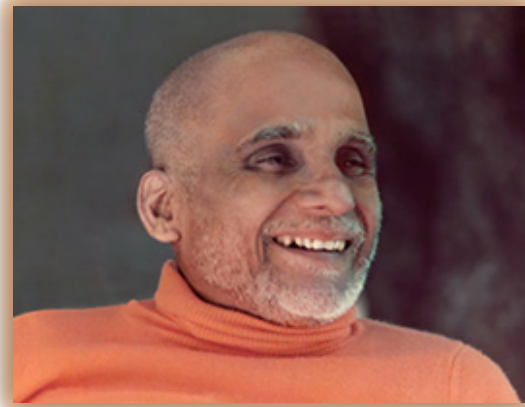


# LESSONS ON THE UPANISHADS



SWAMI KRISHNANANDA  
The Divine Life Society  
Sivananda Ashram, Rishikesh, India  
Website: [www.swami-krishnananda.org](http://www.swami-krishnananda.org)



## **ABOUT THIS EDITION**

Though this eBook edition is designed primarily for digital readers and computers, it works well for print too. Page size dimensions are 5.5" x 8.5", or half a regular size sheet, and can be printed for personal, non-commercial use: two pages to one side of a sheet by adjusting your printer settings.

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## A BRIEF BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF SWAMI KRISHNANANDA

Swami Krishnananda was born on the 25th of April, 1922 into a highly religious and orthodox Brahmin family, and was given the name Subbaraya. At an early age, he had become very well-versed in the Sanskrit language and its sacred texts. The longing for seclusion pulled him to Rishikesh, where he arrived in the summer of 1944. He met Swami Sivananda, who initiated the young Subbaraya into Sannyasa on the sacred day of Makara Sankranti, the 14th of January, 1946, and gave him the name Swami Krishnananda.

Gurudev Swami Sivananda found that this young Swami Krishnananda was well-suited to general writing tasks, the compiling and editing of books, and other sorts of literary work. Eventually Gurudev asked his disciple to do more serious scholarly work. Swami Krishnananda's first book, *The Realisation of the Absolute*, was written in a matter of weeks when he was still only a young man in his early twenties.

Swami Sivananda nominated Swami Krishnananda as General Secretary of the Divine Life Society in 1959, which position he held until his resignation in 2001 due to poor health. Swamiji is the author of over forty works covering a wide range of subjects.

Swami Krishnananda was a rare blend of Karma yoga and Jnana yoga and a living example of the teachings of the Bhagavadgita. He was a master of practically every system of Indian thought and Western philosophy. "Many

Sankaras are rolled into one Krishnananda,” Swami Sivananda would say of him. Swamiji continued his service to the Ashram for forty years as it grew from a relatively small organisation into a spiritual institution widely known and respected throughout the world. Swami Krishnananda attained Mahasamadhi on the 23rd of November, 2001.

## PUBLISHERS' NOTE

In the Upanishads can be found the answer to our quest for higher knowledge; knowledge which ends the churning and turbulence of our restless spirit. The changefulness of things that we experience is verily in the direction of a higher state. This in turn leads to the recognition of a spiritual background to life which is the true nature of all existence. And this change, says Swami Krishnananda very eloquently, "...could not be perceived without the presence of something that is not changing in ourselves...something in us which is not finite."

It is the call of this changeless Infinite that the Upanishads in general and this book in particular address through simple, succinct nuggets of handpicked teachings carefully chosen from the principle Upanishads and woven seamlessly into a tapestry of wisdom. This book is a bouquet of rich lectures delivered by Swami Krishnananda in 1991 to the students of the Yoga Vedanta Forest Academy and reveals the message of the Upanishads in a most lucid manner. It is a priceless treasure and a boon to all seekers of Truth.

## Session 1

### INTRODUCTION TO THE UPANISHADS

When we look at the world, we have what may be called a first view of things, and dissatisfaction with the first view of things is supposed to be the mother of all philosophical thinking. If we are satisfied with things, there is nothing more for us to search for in this world. Any kind of search, quest, enterprise, or desire to seek implies that we are not satisfied with the existing condition of things. And, we are quite aware that nobody in this world can be said to be totally satisfied with the prevailing conditions of things – neither in one’s own self, nor in one’s family, nor in the society outside, nor in anything, for the matter of that. There is always a tendency in the human mind to discover a lacuna in things: “It should not be like this. It should have been in some other way.” This is a distinction that we draw between the ‘is’ and the ‘ought’. We may say “something is like this”; but instead, what we express is “something ought to have been like this” or “something ought to be like this”. The ‘ought’ is something that we are expecting in this world; the ‘is’ is what we are actually facing in this world. There is always this distinction, drawn in ourselves, between the ‘is’ and the ‘ought’. We will not find any circumstance in life where we will not be searching for an ‘ought’ and be dissatisfied with what ‘is’. This tendency in the mind – this peculiar predilection of the human psyche to search for what is not visible, perceptible, tangible or recognisable – is the seed sown for philosophical thinking.

Philosophy is the search for the higher values of life – not the values of the world as they are available to us. This



world of perception is also filled with several values. We have social values, economic values, educational values, artistic and aesthetic values, and what not. None of these values can satisfy us for a long time. For a short period, everything seems to be fine; for a protracted period, nothing is fine. Everything looks stale, insipid, worn out and good for nothing after some time. We get fatigued and tired of things. We search for something else.

This 'else' that we bring into the picture of our consciousness is the urge of the philosophical impetus. There is a necessity felt within each person to search for and recognise something which is not clear to the mind as yet; still, it is something which summons with a force that is irresistible. The irresistibility of this call seems to be so very compulsive and compelling that it keeps us restless always. We will find that every one of us, all people anywhere, have a little restlessness in the mind. Neither we eat with satisfaction, nor we sleep with satisfaction, nor are we secure when we speak to people. There is always a difficulty in our adjustment with the conditions prevailing in society and with people, and even with nature itself.

This kind of adventure of the Spirit, we may say, was at the back of the ancients in India who are supposed to be the promulgators of the great Scriptures called the Vedas, especially what are known as the Veda Samhitas. The mantras, the poems or the large poetry of the Veda Samhitas are an exuberant outpouring of the spirit of man in respect of something which is not adequately recognisable to sense perception or even to mental

cognition, but which summons the spirit of man somehow or the other.

We begin to feel there must be something above this world. This was what the great poets and the sages of the Vedas felt. Everything seems to be transitory, moving, and in a state of flux. There is change in nature, change in human history, change in our own mental and biological constitution, change in even the solar system, the astronomical setup of things. Everything is changing. The perception of change is something very important for us to consider. How do we know that things are changing, that things are moving or are transitory? There is a logical peculiarity, a significance and a subtlety at the back of this ability on our part to perceive change and transition in things. A thing that changes cannot perceive change by itself. Change cannot know change. Only that which does not change can know that there is change.

This is a very important point at the rock bottom of our thinking that we have to recognise. If everything is changing, who is it that is telling us that everything is changing? Are we also changing with the things that change? If that is the case, how do we come to know that all things are changing? Logical analysis of this peculiar analytical circumstance tells us that there is something in us which does not change; otherwise, we would not know that things are changing.

Now, if oneself – this person or that person – seems to be obliged to recognise something in one's own self that does not seem to be changing because one perceives change in general, we also have to be charitable enough to accept

that everyone in the world has this something which does not change. I have something in me which does not change, and you also have something in you that does not change. If this is the case, it seems to be everywhere. It does not mean that this unchanging so-called thing is only in one person, as all persons have an equal prerogative to conclude that something unchanging seems to be there, speaking in a language which is not subject to connection with changeable objects.

The Veda Samhitas to which I have made reference – which are the outpourings of spiritual seekers, sages and masters of advanced religious thought and spiritual perfection – felt the presence everywhere of something that does not change. All things seem to be embedded with something that cannot change. This is due to a logical conclusion to which we are led – namely, that the perception of change would not be possible if everything, including oneself, including even the perceiver of change, also changes. Therefore, transitoriness implies a non-transitory background of things.

The whole universe of perception, the entire creation, may be said to be involved basically, at the root, in something which cannot be said to change. This is an adorable and most praiseworthy conclusion, and anything that is adorable is a worshipful something. These masters of the Vedas Samhitas, therefore, recognised a divinity in all things. There is a god behind every phenomenon, which is another way of saying there is an imperishable background behind every perishable phenomenon. The sun rises in the east, the sun sets in the west; clouds gather, pour rain and

then go; seasons change; something comes, something goes; we are born, we become old and we also go. Everything is changing, everywhere, even in the vast universe of astronomical calculation.

But all this is only an indication, a pointer to an unrecognised fact of there being something which is an adorable background of the cosmos itself. And wonderfully, majestically and touchingly, we may say, these sages of the Veda Samhitas began to see a god everywhere. There is no 'ungod' in this world, because every phenomenon must be conditioned, or determined, by something which is not a phenomenon itself. Even the sun cannot rise and move, as it were, and the earth cannot rotate or revolve unless there is a motive force behind it. That motive force, the impetus for the rotation or revolution of the earth or the stellar system, cannot itself be revolving or rotating. So, there is a god behind the sunrise, behind the moonrise, behind the visibility of the stars, behind the seasons, behind even birth, death, aging and all transitions in human life.

The reality of things is what we are after; unrealities do not attract us. That which perpetually changes and escapes the grasp of our comprehension cannot be considered as real because of the fact of its passing constantly into something else. When we say that things are changing, we actually mean that one condition is passing into something else; one situation gives way to another situation. Why should this be at all? Where is the necessity for things to change and transform themselves? There is also a dissatisfaction with everything in its own self. We would like to transform ourselves into something else. It is not

that things are changing only outwardly; we are changing inwardly. There is psychological change, together with physical and natural change. So, the transitoriness of things – the changeful character of everything in the world, including our own selves as perceivers of change – suggests the fact that we seem to be moving towards something which is not available at the present moment.

Movement is always in some direction, and there is no movement without a purpose. So there must be a purpose in the movement of nature, in even the historical transformations that take place in human society and in the world as a whole. There must be a destination behind this movement. If we move, we are moving in some direction, towards some destination. There must be some destination towards which the whole cosmos is moving in the process of evolution.

We are all well acquainted with the doctrine known as the evolutionary process, which is highlighted these days in the modern world. We have heard that there is a gradual rise of the organisms of life from the material state of inanimate existence to the plant or the vegetable state, to the animal condition of instinct and to the human level. If evolution has stopped with man, there would be no asking by man for anything further. We would be totally satisfied as human beings.

Man is not the perfection of things. Though many a time it is said that we have reached the apex of evolution, we have not reached that state. As there was dissatisfaction with the lower stages – such as the animal, etc., which gave rise to the upper level of human psyche, human

understanding – there also seems to be a higher state than the human level, but for which nobody would be dissatisfied in this world. Everything is fine in this world. As I began by saying, there is a dissatisfaction with everything at the human level. That means we are also growing towards a higher state.

Where is it that we are going to? Man has to become superman. Animal man has become Homo sapiens; humanity is rising up. Animals mind their own business; they do not care for the world. They need only their grub, and the survival instinct is predominant in them. But the human being has reached a state today where he has animal instincts of survival – intense selfishness – but he also has a cognition of a new value emergent in life, which is consideration for the world outside also. Animals do not care for the world outside, but man has risen to a level where he feels it is necessary to care for the welfare of people outside, of the world as a whole. Even then it is not satisfying, because one day humanity itself will be shaken from its very roots if nature is against the continuance of human existence. There can be an epidemic, there can be a cataclysm, there can be an earthquake, there can be a war, there can be anything; it will break down everything. The earth can even be struck by a meteor. What will happen to our humanitarian outlook? No guarantee is given to us by the planets that they will maintain their position. That is to say, there is something which is pulling the entire cosmos towards itself. Animal becomes man, man becomes superman, superman becomes Godman, and even Godman is not the final stage because, after all, there is manhood,

humanity, individuality and isolation persistent even in what we may call a Godman.

The recognition of a spiritual background behind the transitory phenomena of life is actually the object of worship. This is known as the divinities, or gods, who are adumbrated in the Veda Samhitas. Everywhere there are gods. We can worship a tree, we can worship a stone, we can worship a river, we can worship a mountain, we can worship the sun, the moon, the stars. Anything is okay as an object of worship because behind this emblem of an outward form of things in this world, there is a divinity masquerading as these forms.

This is the highlighting principle of the Veda Samhitas. If we read the Vedas, we will find that every mantra, every verse, is a prayer to some divinity above, designated by various names: Indra, Mitra, Varuna, Agni, etc. We may give them any other name, according to our own language, style or cultural background. The point is not what name we give, but that there is something behind visible phenomena. Our heart throbs in a state of satisfaction of the fact that there is something above us. Religion, spirituality or philosophy, in the true sense of the term, is the recognition of something above oneself and a simultaneous recognition of the finitude of one's personality.

We are finite individuals in every way. Financially we are finite, geographically we are located in one place only and, therefore, we are finite; socially we are finite, historically we are finite, politically we are finite; even in the eyes of nature we are finite. Thus, the same argument can

apply here: as change could not be perceived without the presence of something that is not changing in ourselves, the finitude of our existence also could not be known unless there is something in us which is not finite.

The non-finite is what we call the Infinite. The Infinite is masquerading in us, which is another way of saying that the Unchanging is present in us. The Infinite is summoning every finite individual. The Unchanging is calling us moment to moment: “Don’t sleep, get up!” One of the passages of the Katha Upanishad is *uttisthata jagrata prapya varan nibodhata* (Katha 1.3.14): “Wake up. Sleeping mankind, stand up!” Are we slumbering? Are we seeing only what we are able to cognise through the sense organs or are we also aware of something that is deeply rooted in our own self? *Prapya varan*: “Go to the Masters.” Go to the wise ones in this world – masters and teachers and guiding lights of mankind – and *nibodhata*: “know the secret”. The Bhagavadgita also has this great teaching for us: *tad viddhi pranipatena pariprasnena sevaya* (Gita 4.34): “Go to the Masters.” How do we gain knowledge? *Pranipatena*: “Go and prostrate yourself before the great Masters.” *Pariprasnena*: “and question them”. “Great Master, this is the problem before me. I am not able to understand the solution for this. Please condescend to come down to my level and satisfy my inquisitiveness.” Serve that great Master; prostrate yourself; question the Master. These three things are mentioned in the Gita. So says the Upanishad: *uttisthata jagrata prapya varan nibodhata*.

There is an Infinite at the back of all the sensations of finitude of our personality which is calling us, and an



unchanging timeless and spaceless Eternity is summoning us. We may put a question to our own selves: “Why are we unhappy in this world?” What is it that is dissatisfying? It is that which is in space, that which is in time, that which is causally connected as a couple of terms of relation between cause and effect, and the insecurity that we feel in the presence of things outside.

The Brihadaranyaka Upanishad tells us in one little passage: *dvitiyad vai bhayam bhavati* (Brihad. 1.4.2). We can never be happy if there is another person near us. Always we have to adjust ourselves with that person and we do not know what to expect from that person. We cannot keep even a mouse in front of us; we will be very disturbed because the mouse is sitting in front. The mouse cannot do any harm to us, but we do not like the presence of even a little ant. “Oh, another thing has come.” This “another thing” is what is troubling us. The difficulty arising out of the cognition of another is because of the fact that the basic Reality, that unchanging Eternity, has no “another” outside It. Because of the absence of another in the basic reality of our own Self – the Truth of this cosmos – we feel a discomfiture at the perception of anything outside, human or otherwise. Whatever it is, we would like to be alone. Finally, we would like to be alone because that Aloneness, which is spaceless and timeless, is telling us: “You are really alone.”

The Manu Smriti tells us: *namutra hi sahayartham pita mata ca tisthatah. na putradarah na jnatih dharmas tisthati kevalah.* “When you depart from this world, your father will not come with you, your mother will not come with

you, your brother will not come, your sister will not come, your husband will not come, your wife will not come, your children will not come, your money will not come, and even your body will not come.” What will come? What you have thought and felt and done, that will come. Be cautious, therefore. Every day check your personality and your behaviour. “What have I thought, what have I felt, what have I spoken, what have I done?” Ask these questions when you go to bed in the evening. And if satisfactory answers come to these questions, this will be a little credit to that which will come with you when you depart from this world. Otherwise, nobody will come. You will be dragged by the forces of nature to the justice of the cosmos and you will have difficulty in answering the question: “What have you done?”

This world is not in a position to satisfy the desires of even one person, finally. If the whole world is given to you with all its gold and silver, rice and paddy, wheat and whatever it is, you will not find it satisfying. “The whole world is with me.” All right. Are you perfectly satisfied? You will be unhappy even then, for two reasons. One of them is: “After all, there is something above this world. Why not have that also?” A person who has a village wants another village also. If you have all the villages, you would like the entire state. If the state is under you, you want the entire country. If the country is under you, you would like the whole earth. But why not have something above the earth? So there is a dissatisfaction. “What is above? No, this is no good; there is something above me which I cannot control, which I cannot understand.” The presence of

something above the world, outside the world, will make you unhappy again. The second point is: “How long will I be in possession of this whole world, sir? Is there any guarantee?” Nobody knows. The next moment you may not be here. “Oh, I see. So, what is the good of possessing the whole world, if tomorrow I am going to be dispossessed of it?” Thus, the recognition of a supreme value in life, and the need to adore it as the objective and the goal of one’s endeavour in life, became the *devata* or the Divinity of the Vedas.

There are four Vedas – known as the Rig Veda, Yajur Veda, Sama Veda and Atharva Veda. The Rig Veda is the primary one and it is the foundation of all Indian thought, philosophy and religious consciousness. It is in poetic form; there are about 10,000 mantras. The Yajur Veda is partly in poetry and partly in prose. The Sama Veda is comprised of musically set verses, mostly from the Rig Veda, and they are sung in a melodious tune. The Atharva Veda is filled with a variety of subjects such as technology, art, and other scientific thoughts with which we are familiar in this world. Religiously, spiritually and philosophically, only three Vedas are important – Rig Veda, Yajur Veda and Sama Veda – and, therefore, they are called the Trayi in Sanskrit. Trayi means the threefold knowledge: Rig Veda, Yajur Veda and Sama Veda.

