पदमाप्नोति संसारं चाधिगच्छति ॥ ७ ॥

यस्तु विज्ञानवान्भवति समनस्कः सदा शुचिः।
स तु तत्पदमाप्नोति यस्मात् भूयो न जायते ॥ ८ ॥

विज्ञानसारथिर्यस्तु मनःप्रग्रहवान्नरः।
सोऽध्वनः पारमाप्नोति तद्विष्णोः परमं पदम् ॥

इन्द्रियेभ्यः परा ह्यर्था अर्थेभ्यश्च परं मनः।
मनसस्तु परा बुद्धिः बुद्धेरात्मा महान्परः ॥ १० ॥

महतः परमव्यक्तं अव्यक्तात् पुरुषः परः।
पुरुषान्न परं किञ्चित् सा काष्ठा सा परा गतिः ॥ ११ ॥

एष सर्वेषु भूतेषु गूढो आत्मा न प्रकाशते।
दृश्यते त्वग्र्यया बुद्ध्या सूक्ष्मया सूक्ष्मदर्शिभिः ॥ १२ ॥

यच्छेद्वाङ्मनसी प्राज्ञः तद्यच्छेज्ज्ञान आत्मनि।
ज्ञानमात्मनि महति नियच्छेत् तद्यच्छेच्छान्त आत्मनि ॥ १३ ॥

उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत।
क्षुरस्य धारा निशिता दुरत्यया दुर्गं पथस्तत्कवयो वदन्ति ॥ १४ ॥

अशब्दमस्पर्शमरूपमव्ययं तथाऽरसं नित्यमगन्धवच्च यत् ।
अनाद्यनन्तं महतः परं ध्रुवं ज्ञात्वा तन्मृत्युमुखात् प्रमुच्यते ॥ १५ ॥

नाचिकेतमुपाख्यानं मृत्युप्रोक्तं सनातनम् ।
उक्त्वा श्रुत्वा च मेधावी ब्रह्मलोके महीयते ॥ १६ ॥

य इमं परमं गुह्यं श्रावयेद्ब्रह्मसंसदि ।
प्रयतः श्राद्धकाले वा तदानन्त्याय कल्पते तदानन्त्याय कल्पत इति ॥ १७ ॥

## चतुर्थी वल्ली

पराञ्चि खानि व्यतृणत् स्वयंभूः तस्मात्पराङ् पश्यति नान्तरात्मन् ।
कश्चिद्धीरः प्रत्यगात्मानमैक्षत् आवृत्तचक्षुरमृतत्वमिच्छन् ॥ १ ॥

पराचः कामाननुयन्ति बालाः ते मृत्योर्यन्ति विततस्य पाशम् ।
अथ धीरा अमृतत्वं विदित्वा ध्रुवमध्रुवेष्विह न प्रार्थयन्ते ॥ २ ॥

येन रूपं रसं गन्धं शब्दान्स्पर्शांश्च मैथुनान् ।
एतेनैव विजानाति किमत्र परिशिष्यते एतद्वै तत् ॥ ३ ॥

स्वप्नान्तं जागरितान्तं चोभौ येनानुपश्यति ।
महान्तं विभुमात्मानं मत्वा धीरो न शोचति ॥ ४ ॥

य इमं मध्वदं वेद आत्मानं जीवमन्तिकात् ।
ईशानं भूतभव्यस्य न ततो विजुगुप्सते एतद्वै तत् ॥ ५ ॥

यः पूर्वं तपसो जातं अद्भ्यः पूर्वमजायत ।
गुहां प्रविश्य तिष्ठन्तं यो भूतेभिर्व्यपश्यत एतद्वै तत् ॥६ ॥

या प्राणेन सम्भवत्यदितिर्देवतामयी ।
गुहां प्रविश्य तिष्ठन्ती या भूतेभिर्व्यजायत एतद्वै तत् ॥ ७ ॥

अरण्योर्निहितो जातवेदा गर्भ इव सुभृतो गर्भिणीभिः ।
दिवे दिव ईड्यो जागृवद्भिर्हविष्मद्भिर्मनुष्येभिरग्निः एतद्वै तत् ॥ ८ ॥

यतश्चोदेति सूर्योऽस्तं यत्र च गच्छति ।
तं देवाः सर्वे अर्पिताः तदु नात्येति कश्चन एतद्वै तत् ॥ ९ ॥

यदेवेह तदमुत्र यदमुत्र तदन्विह ।
मृत्योः स मृत्युमाप्नोति य इह नानेव पश्यति ॥ १० ॥

मनसैवेदमाप्तव्यं नेह नानास्ति किञ्चन ।
मृत्योः स मृत्युं गच्छति य इह नानेव पश्यति ॥ ११ ॥

अङ्गुष्ठमात्रः पुरुषो मध्य आत्मनि तिष्ठति ।
ईशानो भूतभव्यस्य न ततो विजुगुप्सते एतद्वै तत् ॥ १२ ॥

अङ्गुष्ठमात्रः पुरुषो ज्योतिरिवाधूमकः ।
ईशानो भूतभव्यस्य स एवाद्य स उ श्वः एतद्वै तत् ॥ १३ ॥

यथोदकं दुर्गे वृष्टं पर्वतेषु विधावति ।
एवं धर्मान् पृथक्पश्यन् तानेवानुविधावति ॥ १४ ॥

यथोदकं शुद्धे शुद्धमासिक्तं तादृगेव भवति ।
एवं मुनेर्विजानत आत्मा भवति गौतम ॥ १५ ॥

## पंचमी वल्ली

पुरमेकादशद्वारं अजस्यावक्रचेतसः ।
अनुष्ठाय न शोचति विमुक्तश्च विमुच्यते एतद्वै तत् ॥ १ ॥

हंसः शुचिषद्वसुरन्तरिक्षसत् होता वेदिषत् अतिथिर्दुरोणसत् ।
नृषद्वरसदृतसद्व्योमसत् अब्जा गोजा ऋतजा अद्रिजा ऋतं बृहत् ॥ २ ॥

ऊर्ध्वं प्राणमुन्नयत्यपानं प्रत्यगस्यति ।
मध्ये वामनमासीनं विश्वे देवा उपासते ॥ ३ ॥

अस्य विस्रंसमानस्य शरीरस्थस्य देहिनः ।
देहाद्विमुच्यमानस्य किमत्र परिशिष्यते एतद्वै तत् ॥ ४ ॥

न प्राणेन नापानेन मर्त्यो जीवति कश्चन ।
इतरेण तु जीवन्ति यस्मिन्नेतावुपाश्रितौ ॥ ५ ॥

हन्त त इदं प्रवक्ष्यामि गुह्यं ब्रह्म सनातनम् ।
यथा च मरणं प्राप्य आत्मा भवति गौतम ॥ ६ ॥

योनिमन्ये प्रपद्यन्ते शरीरत्वाय देहिनः ।
स्थाणुमन्येऽनुसंयन्ति यथाकर्म यथाश्रुतम् ॥ ७ ॥

य एष सुप्तेषु जागर्ति कामं कामं पुरुषो निर्मिमाणः ।
तदेव शुक्रं तद्ब्रह्म तदेवामृतमुच्यते ।
तस्मिंल्लोकाः श्रिताः सर्वे तदु नात्येति कश्चन एतद्वै तत् ॥ ८ ॥

अग्निर्यथैको भुवनं प्रविष्टो रूपं रूपं प्रतिरूपो बभूव।
एकस्तथा सर्वभूतान्तरात्मा रूपं रूपं प्रतिरूपो बहिश्च ॥ ९ ॥

वायुर्यथैको भुवनं प्रविष्टो रूपं रूपं प्रतिरूपो बभूव।
एकस्तथा सर्वभूतान्तरात्मा रूपं रूपं प्रतिरूपो बहिश्च ॥ १० ॥

सूर्यो यथा सर्वलोकस्य चक्षुः न लिप्यते चाक्षुषैर्बाह्यदोषैः।
एकस्तथा सर्वभूतान्तरात्मा न लिप्यते लोकदुःखेन बाह्यः ॥ ११ ॥

एको वशी सर्वभूतान्तरात्मा एकं रूपं बहुधा यः करोति।
तमात्मस्थं येऽनुपश्यन्ति धीराः तेषां सुखं शाश्वतं नेतरेषाम् ॥ १२ ॥

नित्योऽनित्यानां चेतनश्चेतनानां एको बहूनां यो विदधाति कामान्।
तमात्मस्थं येऽनुपश्यन्ति धीराः तेषां शान्तिः शाश्वती नेतरेषाम् ॥ १३ ॥

तदेतदिति मन्यन्ते अनिर्देश्यं परमं सुखम्।
कथं नु तद्विजानीयां किमु भाति विभाति वा ॥ १४ ॥

न तत्र सूर्यो भाति न चन्द्रतारकं नेमा विद्युतो भान्ति कुतोऽयमग्निः।
तमेव भान्तं अनुभाति सर्वं तस्य भासा सर्वमिदं विभाति ॥ १५ ॥

## षष्ठी वल्ली

ऊर्ध्वमूलोऽवाक्शाख एषोऽश्वत्थः सनातनः।
तदेव शुक्रं तद्ब्रह्म तदेवामृतमुच्यते।
तस्मिन् लोकाः श्रिताः सर्वे तदु नात्येति कश्चन एतद्वै तत् ॥ १ ॥

यदिदं किञ्च जगत्सर्वं प्राण एजति निःसृतम्।
महद्भयं वज्रमुद्यतं य एतद्विदुरमृतास्ते भवन्ति ॥ २ ॥

भयादस्याग्निस्तपति भयात्तपति सूर्यः।
भयादिन्द्रश्च वायुश्च मृत्युर्धावति पञ्चमः ॥ ३ ॥

इह चेदशकद्बोद्धुं प्राक्शरीरस्य विस्रसः।
ततः सर्गेषु लोकेषु शरीरत्वाय कल्पते ॥ ४ ॥

यथाऽऽदर्शे तथाऽऽत्मनि यथा स्वप्ने तथा पितृलोके।
यथाप्सु परीव ददृशे तथा गन्धर्वलोके छायातपयोरिव ब्रह्मलोके ॥ ५ ॥

इन्द्रियाणां पृथग्भावं उदयास्तमयौ च तत्।
पृथगुत्पद्यमानानां मत्वा धीरो न शोचति ॥ ६ ॥

इन्द्रियेभ्यः परं मनो मनसः सत्त्वमुत्तमम् ।
सत्त्वादधि महानात्मा महतोऽव्यक्तमुत्तमम् ॥ ७ ॥