These four Vedas are also classified into four sections or four books, we may say. Each Veda has four section-wise categorisations. The first part is called the Samhita, which means the mantra portion, in which there is eulogising, an offering of prayer to the gods, to which I made reference

earlier: the gods of the heavens, the realities behind the cosmos. The worship of these divinities through prayer is the subject of the Samhita section of the Vedas. While this is sufficient for us and we can work wonders by mere prayer itself, by the concentration of our thought in the act of meditation, all people are not intended for this purpose. Everybody cannot pray from the heart. They can utter or mutter some words, but the heart may not always be in it; the heart may be elsewhere. They require some suggestions from outside in order that the heart may also work together with the act of prayer. People who could not directly concentrate their minds abruptly on the divinities felt the necessity for some external gestures, such as rituals, which they could do with their hands by gesticulation, suggesting the coming out of a thought or a feeling in respect of the divinity that is going to be worshipped. When we go to a temple, we bow with folded palms. We need not do that; we may just stand erect and feel the presence of God. There is nothing wrong with it, but the heart will not do that; it requires a gesture. We fall down on the ground, prostrate and then offer our prayer to the divinity in a temple. If we see anything holy – a holy man, a holy person, a holy place, whatever it is that is sacred – we bow with folded palms. We would like to offer a flower; we would like to wave a lamp; we would like to light a scented stick. Why do we do all this? It is a gesture, a ritual that we are performing to bring out our deep feelings of acceptance of the divinity of that object which is before us.

The second section of the Vedas is called the Brahmanas. Here Brahmanas does not mean the Brahmin

caste; it is a section of the Vedas that deals with an elaborate system of ritualistic performance, including sacrifices into the holy fire, all which is very elaborate indeed.

The third section is called the Aranyaka. Advanced seekers began to feel that it is not always necessary to have gestures and rituals in order to contemplate on the gods. We need not even offer prayers through words of mouth; the Veda mantras also may not be necessary if the thought is concentrated. A time, a state, a stage arises where we need not utter a mantra or a word of prayer to the god, or show a gesture by way of ritual to satisfy the god; our hearts can well up by contemplation only. I can deeply feel affection for you without any kind of outward demonstration of it and that is enough. That is called *dhyana*, or meditation. A contemplation in sequestered places, in forest areas, in isolated spots – *aranya*, as it is called – where meditations are conducted is the subject dealt with in the scriptures called the Aranyakas.

The Upanishads come last. These are the most difficult part of the Vedas. We can have some idea of what the Veda Samhitas are, what the Brahmanas are, what the Aranyakas are, but it requires deep thinking and a chastening of our psyche before we can enter into the subject of the Upanishads. What do the Upanishads tell us? They tell us the mode, the *modus operandi* of directly contacting the Spirit of the universe through the Spirit that is inside us – not by word of mouth, not by speaking any word, not by performance of any ritual. There is no need of any temple, church or scripture; we want nothing except our own Self. When we reach the Spirit of the universe, nothing will

come with us, as it was mentioned. We will go there alone. *We* are the most important thing in this world, and not what we possess. The possessions will leave us, but we will carry ourselves. What is it that we will carry as ourselves? You will not be able to understand the meaning of this statement. What exactly is meant by saying “I carry myself”? How will you carry yourself? You are not an object or luggage to be lifted. If you cannot know what it is to carry yourself, you will also not know what the Upanishads will tell you.

The Upanishads are the doctrine of the lifting of your own self to the Self of the universe, the Spirit which you are. It is not merely the Spirit inside you – you yourself *are* the Spirit. Why do you say “inside” – because when the outer cloth of this body and even the mind is shed at the time of departure, do you remain, or do you exist only in part there? Can you say, “A part of me has gone; I am only partly there”? No, you are wholly there. Independent of the body and also of the mind, you are whole.

This is a fact you will recognise by an analysis of deep sleep. The body and mind are excluded from awareness or cognition in the state of deep sleep. Do you exist only partially in deep sleep, or do you exist entirely? If your body and mind are really a part of you, when they are isolated from your consciousness in deep sleep, you would be only fifty percent or twenty-five percent; and when you wake up from sleep, you would get up as a twenty-five percent individual, and not as a whole person. But you wake up as a whole person. Therefore, the wholeness of your true essence need not include the body and the mind. This is

what is meant by the word 'Spirit'. Because of the difficulties in understanding what it is, mostly you think that the Spirit is inside, the Atman is inside, God is inside; everything is inside. But inside what? When you utter the word 'inside', you do not know what exactly you mean. Does it mean that the Spirit is inside the body? If that is the case, are you inside yourself? Are you inside your body? Just think over this absurdity in defining your own Self as something inside yourself. "I am inside myself." Can you say that?

These are some of the difficulties that are faced in understanding the Upanishadic doctrine, which is why the Upanishads are not intended to be taught to the public. We should not shout the Upanishads in a marketplace. Great teachers used to communicate this knowledge only to great students. The students also must be equally great. Electricity can pass only through a high-tension copper wire; it cannot pass through a rope which is made of coir. So, every person cannot become a fit student for the Upanishads. Years and years of *tapasya* were prescribed to the students. Unless you are hungry, food cannot be digested. Similarly, if you have not got the appetite to receive this knowledge, nothing will go inside you.

When you search for the Spirit of the world as a whole, the Spirit of your own Self, when you search for your Self, you conclude there is no need in searching for anything else. Here is the condition that you have to fulfil before studying the Upanishads. Do you want only your Self as the true Spirit, commensurate with the Spirit of the universe, or do you want many other things also? Those who want

many other things are not fit students of the Upanishadic or even the Bhagavadgita philosophy, because the Upanishads and the Gita take you to the very essence of things, which is the Reality of all things. When you get That, attain That, reach That, identify yourself with That, you will not have to ask for anything else. It is like the sea of Reality, and nothing is outside it. But if desire still persists – a little bit of pinching and a discovery of a frustration, and emotional tension: “Oh, I would like to have this” – and it is harassing you, then you had better finish with all your desires. You should fulfil all your requirements and not come to the Upanishadic teacher with the disease of a frustrated, unfulfilled desire.

Teachers used to prescribe many years *tapas* – in the form of self-control – to students. That is why in ancient days the students were required to stay with the teacher for so many years. What do you do for so many years? *Pranipatena pariprasnena sevaya* (Gita 4.34): “Every day prostrating yourself before that person – questioning, studying and serving.” This is what you do with the Master. This process should continue for years until you are perfectly chastened and purified of all the dross of worldliness – earthly longings, all rubbish of things. These must be washed out completely and like a clean mirror, you approach the teacher; then, whatever knowledge is imparted to you will reflect in your personality as sunlight is reflected in a mirror. Thus, you receive something in depth in the Upanishads.

The last portion, Vedanta, is also the name given to the Upanishads. *Anta* means the inner secret, the final word of



the Veda or the last portion of the Veda – whatever is one’s way of defining it. The quintessence, the final word, the last teaching of the Veda is the Upanishad, and beyond that there is nothing to say. When one knows That, one has known everything. Thus, these are the four sections of each of the four Vedas – Rig Veda, Yajur Veda, Sama Veda, Atharva Veda – known as Samhita, Brahmana, Aranyaka, Upanishad.

## Session 2

### THE PROBLEM IN UNDERSTANDING THE UPANISHADS

We were touching upon the subject of the Upanishads. I made reference to the Veda Samhitas, Brahmanas, Aranyakas and the Upanishads being the section-wise classification of the Vedic lore. There are supposed to be more than 1,000 editions or versions of the Vedas, with slight differences of words or letters in varying cases. If there are more than 1,000 such versions – we are told in this context that each version has its own Upanishad, so theoretically at least, traditionally, the information that has come to us is that there are more than 1,000 Upanishads – we do not find them; they are not existent. What is available to us is only a group of about 108 Upanishads, or two or three more.

108 Upanishads are prominent and very well known. One of the Upanishads, which is known as the Muktikopanishad, gives a section-wise list of these 108 Upanishads; but ten of them are the most important. The philosophically important Upanishads are ten out of the 108 and all the remaining ones, apart from these ten, stand almost in the position of expositions, elucidations – a sort of commentary of certain aspects briefly touched upon in the ten Upanishads.

The great philosophers and commentators on the Upanishads have considered only ten as prominent. The traditional commentators on the Upanishads are the Acharyas; their names are perhaps well known to many of you. The most pre-eminent of them are Acharya Sankara,

Acharya Ramanuja, Acharya Madhva, Nimbarka and Vallabha. These are the well-known Acharyas who have commented on the Upanishads and also on two other important philosophical texts: the Brahma Sutras and the Bhagavadgita. All the three – namely, the Upanishads, the Brahma Sutras and the Bhagavadgita – constitute what is usually known as Prastana Trayi, the tripod of Indian thought. The whole of Indian philosophy in its highest reaches is to be found in these three great fundamental texts: the Upanishads, the Brahma Sutras and the Bhagavadgita.

Ten Upanishads are the foundation. These ten are: the Isavasya Upanishad, the Kena Upanishad, the Katha Upanishad, the Prasna Upanishad, the Mundaka Upanishad, the Mandukya Upanishad, the Taittiriya Upanishad, the Aitareya Upanishad, the Chhandogya Upanishad and the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad. This is the usual sequence in which these ten important Upanishads are traditionally recounted, but modern scholars have a different sequence. They consider the oldest as the best and the later ones as less important. Western scholars, especially, have introduced this new system of placing the Upanishads in a novel order, or sequence, considering the prose Upanishads as older and the versified ones as later. The thoughts of these so-called older ones are supposed to be more foundational and determinative than the later ones. Whatever it be, this aspect of the matter is not important for us. What is of consequence is that all the ten Upanishads are very important for some reason or other. We can forget about the sequence.

The Isavasya Upanishad is the only one which occurs in the Samhita portion of the Veda. All the others come as appendices or follow-ups of the Brahmanas or the Aranyakas, which I mentioned in the previous session. Therefore, there is a special intonation required in the recitation of the Isavasya Upanishad, as is the case with the Samhitas of the Vedas. We cannot read the verses casually, as we read a book. There is a special modulation and intonation of voice – *swara*, as it is called. This *swara* aspect of recitation is not emphasised as much in the other Upanishads as is the case with the Isavasya Upanishad.

Now, to repeat what I told you towards the end of our last session, the Upanishads are most important and equally difficult to understand. The difficulty arises because of the subjects they treat. They are not telling us a story of something that happened sometime, like the Epics and the Puranas, for instance. Also, the Upanishads are not prayers offered to some god which we can just chant every day as a routine of practice. They do not tell us how to perform rituals or gestures of worship as we do in temples or altars of adoration. They tell us something quite different from all these things. What is this differentia which marks the Upanishads? They deal with our Self.

The most unpleasant thing in the world is to say anything about one's own self. We can go on saying anything about people, but when it is a matter concerning us, we would like that not much is said. Om Shanti. This is because we are the most secret aspect of creation and we are very touchy; we would not like to be touched, even unconsciously, by anybody. "Don't say anything about me;

say anything about other people.” Now, what is the matter? There is some peculiarity about this so-called ‘me’, ‘I’, or the self. This is the peculiarity of the Upanishadic teaching, and also its difficulty. The knowledge of the gods in the heavens, the knowledge of historical personages – kings, saints and sages – and the way of worshipping them and adoring them is something we can comprehend. “Yes, we understand what it means.” This is exactly what we commonly understand by the word ‘religion’. “He is a religious person.” Sometimes we even say, “He is spiritual.” Generally speaking, when we say that a person is religious or spiritual, we have an idea that this person is concerned with something higher than himself or herself – some god, some ideal, some future expectation which we may call divine, not concerned with the present, necessarily. The present is unsatisfying; therefore, we are in search of a future. I said something about it in our last session.

The Upanishads are not telling us about any god. Then, what is it that the Upanishads are telling us if it is not speaking about God? It is speaking about God, but not about the God that we usually think in our mind according to our upbringing, culture, language or tradition. It refers to God and it refers to nothing else, whereas the other religious forms of the concept of God – the God of the various ‘isms’ in the world – have other things in addition to and simultaneous with God’s existence, such as: Something must be done, something must not be done. These ‘do’s’ and ‘don’ts’ fill the texture of every religion in the world. Something has to be done and something should

not be done. The question of this dichotomy does not arise in the Upanishads.

The concept of God, or the Ultimate Reality, that we encounter in the Upanishads is markedly different from our transcendent conception of God. We always look up to the skies, fold our palms and humbly offer a prayer to a divinity that is invisible to the eyes but considered as transcendent, above us – perhaps very far from us. None of us can escape this idea of God being a little far from us. Certainly, there is some distance between us and God. That distance frightens us. Sometimes the distance seems to be incalculable, especially when we are told that millions of births have to be taken in order to reach God. This has been told to us, and is being told to us, again and again. It is not a question of an effort in one birth only. Several incarnations may have to be undergone by way of purification and self-discipline in order that one may reach that Supreme Almighty. This brings us into the well-known idea of the distance between us and God.

Simultaneous with this concept of distance between us and God, there is also the concept of futurity of the attainment of God. It is not something that can be attained just now; it is a matter for tomorrow. “I will attain God one day.” This “one day” implies some time in the future. So, somehow the concept of time also comes in when we conceive God in the traditional pattern. Because of the space concept in our mind, we feel that God is far away from us; there is a distance. The concept of distance is the concept of space. It has entered our brains to such an extent that we cannot think anything except in terms of

measurement – length, breadth, height, distance. So, God is away from us, measurably, by a distance. He is also a futurity in time, and He can be attained by hard effort. There is also a causative factor involved in the concept of the attainment of God. Space, time and cause – these are the conditioning factors of human thinking. Without these concepts, we can think nothing.

Hence, we are trying to cast God Himself into the mould, the crucible of this threefold determination of our thought – namely, space, time and cause. However, because the concept of space, time and cause involves objectivity, we cannot cast God into this mould. God is not external, not an object. You may ask me: “Why not? As God is the creator of the universe, the created beings like us may consider Him as the supreme object of adoration.” In fact, every religion considers God as the great supreme object of worship and possible attainment. But there is a lacuna even in this supreme concept of well-known religions. As God is, as you all know very well, the Final Reality, the Ultimate Existence beyond which there can be nothing, there cannot be even space, time and causation involved in Him in any manner whatsoever. So our ideas of distance between us and God, the futurity of God’s attainment and some kind of personal effort that is required in the form of aspiration for God may also require emendation. They have to be completely transformed and a trans-valuation may have to be effected.

If God is not spatially distant and temporally a futurity and He is not caused by some human effort, what sort of relation is there between us and God? Here is a point which

will be before us like a hard nut to crack. What is our relationship with God? If we say we are a part of God, we again bring the concept of space and time. If we say we are created by God, then also we bring space, time and causation. If we say we are a reflection of God, then also we bring something external to God's universality. Whatever we may say about ourselves in relation to God, in that statement of ours we are delimiting God and denying the universality and the ultimacy of Reality that is His essential characteristic.

The Upanishads take up this subject, and they want to break this hard nut; but, it is not as easy to break this nut as one may imagine. If we read the Upanishads, we will find ancient seekers undergoing tremendous hardships even in approaching these great Masters of yore, and undergoing disciplines which are unthinkably painful for weak wills and minds and bodies like ours. It is not merely that we are weak psycho-physically; we have other difficulties which are more important and crucial – namely, obstacles which will stand in the way of our contacting God.

Regarding the obstacles, I would like you to listen to one instance of the problem that is highlighted in the Upanishads before I actually try to touch upon the basic doctrine and the philosophy of the Upanishads. This problem, which will harass any person and probably no one in all this creation can escape, is in the introduction to the Katha Upanishad. It is a classical introduction, in a most poetic language. It touchingly expresses not only the processes of the inner disciplines that are required on our part in order to contact the Ultimate Reality, but it also



gives a picturesque description of what problems one has to face even in attempting to contact God. Many of you may be well acquainted with this story. I am repeating it because it is very interesting and it is worthwhile remembering as a guiding light for each one of us. It is a warning, and not merely an instruction.

There was an ardent seeker, a very brilliant young boy called Nachiketas. For some reason which is not important for us now, he came face to face with the Lord of Death – Yama, as he is called in the Sanskrit language. The story mentions to us that when he approached the abode of Yama, the Lord was away. He was not there. The boy, in an aspiring mood for receiving the greatest knowledge that one can think of, stood there for three days and nights, waiting for the arrival of the great master. He did not eat and he did not sleep because he was eager to come in contact with the holiest of holies, the master Yama Raja.

After three days and nights, the Lord appeared and said: “I am very sorry, my dear boy, that I made you stand here starving for three days and nights. I could not be present. As a recompense for the sufferings I inadvertently inflicted upon you by not being present here when you came, I request you to ask for three boons. I shall grant them just now.”

Nachiketas replied, “Well, my Lord, I am very grateful for the grant of these three boons and I shall tell you what these three boons could be in my case, which I love very much and are dear to me. Now I am before you, in the abode of death. When I return to the world, may I be received as a friend of the world, as something

commensurate with the law of the world, as harmonious with everything that operates in the world as rules and regulations. May I be affectionately treated and taken care of and considered with great love by everybody, including my father whom I have left and come to see you.”

There is a philosophical meaning behind this request of Nachiketas, to which we shall refer after some time. Now I am telling only the story behind it.

The great Master said, “Granted, this boon! When you go back to the world you shall be treated with friendliness, affectionately and endearingly, by everyone. Ask for the second boon.”

The second boon is something more difficult to understand, and many of you will not be able to make much sense of what it is.

“I have heard, great Master,” said the little boy, “there is something called Vaishvanara Agni, the all-pervading fire of the cosmos, by knowing which one knows all things. May I be initiated into this wisdom.”

“Yes. Granted!” replied Lord Yama.

All the requisite rituals were performed instantaneously and the boy Nachiketas was initiated into the secret of cosmic knowledge, omniscience, which follows automatically from meditation according to this technique of what is known as contemplation on the Vaishvanara Agni. This subject also we shall not touch deeply now.

“Ask for the third boon,” said the Lord of Death.

Here the boy threw something like a bombshell on the great master, which the master perhaps did not expect.

“Some say after departure, the soul ‘is’, and some say after departure the soul ‘is not’. I want to know what this mystery is,” said Nachiketas.

“No, this question you should not ask! I did not know that you would raise questions of this kind. Ask for something else, something better than this,” replied Lord Yama.

“Better than this? I don’t consider anything as better than this,” said the boy.

“No. I shall make you a king of the whole world, for as long a time as the world lasts. Are you happy? All the wealth of the world will be yours, the joys of heaven – not merely of this earth only – I grant just now. All the music and the dance, the gold and the silver, authority and kingship and rulership, here it is. Take it, but don’t put this question,” said Lord Yama.

“What is the matter?” asked Nachiketas. “You are prepared to give me the whole earth and heaven and all its joys for as long a time as the world lasts, but you will not answer this question.”

“No,” replied Lord Yama. “I made a mistake in allowing you to unconditionally ask for three boons. I did not know that you would harass me like this with the third boon.”

“No, Master; I have only one question. This must be answered,” said the boy.

“Not even the gods can answer this question; even they are in doubt. How will you understand?” said the Lord of Death.

“Even the gods cannot understand? That means you understand!” replied Nachiketas. “I am face to face with a

great master like you who knows the secret. Will I return foolhardy by obtaining the boon of the joys of the earth and the heaven, which are perishable? Today they are, tomorrow they are not. They wear out the senses. How can anyone enjoy the joys of earth or heaven unless the sense organs are strong? How long will the sense organs work? They become old and decrepit, and die. Who will enjoy the joys of earth and heaven; and, how long will they last? Even the longest life – you told me I can live long, as long as the world lasts – but the world will last how long? One day it will end. When that ends, the longest life becomes short. *Api sarvam jivitam alpam eva* (Katha 1.1.26). Take all your joys back, Master. All the earth and the heaven and the dance, music, gold, silver, you take back. Answer my question.”

Then the Upanishad goes into the great initiation which the master imparted to the boy Nachiketas, which is a subject by itself.

Now, is any one of us prepared to face this kind of encounter? If the whole earth becomes yours, you will jump just now. You will leave the hall and run. All of you will run from this hall because the whole earth is coming to you. That temptation becomes inevitable in the case of most of us because we do not understand the significance of the answer to this question. We think there are so many questions and this is also one question; and there so many answers and this is also one answer. What do we gain by knowing the answer to this question of whether the soul is there or not? Let it be; let it not be. We are so foolishly complacent and idiotically ignorant of the meaning of the

answer to the question that we do not see the truth behind it. Otherwise, why should there not be an answer? Why did Lord Yama deviate from the point and say, “Take something else; I will give you diamond and gold, but not the answer to this question”? What did he mean? What would he lose? There is something very problematical about it. That problem is the problem of the Upanishads. It cannot be handled like that, so easily. Why do we consider the answer to this question to be so simple that Yama could have immediately answered it? It is because of the fact that our mind is not yet prepared to comprehend the significance and the in-depth reality of this matter.

When we speak of the soul, we do not know what it is that we are speaking about, finally. It is a nebulous, flimsy, slippery object. What are we talking about when we say “self”? Everybody uses the word ‘self’. “I myself I have done this work.” “He himself is responsible for that mistake.” Do we not use the word ‘self’ in this manner? We are very well acquainted with the use of the word ‘self’: myself, yourself, himself, herself, itself – everywhere this ‘self’ comes in. It is so common in our daily life that we do not see any special significance in that usage at all. We do not see the significance because we do not know the meaning of the word ‘self’, and no dictionary gives us the correct meaning of this word. Even if the dictionary says it is you, one’s own Self, the basic Reality, the Atman, these are only words which will mean as little as the word ‘self’ itself. This is because here is a question of the handling of one’s self by one’s Self. You may ask me: “Why should I handle my self when there are more important things in the world? The

world is so rich and beautiful and grand and vast; instead of that I handle my self? What is the great thing that I am going to gain out of it?" Terrible is the problem. If you have answers and questions of this kind and you have doubts as to why this Self is to be considered as so important, you will not be immediately fit for the knowledge of the Upanishads. People had to stay with the Guru for many years.

I will tell you another story. One day Prajapati, the Creator, announced: "He who knows the Self knows all things."

Both the gods and the demons heard this and said, "Oh! Is it so? If one knows the Self, all things are known? Then it is worth knowing. Let us go."

"Great Master, we have come to learn the Self from you which – as you proclaimed – is the source of all knowledge." The gods sent Indra as their representative to obtain this wisdom. The demons sent Virochana as their leader. Both of them went to Prajapati and said, "We have come for Knowledge."

"Stay here and observe discipline for many years," replied Prajapati.

They stayed with Prajapati and served him for years and years – thirty-two years. After the lapse of so many years of discipline and hardship under the tutelage of Prajapati, these two persons approached him and said: "Now, please initiate us into the nature of the Self."

"Come on," Prajapati replied. "Go and look at yourself in a pan of water, a vessel filled with water. You will see something there. That is the Self."

“Oh, good; very good. It is a very simple matter,” they said.

They looked. What did they see? They saw their own face – their own body.

Virochana said, “Now I know what is the Self. This body is the Self.”

Virochana returned home and proclaimed to all the demons: “Now we know what the Self is, by knowing which all things are known and all things can be obtained. This very body is the Self. Eat, drink, be merry and enjoy.”

Thus it is that the philosophy of enjoyment, hedonism and materialism started with Virochana, because he concluded that the Ultimate Reality is this body, which was very clear from the instructions he received from Prajapati. And what does this body need? It needs eating, drinking, enjoying, sleeping and all the appurtenances of physicality.

Indra also got this knowledge. He left, thinking that he had this wisdom. On the way, he had a difficulty.

“Is this the Self? This thing? No, it cannot be. The Self is supposed to be a permanent entity, but this body is not permanent. So if the body gets old, the Self will also become old; if the body become sick, the Self will also become sick; if the body dies, the Self will also die. No, no, there is something wrong in this,” he thought.

Indra went to Prajapati again. Virochana did not come back; he was happy. But Indra came back.

“How is it that you have come back?” asked Prajapati.

“Sir, there is some problem. I see no good in this instruction.”

“What is the matter?”

“If this body falls sick, the Self will also fall sick. If the body dies, the Self will also die. Is this the Self?” asked Indra.

“Stay here another thirty-two years,” Prajapati said.

“Okay, I will stay,” replied Indra.

After thirty-two years, Indra went to Prajapati a second time and requested, “Please instruct me.”

“What you see in dream is the Self,” said Prajapati.

“Oh, I see; okay, good,” said Indra.

Indra left, but on the way he again had a problem: “Dream? What do I see in dream? I see in dream whatever I see in waking – the same thing. There is hunger and thirst. There is old age and decrepitude. There is even death in dream. All the difficulties and pains of life are capable of being experienced in dream also. The dream self also dies. No, this is no good.”

Indra again came back.

“Why have you come again?” asked Prajapati.

“There is some problem, sir,” replied Indra. “The dream self is fickle. It seems to be dying, just like the waking self about which you told me. I see no good in this instruction. Please give the correct instruction.”

“Stay another thirty-two years,” said Prajapati.

Indra stayed another thirty-two years, and then Prajapati told him, “What you see in the state of deep sleep, that is the Self.”

“Good” Indra said, and went away.

On the way, again a doubt arose. “What do I see in deep sleep? Nothing. It is like a negation of all things – darkness;



it is veritable death. Is this the Self? No, this is no good,” thought Indra. Again he went back.

“Oh, how are you here again?” asked Prajapati.

“Sir, this instruction is of no use. What do I see in deep sleep? I see complete darkness, negation, annihilation. So, is the Self an annihilation? No, I don’t see good in this instruction; please give me proper instruction.”

“Oh, I see. Stay again and undergo discipline here,” said Prajapati. This time it was for five years. Prajapati was a little considerate.

When Indra came back after five years, Prajapati said: “Now listen, Indra, my dear one. This Self is not what you can see with your eyes, because it is the Seer of things. How can you see it? This body is the seen; it is an object like any other object in this world. If the Ultimate Self, which is the Supreme Reality, is not an object that is perishable, it cannot be the body either. Otherwise, the Self will die along with the death of the body. What good is this knowledge of the Self? The Self is not what is seen in dream because in dream there is such fluctuation, fickleness of thought and veritable transition, transitoriness, and all the sorrows that are incumbent in the waking life. The waking perception also is not the Self. The dream, the waking are both not the Self. The sleeping experience also is not the Self. What you experience in the state of deep sleep is not the Self; it is a negation of it.”

Now, what is the Self? Here a little bit of in-depth thinking may be good. Every one of you has a good sleep in the night. Do you know that you slept last night? Were you endowed with any kind of consciousness, awareness in the

state of deep sleep? If you had no knowledge of any kind in the state of deep sleep, how are you now telling me that you slept last night? Who is telling this? You may say that you have a memory. How can there be a memory of an experience which is bereft of all consciousness? Can a stone remember anything? Were you a stone? Memory is a recollection of a past experience, and no experience can be called experience unless it is attended with a kind of awareness. So you cannot explain the fact of memory of sleep unless you concede somehow or the other, by the force of logic, that there was a kind of consciousness in sleep. Why you could not experience it is a different matter. By inference, logically, you conclude that there must have been some sort of an awareness. Did you exist in the state of deep sleep? Were you dead? No, you were not dead; you were existing. In the state of deep sleep, did you exist as this body? No. Did you exist as the mind? No, because the mind was not thinking. In sleep, you did not exist as the body and you did not exist as the mind. What else have you got with you?

Today, for instance, when you think of yourself, you think of the body-mind complex. "This body is me" or "this mind is me" or "the intellect is me" or "the psyche is me", and so on. Other than that, what else is there in you? But, did you exist in the state of deep sleep as something other than the body and the mind? You are forced to conclude: "Yes, I did exist." In what condition did you exist? "Not as body, not as mind." What else, sir? "I must have been there as only Existence." Existence of what? "It is not existence of what, it is not existence of anything because anything was

not there; it is existence of my Self.” You were conscious of the existence of your Self, though that consciousness was covered and you were not aware of it directly, for some reason – without which fact, memory of the sleep would have not been possible. You were consciousness. What kind of consciousness? Consciousness of something? Because when you say “I am conscious”, you always mean conscious of this world, this tree, these people, this mountain, etc. It was not a consciousness of something; it was consciousness of Being only – just Awareness of the fact of your existing. In Sanskrit we call this Consciousness *chit*, and the consciousness of Being is *chit-sat* or *sat-chit*. Were you happy? You were very, very happy. Otherwise, you would complain that you had slept yesterday and it was a painful thing. All the pains of life get abolished and they vanish. Even a great pain or agony or sickness or any other pain is negated in the state of deep sleep; you get rejuvenated. You feel happy when you wake up.

So you were existing, you were conscious, you were happy. Existence-Consciousness-Bliss was your real nature. What kind of existence? What kind of consciousness? What kind of bliss? Were you existing in some place only, or in some other place? You will say, “I was existing in one place only – on the bed.” Now, if you have been conscious of one point only, you would not be conscious of another point; you would exclude that which appears to be away from the point which is supposed to be your existence. “I was existing there – only on the cot, not elsewhere.” So, if you were not elsewhere, then the “elsewhere” must be there as outside the purview of your consciousness. If that is the

case, you were conscious of the fact that there was also something outside you. When you say “I was only in one place”, you are making a reference to the existence of other things or other places or other spots, of which you had no knowledge. If you had no knowledge of that which is not in your location, how could you say that there were things of which you had no knowledge? You make a contradiction in your statement. As there is a difficulty in finding out what condition you were in the state of deep sleep, there is another difficulty here in knowing what kind of consciousness it was that was prevailing in the state of deep sleep.

Prajapati goes deep into this question and gives a tremendously illuminating answer. “This Consciousness was not of some particular thing like this self or that self or this thing or that thing, because there was no question of this thing and that thing there. It was Pure Being as such, which is the Being of all things. Universal Consciousness was prevailing there; that is the reason why you are so happy. If it had been finite consciousness, you would have woken up miserably from sleep.”

Hence, the great teaching of Prajapati to Indra was that the Self is Universal Existence and Universal Consciousness. The difficulty, the problem before us, is how to conceive this Universality which is supposed to be inseparable from us – in other words, how to conceive our own Universality while we are sunk in this body consciousness, social consciousness, political consciousness and a hundred types of irrelevant consciousnesses.

I have placed before you this little introduction in order to present the teaching of the Upanishads, which is the knowledge of the Self.

## Session 3

### PREPARATION FOR UPANISHADIC STUDY

I made a brief reference to the natural difficulty that one may feel in understanding the subject of the Upanishads, that difficulty being the nature of the Upanishadic discussion itself. It is the subject of the Atman, but it is more easily heard than clearly understood.

All our educational technology these days, as education is generally understood, concerns itself with objects of perception and intellectual understanding. The Atman is not a subject which can be perceived through the sense organs, nor can it be understood intellectually by any kind of logical acumen. The reason is that the Atman is yourself; it is not somebody else. In all courses of knowledge and procedures of study, you place yourselves in the position or context of students, and you consider the world of objects outside as subjects of observation, experiment and study. In your education you do not study yourself; you study something other than your own self. You go to a college or a university and study subjects like mathematics, physics, chemistry, sociology and what not. All these subjects, which are so well placed before you in great detail, are external to yourself. Everything that you study, anywhere, is outside you. You do not study yourself in any course of study that has been made available to you.

But the Upanishad is a study of ourselves. *Atmanam viddhi* is the great oracle of the Upanishad: "Know thyself and be free." It is something astounding to hear that you can be free by knowing your own self. It is so because of the fact that you have a feeling generally, in the work-a-day life

of the world, that you become free only when you know the world outside. You study sociology, history economics, and what not – external studies and empirical observations – for the purpose of acquiring freedom in life. The more are you educated, the more you seem to be free in human society. But the Upanishad says this knowledge cannot make you free. It is only the knowledge of your own self that can assure you true freedom.

The reason for this opinion of the Upanishads is very deep-rooted. How is it that freedom is embedded in you only, and not anywhere else? I mentioned on the very first day that this particular something, which the Upanishads call the Atman, is not a prerogative of any particular individual. It is not something that is in you only; it is the pure subjectivity of all things. The deepest essence of anything and everything in the universe is what is called the Atman. So the study of the Atman is not the study of the self of some person, Mr. So-and-so; it is the study of the self of every Mr. So-and-so. Everything, everyone – all things – are a pure subjectivity in themselves.

There is an 'I-ness' or a feeling of self-identity even in a tree, which grows according to its own predilection for the purpose of its own survival. The instinct of survival is present in each and every living entity – and perhaps even in non-living elements, like an atom. They maintain an identity of themselves. The Atman may be said to be the characteristic of the self-identity of everything. You cannot become other than what you are. You are something, and you want to be that thing only, and you cannot be something else. 'A' is 'A'; 'A' cannot be 'B'. This is the law

of identity in logic. Everything is what it is; nothing can be other than what it is. There is a peculiar inherent tendency of the maintenance of self-identity in all things. You have to listen carefully to every word that I speak. This inherent tendency in everything in respect of the maintenance of that vehement form of self-identity consciousness is the Atman.

The Atman is not merely a force that causes this impulse of self-identity in things, it is also a consciousness of there being such a self-identity. You are what you are, but not only that; you are also aware that you are what we are. So it exists, and it is also conscious that it exists. Therefore, the Atman is existence, and it is also consciousness. Now, what sort of existence? It is the existence of the fact that it cannot be identified with anything other than itself. This is the characteristic of pure subjectivity. You cannot become somebody else. Rama cannot become Krishna, Krishna cannot become Jesus, Jesus cannot become Thomas, and so on. A particular thing is just that particular thing for the reason that it is constituted of characteristics that make that thing only that thing. This cohesive element which brings the parts of your personality into a centrality of apprehension, awareness, is the work of the Atman within.

To repeat once again what I told you a few minutes ago, this tendency is present in everything and everyone. Therefore, the study of the Atman is not the study of something somewhere; it is the study of everything. I hope you catch what I am saying. The study of the Atman is the study of the essence of everything anywhere because of the



fact that everything everywhere has this Atman. There is an Atman in all things in the sense that they maintain an identity-consciousness of themselves. So the Atman has a peculiar characteristic of being just what it is. That is to say, it cannot be an object of anyone. The self-identity aspect of consciousness, which is the Atman, cannot become Anatman, to put it in the Sanskrit language. The Atman cannot become Anatman. The Self cannot become not-Self. The subject cannot become the object. Consciousness cannot become matter. You cannot become somebody else.

This is something that will follow from a proper analysis of the nature of what is called the Atman – the great, grand, magnificent subject of the Upanishads. Inasmuch as this is something which you have never heard in your life, something which nobody has taught you anywhere in any educational institution, something that cannot be included in the curriculum of any kind of science, arts or humanities in the ordinary sense of the term, it is astounding for you. That is the reason why the Upanishads insist that it is a secret knowledge. It is not a subject for public oration. It is secret because it cannot be understood by any amount of scratching your head. The reason is, you are studying your Self as a basic principle – this ‘Self’ not being the person ‘you’, this physical body-mind complex, but the principle that is the principle of all things.

Therefore, the study of the Atman is the study of first principles. The philosophy of the Atman is the fundamental philosophy. When that is known, we have known the secret of all things. It is the vital spot of every individual, of

anything in the universe. This knowledge is not communicated by merely reading books in a library. It is possible to acquire it through hard discipline. The mind of the human being is usually characterised by three defects, and any kind of self-discipline implies the avoiding of these defects somehow or other – the scrubbing out of the defect-ridden personality of the individual. In Sanskrit, this threefold defect of the human mind is called *mala*, *vikshepa* and *avarana*.

*Mala* means dirt, something like a thick coating over a clean mirror, preventing reflection of light in it. Dirt is that which covers the essential nature of an object, like a thick coating of dust, etc., on a mirror. There is some such thing covering the mind of the human being also, on account of which correct knowledge is not reflected in the mind, just as a mirror that is covered over with dust cannot reflect sunlight. So some step has to be taken in order to see that this dirt of the mind is scrubbed off.

The other defect of the mind is known as *vikshepa* – which is fickleness; the inability to concentrate on anything for a long time. Instability is the basic nature of the mind. It thinks twenty things in one minute and is not able to fix its attention on one thing, even for a few seconds. These are the superficial aspects of the defects of the mind.

But there is a deeper defect known as *avarana*. It is like a thick veil over the mind, a black curtain, as it were, which totally prohibits the entry of the rays of light into the mind. The Atman is pure subjectivity and, therefore, the impulsion of the mind to move outward in the direction of sense objects is an anti-Atman activity taking place in the

mind, a movement towards the not-Self. Any psychic operation, any modification of the mind in the direction of anything other than what the Self is, is to be considered as impelled by some dirt in the mind.

Sometimes the mind operates like a prism which deflects rays of light in various forms and in various hues. It is up to each person to consider for one's own self what are the thoughts that generally arise in the mind from morning to evening. You may be doing anything, but what are you thinking in the mind? This is what is important. The thoughts which take you wholly in the direction of what you are not and engage your psychic attention on things which are not the Self – these thoughts should be considered as a serious infection in the mind itself.

Since basically everybody is what one is, and even when one is operating in the direction of a so-called sense-object, through the perceptive activity of the senses, what is actually happening is that one particular psycho-physical location of this universal Self – it is universal because it is present in all beings – tries to impinge upon another such location in the form of an object outside. It wrongly considers another thing as an object because of the movement of the Atman consciousness through the eyes and the various sense organs.

There is a tendency inherent in the human mind by which the pure subjectivity, which is the consciousness of the Atman, is pulled, as it were, in the direction of what it is not, and is compelled to be aware of what it is not in the form of sense-perception. Not only that, it cannot be continuously conscious of one particular object. Now it is

aware of this; now it is aware of another thing. It moves from object to object. The tendency to move in the direction of what the Atman is not – the impulsion towards externality of objects – is the dirt, or *mala*, as it is called. The impossibility of fixing the mind on anything continuously is the distraction, or the *vikshepa*. The reason why such an impulse has arisen at all is the *avarana*, or the veil. These three defects have to be removed gradually by protracted self-discipline coupled with proper instruction. It takes its own time.