अव्यक्तात्तु परः पुरुषो व्यापकोऽलिङ्ग एव च ।
यं ज्ञात्वा मुच्यते जन्तुः अमृतत्वं च गच्छति ॥ ८ ॥

न सन्दृशे तिष्ठति रूपमस्य न चक्षुषा पश्यति कश्चनैनम् ।
हृदा मनीषा मनसाऽभिक्लृप्तो य एतद्विदुरमृतास्ते भवन्ति ॥ ९ ॥

यदा पञ्चावतिष्ठन्ते ज्ञानानि मनसा सह ।
बुद्धिश्च न विचेष्टते तामाहुः परमां गतिम् ॥ १० ॥

तां योगमिति मन्यन्ते स्थिरामिन्द्रियधारणाम् ।
अप्रमत्तस्तदा भवति योगो हि प्रभवाप्ययौ ॥ ११ ॥

नैव वाचा न मनसा प्राप्तुं शक्यो न चक्षुषा ।
अस्तीति ब्रुवतोऽन्यत्र कथं तदुपलभ्यते ॥ १२ ॥

अस्तीत्येवोपलब्धव्यः तत्त्वभावेन चोभयोः ।
अस्तीत्येवोपलब्धस्य तत्त्वभावः प्रसीदति ॥ १३ ॥

यदा सर्वे प्रमुच्यन्ते कामा येऽस्य हृदि श्रिताः ।
अथ मर्त्योऽमृतो भवति अत्र ब्रह्म समश्नुते ॥ १४ ॥

यदा सर्वे प्रभिद्यन्ते हृदयस्येह ग्रन्थयः ।
अथ मर्त्योऽमृतो भवति एतावदनुशासनम् ॥ १५ ॥

शतं चैका च हृदयस्य नाड्यः तासां मूर्धानमभिनिःसृतैका ।
तयोर्ध्वमायन्नमृतत्वमेति विष्वङ्ङन्या उत्क्रमणे भवन्ति ॥ १६ ॥

अङ्गुष्ठमात्रः पुरुषोऽन्तरात्मा सदा जनानां हृदये सन्निविष्टः ।
तं स्वाच्छरीरात्प्रवृहेत् मुञ्जादिवेषीकां धैर्येण ।
तं विद्यात् शुक्रममृतं तं विद्यात् शुक्रममृतमिति ॥ १७ ॥

मृत्युप्रोक्तां नाचिकेतोऽथ लब्ध्वा विद्यामेतां योगविधिं च कृत्स्नम् ।
ब्रह्मप्राप्तो विरजोऽभूद्विमृत्युः अन्योऽप्येवं यो विदध्यात्ममेवम् ॥ १८ ॥

# APPENDIX II

## VEDĀNTA AND MODERN SCIENCE

*Correspondence between*
*Sir Julian Huxley and Swami Ranganathananda*
*on The Message of the Upaniṣads*

We are glad to publish herewith the correspondence between Sir Julian Huxley, the noted biologist and humanist, and Swami Ranganathananda on the subject of the Swami's book *The Message of the Upaniṣads.*

We hope the letters, most of which were exchanged through the kind help of Mr. G.F., an English friend of the Swami, who prefers to remain in the background, and which contain critical comments by an eminent scientist and detailed clarifications by the Swami on several points arising from the latter's exposition of the Upanishads, will be of great interest to the readers.

We are thankful to Sir Julian, Mr. G.F., and the Swami, for their kind permission to publish this correspondence.

*PUBLISHERS*

31 Pond Street,
Hampstead,
London, N.W. 3.
June 12, 1970.

To:
Mr. G.F.,
Surrey, England.

Dear Mr. G.F.,

I have now read Swami Ranganathananda's book with interest. Please thank him from me for sending it to me. I agree that the Upaniṣads are remarkable achievements considering the date of their composition—though we must remember that the prophets of the Old Testament were writing—or rather preaching—equally surprising ideas or doctrines at about the same period.

I must add, however, that I fail to understand some of the points made in the Upaniṣads, e.g., right at the outset (p. 1 of the *Message*) the phrase 'the spiritual unity and solidarity of all existence' is, to me, meaningless and on p. 2 (of the *Message*) 'reality' is not 'changeless'. Both external reality, individual subjective reality, and social (cultural) reality all are subject to change, and evolve. In my *Essays of a Humanist* and in my book on *Evolution, a Modern Synthesis*, I have tried to set forth the modes, methods, and main trends of evolution in its various aspects.

P. 19, the Swami speaks of *active* (Indian) *tolerance*. Is he not forgetting the terrible intolerance between Hindu and Muslim, which resulted in hundreds of thousands of deaths, especially at the time of Partition? Again on page 304, the Upaniṣads rightly speak of the *delusion of wealth*. But the Swami does not point out the present misery and poverty, which besets the majority of present-day Indians, whatever their religion.

Coming back to tolerance, the Swami makes no comment on the gross intolerance of the caste system. See also p. 481 (of the *Message*) which seems to contradict all ideas of superior and inferior castes—was this not set up by the ruling class of the Indo-Aryan invaders, some of whom, I presume, wrote the Upaniṣads?

P. 308, para 1 (of the *Message*), the Swami says that 'the conquering of the inner man' etc. belong entirely to religion. This simply is not true. Many atheists and agnostics have a well-developed *morality*—e.g. my own grandfather T.H. Huxley.

P. 314 (of the *Message*), I simply don't understand what is meant by 'the truth of survival' of the human personality. This is a hypothesis, which various religions have sought to establish as a certainty—even proclaimed as 'certainty'—but no one (including the spiritualists) has succeeded in establishing it as a fact. I, like many others, would *like* it to be true, but there is no proof.

As for *reincarnation*, p. 313 (of the *Message*), not only is there no proof of this, but the facts of genetics make it impossible—at least for me. This is not *materialism*—man, like every other animal, certainly every other higher vertebrate animal, has both material and mental (subjective) capacities.

The Swami must excuse these critical comments. I assure him that I am much impressed with his general exposition of the Upanishads and the way in which they anticipate many psychological discoveries of our own time.

In many ways, the Swami's ideas come closer to those of my brother Aldous (alas, now dead and so prematurely, of cancer)—a terrible example of the powers of the material fact of over-multiplication of diseased cells and its power to destroy the psycho-physical entity we call a human being—hope the Swami knows of Aldous's book *The Doors of Perception*—a remarkable demonstration of the capacity of the conjoined psycho-physical creature we call man to transcend itself and achieve new and more meaningful experience.

Please thank the Swami again for sending me his book—though, as you see, I am critical of certain points in it, it has given me new knowledge and understanding of various aspects of human nature—I wish it had been equally illuminating about non-human nature. But perhaps we may expect something on this subject from the Swami in later years.

Yours sincerely,

JULIAN HUXLEY

comments on reading my book *The Message of the Upanisads* which Mr. G.F. had presented to you on my behalf. He has also sent me copy of his letter to you dated 14 June 1970, in which he has written: 'Your comments are thought-stimulating and I am forwarding them on to Swami Ranganathananda in India who is sure to appreciate your attitude.... Unless he is again lecturing somewhere abroad, he should be replying before long.'

These letters were awaiting my return here on 19 July from my 45-day lecture tour of Geneva, France, Belgium, Holland, Yugoslavia, and Greece, followed by a 60-day lecture tour of Uttarapradesh, Bombay, and Madras states in India. Hence the delay in sending a reply to your kind letter, clarifying the points raised in your critical comments, for which please excuse.

I have read your letter with deep interest and with all the respect which I have always felt for the great scientist and humanist that you are. I am thankful to you for your appreciation of and critical comments on my *Message of the Upanisads* conveyed in your letter of 12 June 1970 to Mr. G.F. You have kindly written there:

'I have now read Swami Ranganathananda's book with interest.... I agree that the Upanisads are remarkable achievements....'

And then after your critical comments, which I have tried to clarify in this letter, you have added:

'The Swami must excuse these critical comments. I assure him that I am much impressed with his general exposition of the Upanisads and the way in which they anticipate many psychological discoveries of our own time.... Though ... I am critical of certain points in it, it has given me new knowledge and understanding of various aspects of human nature...'

While deeply appreciating and valuing your words of appreciation, I am more grateful to you for your critical comments. When our quest is truth and the happiness and welfare and fulfilment of man, and not the projection of a dogma or the aggrandizing of a group, critical comments from competent thinkers become more stimulating and illuminating than hearty acceptance by all the rest.

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You will be glad to know that your friend, astronomer Harlow Shapley of Harvard University, had visited me in Delhi some years ago. I tried to meet him in Boston last year but learnt from his son and daughter-in-law that he was sick and in a hospital. I hope he is well now. He is a charming personality.

I am routing this letter through Mr. G.F. with a view to ensuring that it reaches you wherever you be.

This Advaita Ashrama publishes a monthly cultural, philosophical, and spiritual journal: *The Prabuddha Bhārata* (The Awakened India) It was started by Swami Vivekananda 75 years ago with its editorial office high up in Māyāvati, Himālayas, which was sponsored by an English student of Vivekananda, Captain J.H. Sevier (and Mrs. Sevier) The July 1970 issue of the journal carries an article 'A Traveller looks at the World'. It is the first instalment of an interview which the Editor had with me on my impressions of my 18-month lecture tour of U.S.A. and 24 other countries in 1968-69 and which will appear in the subsequent three or four issues. This Ashrama has sent you by surface mail 3 days ago the July and August issues. Other issues also will be sent in due course. I hope you will find the journal interesting. The pages of clarification follow as continuation of this letter.

I shall be glad to hear from you at your leisure. In the meantime, please accept my love and good wishes and convey the same to Lady Huxley. Hope this will find you both fine.

Yours sincerely,

RANGANATHANANDA

It is not easy to deal adequately with your comments in a mere letter. I shall, however, try to do so item by item:

(1) You have said at the outset that the phrase on page 1 of the *Message*: 'the spiritual unity and solidarity of all existence' is, to you, meaningless.

In this, speaking as a biologist as you do, I fully agree with you. It is meaningless. It is not the conclusion of science in its department of biology; though I am not so sure that you will disagree if that statement of unity and solidarity was confined only to the world of biological phenomena. Each department of sci-

ence, in forging ahead in its study of relevant phenomena, aims at, and often succeeds in achieving, a reduction of its bewildering multiplicity to orderly unity. In discovering linkages in organic nature, biology is tracing this unity. This process, with respect to one of the sciences, namely, the science of physics, I have referred to on pages 110-11 of the *Message*. Physics also aims to discover, and has progressed far in discovering, an element of unity behind the multiplicity of entities and energies it was initially confronted with.