There are techniques of yoga practice known as *karma*, *bhakti* and *jnana* – or *karma*, *upasana* and *jnana*. *Karma* is activity, work, performance of any kind – discharge of one's duty, we may say. This impulsion of the mind to always move in the direction of objects outside is due to a desire that is present in the mind to grab something from outside and make good a particular lacunae that it feels in itself. This tragic movement of the mind in the direction of objects for the purpose of fulfillment of selfish desires can be obviated only by a certain type of activity called *karma*. *Karma* does not mean any kind of work, but a specific kind of work. Everybody is doing some work; everybody is busy in this world, but it does not mean that they are doing yoga in the form of work. Work becomes yoga only when the performance of work is free from the impulse of selfishness.

When you do a work, you must put a question to yourself: "What is the reason behind engaging in that work? Is it because there is some extraneous or ulterior motive behind that work? Or is it done for mere self-purification? You must distinguish between work done as a job and work

done as a duty. A duty may not apparently bring you a material benefit at the very outset, but it will bring you an invisible benefit. That is why duty is adored so much everywhere and people say you must do your duty. If duty is not so very important, but a remunerative job is the only thing that is important, then insistence on duty would be out of point.

Everybody says duty must be done; but, what is duty? Work done as a duty alone can purify; no other work can purify the self. It is not any kind of labour that can be regarded as *karma* yoga. So, what is this duty that we are talking of which is going to chasten the personality of the individual, and purify it? Briefly it can be called unselfish action. It is a work that you do for the benefit that may accrue to a larger dimension of reality, and not merely to the localised entity called your own individual self.

When you serve people, you are to always bear in mind the reason why this service is done at all. Mostly, the reason is buried underneath. You have social reasons, political reasons, economic reasons and family considerations when you do any work in the form of service of people. But service which is spiritually oriented is not a social work or a political activity, nor is it connected even with family maintenance. It is actually a service done to your own self.

How is that so? You may put a question: In what way is the service of people, for instance, a service to you own self? Remember the few words that I spoke a little while ago, that one's essential being is also the essential being of everybody else. So the people that you see outside, even the world of space-time, is a wider dimension of the selfhood which is

your own pure subjectivity. This is a subject that is a little difficult to understand, and is to be listened to with great caution and care. The service that you render to others – even to a dog, let alone human beings, even feeding manure to a tree for its sustenance or taking care of anything whatsoever – is not to be done with any kind of ulterior motive, much less even the consideration that it is something outside you.

Work becomes purely a spiritual form of worship only when the character of selfhood is introduced into the area of this performance of work and into the location of the direction towards which your work is motivated. You are serving your own self when you serve humanity. People sometimes glibly say, “Worship of man is worship of God.” It is just a manner of speaking, without understanding what they mean. How does man become God? You know very well that no man can be equal to God. So how do you say that service of man is equal to service of God?

Therefore, merely talking in a social sense does not bring much meaning. It has a significance that is deeper than the social cloak that it bears – namely, the essential being of each person is present in every other person also. So when you love your neighbor as yourself, you love that person not because that person is your neighbor in the sense of social nearness, but because there is a nearness which is spiritual. The person is near to you as a spiritual entity, as part of the same self that is you, rather than a nearness that is measurable by a distance of yards or kilometres.

The spiritual concept of work is the great theme of the Bhagavadgita. The whole theme of the Bhagavadgita is how we can conduct our activity in the sense of a transmutation of all its values into spiritual worship. Actually, service is not service done to anybody else – that term ‘else’ must be removed from the sentence. It is service done to a larger area of one’s own self. This idea can be planted in one’s own mind by doing service of any kind, whether it is service of Guru, service of mankind, or even work in an office without laying too much emphasis on the salary aspect, etc. If the administration is well managed, the salary will come of its own accord – you need not cry for it – and this universe is a well-managed organisation. It is not a political system which constantly requires amendment of laws and regulations. Everything is systematically ordained and, therefore, you need not have any doubt in your mind whether you gain anything at all by doing service in this manner. When you serve your own larger self, which becomes largest when it is a service done to the universe as a whole, virtually you are serving God, because the largest self is God. And it is an expanded form of your own self. This is the point to be borne in mind. This has to be borne in mind again and again because of the fact that this is the subject of the Upanishads.

So this dirt of the mind, so-called, the *mala* or the impurity that compels the mind to move in the direction of sense objects, can be scrubbed off by work – hard work, service, labour – provided it is in the spirit of a service done to a larger self of one’s own self. Then work becomes worship and *karma* becomes *karma yoga*.

A discipline of this kind was instituted in earlier days when it was obligatory on the part of students to serve their Masters and learn under their tutelage. Narada, a master in all the arts and sciences conceivable by the human mind, went humbly to the great divine sage Sanatkumara, as it is recorded in the Chhandogya Upanishad.

“I am unhappy, great Master,” said Narada.

“What have you learned already, Narada?” asked the sage Sanatkumara.

“All the things in the world, all the sciences, astronomy, physics, psychology, axiology, aesthetics, ethics, civics, astrology, economics, politics, religions, philosophy – there is nothing that I do not know. But I have no peace of mind,” replied Narada.

The great Master said: “All this that you have learned is only words. You have not gone to the depths of things; the Atman has not been studied. You have only collected words, names and information about the outer structure of things. The name and the form complex of things have been made available to you by the studies that you have enumerated just now, as a series of learning.”

Likewise, in the Upanishads we have instances of great seekers humbly moving towards sages and saints for the purpose of making themselves fit to receive this knowledge. Even after achieving considerable success in purifying the mind of this dross of its tendency to move in the direction of objects of sense – by duty, by service, by unselfish work – the mind will refuse to concentrate on this subject. It has, as I mentioned, very fleeting ideas, one of which is what I have been enumerating just now.



The other is the incapacity of the mind to fix itself on anything for a long time. Try to think of something for a long time, continuously. Let us see what happens. Go on looking at this tree and thinking only about this tree, and about nothing else. After a few minutes you will think of another tree nearby. You will think of the mountain in front. You will look at the river; you will look at the buildings and at people moving about. Distraction is another malady of the mind. How will consciousness rest itself in its pure subjectivity, which is the Atman, if this fickleness continues for a long time and thus makes it impossible for one to be aware of anything other than what is outside?

But, there is a greater danger – namely, the inability to know why this discipline is to be undergone at all. “What for is all this study, sir, finally? What do I gain?” You bring a business mentality once again: “What do I gain by way of profit?” The mind of the human being is made in such a way that it will not undertake any kind of work, project or activity unless it is told that something will follow. This is exactly what the Bhagavadgita has condemned. You should not expect anything to follow from the pure subjectivity aspect of the work because that which follows, as it were, is a futurity which you are trying to inject into the present. You are creating a conflict between the present and the future. Naturally, there is a difference between the present and the future when we think of the future possibility of attainment, or obtaining an objective far ahead in time as a fruit accruing to the work that we are doing at this moment, in the present. But the Atman is a present; it is not a future.

The reason or the rationale behind this study, this activity, is something beyond reason itself. The reason behind the need for the study of the nature of the Atman is super-rational. What can be more important than your own self? Is any burden of material value superior to your own existence? Has the world any meaning minus you? Let your existence be isolated completely; you will find that the world will stand as a series of zeros or ciphers unless there is a single stroke of a figure that makes sense and which is the Atman who does things.

There is a screen covering the consciousness of this pure subjectivity in oneself. That screen is called *avarana*, the third defect of the mind. Dross, physical impurity, is removed by *karma* yoga, or the performance of unselfish action. The fickleness of the mind is subdued by *upasana*, or devout worship. And *avarana*, or the veil, is removed by *jnana*, or wisdom of life. The Bhagavadgita is a standard gospel on the art of *karma* yoga, unselfish spiritual activity. The Epics and the Puranas highlight the path of devotion – *bhakti* or *upasana* – love of God. The Upanishads deal with *jnana*, or wisdom of the Ultimate Reality.

Thus, this teaching that is going to be imparted to you is not to be taken as a diversion from the ordinary regime of life, but as a very serious matter which will polish your personality, chasten your individuality and make you a perfect individual, not only in your own self but also in human society. The teaching is a spiritual discipline; it is not just intellectual information.

I have briefly told you something about the nature of *karma* yoga, or unselfish action – performance of duty for

duty's sake as a standard method laid down before us by the ancient masters for cleansing the mind of the dross of extraneous desires for sense objects – and *upasana* is the love of God that you evince in your own self by daily worship performed in whatever way you would like to do it.

In the beginning when you conceive of the Supreme Being, you have a spatio-temporal imagination of that Being. God is very big, very large, very far away, very great, adorable; you offer your prostrations to that Almighty as something lovable. Even the Upanishads sometimes refer to the Supreme Absolute as the most lovable. *Vanam* means adorable; that Being is the most adorable. That thing which you call God, that thing which pulls your attention in its own direction, that which is the Ultimate Reality of things, that which is the Self of the cosmos, is the most magnificent, beloved, lovable, beautiful, most essential of all beings. And one who loves this Ultimate Being as the most lovable is loved by the whole world. You attract things towards yourself because you are attracted towards that which is everywhere. This is the best way of making friends in this world. You need not read Dale Carnegie, etc. If you are attracted towards that which is everywhere, wholly and solely, the entire world will be attracted towards you as a natural consequence of the attraction that you feel towards that Ultimate Reality. This is how you can honestly love it, if you want to be loved by others. How can you expect love from anybody if you yourself have no love for that which is the essence of all things?

Worship, or *upasana*, is conducted in many ways: by ritualistic methods as it is done in temples or before the

altar in one's own house, by *japa* or recitation of the Divine Name, in *japa sadhana*, by prayer which is offered in the form of actual articulation of voice or even mentally, or by the study of scriptures. All these constitute part of *upasana*, adoration, the feeling of love for that which is supremely divine.

All this process will have to be carried on for a considerable period of time in order that the fickleness of the mind may be subdued. Otherwise, if you give scant attention to this difficulty in the mind, you will find that you will not be able to appreciate the methodology prescribed in the Upanishads for the realisation of the Atman. You will not only not be able to do this, you will also have a difficulty in even knowing why this meditation is carried on at all, because many people may honestly feel a difficulty in knowing what will happen to them after attaining God. Everybody knows that one has to attain God, but what will happen to you afterwards? You cannot easily answer this question because you still have a defective understanding of what you are and, therefore, there is a defect persisting even in your attempt to know what will happen to you at that time. However, by a protracted practice of *upasana*, by worship, by *japa sadhana*, by *svadhya*, by *jnana*, and your own notion of God, whatever that notion may be, the fickleness of the mind comes down. It will become attentive.

After having sufficiently undergone this discipline by which the distraction of the mind is subdued and also the impulse towards sense objects is curbed, you can become good students of the Upanishadic philosophy.

In the Upanishads, three disciplines are referred to, which are equivalent to what I meant as *karma*, *bhakti* and *jnana* – namely, sacrifice, austerity and Guru *pasakyti*, approaching a master for teaching. In ancient Vedic terminology, sacrifice meant, of course, the offering of holy oblations into the sacred fire, but sacrifice may also mean mentally offering anything that one would like to dedicate to God. There can be externally performed sacrifice, or *yajna* – or a mentally conceived *yajna*. You can be charitable by an external gesture or you can be charitable in your own feeling. A charitable feeling is more important than a charitable gesture. I am not going to dilate upon the subject of sacrifice just now, as many of you may know what it actually means, and as it is not the main subject of our study.

Austerity is very important. *Tapas* is the pre-eminent prescription of the Upanishads for self-control, which actually means the inhibition or abstraction of the tendency of the mind to move towards things other than the Self. Austerity, or *tapas*, can be performed or carried on gradually by a systematic adoption of graduated methods.

The first thing you can do in your life towards performance of austerity is to avoid luxury and a happy-go-lucky attitude. You should have or keep with you only those things which are necessary for you, and should not keep those things which are not essential for a reasonably comfortable existence. This is the first step that you can take in austerity. Something is necessary for you under certain given conditions – okay, granted – but you need not ask for more than that. Eating, sleeping and comforts of any

kind have to be within the limit of the exigency that you feel under the conditions that you are living, for the work that you are doing, etc, and you need not go beyond that limit. This is the first step that you may take towards austerity.

Austerity is physical, verbal and mental. You have to be restrained not only in your physical appurtenances but also in the words that you speak and the acts that you do. That is, you should not cause any kind of disharmony, incongruity in the atmosphere, and towards that end you may manipulate and adjust yourself ably for being a humane individual, a good person, in the sense that your presence does not cause conflict with anyone. In eating and in other well-known comforts of life, maintain a minimum, to the extent that it is absolutely essential. Here also a note of caution has to be exercised – namely, that austerity does not mean torture of the body, nor does it mean indulgence. The path of the spirit is a *via media*; the golden mean is the path of spirituality.

There is the well-known incident often cited in connection with an event that took place in the life of Buddha, or perhaps it is also connected with Raja Janaka's life. Some angels were playing a stringed instrument and they said, "Tune not the sitar too high or too low. If the string of the sitar is tuned too tight – hence, high – it will not produce music; it may even snap. If it is too low, it will make a dull humming sound; it will not give music." Neither this extreme nor that extreme is the path of the spirit. Any kind of suffering is to be avoided. Over-indulgence is also to be avoided. Therefore, austerity is also

a cautious exercise of one's demeanour in respect of one's own self as well as in respect of others.

Hence, the Upanishad prescribes sacrifice, *yajna*, as one method or means of self-discipline, and the other method is austerity, self-control. Self-control is actually taking all necessary steps available for enabling the mind to fix its attention on the root of its own existence – the Self that is behind the mind, the real you that is so valuable to you. When it is a question of yourself, you would like to abandon everything else for the sake of yourself, meaning thereby that the importance that you attach to yourself, for some reason or other, surpasses the importance that you feel towards anything else in the world.

After sacrifice and austerity, there is the most important teaching – the third, which is study under a teacher, a competent master who has trodden the path, who knows the pitfalls, who knows the difficulties, who treats you as a physician treats his patients. With these methods, the dirt of the mind is scrubbed off, the fickleness is brought down, the veil covering the Atman is lifted gradually and the light of the sun of the Pure Spirit sheds its radiance automatically from within one's own self. Knowledge will arise from within you. This is why it is said that when you know yourself, you know everything. Know thyself and be free – *atmanam viddhi*.

## Session 4

### THE ISAVASYA UPANISHAD

Of the many Upanishads, I mentioned the names of ten that are very important. Among these ten, one is known as the Isavasya Upanishad. Inasmuch as it occurs in the mantra portion, or the Samhita part of the Vedas, it is also called the Mantra Upanishad. Though it is very short, it is a very important Upanishad.

In a sense, this Isavasya Upanishad gives us four important instructions. Four types of knowledge are imparted to us by this Upanishad. Firstly, the Creator pervades the whole of creation. Secondly, everyone is to do one's duty. Thirdly, knowledge and action have to be combined and not be considered as opposites. Fourthly, we should view God and the world as being in a state of harmony, not as opposed to each other.

*Isavasyam idam sarvam yat kim ca jagatyam jagat, tena tyaktena bhunjitha, ma gridhah kasyasvid dhanam* (Isa 1) is the first mantra of the Isavasya Upanishad. This mantra says: "All this is enveloped by the Supreme Being." The word 'enveloped' has to be understood in its proper connotation. I am enveloped here by this piece of cloth. You are enveloped by a shirt. Is it in this sense that the Creator envelops the universe, or is there any other meaning implied in this great statement? The philosophies, or Darshanas as they are called, have many things to tell us about this matter.

The Creator, Whom we call God, manifests this universe, creates this universe. In what manner does He create the universe? There are instances of someone



creating something in this world. A carpenter creates a table or a chair. A potter creates a mud pot. Is this the way in which God creates the world? Some say that this is not the way in which God creates, because a carpenter requires some tool and some material out of which and through which he can manufacture a table or some furniture. But, where is the instrument or tool, and where is the material for God? If we say that there is some material outside God, then there will be another difficult question: "Who created this material?" If God created the world out of some existent material, someone must have created that material also. Is God Himself the creator of that material wood or furniture of this cosmos? The question is a vicious one; it is what is called 'begging the question'. Hence, problems connected with the creation of the world do not seem to be easily solvable by merely assuming that there was some material before God at the time of the creation of this universe. Though there are some thinkers and philosophers who hold this opinion that there is an eternally existing material out of which God fashions this universe, there are others who feel that this is not the proper way of visualising the fact of creation.

God must have modified Himself into this universe, as milk modifies itself into yogurt or curd. Otherwise, we cannot explain how God creates this world. The assumption of a totally independent material existence outside God is not permissible for various reasons, one of the reasons being that it would limit God to a finite entity. Finitude is that state of being which has something outside it, another finite. Everyone is limited and everyone is finite

because of the existence of other finitudes – in the sense that there are things and persons outside every person and thing. God also would become finite because the existence of another thing outside God, such as the material for creation, would condition God to a limited existence. Therefore, the doctrine that the creation of the world came out of an already-existing material would be a contending factor before God, an opposition to God. God would then not be infinite. Therefore, God must Himself have become this universe. This is the second doctrine.

The first doctrine is called Arambhavada. A creation out of something and producing something totally new is the doctrine of Arambhavada, which involves multiplicity and duality in creation. As I mentioned, the assumption of a duality between God and the material of creation would limit God to a finite existence and He would be mortal like anybody else. He would no more be immortal. This is the reason why the Parinama doctrine, which is the second one, the transformation theory, was conceived by certain philosophers. God has become this universe, as milk has become curd.

However, there was a third set of philosophers who thought that this is also not a very reasonable way of arguing the case. How can God modify Himself? That would mean He transforms Himself into something else. Milk can never become milk again, after it has become curd. It is destroyed; it has become something else. 'A' has become 'B'. When 'A' becomes 'B', 'A' ceases to exist afterwards. There would be no God. There would be only creation, as there would be only curd and no milk in the act

of transformation. Where is the point in searching for God and aspiring for the attainment of God if He does not exist at all and He has already destroyed Himself by a self-modification of His being into the form of this cosmos? This theory, known as Parinamavada, is not to be regarded as very appropriate to God's eternity and immortality.

What is the meaning of saying that God pervades the whole cosmos? When we dip a piece of cloth into a bucket full of water, we may see the water pervading the entire cloth. Water inundates every fibre of that fabric. Is this the way in which God pervades things? No, it cannot be. Here again, a distinction is created between the pervading principle and that which is pervaded. The original difficulty once again creeps in. Cloth can never become water even if it appears that water has gone into every fibre of the cloth, because it can be dried till there is no water left. Therefore, one must understand the pervasion theory carefully. Actually, it is believed that nobody can answer this question as to how creation came at all. In any way we try to describe the process, we seem to fail. We have no clear-cut, logical, conclusive answer.