No particular department of science, it is obvious, is competent to pronounce judgement as to the nature of reality that lies behind *all orders* or *fields* of phenomena, namely, physical, biological, mental, aesthetic, and ethical, or even whether there is such a basic reality at all.

But nature is one and we cut it up into various fields and departments only for convenience of study and research. So the conclusions in each field should be treated as relevant to that field only and only provisional with respect to nature as a whole, as also to another sister-field of study. For example, biology, though based on physics and chemistry, does not accept *their conclusions* but arrives at its own conclusions based on the specific orders of facts it is confronted with. Similarly, a scientific view of nature as a whole may be *based* on biology *but will not be wholly bound* by its conclusions; it will arrive at its own conclusions based on the data furnished by other orders of experience also.

One thing, however, is revealed as knowledge advances, and that is, that nature is all differences on the surface but unity at the depths. And this depth-view of nature is what knowledge gains when it moves even from the physical to the biological. As in the case of a particular science there is the steady movement from the particular facts to a synoptic unitary vision, so also at their deepest levels, the various sciences tend to shed their particularities and limitations and merge into a grand science of reality in its totality and unity.

We are today living in such an era of synoptic knowledge-development in the field of pure science. This is what makes this modern quest and development so akin to the ancient Vedānta.

Physics and chemistry reveal nature's outer dimension; biology begins to unfold, as you have shown in your writings, the mystery of nature's inner dimension as evolution proceeds from the cell upwards. Throughout its pre-human stage, that inner dimension reveals itself as psychical, first, rudimentary, later, more clearly expressed. But at the human stage that dimension reveals itself as something more than merely psychical, as something which one may call *spiritual*, for very valid reasons. The spiritual peeps through the merely psychical in human experience. The rest of the story of its investigation and elucidation does not, and cannot, belong to the field of the science of biology, or of any of the other positivistic sciences, but to the science of the study of man in depth, to the science of the nature of consciousness or awareness itself.

This is what Vedānta did; and its methods and results deserve respectful study. Beginning with the multiplicity of consciousness of daily experience, such as your consciousness and my consciousness, Vedāntic inquiry discovered the unity of consciousness, infinite and non-dual, as the true self of man and the reality or stuff of the universe. This it termed Brahman or Ātman, with the warning that it is beyond the grasp of all terms and concepts. I have discussed this subject as best as I could on pp. 410-12 of the *Message*.

The physical universe studied by physics or biology and handled by our daily life is not spirited away by this truth of the self as infinite consciousness. It is only the depth-view of the reality of the universe, gained through a depth-study of its unique product, namely, man. Of this infinite consciousness arising from this depth-view, the universe of physical science and our daily life is, using the language of twentieth-century physics with respect to the world studied by nineteenth-century physics, just a limiting case; it is that same reality, but cut up by the moulds of the senses and the sense-bound mind. It is of course difficult to conceive how pure non-dual consciousness can account for the solids and liquids and gases and other entities and events of the physical world. Well, it cannot be so incomprehensible to modern man who is taught by the sciences that intangible solar energy becomes tangible food and dress and oil and coal etc. of outer nature, on the one side, and the body and its metabolism and the mind etc. of man, on the other, or a microcosmic unit of genetic

matter becomes the highly differentiated but integrated organs and organic processes which is man.

Vedānta holds that in the deepest vision vouchsafed to man, inner nature and outer nature are realised as one and that that one is of the nature of pure consciousness, infinite and non-dual, the Brahman or Ātman, the equivalent of the God of religion and the 'background-stuff' of the universe posited by science.

(2) You have taken exception to the description of reality as 'changeless' as given on page 2 of the *Message*. You say that it is not changeless and add: 'Both external reality, individual subjective reality, and social (cultural) reality, all are subject to change, and evolve. In my *Essays of a Humanist* and in my book on *Evolution, a Modern Synthesis*, I have tried to set forth the modes, methods, and main trends of evolution, in its various aspects.'

Vedānta fully accepts the above three realities as changeful; but Vedānta continued the search for the changeless in the midst of the changeful; that search was first directed to external reality and social (cultural) reality; Vedānta found it difficult to penetrate the crust of change in these fields of reality; investigation revealed only change and more change; in the process, it discovered some of the laws governing these changeful aspects of reality, which are confirmed, and carried to revolutionary proportions in the pure and applied fields, by the modern physical sciences. Then it turned its search-light to the field of individual subjective reality; and *here it registered a tremendous breakthrough which I wish that modern scientific thought will become acquainted with.* In the initial stages of that inquiry, here also it found change reigning supreme at the neurological, psychical, and ego levels. But undaunted, it carried the search beyond these levels—a search and a technique which it later described as 'walking on the edge of a razor' (*Message*, pages 435 to 440). And at the very centre of that individual consciousness, transcending it but sustaining it, it discovered the true Self as the changeless behind the changing, the eternal behind the ephemeral, and the infinite behind the finite, and proclaimed *that* as the true self of man—*tat tvam asi*, 'That Thou Art', as the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* puts it in a cryptic, pregnant phrase, and *Sarvaṁ khalu idaṁ Brahma*, 'All this universe is verily Brahman', as the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* puts it in another similar cryptic utterance.

Pure consciousness is termed *cit* in Vedānta. The Ātman or Brahman is *cit-svarūpa*, the *svarūpa* or 'very nature' of *cit* or pure consciousness. The Ātman or Brahman is also *cit-śakti*, the *śakti* or energy of *cit* or consciousness; and this is the changeful aspect of Reality which reveals itself in the three orders of reality mentioned in your sentence. Brahman, therefore, is change and changelessness, the many and the one, somewhat similar to modern physics describing physical energy as released energy and bottled-up energy. The changeless lies beyond the psychical layer, if one may so put it; the psychical layer and below are all change, are all subject to the limitations of time, space, and causality. What lies above these three limitations is necessarily changeless, and therefore, infinite, and therefore non-dual. The infinite cannot be two; and no terrestrial or celestial object outside, or psychical entity within, can be that infinite. It can only be *cit* or pure consciousness which is described by Vedānta in one of its books thus (cf. *Message*, pages 421-23):

'*Saṁvit* or pure consciousness is one and non-dual, ever self-luminous, and does not rise or set in months and years and aeons, past or future.'

In physics, we can legitimately ask the question: if all matter is nothing but energy, and if that energy is a wave function, of what reality is it the wave function? That background reality must be presumed to exist not only in its changeable aspect as wave function but also in its changeless aspect as itself, like the ocean in which all waves have subsided. Similar is the nature of pure consciousness, says Vedānta, beyond the limitations of name, form, and action, beyond time, space, and causality, and *realized* in the *nirvikalpa samādhi* experience, where the world with its objects and subjects cease to be. That very reality, again, is the universe of name and form, the universe of change, much as twentieth-century physics describes its vision of reality, in the light of Relativity and Quantum, as the unity of space-time, and the universe of experience as events, as *configurations*, of that space-time. The One and the many are *advaita* or non-different.

On pages 342-43 of the *Message*, I have discussed this theme of the changeless subject beyond the changing egos at the core of individual subjective reality, and incidentally quoted physicist Schrödinger's remark on the unity of consciousness:

'Consciousness is never experienced in the plural, only in the singular....Consciousness is a singular of which the plural is unknown....'

This subject of Reality as the changeless in the midst of the changing cannot be approached by a scientist merely as a physicist or a biologist, etc. He has to leave behind his secondary mantle as a physicist or a biologist, but keep on his primary mantle as the seeker of truth in experience, which is the role of science as lucifera, and carry that search to the deepest level of experience itself. Since pure science is the search for truth, Vedānta treats scientific search as spiritual; and when that search is carried to the deepest level of experience, it becomes spiritual search par excellence. This is what makes the sages of the Upaniṣads, Buddha, Jesus, and Ramakrishna, and others, depth scientists whose message has a direct reference to the fundamental enrichment, the root nourishment, of human life, like the nourishment a tree receives from the watering of its roots, unlike all physical sciences as well as politics and economics, the nourishment proceeding from which is necessary but is secondary, like watering the branches, twigs, and leaves of the tree.

(3) You comment: 'on page 19 (of the *Message*), the Swami speaks of *active* (Indian) *tolerance*. Is he not forgetting the terrible intolerance between Hindu and Muslim, which resulted in hundreds of thousands of deaths, especially at the time of Partition?'

I have discussed this subject of inter-religious relations in India on pages 19 to 36 of the *Message*, which you may have missed. On page 24, I have written:

'Christianity in India is practically coeval with Christian history itself. Indian Christian tradition traces the origin of the Christians of Kerala, the south-west state of India, to a visit of St. Thomas, a direct disciple of Jesus Christ, in the first century of the Christian era. From then to this day, Christianity in India, as also Judaism, which also reached Kerala about the same time, followed by Zoroastrianism, which reached Western India eight centuries later, have been protected, cherished, and nourished by the *mother-heart* of Hinduism under the inspiration of the spiritual vision of the Vedāntic sages.'

It is noteworthy that among the dispersed Jews now returning to their new state of Israel after 2000 years, the only group

that has not suffered persecution, torture, pogrom, and contempt is the group from India.

Indian tolerance is the positive product of Indian philosophy and religion. In the field of religion, history shows that India has experienced a measure of tolerance, and that too for thousands of years, unequalled in world history. As Prof. Toynbee has remarked, the Indian religions are not exclusive-minded as the Semetic religions are.

It is also to be noted that during her long history of over five thousand years, during which she had thrown up several vast and powerful empires, India never practised military aggression on countries outside her borders. Her international political, religious, and cultural relations have been uniformly peaceful. But she has often been the victim of outside aggression. These are facts of history.

Intolerance appeared in India in a big way along with the appearance of the Semetic religions, and that too under the most irreligious political auspices of conquest and plunder. Even then, India's religious leaders, both Hindu and Muslim and also Sikh, strove to inject tolerance into the body-politic. The conflicts were essentially political; hence they are called communal conflicts. A few weeks ago the Prime Minister of India, speaking in Mauritius, described the Hindu-Muslim conflicts in India as political and not religious. And the saddest part of it was that, while wise Indians were striving to bring the communities together, the British rulers were always driving the wedge between the communities deeper in the interest of their own self-perpetuation. Tarachand in his *History of the Freedom Movement in India*, quotes the following (Vol. II, pp. 514-15) from the book *Wood Papers*: Wood to Elgin (British Viceroy in India), 3 March 1862:

'"We have maintained our power by playing off one part against the other, and we must continue to do so.... Do what you can, therefore, to prevent all having a common feeling.'