There was a saint, it is told, who was sitting on the shore of the ocean and contemplating this great subject as to how God could have created this world, and in what manner. The story goes that while the saint was contemplating on this subject and wanting to get an answer, suddenly a boy appeared nearby – a divine being, who came to instruct this saint. The boy held a mud pot that had several holes at the bottom, and he was using it to scoop up water from the sea and throw it on the bank. He was doing it continuously – a

hundred and twenty times he went on scooping and pouring.

The saint asked, "Hey, little boy, what are you doing?"

"I am emptying the ocean," replied the boy.

"Have you any sense?" asked the saint. "Firstly, the ocean cannot be emptied; secondly, not with this little pot with holes in it."

"Great Master," replied the boy, "if you can get an answer to the question you have in your mind, I can empty the ocean."

They say that God Himself appeared in the form of the boy. No philosopher has finally succeeded in giving us a conclusive answer to this question.

There were others who escaped this problem by saying that God never created the world and, therefore, there is no problem. However, we will be very worried if the answer indicates that God never created the world. If that is the case, what are these problems before us? Do we also not exist? It would mean that you also do not exist; I also do not exist. That will be the conclusion if we say that God never created the world. It is stunning and astonishing, and seems to be apparently more unacceptable than any other answer. This is the creation theory and the acosmic theory, as they both are called. The latter one, called acosmic, holds the doctrine that creation never took place.

I will tell you, in a homely way, why these people say so. Why should you think that creation never took place when actually you can see solid objects in front of you? Here is a little illustration. There is a big boulder, a stone. You see the stone; it is very hard and heavy, and you can touch it as a

solid object. Bring a sufficiently powerful microscope and look at this stone. You will find that the stone is a heap of very minute, fly-like, insect-like entities called molecules. It is a heap of certain things, and not one solid object. Bring another, more powerful microscope, more powerful than the earlier one. Even the molecules will not be seen there. There will be still finer elements looking like almost non-cognisable particles which are called atoms. Bring a still more powerful microscope. You will find that even these little particles melt into a continuum of energy, or force, which impinges on the energy centres which are other atoms. It looks as if there is one sea of force everywhere, an indistinguishable continuum. What has happened to the stone? Can you say that this sea of force, these atoms, one day thought: "Let us become a stone"? If the atoms have really become the stone, they will not be there for you to see through the microscope. You will conclude that they have never become the stone. It is only your vision that presents the perception of a solid object. These so-called 'things' – molecules, atoms, energy centres, etc. – never became the stone. They were never transformed into the stone. They did not create the stone. They exist and have always existed in the same condition as they were when you perceived them through a powerful perception. The only difference is that in one case our perception is gross, and in another case it is subtle and correct. The stone has not been created, though it is solidly perceivable. In the same way, the world has not been created, though it is visible to the eyes. This doctrine is too much for us. We shall put it in our pockets and never talk about it again.

*Isavasyam idam sarvam*: “This creation is enveloped by the Almighty Supreme Being.” From the conclusion that we can draw out of our considerations on the very first session, it would follow that there is something which cannot be divided into parts, which is infinite in its nature, which is existing everywhere to such an extent that it may appear that it is the only thing existing. That only-existing ‘Something’ is the Ishvara that the Isavasya Upanishad speaks of. You have to somehow or other accommodate your mental operations to get tuned up to this interesting situation of there being Something which Alone Is – at all times, and outside which nothing can be. This conclusion follows from the nature of consciousness, whose structure we tried to analyse on the very first day.

Consciousness cannot be in some place because to be conscious that consciousness is in this ‘some place’, it has also to be somewhere else – where it now appears not to be. Therefore, consciousness cannot deny that it exists in another place as well, somewhere else, because such denial is impossible unless it is already present there at the spot which is being denied. Therefore, the nature of consciousness is universal. This is the nature of the Ultimate Reality. This is what we call God. This is what we call Ishvara. Therefore, the pervasion of this Supreme Consciousness, which is the Absolute Reality, is not pervasion – something entering into something else – in the ordinary sense of the term. It is the One Thing being all things. In a great mantra of the Rig Veda we are told: *ekam sad vipra bahudha vadanti* (R.V. 1.164.46). “The one Being – poets, sages, and masters call It by different names” such

as Indra, Mitra, Varuna, Agni, and so on. Therefore, this world of perception, this universe of variety, is a perceptual presentation and not actually a modification, because eternal things cannot modify themselves. If eternity modifies itself, it becomes a temporal something. That which is above time cannot become something in time.

This is the tough doctrine of creation, hard to understand, which will never enter the brain of a person; and even if it enters, it will not stay there for a long time. So, be cautious about this. The great sage of the Upanishad, therefore, tells us: “Whatever is apparently moving or not moving – *yat kim ca jagatyam jagat tat sarvam* – all that is Ishvara.” You must be able to convince yourself as to the way in which God, Ishvara – the Ultimate Being – can be everywhere and also be everything. From this consideration it follows that God is not merely everywhere, He is also everything. “Knowing this, be happy without the sense of possessiveness in regard to any object,” is the second half of this mantra: *tena tyaktena bhunjitha, ma gridhah kasyasvid dhanam*.

You feel happy only if you have some property. A propertyless person is considered an unhappy person. People say: “I have nothing – neither land, nor house, nor money. My condition is pitiable.” If you obtain land, money and a house, you are happy. But the Upanishad says: “You will not be happy by acquiring land, money, house, etc.” Actually, possession is not the way of being happy. There is no such thing as possession. You cannot possess an area of land. It was already there, and was there even before you were born. Can you grab a piece of land, which is the

earth? How can you grab the earth? Even the house that we propose to purchase from somebody must have been there before you existed. What exactly do you mean by saying “I possess something”? Does that object enter into your body? Does the house seep into your flesh and bones? Does the land enter your brain, and is the money under your skin? Does it happen so? They always remain outside, just as they were outside even before you were born. Nobody has seen money entering into someone’s stomach.

For obvious reasons, a thing that is outside, totally, cannot become yours. How can you possess a thing that is not yours? But you somehow convince yourself that it is yours. You have a way of operating your mind and of convincing yourself: “This tree is mine from tomorrow because I have purchased it from someone.” Neither that person who got money from you really had it, nor have you really got this tree as you imagined. But the mental operation is so very important and so very tricky that it can make you happy or unhappy. If somebody has taken away something and kept it somewhere else, you consider it lost and you grieve that it has gone. It has not gone anywhere; it is in some other location. Now, suppose the location shifts. The object is placed in another location and your mind is adjustable to the idea that it is yours; you are happy. That which is capable of leaving you, for any reason whatsoever, cannot belong to you. A thing that is yours cannot leave you. Anything which can leave one day or the other is not yours, and there is nothing in this world which will not leave you one day or the other. Therefore, it cannot be considered as yours. Hence, you should not be under the



impression that you will be happy only because of possessions. In this wondrous universal context of the pervasion of God in all things and God being all things apart from being everywhere, who will possess what? Are you concocting some imaginary dream-like situation in which you can be falsely happy by a false sense of possession of existing or non-existing things?

Therefore, renounce attachment. It is another way of saying renounce the sense of possession. You do not grab anything; you cannot grab anything. Happiness is a state of being and not a consequence of possessing. God is not a possessor of the world; and do you believe that God is happy or unhappy? Is God very unhappy because He does not possess anything? Sometimes God is called Bholebaba, like Lord Siva who has not even a house to stay in. If God is the happiest of conceivable realities and if God has no possessions of any kind, then the highest happiness is not in possession. The more you feel the need to be alone to yourself as a state of being rather than a possessor of objects, the more happy will you be. The greater is the approximation that you strike to God's universal Existence, the greater also is your joy, your happiness.

Therefore, enjoy, be happy. The Upanishad does not say, "Be sorry." *Bhunjithah* - "Enjoy." Does God enjoy anything? Or is He starving? You will be wondering if the question itself has any meaning. God does not starve. He does not require any diet and, therefore, there is no question of starving. Why does He not require any diet? He is all things and so the diet is also Himself only. Therefore, where is the question of His grabbing it? If you consider

God as the Ultimate Reality and all others as lesser realities, or perhaps not realities at all, your welfare consists in your approximation to God's Existence in some way, to some extent, in some measure, and not in anything else.

So, enjoy everything without possessing anything. Can you enjoy a flower without plucking it from the garden? Here is the whole point. Why do you pluck things and want to say "it is mine"? Let it be there; let the flower be there, growing luxuriantly on the plant. Let it be happy as it is and ought to be, in its own location. Why do you want to cut it off and say it is yours? Would you like someone to say that you are his? Would you like to be a property of somebody? "You are my property from tomorrow." Would you like to be told this? You will say, "What kind of thing is this? How is it possible? I am an independent person. I am what I am and how can you possess me?" Nobody likes to be even a servant or a slave. It is a very unpleasant thing to become a servant, a slave, an underdog of somebody; and to say, "You are my property," is still worse. How would you expect anyone else to tolerate this statement of yours? Even the land would not like to be told, "You are mine from tomorrow onwards." This is not a joke; in fact, there is a reference to this in the Bhumi Gita of the Bhagavata, where the earth says: "Oh, so many kings have come and wanted to possess me! Nobody really possessed me. They went and I am here as I am. Nobody possessed me! So many kings walked over me and said, 'Oh, you are mine', but nobody took me. They went, and I remained." The Bhumi Gita is very interesting. You will find this in the Vishnu Purana and also in the Srimad Bhagavata Mahapurana.

Therefore, do not be under the impression that you require possessions in order to be happy. Being enhanced is the state of happiness. Your existence has to increase in its dimension; you have to become larger, not by adding some accretions from outside in the form of property, which can never become yours, but by your 'being' itself becoming larger. You have to learn this technique of how your being can become large.

If you can conceive of God, you can conceive of this large Being also. God is the largest expanse of Being, and is not 'becoming', or an object. Pure Sat, Existence as such, Being *qua* Being is Ishvara, God. And if you know He is the happiest pinnacle of existence without having any kind of association or possession from outside, you can also be happy in the same way, provided you are able to adjust your being in some measure at least, to the extent possible, with that Great Being of the Cosmos.

Hence, the first mantra of the Isavasya Upanishad says, *isavasyam idam sarvam yat kim ca jagatyam jagat*: "All this that you perceive, see, or contact through the sense organs is enveloped by God." I have tried to explain the meaning of this word 'enveloped', which is very intriguing, and deep connotation and significance are involved in it. "Knowing this, be happy." Merely by knowing this, you will be happy. Are you not happy merely by knowing that you are alive? Will you be happy by knowing that you will not be alive? The greatest happiness is in the feeling that you are hale and hearty. And if you are not hale and hearty, any kind of possession is not going to make you happy. Even in ordinary daily life you will realise that your being itself is a

source of happiness. “I am perfectly secure, hale and hearty; it makes me happy. However, if I am not that, then put all gold and silver on my head. Will I be happy? Crush me with the weight of a load of silver; what is the good if I am not hale and hearty?” Happiness is the condition of Being, which is you. Happiness is not some consequence or result that follows from accretion of objects into your so-called personality. This mantra is very difficult to understand. One great thinker said that if all the scriptures in the world were destroyed and if only this mantra is available to us, we need not learn anything else afterwards. Let this one mantra remain and all the scriptures be destroyed. This one verse is sufficient to save us: *Isavyam idam sarvam yat kim ca jagatyam jagat, tena tyaktena bhunjitha, ma gridhah kasyasvid dhanam* (Isa 1).

Do not be greedy. Do not be possessive. Do not say “I want, I want, I want.” You require nothing, finally. Even the richest people do not sleep on ten kilometres of land. They require six feet on which to sleep. Do you think a millionaire requires a longer, lengthier bed, several furlongs long, to sleep on? Will a rich person eat two quintals of food because he is rich? He will perhaps eat less than what you eat. These are confusions in the mind. Wealth and possession – accretion of objects, imagination that one has everything in this world – “I am the ruler of this earth” – these are rank illusions in the mind, and you will know this when the time comes. When everything goes, you will realise that you made a mistake in thinking that you had everything. You never brought anything when you came to this world. Are you trying to possess things which you did

not bring? How did you earn this property of the world when you did not bring it with you when you came? Actually, if you have earned this property, you could take it when you go. Why do you not take it with you? You have so much wealth that you have earned through your profession; take it with you when you go. Can you? If you cannot bring anything and if you cannot take anything either, how is it possible for you to possess anything in the middle? The logic is: that which is not in the beginning, and not in the end, is also not in the middle. It is a total delusion, which is hard to understand and difficult to appreciate. A bitter pill is this knowledge. But this is the truth, and this is what the first mantra of the Isavasya Upanishad says.

I have told you there are four instructions in this Upanishad. The first one is the fundamental, philosophical doctrine – the basic philosophy, not merely of this country, but of humanity as a whole. It is possible to thrust all religions into this one single verse of the Upanishad, i.e., the first verse – *isavasyam idam sarvam...*, as one can thrust things into a hold-all. All philosophies, all religions, all doctrines go into the hold-all of this one verse of the Isavasya Upanishad. Well, that is wonderful. This is the metaphysical foundation of philosophy and the highest peak of human thought.

The second mantra says: “Everyone has to do something.” Knowledge of the Supreme Being does not mean idleness of personality. This is something even more difficult to understand than the earlier mantra. You will say: “If God alone is, why should I do anything? I will keep

quiet.” Here, in saying so, you make the mistake of having a wrong notion about yourself. “I will keep quiet.” Which ‘I’ is keeping quiet? Is the body ‘I’ keeping quiet? Is the mind ‘I’ keeping quiet? What is meant when you say: “I shall keep quiet because God does all things and He is all things”? It is a consciousness of a peculiar condition of your personality that makes this statement. Here you have made a blunder. Your statement that you need not do anything implies your acceptance of your being an individual nevertheless, a body-mind complex, in spite of your theoretical and intellectual acceptance of the omnipresence of God. This is something very interesting, which may also look very difficult; but if you remember this, you may not have to learn anything else afterwards.

It is a wrong notion of yourself that makes you conclude that one can keep quiet without doing anything because God does all things. Then how do you come into existence as an idle person, if God exists everywhere and God is all things? Do you believe that you have also negated yourself, and your existence is abolished? If you really feel that God exists and He is all things, it is wonderful. If you are convinced that you do not exist and you have melted into the Cosmic Being, why should you feel the need to say that you need not do anything? In making this statement, you have made a mistake due to a wrong concept of your individuality that has crept in, even as you appear to be making a correct statement from your point of view.

The concept of the Absolute is the subject of the first mantra. The concept of individuality is the subject of the second mantra. What are you, in the light of this conclusion

that God pervades all things and God is everything? If you are cautious enough in exercising your thoughts in this context, you will be compelled to conclude – and feel, too – that you cannot exist at all. You do not any more exist. It has gone. Your so-called ‘me’ has gone into the Universal ‘I’. Such a feeling, intellectually, is appreciable and conceivable. Practically, you cannot accommodate yourself to this consciousness because you can feel this hard body when you touch it with your fingers. So the Upanishad says: “Do not be in a hurry. Go slowly. Do such things as will gradually widen the concept of your personality, or individuality, and make it commensurate with the supreme universal personality of God Himself. This is done by the duty which is to be performed.”

Yesterday I made a brief reference to the concept of duty. Duty is the work that you do in participation with a larger whole – an organisation, a family circumstance, a national setup or even the universe itself. Actually, work in a spiritual sense is not something that is done in some way, for some reason. “I am doing something” – that is not the point. The work that you do as a duty becomes valuable – and actually can be called duty and as work that has that a value in it – only if it is a sacrifice on your part by way of a participation in the welfare of a larger whole to which you belong. If you are in a family with five people, ten people, each member has to contribute something by way of a sacrifice of his personal interest for the welfare of a larger organisation, which is the group of individuals called the family. If each one sticks to his own guns, there will be no family. It will disintegrate. A family is a consciousness; it is

not a bundle of people. It is an awareness of oneself belonging to a total whole, which is what is called a family. It is a conceptual entity, not a physical body. So is an organisation; so is a nation. You cannot see the nation with your eyes. You see only mountains, rivers, trees and the ground. Nation is a concept, a consciousness of a totality of values to which you belong as a citizen thereof. When you say, "I am a citizen of this country," what is it that you actually mean? You are a citizen; it means you are a person, an entity that belongs to a total whole, which is not visible to the eyes. You have to participate in the welfare of the whole.

There are various wholes. The body itself is a whole. You have to take care of it, not torture it and kill it. The body also is an organism; it is an organisation. The family is an organism, an organisation. So is a state, a nation, an international setup, the United Nations organisation or the whole universe of creation. In each one, in each level, you have to be a participant and not be in opposition. You should not belong to the opposite party always. You should be a participant in the welfare of the whole to which you belong. This is the duty that you have to perform. Do work as long as you are alive in this world. There is no retirement from work of this kind. There may be retirement from office work, from industrial work and so on, but there is no retirement from duty because you retire from duty only when you cease to exist as an individual. As long as personality persists, duty continues. You may live for a hundred years, if possible – *satam jivema*. What will you do



for one hundred years? You will be doing duty. What is the duty?

A person who has not understood the meaning of the first mantra will not understand the meaning of the second mantra either. They go together as associates, like the right hand and the left hand. You will not be able to understand what duty is, in the sense of this self-sacrifice for the welfare of the whole, unless you know what the whole is. I gave you a traditional list of several wholes. The ultimate whole is the Absolute Being. All these lesser wholes are determined by the Supreme Whole. In every case you ought to be a participant. You have to participate in every way necessary for the welfare of your bodily and mental health. You should not destroy your mind and body. So also it is with your family, and so also with all the things that I have enumerated just now.

Therefore, you can be a very happy person by belonging to something, not by possessing something. The moment you belong to something, that something to which you belong will take care of you. Hence, privileges follow automatically from duties. However, these days people cry only for rights, and want no duties. "I have no work; I will sit outside. Bring my salary." This is against the law of the cosmos. You cannot expect remuneration without doing anything. If you understand what I said, you will be very happy.

## Session 5

### THE ISAVASYA UPANISHAD CONTINUED AND THE KENA UPANISHAD

We noticed that among the many things that the Isavasya Upanishad has to tell us, four important instructions may be considered as very relevant. Firstly, the first mantra of the Isavasya Upanishad tells us that the whole of creation is enveloped by God. We had the occasion to consider briefly the meaning of this word 'enveloped'. How does He pervade the cosmos? This subject we discussed previously.