Then, again (*ibid.*, 10 May 1862):

'"I have been always very anxious to avoid any fraternizing and combining amongst the troops. It obviously is a cardinal point in India to keep races and classes so far away from each other as to obviate as far as possible all danger of this kind. Do the ordinary

work of the North-Western provinces with North-Western troops, Punjab ditto, and then have your Punjab troops ready to beat the Eastern with, and your Eastern troops to beat the Sikhs with, if occasion should arise."

"In yet another letter, Wood sagely remarks", continues Tarachand (*ibid.*, 19 May 1862):

'"We cannot afford in India to neglect any means of strengthening our position. Depend upon it, the natural antagonism of races is no inconsiderable element of our strength. If all India was to unite against us, how long could we maintain ourselves?"'

Every nation has some antagonistic groups within itself. Free nations try to reduce such antagonisms by wise religious and political policies. India had always a fair share of such wise leaders —religious and political. And during the last hundred years, she produced a few such leaders of outstanding world stature like Ramakrishna and Vivekananda in religion, Gandhi and Nehru in politics. Gandhi, who succeeded in injecting a high measure of tolerance into the attitude and relationship of the Indian freedom fighters towards their antagonists in the British masters (so that, as American correspondents reported to their papers, British women and children could freely go shopping unmolested and undisturbed during the acute phases of the 1931 Civil Disobedience struggles even while the British police officers were smashing the heads of Indian satyagrahis, men and women), failed in injecting the same into the communal situation—so bad it had grown by the time the British left. And Indian wisdom and its energies, which had the courage to proclaim not a Hindu, but a non-communal secular, constitution for their country even against the challenge of the partition of their country on communal grounds and the violence it let loose, and which are engaged since then in healing the wounds inflicted by the vicissitudes of recent political history by far-seeing policies and measures, deserve understanding, appreciation, and sympathy from scientists and humanists, particularly English, like your eminent self, whatever may be the approach of some of the die-hard politicians in England and elsewhere.

(4) Again, you comment: 'on page 304 (of the *Message*), the Upaniṣads rightly speak of the *delusion of wealth*. But the Swami does not point out the present misery and poverty, which besets the majority of present-day Indians, whatever their religion.'

This observation is not correct. I have discussed this in several places in the *Message of the Upaniṣads*, e.g., pages 146 to 150, and 169 to 172. But, of course, the effort there was to focus attention on the *internal* causes for India's backwardness and on the philosophy which can overcome the same. A little discussion on the *external* causes may be illuminating; and I shall attempt it here.

Many wise thinkers and humanists in England, including your eminent self, do not seem to be aware that mass poverty, which is a stark fact of modern India, is but a recent phenomenon directly traceable to her British connection. Throughout the ages, India was known all over the civilized world for her wealth (according to contemporary standards) and her wisdom. Her people were intelligent, hard-working, and thrifty; her artists and artisans created things of beauty and utility; and they found joy in their work. And India's trade was sought by every contemporary civilization for over 5,000 years. Even in the modern period, the Western Europeans sought India's trade and, in the search for it, discovered also the great continent of America and initially mistook it to be India. In the beginning, it is important to note, this trade started as export of manufactured goods from India to England, besides getting ships of the British mercantile marine and the British navy built in India, since India had a millennia-old tradition of shipbuilding and maritime activity. But from about 1850 A.D., however, this became transformed into import of manufactured goods from Britain to India and export of raw materials from India.

Historians, both British and Indian, have referred to the drain of India's wealth to Britain systematically for over a century and a half, first by *indiscriminate* loot and plunder by the rapacious agents of the East India Company, and later as *organized* loot by manipulation of industrial, fiscal, defence, and other policies by the British Government. Many Indian leaders protested helplessly against this policy of impoverishment of India, which could be traced creeping steadily into the Indian body-politic decade after decade of the British connection.

The centuries-long foreign invasions and foreign rule which India had experienced from the thirteenth to the sixteenth century A.D. had not witnessed this draining away of the life-blood of India. These invasions did dislocate life temporarily, but the wealth produced remained in the country, and life resumed its even tenor

after the immediate crisis was past; and the political disturbances rarely disturbed the peasants and the artisans and the socio-economic system.

But all this changed for the worse with the British advent, so far as the economic conditions of the people were concerned, whatever other benefits that connection may have indirectly conferred on Indian society.

Says Tarachand in his *History of the Freedom Movement in India*, Vol. I, (p. 359):

'The supremacy of India in the industrial field reached its high-watermark towards the end of the seventeenth century when there was a sudden spurt in the demand for Indian cotton goods in England, induced by a remarkable change in English fashions and mode of dress.... Among the ladies there was a craze for Indian chintzes and calicoes. "On a sudden", reports a publication of the early eighteenth century (*A Brief Deduction of the Oriental Progress and Immense Increase in Woollen Manufactures* (London 1727), p. 50, quoted by Thomas, P.J.: *Mercantilism and East India Trade*, p. 26), "we saw all our women, rich and poor, clothed in calico, printed and painted, the gayer and the more tawdry the better".'

Daniel Defoe bewailed the fact that "it (Indian cotton cloth) crept into our houses, our closets, and bed chambers; curtains, cushions, chairs, and at last beds themselves were nothing but calicoes or Indian stuffs", with the result that "almost everything that used to be made of wool or silk, relating either to dress of the women or the furniture of our houses, was supplied by the Indian trade". (*Weekly Review*, January 31, 1708, quoted by Thomas, P.J., *op. cit.* p. 30).

This resulted in the impoverishment of the British weavers who, according to one report, 'were running up and down the nation seeking bread from Canterbury to London, from London to Norwich' (*ibid.*, Thomas, P.J., p. 55). Public finances also suffered because of the decline in revenue and the increase in expenditure on poor relief, for which in a parish like Gloucester, for instance, one-fifth of the whole annual value of land was distributed to the starving poor (*ibid.*, p. 56).

From 1700 onward, curbs began to be put on the Indian imports and a rigid mercantilist policy began to be applied. Mean-

while the cotton industry in England was developing rapidly and became well established by mid-eighteenth century. 'About the excellence of the British Printers,' says Tarachand (*op. cit.*, p. 363), 'it was reserved for the English to attempt the imitation of the best Indian work in prints and to arrive at a degree of perfection which no one would have thought possible' (Baines, *History of Cotton Manufactures*, p. 261).

But in spite of curbs from outside and inside, Indian arts and crafts held their own till about 1810. Then started the steady decay of Indian industry and exports and enormous increase in the exports of British manufactures to India. Within fifty years, India became a big importer of textiles (British), from being for ages its producer and exporter. The ruin of Indian industry proceeded simultaneously with the decline in Indian agriculture and commerce due to political factors beyond her control. At this stage, Britain imposed the free trade policy which helped the rising British industry and tended to ruin the declining Indian industry.

The drain of Indian wealth to Britain took place through various channels. Opinions differ only as to the quantum of this drain but not as to the truth of it. William Digby estimates (*Prosperous British India*, p. 33) 'that probably between (the battle of) Plassey (1757) and Waterloo (1815) a sum of £1000 million was transferred from Indian hoards to English banks'.

'The drain of wealth from India was a contributory factor in the industrial development of England', says Tarachand (*op. cit.*, p. 388) and continues: '...There was, according to the British historians themselves, a close relation between the Industrial Revolution in England and the establishment of British rule in India.' Says Brooks Adams (*The Laws of Civilization and Decay*, pp. 259-60, quoted by Tarachand, *op. cit.*, pp. 388-89):

'"...the influx of the Indian treasure, by adding considerably to the nation's cash capital, not only increased its stock of energy, but added much to its flexibility and the rapidity of its movements.

'"Very soon after Plassey, the Bengal plunder began to arrive in London and the effect appears to have been instantaneous.... Plassey was fought in 1757, and probably nothing has ever equalled the rapidity of the change that followed. In 1760, the flying shuttle appeared, and coal began to replace wood in smelting. In 1764, Hargreaves invented the spinning-jenny, in 1779, Crompton

contrived the mule, in 1785, Cartwright patented the power-loom and, chief of all, in 1768, Watts matured the steam engine.... But though these machines served as outlets for the accelerating movement of time, they did not cause that acceleration. In themselves inventions are passive, many of the most important having lain dormant for centuries, waiting for a sufficient store of force to have accumulated to set them working. That store must always take the shape of money, and money not hoarded but in motion.... Before the influx of the Indian treasure and the expansion of credit which followed, no force sufficient for this purpose existed; and had Watts lived fifty years earlier, he and his inventions must have perished together.

'"Possibly, since the world began, no investment has ever yielded the profit reaped from the Indian plunder, because for nearly fifty years, Great Britain stood without a competitor."'

Tarachand concludes (*op. cit.*, p. 391):

'Over and above this, the British exacted a cruel and unjust annual tribute from India, which prevented any accumulation of capital or improvements in agriculture or industry. The productive organization of India was destroyed and the country, which was once known for its riches all the world over, was reduced to a state of poverty, disease, misery, and starvation.'

After the attainment of political freedom in 1947, India is taking energetic steps to banish this poverty through the rapid spread of education, science, and industry, and also family planning. And there has been impressive progress even during this short period of 22 years. The number of scientific and technical personnel has crossed the million mark already; the measures initiated during this short period bid fair to develop a self-generating energy and capacity for rapid economic growth during the next decade or two. And India is receiving technical and other aids in this work from economically developed countries, including U.K., for which India is deeply grateful to them. It is worthy of notice that India's thinking today is not conditioned by this recent dismal past. Her own understanding of the higher mind of Britain, through which India thinks herself fortunate to have come in touch with the dynamic culture of the modern West, made Dadabhai Naoroji (a Parsi), the most outstanding political thinker and lea-

der of India of the pre-Gandhian period, to title his book on the Indian economic scene as *Poverty and Un-British Rule in India.*

(5) You have commented: 'Coming back to tolerance, the Swami makes no comment on the gross intolerance of the caste system. See also p. 481 (of the *Message*) which seems to contradict all ideas of superior and inferior castes—was this not set up by the ruling class of the Indo-Aryan invaders some of whom, I presume, wrote the Upaniṣads?'

To this comment I can only say that *The Message* was not intended to be a book on sociology or a catalogue to list the evils of Indian or any other society. It expounds a positive philosophy of life, arising from the immortal Upaniṣads and 'in the light of modern thought and modern needs', as its sub-title indicates. Its approach is entirely positive; it is an effort to provide man in the modern age with a light, lit out of his ancient wisdom and modern knowledge, to guide his footsteps in the most difficult period of the modern transition, and not to curse the darkness of his past and present.

I have no apologies for the evils of the caste system or any other evils of the Indian society. Evil is evil, whether national or international, and needs to be identified and combated. It has been my constant effort throughout the book to be objective like a scientist and not partisan like a mere patriot.