It was also mentioned that you should be happy by being in communion with this creation of God, which is pervaded by Him; and your happiness does not consist in possession of objects of any kind, because any object that you wish to possess is an external feature, something unconnected with your own being. Happiness is proportionate to your approximation to God's Existence; and as God is Pure Being, happiness is connected to the extent of 'being' that is revealed in your own individual being, or existence. The extent of God-Being manifest in your own individual being is also the extent of your joy or happiness in this world; therefore, your joy or happiness does not depend upon what you possess in this world. Therefore, do not be greedy; do not run after things. Even if the whole earth is your property, you are not going to be secure and happy, because your being – even if you are the emperor of the whole earth – is severed from the object of your possession. Therefore, possessions cannot give you any kind of security or freedom and, therefore, they cannot

give you happiness. So your freedom, security and joy are determined by the extent of God-Being that has entered into you and by your entering into God Himself, not by property of any kind. Knowing this, renounce attachment. *Tena tyaktena bhunjitha* (Isa 1.1). 'Renounce' is the word, but renounce what? Renounce attachment to things and be happy; enjoy all things, but do not form attachment. The more you are unselfish and the more you are detached, the more does the world become subordinate to your thoughts and orders. Nobody will obey a selfish person. The entire world of beings will be at your service, as it were, if you are unselfish, detached and want nothing. When you have emptied yourself of all your selfish cravings and desires, the world will enter into you and it will be yours. Therefore, be not greedy, and hanker not for things of this world.

Perform your duty as a participation in the work of this evolutionary process of creation and not as an individual initiative on your part. In duty, you cooperate with the existent order of things. You do not start independent initiatives which will not be regarded as commensurate with the requirements of the organisation of the universe. I also mentioned that there are various types of organisations; there are levels of organisational setups, starting with the family, up to the universe. At every level you have to be in harmony with the organisational setup. Even your own bodily personality is an organisation, and you have to be in harmony with it. You cannot be in conflict with your body or mind, or anything outside. This, briefly, is the subject that we touched upon and considered previously. These are the two essentials among the many

others: the pervasion of God in all creation and the obligation of duty on the part of every person.

The third point that is driven into our minds by the Isavasya Upanishad is that there is no conflict between meditation and action, or knowledge and work. Usually we feel there is a conflict. The more we work, the less we are able to meditate; and the more we want to meditate, the less we have to do work, so that when we are in absolute meditation, no work should be done. Also, we think that a person who is busy with doing things cannot meditate. This is our idea about things. The Isavasya Upanishad gives a new emendation to this concept. I am not going into the technology or the traditional meaning of the verses connected with the subject. I am briefly mentioning to you, for your own information, their significance.

Knowledge and action have to be understood in their proper connotation. You have to decondition your mind a little and give up all preconceived notions of knowledge and action. You may be under the impression that knowledge means knowing something – reading books, accumulating information, having a degree, and acquaintance with the sciences and the arts of the world. But, knowledge is not necessarily this. This is informative and a gathering of structural knowledge of the outer form of things. The inner essence is not gained by ordinary academic learning. You do not know anything in its essence, but you know how it behaves, how it works, and what its structure or pattern or formation is. True knowledge is the insight into the being of things, the Self of all things; and action – about which you have already learnt

something recently – is also to be understood with regard to what it actually means.

When you do something, you seem to be occupied with something and, therefore, you feel you cannot be occupied with meditation at the same time. This is the problem. But the question is: When you do proper work as a duty incumbent upon you, are you occupied with something which is not good for your welfare? The conflict imagined to exist between knowledge and action arises because of the feeling that the aim of knowledge is not in harmony with the aim of work. You do work for a purpose which is not really what you want, finally – whereas what you want is something else altogether, which is the aim of knowledge. This is what may be in the minds of people. Actually, knowledge and action go together. The Bhagavadgita highlights this by saying that *karma* must be based on *buddhi* yoga. Understanding precedes action, and action minus understanding is a mechanical routine.

An important aspect to be remembered is this: all actions are not liberating; only unselfish duties are liberating. Thus, when action is performed as duty, any kind of cooperation of yourself with the whole to which you belong is liberating in its effect because the whole to which you belong – the organisation – liberates you, takes care of you, protects you and sees to it that you are taken care of in every way. But if you are in disharmony with the whole and you do any kind of selfish work, then the reaction set up by the whole – to which otherwise you integrally belong – will harm your endeavours; you will not reap the fruits of those actions which you have individually undertaken under the

wrong impression that you will reap the fruit. You will not get anything out of selfish action, because you are organically related to the whole organism of the creation of the world. This is a fact that you forget when you individually take initiatives and when you expect the fruit to follow from your individually motivated action.

That fruit does not always follow, because the means and ends have some connection. You cannot adopt one kind of means and expect another kind of end. The means – in the ordinary case of people – is a selfish motivation, but the end that you expect has to be sanctioned by the structure of the whole. The world is not under your control and it cannot actually listen to your commands. The fruits are in the world. The world is not your property and, therefore, you cannot order the world to bring something to you. You may order the world, under a different circumstance, but as an individual isolated from it, wholly stationed in a selfish perspective, you cannot give an order to the world. The world will obey you, as I mentioned earlier, provided you are in harmony with the world. Selfishness cuts off all harmony with the world outside. The meaning of selfishness is individualised affirmation: “I am something and the world is another thing. I have no connection with you.” This is the essence of selfishness. But, if I have no connection with you, what can I expect from you? So, the very purpose of selfish action is defeated by the manner in which it is undertaken. You cannot expect anything from the world from which you have segregated yourself deliberately; and you know very well that without that segregation, you will be unable to assert yourself

independently. You have a feeling that independent assertion of an egoistic type always brings some fruits, and that abolition of individualised personality is a real loss. There is thus a basic error in the very conception of what is good for you.

You lack knowledge, truly speaking. Study of books on science and philosophy, art and religion may also bring you some information, but the secret of life in the world seems to be so deeply a question of insight that it cannot be gathered easily by study of any book. You can never recognise in your daily life that you have made a mistake in your behaviour with the world. Everything looks all right for you. When you walk on the road, what is wrong with you? Everything looks fine; you are seeing beautiful things all round. You have already asserted yourself. The whole purpose of the Upanishadic teaching is the liberation of the Self. It is not to give you some sweetmeats or pleasantries and make you comfortable in the psycho-physical sense. This is not the intention of the Upanishadic knowledge.

Hence, knowledge has to be construed in the sense of the apprehension of your true relationship with the world of creation outside, which is – to put it briefly – organic and vital. It is so because of the fact it has already been decided that God pervades the whole of creation. Therefore, you cannot stand outside this pervasive aspect of God. Independent motivation, therefore, gets ruled out. The Being of God, having enveloped the whole of creation, includes your being also in the enveloping action. So, where are your independent assertion and your individual existence itself? And, where is the individual motivation?

Expecting a fruit from individualised selfish action is something like wanting a property. The fruit of your action – which is externally placed in the world, which you desire and long for – is actually a property that you are asking to possess, and it is mentioned in the very beginning that possession is not the source of happiness. So, knowledge is not commensurate with individual affirmation – egoistic motivation. All true knowledge, which is *jnana* proper, is the wisdom of life that lights up your personality with the clear vision of your continuous relation with every speck of the world in every nook and corner of creation. You cannot do anything privately. There is no such thing as a private corner in this world. With this knowledge, if you undertake an action as a duty, it certainly stands in a state of harmony with this knowledge because you will not any more be motivating an active process for the purpose of an extraneous result or a remote end.

All ends that you expect, all fruits of actions that you desire, are placed in the future, in the time process, which is yet to come. You do something today, just now, and you expect some result of action to follow after some time. This ‘after some time’ is the futurity of it. All actions individually motivated are, therefore, bound by time and, therefore, they are also binding in every other way. All bondage is the bondage of the time process. Only the entry of timelessness or eternity into your life can liberate you. You have to live in the present much more than in the past and the future. But if you worry about the past and get aggrieved about the future, the present is obliterated from your vision. Then the crocodile of the time process will consume you completely.



Knowledge and action go together because action is nothing but the movement of knowledge itself. As the movement of waves on the surface of the ocean is in fact a movement of the ocean itself and there are no waves actually speaking – the ocean itself is moving – in just the same manner, all action is the movement of knowledge. Everything that you do from the point of view of this knowledge of the Upanishad is God Himself working through you. The Bhagavadgita also says that you are an instrument in the hands of God – *nimitta-matram bhava* (Gita 11.33). You are like a fountain pen that writes; the Writer is somebody else. You are a tool or an instrument; the Handler is somebody else, because you are a part and God is the whole. The whole determines the part, so you cannot assume the role of the whole while you are only a segment of the totality to which you belong.

Hence, make not the mistake of imagining that you can grab this world and have a lot of property, wealth, land, etc. You will not get it. You may appear to be getting it, but it is an illusionary presentation before you. You will be clouded with a delusion that things are under your control. You will find that nothing is under your control. Even the body is not totally under your control; it is working in its own way, and you have to cooperate with it. No process – individually, socially or outside – is entirely under one man's control, because there is a total wholeness that is operating in all parts, in which we are also participants.

We have to deeply contemplate this great significant teaching of the Upanishad that contemplation is action, and action is contemplation. In Germany there was a great

mystic called Meister Eckhart. He used to humorously say, “If you want to meditate more, work more. If you want to work more, meditate more.” What is this contradictory statement? Because work requires a lot of energy and participating capacity in the structure of the whole which is this creation, this capacity to participate will manifest itself through internal contemplation. So if you want to work more, you have to meditate more. And if you want to meditate more, you have to work more because of the fact that your meditational process also is a kind of work, in the sense of an internal participation in cosmic affairs. Psychological participation becomes meditation, and any kind of gesture that you make outwardly to manifest this internal contemplation becomes action. Thus, meditation manifests itself as action and action energises the process of meditation. Therefore, make not the mistake of isolating action from knowledge.

The greatest masters who lived in this world were very great active participants and great masters of wisdom and meditation. They lived as highly energetic participants in every kind of work and were in union with the realities of life within. As a matter of fact, if you create a kind of rift between two things, even mentally, you are creating a rift in your own personality. A personality rift will manifest itself as a rift in society, social behaviour and all things in the world. An alignment of personality will be marred by a psychological rift that you create by the very thought that what you do has a duality behind it – namely, knowing one thing and doing another thing. What you think, that you say; what you say, that you do; what you do, that you speak;

and what you speak, that you think. *Karmanyekam vachasyekam manasyekam mahatmanam*: “Great souls have only one thing in their action, in their speech and in their thought.” And the same verse is repeated in the case of opposite personalities: *karmanyekam vachasyekam manasyekam duratmanam*. One thing in action, one thing in speech, one thing in thought is the characteristic of great people, but with a different shift, the same thing is the case with people who are paltry and unknowing. What do they do? “One thing is their action, one thing is what they say, and one thing is what they think.” It is a shift in emphasis, but the words are the same.

So the Isavasya Upanishad tells us again, as a third instruction, that *knowing* is *being*, and *action* is the *movement of being*, and *action* is also what is called *becoming*. If the whole process of creation itself is a manifestation of God’s Being – the greatest action that you can think of at any time – why should not your action be a manifestation of your being? And your *being* is nothing but the *knowledge of your being*. If God’s knowledge of His own Being can reveal itself as the wondrous work of this creation, why should not your knowledge of your being manifest itself as your actions? How is it that you find a difficulty?

Here is the essence of the whole matter. If you cannot remember everything, remember at least these two sentences. They will act as a recipe for you to memorise these thoughts. If God’s Being can manifest itself as the wondrous action of creation, and inasmuch as your being is inseparable from God’s Being, it stands to reason that your

actions also should be a manifestation of your being. Therefore, there is no conflict between your actions and your being, which is nothing but the knowledge of your being.

The fourth instruction is: There is no difference between creation and God. The Universal and the particular, the Eternal and the temporal, God and creation, *purusha* and *prakriti*, the internal and the external, whatever word you may use, stand always in a state of harmony. God is not outside the world, and the world is not outside God. God is not extra-cosmic, as some thinkers may tell us. He is not a *deus ex machina*. He is not an instrumental operative force standing outside the material of creation. We bestowed some thought on this previously. The pervasion of God in all creation rules out any kind of extra-cosmic existence of God. He is not outside the world, standing somewhere in the seventh heaven and fashioning this world as a potter fashions the pot. God is not merely the efficient cause or the instrumental cause; God is also the material cause. In the case of the pot, the potter is only an efficient cause; he is not the material cause. That is, he himself does not become the pot; he has an external material. But in the case of God, external material does not exist because He is infinite. This world, therefore, is a revelation of God. We have to use words carefully here. We cannot say He has modified Himself, changed Himself, transformed Himself, nor can we say He has become something else. We cannot say that, because He has not become something else. He is as He was. In the past, present and future, He exists in the same condition.

*Purnam adah, purnam idam, purnat purnam udachyate, purnasya purnam adaya purnam evavasisyate* (Isa. Invocation): The eternal Wholeness, which is God's Existence, manifests His Wholeness which is this creation. This creation is very vast. It looks infinite. This infinite creation has come out from the infinite, timeless Eternity which is God. That is the meaning of *purnam adah, purnam idam*: "That is the infinite, this also is the infinite." Mathematically there cannot be two infinities and, therefore, the coming out of one infinite from another infinite is to be understood in its proper sense. When this infinite comes out from the infinite, there is no diminution in the infinitude of that infinite. It remains nevertheless the same infinite. *Purnasya purnam adaya purnam evavasisyate*: Having taken the infinite from the infinite, the infinite always remains without any kind of lessening of its quantum.

If God was totally outside the world of creation and you were part of the creation, there would be no ladder or link between the world and God; there being no linkage between you and God's Existence; there would be no propriety in even attempting to attain God. But, this world is a revelation of God. He Himself appears as this world. This is the reason why through this world you can attain God. Even the littlest material in this world can act as a ladder to climb to the pedestal of God's Existence. There is no atom in the cosmos where God's eternal Soul is not present. Here, just now, you can enter into God without moving anywhere else because of the pervasion of God in all creation, even in the littlest atom. So this creation in

which you are also included, being pervaded by God Almighty, cannot stand outside Him. And your concept of God – as the creator of the world – should require proper educational discipline, in case you have the wrong notion that God is far away and He exists as a creator of the world at a distance. This is the fourth instruction that we can gather.

The Isavasya Upanishad is pregnant with many other wise sayings, all of which we will bypass for the time being. It is enough if you know these four instructions: 1) God envelops the whole cosmos. 2) It is incumbent on the part of every individual to perform duty. 3) Knowledge and action are always in a state of harmony. 4) There is also harmony between God and the universe.

I shall briefly cover the theme of the Kena Upanishad, which has a very interesting anecdote. The anecdote is attached to the teaching of the Kena Upanishad. You will be highly pleased to hear the story and also to know where you stand in this world of creation. We always say that we do things. “I have tilled this land; I have planted this tree; I have won victory in war” – do we not say that? Are we justified in making such statements: “I have done this and that”?

It appears that in the heavens there was a battle between the gods and the demons of yore, and the demons were overthrown. The gods won victory and patted themselves on their backs and exclaimed, “Oh, we have won victory! Oh, we have won victory! Oh, we have won victory!”

The Great Being, God Almighty, thought, “These fellows, these gods, are thinking that *they* have won the

victory and all the strength comes from them. Let me teach them a lesson.”

This Great Being appeared as some frightening spectre and sat on the top of a tree, near the abode of the gods. The gods just beheld it. “What is this peculiarly structured spectre?” they wondered.

All the gods went to Indra and said, “Sir, something frightening is sitting on the top of a tree.”

Indra called one of his emissaries, the god Agni, and said, “Go and find out what it is.”

Agni is the god of fire – what power! The whole earth, everything he can burn to ashes. Agni went and looked at this spectre, and It asked, “Who are you?”

“I am Agni, the god of fire.”

“Oh, I see. What can you do?”

“I can burn anything to ashes. The whole earth I can reduce to ashes,” replied Agni.

“I see,” said the spectre. It placed a little piece of grass in front of Agni and said, “Burn this.”

It was an insult to Agni. “You are asking me to burn a piece of grass!”

Agni ran with great speed to burn it to ashes, but he could not even move it, let alone burn it. He tried again and again, and he failed in the attempt to burn the blade of grass though he had the strength to burn the whole earth. He could not understand what had happened. He went back and told Indra, “I cannot understand who it is. Send another person.” He did not say he was defeated. He only said, “I do not understand.”

Then Indra sent Vayu, the god of wind.

“Go and find out what is the matter,” Indra told Vayu.

Vayu went and the spectre asked, “Who are you?”

“I am the wind god,” Vayu replied.

“What can you do?” asked the spectre.

“I can blow away the whole earth,” said Vayu.

“Now, blow away this,” the spectre said, and it put a little blade of grass in front of Vayu.

Vayu was insulted. “You ask me to blow a blade of grass!” And Vayu blew, but nothing happened. The grass would not move. He was also defeated, and returned to Indra.

Vayu told Indra, “I do not understand anything. You can go yourself and find out.”

When Indra went, the spectre vanished. The Upanishad does not clearly tell us why it vanished when Indra went, when it was visible to the other two gods. Anyway, there are lots of commentaries explaining why it happened in that manner. It is not very important for us. When Indra went, what he saw was not the spectre, but something else. Uma-Haimavati was visible there. The Devi – Durga, Lakshmi, Saraswati, Uma-Haimavati, the Shakti of the universe, the Power of the cosmos, God’s Energy – was there in the form of a divine enchanting medium and told Indra, “What you saw was the Supreme Creator Himself. You were under the impression – very, very wrong indeed, Indra – that you won victory over the demons, these *rakshasas*. What strength do you have? You cannot lift even a blade of grass. All the strength came from that Being. He was operating through you, and you felt that you did the work. In order to subdue your ego, the Creator came in this form and taught



you a lesson.” Having said this, Uma Haimavati vanished from that place.

We also have such instances in the case of the relationship between Sri Krishna and Arjuna. We know the power of Arjuna. Nobody could stand before him. He could stun anybody who stood in the way. When he took up his Gandiva bow and his arrows, the earth trembled under him. But when Krishna departed from this world, Arjuna could not even lift a stick, let alone the Gandiva bow. Sri Krishna was within him as the energising universality and did all the work, though Arjuna acted as an instrument. When the power was withdrawn because the purpose of the manifestation of the power in that manner had been achieved, Arjuna became an ordinary mortal, so poor and helpless that even a shepherd could drive him away.