On page 114 of the *Message*, you may note, however, that I have deplored the iniquities of the caste system in these words:

'In spite of being the home of Vedānta, India has nursed the delusion of human separateness more than any other country, and she has paid a heavy price for this in centuries of slavery. Swami Vivekananda was deeply pained at this, and he worked energetically to end this state of affairs. His scheme of Practical Vedānta had this end in view.'

It started as a thought-out sociological experiment designed to give a spiritual direction to the entire social process. By placing the *brāhmaṇa*, who is defined in the Upaniṣads as one who has *realized Brahman*, the infinite Self of all, as the ideal man, and not the *vaiśya*, 'the wall-street' millionnaire or the *kṣatriya*, the man of military prowess, the system was meant to lead the common man and woman on the high road of psycho-social and spirit-

ual evolution. Even Buddha, who came later, upheld this *brāhmaṇa* ideal even while criticising its priestly deviations. It is an ideal and programme which modern sociology may well study, to rescue itself and modern society from the prevailing aimlessness and stagnation.

Yes, caste was set up by the Indo-Aryan ruling class. What they originally set up was not what it turned out to be eventually. Caste is an enormous and protean social phenomenon difficult to characterize with definiteness. Race, tribe, class, occupation, creed, and ritual—all these and other elements have gone into its making. One of its ostensible motives was the preservation of every social group instead of its liquidation, the philosophy behind which was *unity in diversity* instead of a dull, dead *uniformity*. The effect of the latter policy can be seen in the destruction of native cultures and groups in the Americas and elsewhere.

The system was mobile in the beginning but became rigid and hereditary and hierarchical later. It was in the latter phase that it exhibited all the evil features of inequality and injustice, with which we are familiar today and which modern India is dead-set to banish. These features were challenged by almost all the spiritual teachers and movements of India, from the Upaniṣads, through Buddha, the Sikh movement, and down to our own time. And, in the modern age, its back is broken as much by a century of ideological onslaughts and reform movements, both religious and socio-political, as by the new Indian constitution and its democratic processes, as well as by the tempo of mobility and change engendered by modern education, industry, and technology.

But to condemn the Upaniṣads, not for what they say or uphold but as the product of the very Indo-Aryans who instituted the caste system, is tantamount to condemning all ancient Greek thought as the product of a people who practised slavery, or all British scientific and socio-political thought as the product of a people who practised child labour, at one time, and mercilessly exploited colonies and dependencies, later.

(6) You have writen: 'On p. 308, para 1 (of the *Message*), the Swami says that 'the conquering of the inner man' etc. belong entirely to religion. This simply is not true. Many atheists and agnostics have a well-developed *morality*—e.g., my own grand father, T. H. Huxley.'

Here I stand by what I have written and also appreciate your last sentence. It is necessary for thinkers in the West to understand that the word 'religion' means something different in the Vedāntic context from what it conjures up in the Western context. In the latter, it conjures up the picture of a set of creeds and dogmas, fixed and final and not to be questioned, and a rigid institutional set-up to enforce them. In the Vedāntic context, on the other hand, it means spiritual striving and spiritual experience or realization. 'The Self is to be *realized*', say the Upaniṣads again and again; God is to be realized and can be realized, emphasises the Indian spiritual tradition, and not just to be believed in; and God *can be experienced* because God is the innermost Self of all, the *antaryāmin*, as the Upaniṣads put it.

Romain Rolland wrote his *Life of Vivekananda* with a view, as he says, to making other Westerners who resemble him, feel the attraction that he felt for Vivekananda whom he introduces as 'this elder brother, the son of the Gaṅga, who of all modern men achieved the highest equilibrium between the diverse forces of thought and was the first to sign a treaty of peace between the two forces eternally warring within us, the forces of reason and faith' (p.178), and introduces Vedānta, which Vivekananda expounded in India and in the West, in these words (*ibid.*, p. 179):

'The true Vedāntic spirit does not start out with a system of preconceived ideas. It possesses absolute liberty and unrivalled courage among religions with regard to the facts to be observed and the diverse hypotheses it has laid down for their co-ordination. Never having been hampered by a priestly order, each man has been entirely free to search wherever he pleased for the spiritual explanation of the spectacle of the universe. As Vivekananda reminded his listeners, there was a time when believers, atheists, and downright materialists could be found preaching their doctrines, side by side, in the same temple and further on I shall show what esteem Vivekananda publicly professed for the great materialists of Western science. "Liberty" he said, "is the sole condition of spiritual progress".'

Vedānta does not preach an extra-cosmic God sitting somewhere in the heavens up in the sky, but a God who is: *sākṣāt aparokṣāt brahma ya ātmā sarvāntaraḥ*—'immediate and direct and *given in experience* as the innermost Self of all (the eternal *subject* of all experience)', as one of the Upaniṣads expresses it.

The God preached by Vedānta as the Self of all cannot be affected by what you have written in your *Religion without Revelation*:

'Operationally, God is beginning to resemble not a ruler but the last fading smile of a cosmic Cheshire Cat.'

In the context of Vedānta, the notion that God is dead is like the English notion about the death of the ruler. It is: the King is dead; long live the King! Similarly, it is, God is dead; long live God. As the earliest study of the evolution of religion, Vedānta came across many dead and discarded gods in the history of religion and hence sought for, and found, the deathless and infinite God in the very centre of consciousness as the Self, as the most direct and unnegatable datum of experience. It then discovered that the dead and discarded gods were only various *concepts* of God, and that *there has been an evolution of the conceptions of God* but not of God Himself, who is the One behind the evolution of the many: 'The One remains, the many change and pass', as Shelley sings of it.

Vedānta holds that all moral sense and ethical awareness is but the by-product of man's growth in this spiritual awareness of the eternal Self behind his fleeting ego, an awareness which takes him beyond the limitations and thraldoms of his organic dimension and the puny ego presiding over it. This is the true growth or evolution of man, says Vedānta and notes its kinship with your own original contribution to deciphering the nature of evolution at the human stage as *psycho-social* evolution. Vivekananda defines religion accordingly as 'the manifestation of the divinity already within man'. Whatever brings this about is religion, which then becomes the science of the inner man, the science and technique of his growth in his transorganic dimensions. It may then be said to be the equivalent of what you have yourself proposed modern Western thought to develop into as a new dimension to itself, namely, *a science of human possibilities*.

Vedānta says that where this spiritual growth does not obtain, religion becomes a stagnant formalism, and gets reduced to a piety-fringed worldliness. All religion, as also politics and sociology, says Vedānta, should satisfy this criterion, namely, the capacity to take human life progressively from the physical or organic level to the ethical and the moral, the aesthetic and the higher spiritual levels. That is the only means to ensure the *qualitative* enrich-

ment of human life, which you yourself have shown in your writings, to be the special criterion of evolution at the human stage, unlike the *quantitative* criterion of the pre-human stage.

In the context of a purely secular ideology, such qualitative enrichment means only more and more avenues of sensate pleasure and satisfactions like music and dancing, theatre and films, and, of course, books and journals, and the leisure made available by reducing working hours and working days. All labour and work are drudgery, from which man seeks escape into the world of pleasure which is the aim of work and of life itself. Such a concept of qualitative enrichment is necessary but not sufficient; its insufficiency is revealed in the contemporary phenomenon, especially in advanced nations, where it has actually become human impoverishment, compelling modern man to seek for a higher concept of qualitative enrichment proceeding from the spiritual depths of man above his sensate dimension.

Vedānta, therefore, agrees with what you have pointed out that men like T.H. Huxley were ethically developed men though they did not belong to any formal religion or church. Vedānta considers them as having achieved in themselves the first stages of that spiritual growth which, when pursued steadily, will take them progressively to the realization of the infinite Ātman which is their true nature, without formal adherence to any piety. Such people are 'religious' in the Vedāntic sense without knowing that they are so, just like the character in the French drama who spoke prose without knowing that he was speaking prose.

When I mentioned this Vedāntic approach during my discussions with some communist professors in Prague in 1961, they reacted wonderfully favourably to it, but said that they objected to the word 'religion' used to describe it. They suggested to call it 'Philosophy of Life'. I agreed, knowing that many today are allergic to the word 'religion'. Vedānta is a staunch advocate of reason; but it views reason not as something static but as growing and developing. I have dealt with this Vedāntic view in the seventeenth lecture of the *Message* (pp. 327-45), where I have said (p. 332):

'Every advance in reason's clarity and effectiveness has been the product of increase in detachment, in subtlety, and in the range of facts.'

This explains Vedānta's attitude of fearlessness of and welcome to advancing knowledge.

In Vedānta, the words 'atheist' and 'agnostic' have none of the sinister associations which attach to them in Western religious (and even rationalist) understanding. If God is the innermost Self of all, an intellectual denial of this truth does not abolish it, nor an intellectual affirmation of it helps to establish it. This is what creeds mean, whether theistic or atheistic. Just as in physical science, belief or unbelief with respect to gravitation does not affect the truth of it or its impact on human life. Says the great Vedāntic teacher, Śaṅkara (of the eighth century A.D.) in his *Vivekachūḍāmaṇi* (verse 572):

'The affirmation (of the theist) and the negation (of the atheist) with respect to the *vastu* (an existing fact, in this case, the ever-present Self of all), do not ever affect that Self at all, being only modifications of the *buddhi* (mind), (since the *Ātman* is the subject or seer or the very Self of even that *buddhi*).'

The only way man can *deny* this truth, says Vedānta, is by *neglecting* it, through spiritual blindness and submersion in his physical organism and its appetites. This makes the organic system a prison of the self instead of an instrument of its spiritual freedom. This is spiritual 'suicide' which the world practises on a wide scale; it is more serious than physical suicide for a being so high in the scale of evolution as man. And the only way man, on the other hand, can *affirm* this truth is by striving to *grow* spiritually and to conduct life in the light of this awareness, by which he begins to experience, progressively from within himself, the impact of an infinite value on his finite organic individuality, making for his expansion in vision and sympathy, understanding and compassion.

If this spiritual growth is not present, man's morality does not rise to the level of *spontaneity* and *naturalness* relevant to the human level but becomes rigid and formal and the product of an external dictation, as pungently expressed by Schöpenhauer: Man is moral not because he chooses to be so, but because of the fear of the police and public opinion. In the absence of this understanding of man's spiritual nature over and above his sensate nature and the need to struggle to manifest that spiritual dimension, modern man's protest against that authoritarian and exter-

nally-imposed morality, however legitimate, though negatively, it be, lands him only in more and more submergence in the sensate in the name of 'situational' and other current forms of new moralities which, in seeking to achieve spontaneity and naturalness, land themselves in the spontaneity of the pre-human level, the spontaneity of below reason and not of above reason.