We should not be proud. None of us should be proud. Arrogance often leads one to say to another, “What do you think you are? Come over here!” You should not speak like that. Everybody knows what kind of person you are. Why do you parade your ignorance? Go and tell the elephant standing in front, “What do you think you are?” Go and touch it and see! Ego is an abomination. It is the worst evil in this world. Ego is the Satan who rebelled against God, asserted independence and said: “The entire kingdom is mine. And God, You mind Your business!” Whoever rebels against God is ego, and if you assert your individuality, you are rebelling against God that very moment. As there is only One Being in the universe, how can there be another being – Mr. So-and-so being? This is not possible. Therefore, every act of yours with the consciousness of your

doing something is a rebellion against God, which is very dangerous and unbecoming on your part. You have to be humble.

*Trinad api sunicena taror api shisnuna amanina manadena kirtaniya sada harih* (Siksastaka 3), says Krishna Chaitanya Mahaprabhu: “You are not fit even to take the name of God if you have egoism in your nature. Humbler than a blade of grass on which anybody can tread, more tolerant than a tree whose branches anybody can chop off, giving respect to others and expecting no respect from other people – such a person is fit to chant the name of Hari, the Great Being.” You cannot proudly chant the name of God and say you are doing *kirtan*. That serves no purpose. You will be surprised that every action of yours is finally a manifestation of your ego, either covertly or overtly. Sometimes you purposely manifest your ego and project your pride, knowing that it is so. Sometimes, unconsciously, you pat yourself on your back.

Who is seeing? Who is hearing? That question is raised by the Kena Upanishad in the beginning itself. You may be thinking that the eyes are seeing, the ears are hearing and the nose is smelling. Nothing of the kind is taking place. The Smeller is somebody else. If the eyes are seeing, a corpse also can see, because the corpse has eyeballs. No function or sensation is possible when life is withdrawn, as you know very well. The life force is the pervasion of psychic power in your personality. If the mind is withdrawn, the energy will also not be operating in the manner required, as the mind, the psychic power, is nothing but the power of the Soul.

The Cosmic Soul, operating through the individual soul, energises the *buddhi*, or the intellect, through which it is reflected as knowledge and understanding. Secondly, it is reflected through the mind and, thirdly, it is reflected through the energy, or the *prana*. Fourthly, it is reflected through the body, and you feel as if you are alive. The body – which is nothing but a corpse, lifeless in its nature basically, composed of five elements, earth, water, fire, air and ether – appears to be living, grand and beautiful because of a portion of the life of the Soul, or the Self, which is revealed through this personality. The Universal Soul is manifest in the individual soul, the Atman – as it is called – in you. It is reflected through the *buddhi*, or the intellect; that is reflected through the *manas*, or the thinking medium; that passes through the *prana* that energises the body. Then the sense organs begin to operate; then you say: “I am doing; I am seeing; I am alive.”

The Kena Upanishad says, in the very beginning itself, “He who sees through the eyes, He who hears through the ears, He who breathes through the breath, He who thinks through the mind, He who understands through the intellect, know Him.”

“There is no use understanding things,” says the Kaushitaki Upanishad. “There is no use knowing what you are understanding. You must know the Understanding itself.” Understand the Understander, which is more beneficial to you than to know what is being understood by the understanding as an external object. Now I understand that there is a tree in front of me; I can see it. But, that is not enough for me; I must know how it is that the

understanding is able to understand that there is a tree in front of me. Who understands the understanding?

These layers of transmission of energy from the Cosmic Soul to the individual soul, from the individual soul to the intellect, from the intellect to the mind, from the mind to the *prana*, from the *prana* to the body and to the sense organs have to be known very clearly. Neither is the body really alive and active, nor are the sense organs capable of perceiving things as you imagine. Neither is it true that the *prana* is working of its own accord, nor can you think through the mind independently; nor is it true that you understand through your intellect; nor is it true that you are existing even as an individual isolated being, but for the fact of the Universal revealed through this particular point in space-time, which is called the Atman proper, the Soul.

Both these Upanishads – the Isavasya and the Kena – tell us almost the same thing, only in different styles. The emphasis of the Upanishad is *ekam sat viprah bahudha vadanti* (R.V. 1.164.46), which is a mantra from the Rig Veda. “Poets, sages, masters, men of insight and wisdom call the One Being by various names.” All the colours and hues, all the names and the forms, all the movements and the forces and the activities in this world are, in one way or the other, the revelation of the One Being, *ekam sat*, One Existence. This One Existence is all the other existences which you are attributing to the forms of the objects of sense. Your existence and my existence and the existence of this desk and table, everything – they are participations in the Universal Existence. Thus, God-Being is All-Being and our existence has no significance except as a participating

medium in the existence of the Universal Existence.  
Virtually God is, and nothing else is!

## Session 6

### THE TAITTIRIYA UPANISHAD

Until now, we have been passing through the foundational doctrine of the Upanishads – namely, the nature of the Ultimate Reality. What is there, finally? In several ways we have been told that whatever is there, finally, can be only a single Reality and it cannot be more than one. This concept was corroborated by a famous mantra that I quoted from the Rig Veda Samhita – *ekam sat*: “Existence is one only.” The Ultimate Being is Existence. Being and Existence mean the same thing. That which exists cannot be more than one.

Everything has to exist, in some form or the other. Trees exist, stones exist, you exist, I exist, mountains exist, stars exist – all things exist. Existence is a common factor underlying every modification thereof as name and form. Whatever be the variety that is perceivable, all this variety is, at its root, an existence of something. Something has to exist, whatever that something be. The Real cannot be non-existent, because even the concept of non-existence would be impossible unless it is related to the existence of the concept itself. So the Upanishads say: “This Existence is supreme, complete, universal, all-pervading, the only Being.” Because It is all-pervading and filling all space, very large in its extent, it is called Brahman. That which fills, That which swells, That which expands, That which is everywhere and is all things – That is the plenum, the completeness, the fullness of Reality; and That is called Brahman in the Sanskrit language. *Brahma-vid apnoti param* (Tait. 2.1.1), says the Taittiriya Upanishad:

“Whoever realises this Brahman attains to the Supreme Felicity.” It is so because of the fact that when anyone contacts Pure Existence, that contact is equal to the contact of all things. It is like touching the very bottom of the sea of Reality. Hence, Brahman is All-Existence. The knowing of it is of paramount importance.

The Upanishads highlight various ways and means of attaining this Supreme Brahman. The principal method prescribed is direct inward communion with that Reality. Direct inward communion is called meditation. Deep thought, profound thinking and a fundamental, basic feeling for it – longing for it, and getting oneself convinced about one’s non-difference from it because of its being All-Existence – is the great meditational technique of the Upanishads. Inasmuch as this meditation is nothing but the affirmation of the knowledge of the universal existence of Brahman, it is also called *jnana*, the path of wisdom. The meditation of the Upanishads is the affirmation of the wisdom of the nature of Brahman. Whoever knows this Brahman attains the Supreme Being. *Brahma-vid apnoti param, tad eshabhyukta, satyam jnanam anantam brahma* (Tait. 2.1.1). How do we define this Brahman? *Satyam jnanam anantam*: This is the name of the Supreme Being. It is Pure Existence, *satyam*, Ultimate Truth. It is Omniscience, All-Knowledge, so it is called *jnanam*. It is everywhere, infinite; therefore, it is called *anantam*. What is Brahman? *Satyam jnanam anantam brahma*.

*Yo veda nihitam guhayam parame vyoman so’snute sarvan kaman saha brahmana vipascita* (Tait. 2.1.1). This is an oracle in the second section of the Taittiriya Upanishad

which gives us the secret of the final attainment of bliss and freedom. This *satyam jnanam anantam brahma*, this Supreme Truth-Knowledge-Bliss-Infinity is, of course, as has been mentioned before, everywhere. It is also hidden deeply in the cave of your own heart – *nihitam guhayam*. *Guha* is the cave, the deepest recess of your own being. That is verily this Ultimate Being. You have to be very cautious in not allowing this thought to slip out at any time – namely, your deepest recess of existence cannot be outside the deepest recess of the cosmos. The all-encompassing nature of Brahman also envelops your basic being.

When this universal Brahman is conceived as the deepest reality of an individual, it is called the Atman – the essential Self of anything. It is the essential Self and not the physical, not the mental, not even the causal sheath of your personality; all of these, as you know very well, get negated in another condition of your being – namely, deep sleep. The analysis of deep sleep is a master key to open the gates of the secret of your own existence. Neither the body, nor the mind, nor this so-called ignorant sheath can be considered as your own reality. Blissful sleep cannot be a condition of ignorance, because the experience of bliss has to go together with a kind of consciousness of that experience. This essential Being of yours indicates the character of the Universal Reality also. It is a sense of freedom and bliss that you enjoy when you come in contact with It. Do you not feel free and happy when you go into a state of deep sleep? Can the freedom and the happiness of sleep be compared with any other pleasure of this world? Even a king who cannot sleep for days together would ask



for the boon of being able to sleep for some days, rather than having a vast, material kingdom. To go into your own Self is the best achievement, the highest attainment, whereas to go outside yourself, however far beyond you may go, is that much the worse for you. Knowledge of the Self is knowledge of the Absolute. *Atma-jnana* is also *Brahma-jnana*. The knowledge of the deepest in you is also the knowledge of the essential secret of the universe. So, whoever knows that supreme *satyam jnanam anantam*, Truth-Knowledge-Infinity, as hidden in the cave of one's own heart, directly comes in contact with that *satyam jnanam anantam brahma*. Simultaneously, you begin to feel a bliss of contact with all things. *Saha brahmana vipascita so'nute sarvan kaman*: "All desires get fulfilled there in an instant."

In this world, to fulfil different desires, you have to employ different means. There, a single means is enough to give you the happiness of everything – not one thing after the other, successively, but simultaneously, instantaneously. In your current state, if you have one pleasure, you cannot have another pleasure at the same time, and if you want to have a third kind of pleasure, the first two must go. Thus, you cannot have varieties of pleasure at the same time because of the conditioning factor introduced by the sense organs in such experience. Your senses do not give you simultaneous knowledge of anything. When one thing is happening, another thing is forgotten. But in the contact of Brahman, there is simultaneous knowledge of all things. At one stroke everything is known, and everything is enjoyed also. It is impossible for us mortals, thinking through the

sense organs and through this body, to imagine what it could be to enjoy all things at the same time.

It is not merely possessing a kingdom; that also may look like a happiness which is sudden and simultaneous. A king who is the ruler of this whole world may imagine that he has simultaneous happiness of the entire kingdom of the earth. "The entire earth is mine," the king may feel. But the entire earth stands outside the king. The experiencing consciousness of the king does not hold under his grip or possession this vast earth that he considers as the means of his satisfaction. So the king's happiness is a futile, imaginary pleasure; really, he does not possess the world. The world stands outside. If the object of experience stands outside the experience, the experience cannot be regarded as complete. Unless the object of experience enters into you and becomes part and parcel of your own existence, you will not be able to enjoy that object. All objects cause anxiety in the mind because they stand outside the experiencing consciousness. Even if you have a heap of gold in the grip of your palm, it cannot cause you happiness. It will only cause anxieties of different types – such as how to keep it, how to use it, how to protect it, how not to lose it, and how to see that it is not leading you to bereavement. The possessor of gold and silver is filled with anxieties, and that person cannot sleep well. Even a king cannot sleep well because of the fear of attack from sources that are external to him. To be secure under conditions which are totally external to yourself is hard, indeed, to imagine.

Brahman experience is not an object of contact; it is an identity. The object is the experiencing consciousness itself.

The content of awareness becomes the awareness; existence and consciousness merge into each other. *Sat* becomes *chit*, *chit* becomes *sat*. It is not actually one thing becoming another thing; the one thing *is* the other thing. Existence is nothing but the consciousness of existence. When you say that you exist, you are at the same time affirming that you are conscious that you exist. You are not merely existing, minus the consciousness of existence. It is not an appendage that is added on to existence in the form of consciousness. Consciousness is not a quality or an attribute of existence, like the greenness of a leaf or the redness of a flower – nothing of the kind. You cannot consider consciousness to be connected to existence; it *is* existence. Actually, existence-consciousness means consciousness which is – or existence which is aware of its existence. In that state, which is called Brahman-knowledge or Brahman-experience, there is simultaneous experience of all things. There is all-existence, a simultaneous knowledge of all things – omniscience, a simultaneous enjoyment of all things, and perfect freedom. It is perfect freedom because there is nothing to obstruct your freedom in that state. Here, in this world, whatever freedom you may have is limited by the existence of other things in this world. Your freedom is limited by the freedom of another person and, therefore, your freedom is limited to that extent. You cannot have unlimited freedom in this world. But That (Brahman) is unlimited freedom. It is unlimited because *anantam brahma*: “Infinite is Brahman.”

Now you have, as students of this great doctrine of the Upanishads, questions of various types: “What is this

world? We understand what you are saying. Now, what is this world that we are seeing in front of us? How are we to reconcile this perceived world with that Great Thing that you are speaking of?” The cosmological scheme that follows in the very same Upanishad after this statement about the absoluteness of Brahman gives us a brief idea as to how we have to set in harmony the nature of this perceived world with the eternal existence of Brahman.

*Tasmat va etasmat atmana akasas sambhutih* (Tait. 2.1.1): “From this Universal Atman, space emanated” – as it were. This is something hard for us to conceive at the present moment. Space is actually the negation of the infinity of Brahman. Infinity does not mean extension or dimension – but space is extension, dimension, distance. So, immediately a contradiction is introduced at the very beginning of the concept of creation. God is negated, as it were, for various reasons, the moment creation is conceived, one reason being that the creation appears as an external manifestation, whereas God – Brahman – is the Universal Existence. We know the difference between universality and externality. The moment there is the concept of space, there is also automatically introduced into it the concept of time. We cannot separate space and time. Duration and extension go together. Actually, according to modern findings at least, space and time are not dead appearances, lifeless presentations before us. For us, to our common perception, spatial extension may look like a lifeless dimension which does not speak, which does not think, which has nothing to say. Time also seems to be some kind of movement which has no brain to think; it is

like a machine moving like a bulldozer in some direction. This is what we may think with our paltry, inadequate knowledge of what space and time are. Space and time are not dead things; they are basic vibrations of the cosmos. Motion goes together with space-time. Not only according to modern scientific terminology, but also in the ancient thought of the Agama and Tantra, one may say that the concept of space-time goes together with motion, force.

A tremendous vibration, an uncanny force is generated the moment there is the beginning of what we call creation. It is a central point that begins to vibrate – *bindu*, as it is called in the Agama Shastra. *Bindu* is a point. It is not a point which is geometrical, which has a nucleus; it is a cosmic point, a centre which is everywhere with a circumference nowhere, as people generally say. It is a point that is everywhere, which is inconceivable to ordinary thought. It is a tremendous vibratory centre. Modern astronomy also seems to be hinging on this point when it concludes there was a ‘big bang’ when creation took place – a splitting of the cosmic atom. The atom should not be considered as a little particle; it is a cosmic centre. The entire space-time arrangement is one point, like an egg – *brahmanda*, as it is called. A globular structure is easy to conceive, and so we call it an ‘*anda*’, a kind of egg – a cosmic egg. *Tadandam abhavat haimam sahasramsh samaprabham* (Manu 1.9) says the Manusmriti: “Even millions of suns cannot be equal in brilliance to that cosmic spot.” Therefore, it is not a point as we can geometrically imagine. It is an inconceivable point.

The Universal cannot be thought by the mind and, therefore, that cosmic point also cannot be really thought of. Astronomers call it the cosmic atom. But the word 'atom' has such peculiar suggestiveness to our thinking mind that often we are likely to slip into the thought of it being a little, small thing. The smallness and the bigness question does not arise there. In that condition, we cannot say what is small and what is big. "Who is a tall man?" If I ask you this, whom will you bring? "Bring a short man." These are all relative terms. In comparison with a tall man, someone may look short, etc. So there is no such thing as a tall man or a short man, a long shirt or a short shirt; they are comparative words. So, too, we cannot say what kind of atom it was. Therefore, they call it *brahmānda*; and it split, we are told, into two halves. What kind of halves they are is not very clear. The subject and the object, can we say? The Cosmic Subject and the Cosmic Object can be two halves of the cosmic egg – or we may say it is the Cosmic Awareness meeting with the Cosmic Object, which is material in its nature. The materiality of the object follows automatically from its segregation from the perceiving consciousness. The concept of matter also has to be very carefully noted. Here, in this condition, 'matter' actually means a hard stone or granite or a brick; it is also a vibration. The Samkhya definition of *prakṛiti*, in its highest condition, is not in the form of a solid object but a vibratory condition of a tripartite nature – *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. Certain Upanishads analogically tell us that these two halves of the cosmic egg are something like the two halves of a split pea. The pea is one whole, but it has two halves.

Everything in the world has a subjective side and an objective side. I conceive of myself as a subject and, for some other reason, I also conceive of myself as an object. The impact that is produced upon me by conditions that are not me may make me feel that I am an object, but the impact that I produce on the external conditions may make me feel that I am a subject. That which exists outside my perceiving consciousness may make me conceive of myself as a subject of perception, but the presence of such an object for itself will appear as an object. This dualism, cosmically introduced at the very beginning of things, is the subject of all the religious doctrines of creation, wherever one may go in this world. God created the world, somehow. This ‘somehow’ brings in this peculiarity of the externalisation of God’s Universality. “The Supreme Purusha sacrificed Himself as this cosmos,” says the Purusha Sukta. The supreme alienation of the Universal into the supreme externality is called creation. God alienated Himself, as it were, in the form of this large, vast, perceived world. He has become this vast world. I mentioned to you previously the difficulty arising out of using such words as ‘becoming’, ‘transforming’, etc. I will not go into that subject once again. These words have to be understood in their proper connotation and signification.

*Tasmat va etasmat atmana akasas sambhutah* (Tait. 2.1.1): This fundamental cosmic space-time-motion, or vibration, became more and more gross in the form of wind – *vayu*. Actually, the word ‘*vayu*’ used here should not be taken in the sense of what we breathe through the nostrils. It is, again, a vibration of a vital nature, which we call

*prana*. An energy manifested itself; cosmic energy emanated, as it were, from this basic vibratory centre which is the space-time-motion complex, to put it in a modern, intelligible style. The solidification, condensation and more and more externalisation of the preceding one in the succeeding stage is actually the process of the coming of what is called the elements. From space, or *akasha*, arose *vayu*; from *vayu*, or air, came friction – heat, or fire; from there came the liquefied form, water; and then came the solid form of the earth.