The onset of this spiritual growth beyond the ego centred in his organic individuality, says the *Gītā*, confers on man a double efficiency, namely, external productive and social efficiency and internal spiritual and personality efficiency. This is how the *Gītā* defines *Yoga* in its second chapter. And, in its sixth chapter, it adds that with the onset of this spiritual growth, man goes beyond the mandates of all do's and dont's of the formal level of religion or of civic life. It was this Vedāntic idea that Vivekananda expressed in one of his sayings: it is good to be born in a church (or a civic order) but very bad to die there.

Romain Rolland, in the preface to his *Life of Ramakrishna* entitled 'To My Western Readers' (p. 6), gives expression to this Vedāntic approach which, incidentally, can as well be a tribute, from the Vedāntic point of view, to your own grand-father T. H. Huxley who, while accepting 'matter' as a useful postulate in scientific research, had the courage to repudiate 'materialism' as an 'intruder':

'The first qualification for knowing, judging, and if desirable condemning a religion or religions, is to have made experiments for oneself in the fact of religious consciousness. Even those who have followed a religious vocation are not all qualified to speak on the subject; for, if they are sincere, they will recognize that the fact of religious consciousness and the profession of religion are two different things. Many very honourable priests are believers by obedience or from interested or indolent motives and have either never felt the need of religious experience or have shrunk from gaining it because they lack sufficient strength of character. As against these may be set many souls who are, or who believe they are, free from all religious belief, but who in reality live immersed in a state of super-rational consciousness, which they term socialism, communism, humanitarianism, nationalism, and even rationalism. *It is the quality of thought and not its object which determines its source and allows us to decide whether or not it emanates from religion* (italics not Rolland's). If it

turns fearlessly towards the search for truth at all costs with single-minded sincerity prepared for any sacrifice, I should call it religious; for it presupposes faith in an end to human effort higher than the life of the individual, at times higher than the life of existing society, and even higher than the life of humanity as a whole. Scepticism itself, when it proceeds from vigorous natures true to the core, when it is an expression of strength and not of weakness, joins in the march of the Grand Army of the religious soul.'

In his *Autobiography* (p. 380) Jawaharlal Nehru has quoted the above passage from Rolland and commented:

'I cannot presume to fulfil the conditions laid down by Romain Rolland, but on these terms I am prepared to be a camp-follower of the Grand Army.'

It is this Vedāntic vision and strength that made the monk Vivekananda feel his kinship with even the agnostic Robert Ingersoll of U.S.A.

In his famous book, *Karma Yoga*, Vivekananda describes the scope of Vedānta so as to include also all seekers of truth who are outside the pale of formal religion (pp. 131-32):

'Karma-yoga, therefore, is a system of ethics and religion intended to attain freedom through unselfishness and by good works. The karma-yogi need not believe in any doctrine whatever. He may not believe even in God, may not ask what his soul is, nor think of any metaphysical speculation. He has got his own special aim of realizing selflessness; and he has to work it out himself. Every moment of his life must be realization because he has to solve by mere work, without the help of doctrine or theory, the very same problem to which the jñāni (philosopher) applies his reason and the bhakta (devotee of God) his love.'

(7) You have written: 'On page 314 (of the *Message*), I simply don't understand what is meant by 'the truth of survival' of the human personality. This is a hypothesis, which various religions have sought to establish as certainty—even proclaimed as 'certainty'—but no one (including the spiritualists) has succeeded in establishing it as a fact. I, like many others, would like it to be true, but there is no proof.'

'As for *reincarnation* (p. 313 of the *Message*), not only is there no proof of this, but the facts of genetics make it impossible —at least for me. This is not *materialism*—man, like every other animal, certainly every other higher vertebrate animal, has both material and mental (subjective) capacities.'

I used the word 'truth' in the expression 'the truth of survival', not from the point of view of any of the physical sciences to which it can only be a 'hypothesis', at least for the present, but from the point of view of Vedānta and its science of man in depth, a science which it has built up out of the facts relating to his inner nature which its sages discovered by inner penetration. An important truth discovered by them and discussed by me on pages 314-15 and 322-24 of the *Message* relates to the internal *sūkṣma śarīra*, finer or subtle body of man, the equivalent of soul in western thought, with its associated concept of *vāsanas*, tendencies or the force of accumulated psychic bent, apart from his *sthūla śarīra*, external gross body. This is not a theoretical assumption but a fact of experience. Even as a theoretical assumption, it has rational strength and relevance in helping to explain the non-physical elements protruding through many experiences of his physical life.

On page 315 of the *Message*, I have said:

'It was an insight into the nature of this finer body that gave man the truths of survival and reincarnation.'

Let me repeat that physical sciences by themselves can never yield these truths, due to the limitations of their 'universe of discourse'. It will be a real scientific 'breakthrough' when the physical sciences begin to realize that the scope of the *philosophy of life* is far wider than the philosophy derived from a single department of physical science or even from all its departments taken together. But all the physical sciences can provide useful hints and suggestions. But the clearance of the mystery of life itself needs the contributions of another science, namely, the science of inner nature.

Modern biology detects the presence of the psyche in the living cell, in the form of a rudimentary awareness. After millions of years of cosmic evolution, a new value thereby appears in evolution, what Vedānta calls *cit*, i.e., consciousness and its concomitant of 'experience', over and above the value of *sat*, i.e., 'exis-

tence' or 'being', obtaining at the pre-organic stage; the cosmos 'exists' but has no 'experience'; the living cell has. Organic evolution thereafter is the gradual clarification and definition of this second value of 'experience'. At the level of the higher vertebrates, as you have said, this value of 'experience' develops a new dimension, although only in a rudimentary form, namely, 'subjective experience', but not yet the 'awareness of the subject'. At this stage 'experience' is still a simple awareness or just mentality, with an indiscriminate mixture of object and subject, mostly object, and hence 'unawareness' or 'unconsciousness', strictly speaking.

Evolution, however, proceeds faster after the appearance of this subjective pole of 'experience', which becomes more discriminated and defined at the level of man. With his rudimentary awareness of himself as a *subject*, and endowed with self-consciousness and reason—the thin luminous point of his psyche, early man achieved a grip on 'experience' and an access, however halting it be, to a new energy resource within himself, namely, his self; these alone conferred on him dominance over all other species in nature. Increasing grip on the 'object' pole of experience thereafter, accompanied by dribblets of grip on the 'subject' pole, gave man civilization, with its modicum of ethical awareness, through the setting in of what you have called 'psycho-social evolution', in its elementary forms. Not knowing the further steps of that evolution, civilizations, including modern civilization, have often stressed and over-stressed the organic man, seeking only organic satisfactions, organic survival, and numerical increase which you have described as the objective of evolution at the pre-human stage, and, governed by the criterion of quantity instead of quality, ended up in the worldliness of over-civilization, making not for fulfilment, individual and collective, but increasingly for all-round unfulfilment.

This is not evolution but stagnation, says Vedānta; its technical term for it is *saṁsāra*, repetitive experience of worldliness and an utter absence of creativity. It is stagnation at the organic level. But what is significant even at this level is the presence of the rudimentary discrimination and detachment of the *subject*, the self, from the *object*, the not-self, which includes the natural and social environments and, to a lesser degree, man's own organic system as well. *Vedānta holds that no ethical awareness and*

*ethical judgement can occur where this detachment of awareness from the organic dimension has not taken place.* That is why the non-human species do not exhibit ethical awareness and judgement.

Vedānta considers the Ātman to be the Self of all non-human species as well. The view that animals have no souls is not an Indian contribution. But nature has not achieved in them the organic development necessary for making this latent datum a patent one. Even in man, with such development in his external physical body or *sthūla-śārīra*, most have this awareness only in elementary forms, in the absence of further development and maturity in their internal body, their *sūkṣma-śarīra*. The spiritual ever-present datum needs for its manifestation spiritual maturity, like the physical ever-present data, e.g., the sex urge etc., which need for their manifestation the requisite organic maturity.

The presence of ethical awareness discloses the more-than-organic dimension of the human personality. A small measure of this, achieved by a small dose of psycho-social evolution, is the force that cements man with man in an ordered society, like the cement that unites brick with brick to form the integrated structure of a building. This is ethical sense, what Vedānta calls *dharma*. It is not a product of the natural or even social environment; it cannot be produced by legislative enactment or force or purchased or produced by money; it springs from some deeper dimension of the human personality as a result of his manipulation of, and action and reaction with, that natural and social environment, in the early stages, and a direct penetration to his inner world with the help of a disciplined and pure reason and will, in the later stages.

What happens when that direct penetration of the inner world is attempted and achieved? Here we enter the trans-physical, even the trans-ethical and, therefore, trans-social, dimension of human growth in which psycho-social evolution, which was already a spiritual process in the embryo, blossoms fully into spiritual experience and fulfilment. The subject realizes the true focus of his subjecthood; the self realizes its true self-hood detached from all objects and all not-self, including the gross body, the *sthūla-śarīra*, and the subtle or finer body, the *sūkṣma-śarīra*.

All evolution pertains only to these two bodies and to the physical or material world which is their matrix. And Vedānta, unlike western theology and philosophy, treats mind, psyche, and the *sūkṣma-śarīra* also as material, only finer or subtler.

Spirit is a hypothesis. Matter also is a hypothesis. The hypothesis of matter helps to explain the mystery of nature in the early stages of the search for knowledge. And the hypothesis of spirit helps to explain the mystery of nature in the later stages. The hypothesis of matter will ever remain a hypothesis. But the hypothesis of spirit ceases to be a hypothesis when knowledge turns on itself and, most clearly, in spiritual realization. 'Consciousness is the most direct thing in experience; all else is remote inference,' says Eddington. Behind both spirit and matter is the reality of the One which Vedānta calls Brahman, which is *saccidānanda*, Infinite Existence-Consciousness-Bliss.

The spirit does not evolve; it is of the nature of infinite existence and infinite consciousness, *sat-cit-svarūpa*. Matter evolves, first, in its gross state as the cosmos, then, in its subtle state as the rudimentary psyche in the cell and the more advanced psyche in the higher vertebrates, and later, as the most developed psyche in man. At the human level, however, his complex and highly developed physical organism, with its unique organ, namely, the cerebral system, discloses, for the first time in evolution, a new and unique value stirring in his psyche, namely, the spiritual, a fraction of which got manifested through his psycho-physical system as ethical sense and the cementing force of ordered society.

It is obvious that ethical sense is not just a psychical force, much less a physical force, though it manifests itself through the psychical and even the physical medium. Physical, intellectual, and psychical developments do not always carry with them ethical sense. With well-built bodies, strongly developed wills, and highly developed intellects, men can still be rascals. This alone explains why the great Thomas Huxley distinguished 'the struggle for existence and survival of the fittest' of nineteenth-century evolution from the 'fitting of as many as possible to survive' of all ethics. Even a little manifestation of the spiritual makes for love and for being loved, in place of struggle for existence, competition, and hatred. That is why higher religions in general and the Hindu religion in particular do not equate mere intellectual scholarship, and worldly achievements through a strong will, with spirituality. They are

psychic achievements, achievements of the mind, and not achievements of the spirit, because the psyche disclosed in them is still stagnant at the level of the ego presiding over the organic system, and the ego's physical instrument, namely, the cerebral system, is still in thraldom to, is still the tail-end of, the nervous system and the old brain in search of organic satisfactions and organic survival, and not their controller and guide in search of truth and meaning, goodness and beauty—all those seekings and attainments that make for the qualitative enrichment of human life and for human fulfilment, individual and collective, which you have defined as the goal of twentieth-century view of evolution.

Men of spiritual realization have experienced their complete separateness from the gross and subtle bodies, which they treat not as their selves but as the instruments of their selves. Sri Ramakrishna compares worldly men to a raw cocoanut in which the kernel sticks to the shell, and the spiritually realized men to a ripe cocoanut in which there is a complete separation of kernel from shell. There are genuine cases of such spiritual detachment from the body where surgical operations are performed on carbuncles or some other lesions on the body without administering, in response to the request of the patient, any anaesthetic but only allowing a few minutes for the patient to detach his mind from the body.

It is not a stoical will power that is seen in such cases but the presence of a knowledge or awareness of the spirit and its separation from the body. This is the realization that Socrates manifested when he drank the hemlock calmly and continued his philosophic discourse, and calmed and chided and consoled his disciples weeping around him. These and other experiences furnish a group of depth data of the human personality which need to be considered and explained by any science of man that aims to reveal him in all his heights and depths. It is through such a depth-study that India came across the truth of man's *sūkṣma-śarīra* within his *sthūla-śarīra*, the survival of the former at the dissolution of the latter, and the former's re-incarnation in new physical forms in continuation of its psycho-social evolution. India discovered the end of this evolutionary process in the realization of the Ātman, the infinite, immortal, non-dual Self.

There is no evolution in the spirit; but as matter evolves, there is a greater and greater manifestation of the spirit, says

Vedānta. It is only an unfoldment of what was already there. Vedānta, therefore, does not speak of creation, which means something coming out of nothing, but it speaks of evolution, projection, or manifestation. Accordingly, all evolution involves also involution. What is involved manifests by stages. First, the spirit unfolds as the psyche and, later, it unfolds in its true form. In Buddha and Jesus and Ramakrishna, we see the complete manifestation of the spirit and the expression of a new type of energy, enormous in quality and quantity, namely, the spiritual, different from the muscular, nervous, and psychical energies, and of a greater impact than that of all of them.

Such spiritual energy cannot be traced to the food they ate, the intellectual knowledge they gained, or the social and cultural *milieu* in which they were born and reared. Neither can that spiritual energy be traced to the genetic or environmental factors that brought them into physical existence. Genetics has given us a wonderful vista of human life, and also of all life. But by breaking the genetic code through discovery of DNA, RNA, etc., genetics has given us only the knowledge of the *physical bases* of life. Genetics will be a dismal science if, in explaining the physical bases of life, it *explains away* all that is non-physical about it. The fear of such developments is hinted already in some recent books, e.g., G. Ratray Taylor's *The Biological Time Bomb*. Genetics, which will drain away all spiritual value from life generally, and the human personality particularly, and convert human society into an animal farm, will, according to Vedānta, cease to be a science and become nescience.

The first phase of modern Industrial Revolution in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was initiated and sustained by the inventions arising from the discoveries in pure physics. Its second phase was dominated by the technological applications arising largely from chemistry during the first half of this twentieth century. Since then, the modern scientific and technological revolution, while continuing to register advances in the other two fields, has been dominated by the discoveries and the technological applications in the biological sciences, especially in its field of molecular biology.

While the mood of cocksureness and all-knowingness of nineteenth-century physics and its thorough-going materialism have now passed over to biology in this century, pure physics itself

has undergone a revolution in this century whose main characteristics are a chastened mood of humility in the presence of the ultimate mystery of the universe and a recognition of what may be described as the *inherent limitation of physical science itself with respect to that ultimate mystery*. This is presented with refreshing candour in the following passage, among several similar other ones by other physicists, of Sir James Jeans, in his *New Background of Science*, quoted by me on p. 327 of the *Message*:

'Physical science set out to study a world of matter and radiation, *and finds that it cannot describe or picture the nature of either, even to itself*. Photons, electrons, and protons have become about as meaningless to the physicist as x, y, z are to a child on its first day of learning Algebra. *The most we hope for at the moment is to discover ways of manipulating x, y, z without knowing what they are*, with the result that the advance of knowledge is at present reduced to what Einstein has described as *extracting one incomprehensible from another incomprehensible*.' (italics not by Jeans).

Let us put this admission side by side with two other ones: the first one, by Lincoln Barnett in his *The Universe and Dr. Einstein* (a book which has the approval of Einstein), quoted by me on p. 282 of the *Message*. Stating earlier that 'all man's perceptions of the world and all his abstract intuitions of reality merge finally into one, and the deep underlying unity of the universe is laid bare', Lincoln Barnett continues:

'*In the evolution of scientific thought, one fact has become impressively clear: there is no mystery of the physical world which does not point to a mystery beyond itself*.... The farther he (man) extends his horizons, the more vividly he recognizes the fact that, as the physicist Niels Bohr puts it, "We are both spectators and actors in the great drama of existence". Man is thus his own greatest mystery. *He does not understand the vast veiled universe into which he has been cast for the reason he does not understand himself.... Least of all does he understand his noblest and most mysterious faculty: the ability to transcend himself and perceive himself in the act of perception*.' (italics not Barnett's).

And the second, by Eddington, quoted by me on p. 181 of the *Message*:

'Here is a hint of *aspects deep within the world of physics, and yet unattainable by the methods of physics.*' (italics not by Eddington).

When biology becomes dominated less by the marvels of technical achievements and more by the spirit of pure science in search of the mystery of existence, it is bound to capture that chastened mood of twentieth-century physics and an awareness of its own limitations in the presence of that mystery, with respect to which it will learn to rate its marvellous achievements in genetics only as 'manipulating x, y, z without knowing what they are', as remarked by Jeans, and as 'the extraction of one incomprehensible from another incomprehensible', as remarked by Einstein. It is then bound to recognize that its breaking the genetic code through the discovery of DNA and RNA etc. is only the breaking the mystery of its *chemical* code but not its *psychical* code. The breaking of that latter code will call for new approaches and methods which, when recognized, will bring physical science closer to Vedānta. This may well become the dominant theme of the next revolution in thought, perhaps in the twenty-first century.

Physical science may now find genetics as a hurdle to the acceptance of the spiritual nature of man, the possibility of its independence of the physical organism, and the possibility of its manifestation through new bodies on the death of the old. But Vedānta does not recognize this as an irreconcilable opposition, because it does not find any irreconcilable opposition between mind and matter, as in Western philosophy, or soul and body, as in Western theology. Genetics seeks to explain the *physical bases* of life; it has already discovered the chemical factors in this field. The soul or *sūkṣma-śarīra* that manifests through the genetic constitution of man, says Vedānta, has also a part to play in the genetic and life processes, which cannot be explained fully by physical factors alone. Neither heredity nor environment nor chance can fully explain the mystery of man. Just as the autonomous functions of the living body are autonomous not of mind as such but of mind in its conscious dimension only, similarly, the mystery of crucial genetic processes cannot be cleared with the aid of only the chemical factors but need reference to the *sūkṣma-śarīra*. All

the processes in my body, including digestion, elimination of waste, preservation of homeostatic equilibrium, production of new cells, the glandular processes, etc., are done by myself and not by any external agency. Only most of these are done by me unconsciously. But it is evident that unconscious processes can be brought to the level of conscious processes.

Molecular biology has now some understanding of the genetic material and its chemical properties and processes. But the conclusions about life as a whole based on this understanding are bound to undergo revolutionary changes as and when molecular biology develops, as in the case of twentieth-century physics, into first its atomic and then its nuclear dimension. Nuclear physics reduced all matter to energy in Einstein's famous equation. Molecular biology is already on the threshold of reducing its factors of heredity, namely, the genes, from entities to forces and from forces to just influences. The revolutionary advances in twentieth-century physics disturbed the materialism and cocksureness of its nineteenth-century counterpart and made Einstein to remark, as quoted earlier from Jeans in his *New Background of Science*, that the progress of knowledge has become reduced to 'the extraction of one incomprehensible from another incomprehensible'. The indeterminacy principle of quantum physics is likely to invade genetics then, raising more serious problems than in physics; for, the indeterminacy in physics led some scientists to banish all matter from the world of physics, 'mind reigning supreme and alone'. A similar indeterminacy in biology is likely to land it on the shore of the same truth, but with greater force, since biology is the study, at close quarters, of a non-entropic system which is life.

Till such compulsions arise from genetics itself, survival and reincarnation, in fact, the very idea of a non-material spiritual principle, must remain a mere hypothesis for physical science—but a hypothesis fascinating and intriguing, and not seriously opposed, as some scientific thinkers have acknowledged, to verified scientific knowledge.

All Hindus base their belief in this set of associated doctrines not on their own personal experiences but on those of competent spiritual investigators and teachers, past and present. And the Hindu finds them not only not contradicting his experiences but

also highly competent to rationally explain the super-sensory facts of life on the basis of the very cause-and-effect determinism which physical science employs in the physical field. Vedānta does not call them super-natural; for, it has a wide conception of nature and so has no need to harbour the unscientific notion of the super-natural.

The Hindu approaches the problem in a way different from that of the modern rationalist. The latter says to himself: I am a body and I may or may not have a soul; even if I have a soul, it is physically conditioned and ceases to be when the body ceases to be. This syllogism is flawless; given the premises, the conclusion follows irresistibly. But the former says to himself: I am a soul and I have a body; in normal life, one is intimately, even inextricably, associated with the other; but it need not be so always. As J.B.S. Haldane has shown in his *Possible Worlds*, even when we think logically and act morally, we extricate our self for the time being from this integument of the physical body. This extrication becomes complete in *samādhi* (the second homeostasis to be achieved by man over and above the physical homeostasis achieved for him by his wet-nurse, nature), in which he completely extricates his self from both the gross and the subtle bodies. With this ascertained knowledge behind him, the Hindu refers to death as 'the giving up of the (physical) body', whereas the rationalist may refer to it as 'getting dissolved into nothingness' and the western theologian and man-in-the-street may refer to it as 'the giving up of his ghost'.

As a corollary of this knowledge of man as essentially a spirit and not matter, the Hindu from very ancient times adopted the practice of cremation of the dead. I have discussed the implications of this on pp. 161-62 of *The Message*.

These truths, for the Hindu, are not the imaginations of primitive 'medicine-men', but are the discoveries and expositions of men (and women) of high intellectual calibre, such as the sages of the Upaniṣads, Kṛṣṇa (in the *Gītā*), Buddha, Śaṅkara, Ramakrishna, and Vivekananda, who had developed 'sharp and subtle and penetrating reason by training themselves to perceive subtle and subtler facts', as described by the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* (cf. pp. 430-31 of *The Message*).

Dealing with the complementary character of the science of genetics and the science of the spiritual nature of man, the Gītā says (XV. 7-11):

'An eternal portion, verily, of Myself (God), having become the living soul in the world of life, draws (to itself) out of the matrix of nature, the (five) sense-organs with mind for the sixth.'

'When the divine Spirit (in the form of the soul) obtains a physical body, and when He leaves it, He takes these (the sensory system and the mind, constituting the subtle body) and goes, as the wind takes the scent from its base (i.e., the flowers).'

'Presiding over the organs of hearing, seeing, touch, taste, and smell, as also the mind, He experiences sense objects.'

'While transmigrating from one physical body to another, or experiencing (sense objects) united with the modes (or forces) of nature, even while residing in the same body, those who are under the delusion (of recognizing as truth what is seen by the physical eyes only) do not see Him; but those who have the eye of knowledge behold Him.'

'The yogis, striving (for perfection), behold Him dwelling in themselves; but those who have not disciplined (their psychophysical energies) and released their reason (from thraldom to them), see Him not.'

From the above it follows that, *even while wisely keeping themselves and their science away from the large tribe of pedlars of cheap and misty religious cults, the modern scientists will be only helping the advance of scientific knowledge and the happiness and welfare of the world, by realizing their kinship with spiritual teachers of the above-mentioned stature who realized and proclaimed the glory of the human spirit and its kinship with all that exists.*

It is necessary to add that, with all the knowledge now available and what may come in the future, says Vedānta, survival and reincarnation will ever remain a mystery to every human being till he or she realizes his or her true spiritual nature. *Vedānta, therefore, does not treat this as sacred dogma; it does not insist on this belief;* but directs human effort to spiritual growth and fulfilment, assuring man that these mysteries will get solved as he progresses in that line.

(8) You have referred to your brother Aldous Huxley's book *The Doors of Perception* as 'a remarkable demonstration of the capacity of the conjoined psycho-physical creature we call man to transcend itself and achieve new and more meaningful experience.'

In my humble opinion, however, Aldous Huxley did write some great books but his last one, *The Doors of Perception*, was not one of them. From the spiritual point of view, that book was an anti-climax. It has done great harm to mankind by introducing, through the prestige of his name, millions of men, women, and even children to the harmful drug habit and making many of them believe that spiritual development is cheap and can be purchased for a dollar. I had to deal with this problem when answering questions after lectures in American Universities last year, of which the most memorable was the three-hour crowded session in the Coffee House of the Carnejie-Mellon University, Pittsburg. I had to tell the students then that, unless checked, this drug habit will incapacitate the American youth, mentally and physically, to carry the burdens and responsibilities of their scientific civilization within three or four generations. Using some drugs to relieve pain or depression etc. is valid; but widespread use of them to get psychic 'trips' *as a means of escape* from the experience of *boredom* in an otherwise *highly exciting technical civilization* is too tragic for words. In far less exciting older civilizations, boredom affected some men, but mostly in old age; but in modern civilization, inspite of its exciting events and innumerable avenues of pleasure and excitement, it is afflicting even children. This is the tragedy of spiritual poverty; and drugs are no remedy to it; they are worse than the disease. And the tragedy is heightened when such trips are taken to be equivalents of religious experiences. The truth is that they are just 'psychic' experiences like dreams; in some rare cases, such experiences may land one on the shores of true religion and become a fortunate escape from this cheap escape from civilization. But, by themselves, they are just psychic ones; not spiritual. Spiritual experience involves one's release from the sensate tether, not by fits and starts through drugs and such external stimuli, but by steady spiritual education leading to, as I said earlier, to spiritual growth, and staying steadily in that awareness. The stimulus of spirituality is received from within, not from without. This is always a slow process, but sure and steady. This is the science of religion, according to Vedānta; the other is

the *magic* of pseudo-religion. A magic fruit cannot quench the physical hunger and thirst of man but a real fruit can. Similarly, a magic pseudo-religion cannot quench the spiritual hunger and thirst of modern man; but the *science of religion* can.

But, as I said, the path of spiritual growth and fulfilment is long and hard; and this is another factor that made the Hindu value the doctrine of reincarnation; man continues his spiritual journey life after life, taking up in the next embodiment where he left it off in the previous one, and reaching perfection eventually, and then ending the long series of his sowings and harvestings.

From a practical moral point of view, reincarnation and *karma*, being based on the principle of moral causation of 'as we sow, so we reap', is a powerful factor for morality. If there is only one short physical existence, and one can enjoy it to the full by means, fair if possible, foul if necessary, and get away with it, the motivation for the good life becomes eroded. For one short life is too short to work out one's desires and propensities and the good and evil consequences of one's deeds. On the other hand, the awareness, that results of actions pursue man in earth or heaven or hell, in this life or lives to come, and that none can escape the law of moral causation, will chasten man and influence him to heed the warning that 'strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leadeth to life and broad is the gate and wide is the way that leadeth to destruction'; men will curse parents and society less and learn to feel responsible for their state more, due to this widening of their horizon.

The sensate man of today lives in a low-horizon world with respect to time and space; a sense of the pressure of time makes him tense and restless and eager to gorge as much of sense experience as possible between birth and death; some would like to have a bit of religion also to spice it. It is this tyranny of the sensate in that low-horizoned world that makes the contemporary 'drug religion' spread like wild fire, beating the record of the great spiritual teachers like Buddha and Jesus and Ramakrishna.

(9) You have commented: 'On p. 263 (of *the Message*), the Swami gives a splendid definition of what education ought to be, and sometimes is. But my visits to India showed me that the aim of a large number of Indian undergraduates was not to enjoy an

education of this sort, but to pass examinations and obtain a degree, which was useful in getting jobs.'

This is unfortunately too true. The tyranny of the sensate, the fruit of nineteenth-century scientific, especially biological, materialism, is powerfully affecting Indian youth now as it has affected youth and others elsewhere. The message of twentieth-century science, especially biology, and your own message of psychosocial evolution and stress on qualitative enrichment of life, will take a few decades to become current coin, and affect, in a wholesome way, social outlook in east and west. India is wrestling with the problem of introducing ethical and spiritual values in education. She has a wealth of ideas in this field from east and west, ancient and modern, to draw upon, especially in her modern thinkers and leaders like Swami Vivekananda, Tagore, and Gandhiji. Writing a foreword to a small book of selections on *Education* by Vivekananda, Gandhiji says:

'Surely, Vivekananda's utterances need no introduction from anybody; they make their own irresistible appeal.'

Current Indian education is basically a continuation of what the British introduced in India in the last century with its aim of turning out clerks. It has quantitatively expanded immensely but has gone down qualitatively. It has neither the virtues of the ancient Indian system nor of the modern British system but the weaknesses of both. It turns out every year not men, but functionaries of society—so many lawyers, doctors, engineers etc. etc. *But India is also silently engaged in significant experiments in education and there is much silent constructive thinking and discussion also on the subject.* We may hope to feel the impact of all these on our education in the coming decades. The fact is, everything in India today is in the melting pot—education, politics, religion, society etc. She is passing through the most revolutionary transition in her long history. Her modern thinkers and leaders, especially Vivekananda, had the fullest grasp of the scope and possibilities of this transition. None can predict the shape of things to come. But her great leaders have injected great ideas into the body-politic; and there is the atmosphere of freedom; and there is youthful energy and dynamism. *The combination of these factors has turned modern India into a vast anthropological laboratory covering a sixth of the human race.* And we can take com-

fort from what Vivekananda said· Put the chemicals together, crystallization will take place according to nature's laws.

(10) Lastly, you write: 'Somewhere (in the *Message*), the Swami rightly mentions that nations and cultures often become decadent and unjust, etc. But...the faults of the culture often stimulate a reaction, even a revolution, which then engenders a new and generally improved pattern of life.'

This is true; such occasional stimuli can arise from within a culture, producing a reaction or even a revolution which helps to engender a new and improved pattern of life. Modern India itself is an example of what you have said. It was at its lowest ebb at the end of the eighteenth century. Many English thinkers in the last century predicted that, with the impact of the dynamic Western culture introduced by the British, the age-old Indian culture would die. But it did not die; it had tremendous reserves of spiritual vitality hidden in its secret depths. And contact with the West helped to usher a renaissance more pervasive and deep than what was ever experienced in the country's long history.

Such resurgence depends upon the presence of a spring of vitality deep in the core of that culture. But by adopting wrong philosophies and harmful ways of life, even this spring may dry up. Then no new pattern of life can be engendered even by cross-fertilization. Successful grafting needs vitality in the tree as much as in the grafted shoot. This is how, I suppose, cultures have died in the past, may be, after passing on some of their elements to newer cultures and achieving thereby a vicarious 'reincarnation'.

RANGANATHANANDA

* * *

31 Pond Street,
Hampstead,
London, N.W.3.
August 19, 1970.

Dear Swami Ranganathananda,

First of all, thank you for your long expository letter of August 10th. I have noted all your points, though I fear that I

am not always convinced by your arguments. However, we are in agreement on many matters, and I don't feel that it is worth while entering into argument over details.

I was pleased to hear of Harlow Shapley's visit to you, but sorry that he is not well. He must be quite old now—I do hope that he is quite recovered.

I look forward to receiving copies of the *Prabuddha Bharata* in due course.

It is kind of you to arrange to send them to me.

Yours sincerely,
JULIAN HUXLEY

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*The Message of the Upaniṣads* is a rational study, verse, by verse, of three of the principal Upaniṣads, viz., *Īśa*, *Kena* and *Kaṭha*, in the light of modern thought and modern needs. Though constituting a small portion of the total Upaniṣadic literature, they contain a lucid exposition of all the essential ideas of this immortal literature.