*Tasmad va etasmad atmana akasa sambhuta, akasad vayuh, vayor agnih, agner apah, adbhyah prthivi, prthivya osadhayah* (Tait. 2.1.1): “All vegetation started from the earth.” *Osadhibhyo annam*: The diet that we consume is nothing but the vegetation growing on earth. *Annat purushah*: Our personality is an adumbration, solidification, concretisation, clarification – whatever we may call it – of the food that we eat. In the personality of the human being we find in a miniature form all that has come cosmically down to the earth, right from the Supreme Brahman – *satyam jnanam anantam brahma*. So the universe is called *brahmanda* and the individual is called *pindanda*. The macrocosm is the universe, and the microcosm, or the individual, is a cross-section of the macrocosm. All that is in the universe you will find in yourself. You are a miniature of creation. If you know yourself, you know the whole world. This is why it is said, “Know thyself and be free.” Nobody says “Go outside and know things.” It will not serve your purpose. Know yourself and all things are known, because you are the nearest thing



that can be contacted and the nearest thing containing all things that are the furthest and the remotest. Therefore, the Ultimate Reality is also called the nearest and the furthest. *Tad dure tad vad antike* (Isa 5): “Very far is It” – in terms of the spatio-temporal expanse of creation; “Very near is It” – as the Self of your own existence.

The miniature individual, as I mentioned, has all the layers of the universe. These are the physicality of the lowest earth, the vibratory form of the *prana*, the mental creation or the mentation, the power of thought, which is reflected in the process of creation from the Ultimate Being Itself, and a peculiar negation that we experience in our own self in the form of the ultimate causality of sleep, which is comparable to the negation that was referred to just now in the form of the manifestation of space-time-motion. This individualised microcosmic representation of the cosmic layers is seen individually as a series of what is called the *koshas*, or the coverings of the consciousness in us. We may, in a way, say the whole universe is a covering up over Brahman.

The cosmic sheaths can be conceived, and they are really conceived many a time when we speak of Brahman becoming Ishvara, Ishvara becoming Hiranyagarbha, Hiranyagarbha becoming Virat, and so on. These sheaths in us – the physical, vital, mental, intellectual and causal – are the inverted forms of the otherwise-vertical, we may say, forms of the cosmic sheaths which are in the form of the five elements – earth, water, fire, air and ether, going upwards from below. The Ultimate *satyam jnanam anantam* is negated, as it were, in this creation, because the

Universal being is absent in all that is external. The word 'external' contradicts anything that can be considered as universal. In a way, God is denied in this world. We cannot see God anywhere; we see only particulars and spread-out things which are external in nature. Nevertheless, as the Isavasya Upanishad warns us, the so-called negated, abolished existence of the Supreme Reality is also hiddenly present as the Atman behind the earth, the Atman behind water, fire, air and ether. There is an Atman even behind space and time. Various degrees of the manifestation of universality can be seen in the operation of the five elements. The Universal is least manifest in the earth, more manifest in water, still more in fire, still more in air and still more in space, so that space looks almost universal, but yet it is not universal because it is externalised.

In a similar manner, in our own personality also, there is a degree of the manifestation of externality and materiality. The physical body is the most material and the most external, visible thing among other things. Very hard substance is this physical body and very external; we can see it with the eyes. The internal externalities are not so easily contactable, but yet are conceivable and observable through analysis. The so-called physicality and externality of the body is made to feel its existence, its very life itself, by the movement of a vibration inside, called *prana shakti*. When the *prana* operates through the cells of the body, we feel that the body is alive; every little fingertip, every toe is alive. It is alive, so-called, because of the *prana* pervading every part of the body. If the *prana* is withdrawn, there is paralytic stroke or even death of that particular part. If the

*prana* is entirely withdrawn, the so-called living body becomes a corpse. It becomes dead matter – matter *per se*.

So our individuality, as a symbol of conscious existence, is a contribution; it comes from the *prana*, the vital energy that is operating within this body. But the *prana* is operating because of the thoughts of the mind. We can direct the *prana*, or the energy, in different directions by the concentration of thought of the mind. If the mind thinks only of one particular thing, the *pranic* energy is directed to that particular thing only. Little children look beautiful because of the equal distribution of *pranic* energy in their bodies. They do not have sensory desires projected through any particular organ. As the child grows and grows, he becomes less beautiful to look at because the senses begin to appropriate much of the *pranic* energy for their own individual operation. The senses become more and more active when we grow into adults or old men. But a little child is beautiful. Whether it is a king's child or a beggar's child, one cannot make a distinction; little children are so nice!

Therefore, the *prana* enlivens this body, but is itself conditioned by the thoughts of the mind, and the mind is a name that we give to an indeterminate way of thinking. "Something is there." When we feel that something is there, but we do not actually know what is there, we are just indeterminately thinking. But when we are sure that something of a specific type is there – "Oh, I see. It is a tree. It is a lamppost. It is a human being" – this determined identification of the nature of a thing which was indeterminately thought by the mind is the work of the

intellect, reason, or *buddhi*, as it is called. These layers are very clear now: the physical, the vital, the mental and the intellectual.

There is another thing that is totally indeterminate, and that is the condition of our experiences in deep sleep. It is a potential of all future experience and a repository of all past experiences. It clouds consciousness to such an extent that in deep sleep, when it is preponderating, we cannot even think. Thus, in this individuality of ours, in this microcosm that we are, there is a miniature representation of the cosmic creative process. As the peels of the onion constitute the onion, so these sheaths constitute our personality and even the cosmic creative process.

This is, briefly, what I can tell you about the essential teaching of one of the sections of the Taittiriya Upanishad, which tells us three things. The first teaching is that the Ultimate Reality is Existence-Knowledge-Bliss, and it is hidden in the cave of the heart of every individual – knowing which, one becomes all things and enjoys perfect freedom and bliss. The second teaching is that all things that we call the universal manifestation emanate from this Supreme Being only. The third teaching is that we, as individuals, are also part and parcel of this creation and we have in us a miniature representation of everything that is manifest cosmically. For the time being, this is enough for you as far as the Taittiriya Upanishad is concerned.

The Mandukya Upanishad goes deeper into this teaching of the Taittiriya Upanishad by an analysis of the states of consciousness that seem to be involved in the categorisation of the sheaths. The involvement of the basic

Atman-consciousness in us, in the sheaths – gradationally – becomes experience, which is waking, dreaming and deep sleep – *jagrat, swapna* and *sushupti*.

## Session 7

### THE MANDUKYA UPANISHAD

Yesterday we observed that the human individual is a microcosmic specimen of the entire creative process of the cosmos. The layers, or degrees of reality, that constitute the universe are also to be found in the human individual in the form of the *koshas*, or the sheaths, as they are called: the physical, vital, mental, intellectual and the causal. These are known in the Sanskrit language as *annamaya kosha*, *pranamaya kosha*, *manomaya kosha*, *vijnanamaya kosha* and *anandamaya kosha*. These are the five layers of objectivity which, in a gradational form, externalise consciousness. The grosser the sheath, the greater is the force of externality, so that when consciousness enters the physical body, we are totally material in our outlook, physical in our understanding and assessment of values, intensely body-conscious, and know nothing of ourselves except this body. It is only when we go inward that we have access to the subtler layers of our personality, not otherwise.

The Taittiriya Upanishad deals with this subject of the five layers, known as the *koshas*; and the Mandukya Upanishad, which is another important Upanishad, sometimes considered as the most important, deals with the very same *koshas* in a different way – namely, by way of the elucidation of the involvement of consciousness in these *koshas*. The five *koshas* have been classified into three groups: the physical, the subtle and the causal. In the waking state in which we are now, for instance, the physical

body is intensely operative and we always think in terms of the physical body, physical objects and physical sensations.

This physical sensation is absent in the state of dream, but three of the *koshas* operate in dream. All the five are operative in the waking condition, concentrating their action mostly on the physical body. The physical body is not operative in the dream state, but the vital, the mental and the intellectual sheaths are active. The *prana* is there, the mind is there, and the intellect is there, in a diminished intensity. We breathe, we think and we understand in the state of dream. That means the *prana*, *manas* and *buddhi* are all active in the state of dream minus the physical element – namely, the body consciousness. In the state of deep sleep, none of these are active. Neither the body is operative there, nor the mind, nor the intellect, nor is there any consciousness that we are even breathing. The consciousness is withdrawn entirely from all the sheaths – physical, vital, mental and intellectual. There is only one sheath operating in the state of sleep. That is the causal sheath – the *anandamaya kosha*, as it is called in Sanskrit.

In the waking condition, the senses are physically and materially very active. The Mandukya Upanishad tells us that in the waking state we enjoy, we experience and we contact things in nineteen ways. Consciousness has nineteen mouths through which it eats the food of objective experience. What are these nineteen mouths? They are the five senses of knowledge: seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting and touching. With these five sensations we come in contact with things in the world outside and enjoy them with the actions and reactions produced by means of such

sensory contact. These five mentioned are called senses of knowledge, or *jnana indriyas*. They are so called because they give us some sort of knowledge of either sight or sound or taste or smell or touch.

Apart from these five senses of knowledge, there are five organs of action. They do not give us any independent knowledge, but they act. The hand that grasps is one organ of action; the speech that articulates words is another organ of action; the feet that cause locomotion or movement are also organs of action; the generative organ and the excretory organ are also two of the active elements, or organs of action. They act, but they do not give any new knowledge. Whatever idea, knowledge, experience, etc., we may have through any one of these organs of action comes through the sensations already mentioned – namely, the *jnana indriyas*. Even when the organs of action act and we are conscious that they are acting, this consciousness is available only through the *jnana indriyas* and not separately through the organs of action. They do not give additional knowledge. It looks as if we have some sensation even through the organs of action, but actually it is not so. The sensation, the experience of the actions of the *karma indriyas*, as they are called, arises on account of the simultaneous action of the *jnana indriyas*, or senses of knowledge. So these five senses of knowledge and five organs of action make ten mouths of consciousness.

There are five *pranas*. The *prana*, or the vital energy in us, operates in five ways. When we breathe out, expel the breath, the *prana* is active. When we breathe in, when we inhale the breath, the *apana* is active. The *vyana* is the third



form of the operation of this energy. It causes circulation of blood and makes us feel a sensation of liveliness in every part of the body. The operative action of the bloodstream is pushed onwards in a circular fashion throughout the body by the action of a particular function of *prana* called *vyana*. There is another action of the *prana*, which is *udana*. It causes the swallowing of food. When we put food in the mouth, it goes inside through the epiglottis and it is pushed down by the action of a *prana* called *udana*. *Udana* has also certain other functions to perform; it takes us to deep sleep. Our *jiva* consciousness, our individualised consciousness, is pushed into a state of somnolence. That also is the work of *udana*. *Udana* also has a third function to perform, namely, the separation of the vital body from the physical body at the time of death. Three actions, three performances are attributed to *udana*. The fifth *prana*, *samana*, operates through the navel region and causes the digestion of food. It creates heat in the stomach and in the navel region, causing the gastric juices to operate, and so we feel appetite. Hunger is created, and food is digested by the action of *samana*. Thus there are five *pranas*: *prana*, *apana*, *vyana*, *udana* and *samana*. Five senses of knowledge, five organs of action and five *pranas* make fifteen ways in which we contact things.

There are four functions of the psychic organ. The internal psyche, which is generally called *manas* – or mind, in ordinary language – has four functions. In Sanskrit these four functions are designated as *manas*, *buddhi*, *ahamkara* and *chitta*. *Manas* is ordinary, indeterminate thinking – just being aware that something is there. That is the work of the

mind; that is *manas*. *Buddhi* determines, decides and logically comes to the conclusion that something is such and such a thing. That is another aspect of the operation of the psyche – *buddhi*, or intellect. The third form of the mind is ego, *ahamkara*, affirmation, assertion. “I know that there is some object in front of me and I also know that I know. I know that I am existing as this so-and-so.” This kind of affirmation attributed to one’s own individuality is the work of *ahamkara*, known as egoism. The subconscious action, memory, etc., are called the *chitta*, which is the fourth function. Thus, *manas*, *buddhi*, *ahamkara* and *chitta* are the four basic functions of the internal organ, the psychological organ.

Hence we have five senses of knowledge, five organs of action, five *pranas* and four operations of the psyche, totalling nineteen. Consciousness grasps objects from outside through these mouths. We feel secure and happy because all these nineteen aspects are acting at the same time, in some form or other, with more or less emphasis. Any one of the nineteen can act at any time under special given conditions. Inasmuch as any one can act at any time, it is virtually saying that all are acting at the same time. Therefore, we are actively, objectively conscious through the nineteen operative media of the individual consciousness in the waking condition. We are aware of this vast world of sensory perception, and we go on contacting these objects of the world through these media.

In this connection, it is also mentioned that we can conceive this form of perception in a cosmic way. Cosmic-consciousness can be conceived to be operative in this

manner in a cosmic waking condition. Just as we are individually conscious of objects in this waking condition of ours, in a similar manner we can conceive that the Universal consciousness is awake to the world of daylight. The whole universe is the object of the consciousness of a consciousness, in a manner similar to an individualised, circumscribed world becoming the object of our individual consciousness in the waking state. The terms for this waking state are *jagrat-avastha*, *jagrat-sthana*. For instance, 'visva' is the word used to designate consciousness in the waking, individualised state. Our consciousness, the *jiva tattva*, this individuality of ours during this moment of waking, is called *visva*. And, this very waking world of universal expanse in space and time, animated by a universal consciousness, is called *vaisvanara* or *virat*. 'Virat' is the word sometimes used. There is a consciousness pervading all things, as we know already. If this consciousness – which is universal and is hidden behind all things – is to be aware of the whole cosmos as we perceive in our waking condition, that cosmic, waking awareness of the whole universe may be regarded as *virat tattva*, Cosmic-consciousness of the whole physical world – the entire cosmos of physicality.

We have heard that Sri Krishna manifested the *viratsvarupa* before Arjuna. In the Purusha Sukta also, we have some sort of description in which the Cosmic Being is conceived as animating the whole physical cosmos. We have to understand here that the physical cosmos is not merely this earth, but is all the layers of externality – which are computerised, as it were, into fourteen categories,

known in Sanskrit as *bhulok*, *bhuvarlok*, *svarlok*, *maharlok*, *janalok*, *tapalok* and *satyalok*. The whole cosmos, in all the levels of its manifestation, is at once an object of the awareness of this Cosmic Being. Such an awakened waking state, as it were, of the Cosmic-consciousness is *virat* – known also as *vaisvanara* in the language of the Upanishads. Individually, the microcosmic aspect of this *virat* is *visva*, your own or my own waking experience as it is available just now, for instance.

Hence, through nineteen mouths we experience objects of the world in this waking condition. We can conceive, for our own intellectual satisfaction, that the universe also operates in this manner. And God-consciousness, imagined to be operating through this waking condition everywhere, is an expanded form of our individualised consciousness. While we in our waking state know only certain things, God as the Universal Consciousness knows all things at the same time. This is, briefly, a description of the consciousness involved in the waking state. The total physical perception – in which the consciousness is involved – is the objective world of the waking state of consciousness.

In the dream state something else happens. The actual physical world – which is seen, contacted through the sense organs in the waking state – is absent, but it looks as if it is present even in the dream state due to an action of the mind. Without the assistance of the gross senses and of the organs of action which are active in the waking condition, the mind alone concocts, imagines, projects a world of its own and we see a world in dream. We exist there, in the

dream, in the same manner as we exist in the waking state. We can see ourselves now seated here in the waking state; in a similar way, we can see ourselves seeing certain things in the dream state also. There is a 'dream me' in the same way as there is a 'waking me'. There is also a dream world. We see all sorts of things in the waking state – mountains, rivers, sun, moon, stars, and all kinds of people. We can see all that in the dream world also. There is space, time and externality in dream, as there is in the waking state. The difference between the waking and the dream is that the mind has created the entire world of external cognition and perception of its own accord without the assistance of externally existing physical objects or physical sensations.

In dream also there are nineteen mouths operating. We have dream eyes, dream ears, a dream nose, a dream tongue that tastes, dream touch and dream legs, dream hands, dream organs of every kind. In dream we run with legs; we eat a good meal in dream. We can even live and die – even that experience is possible in dream. One can feel that one is born or one can feel that one is dead; one can observe one's own cremation in dream. All kinds of fantastic things can be experienced in dream. A new world is projected by the mind. Space, time, causation, objects, people, all blessed things are in the dream world because the psyche is operating through the vital energy, the mind and the intellect in a diminished form – not in an active way. The only difference is that the physical body is not there as an object of awareness. People sometimes sleep with their mouths open; if a few particles of sugar are put on the

tongue of a sleeping man, he will not taste it because his mind is withdrawn.

The mind is the main operative organ that causes the sensations of seeing, hearing, tasting, etc. Even the ego is very active in dream. If somebody calls us – either in dream or deep sleep – by a name that is not ours, we will not listen to it; we will not wake up. If John is sleeping and he is called Jacob, he will not wake up. John must be summoned only as John. That is, the ego is so very intensely identified with this particular name-form complex that it is active even there, in the submerged condition of dream and sleep. So the nineteen mouths of the waking condition are psychologically projected by the mind in the dreaming state also. There also we have all these experiences, every blessed thing, as we have in the waking state.

The Mandukya Upanishad is a study of these states. It is said that if we understand the Mandukya Upanishad and its implications properly, we need not read any other Upanishad. *Mandukyam ekam evalam mumukshunam vimuktaye* (Muktika 1.27): “For the sake of the liberation of the Soul, one Upanishad is sufficient – the Mandukya Upanishad” provided it is understood properly in its deep connotations. You should not just read it only by way of understanding the word meaning of it. The suggestion given by the Mandukya Upanishad is to take your consciousness deeper and deeper into the very root of your personality – from external sensations, from body, etc., to what you really are in your deepest essence.

There is a third state called sleep, where not only are you not aware of the body, but even the psychological

functions are not there. The mind does not think, the intellect does not decide and you do not know that you even exist there. Your existence itself is abolished, as it were. It is a state of nothingness, but you are not even aware that it is nothing. To be aware that it is a nothing would be something, but you are not even aware that it is nothing. It is pure, unadulterated nothing. But, what is happening there? Are you dead? No, you are very much alive. Who told you that you were alive in sleep, when it was a nothing and your awareness was totally obliterated by something? You are totally oblivious of all things happening there. When you did not even know that you were existing, how did you come to the conclusion that you were alive at that time? Nobody told you. You yourself conclude, "I am the same person now that I was before I slept yesterday. I am not another person. Therefore, I must have been existing during sleep." But how do you know that you are the same person? You may be another person. Every day you could change and become somebody else, but this does not happen.

A continuity of consciousness is maintained between yesterday's experience and today's experience. Is this not interesting and surprising? You are very certain that today you are the same person that you were yesterday and your consciousness continues through even the sleep condition, making you feel that you exist today in the same way as you existed yesterday. That is to say, you did exist in the state of deep sleep. The proof of it is only your conviction that you are the same person today as you were yesterday. You have a memory of having slept. Now, if consciousness must have

existed in the state of deep sleep, you must have existed as consciousness only. You did not exist as a body, mind, intellect or anything else. You were not even aware of the act of breathing at that time. You existed as consciousness only.

So, do you believe that your essential nature is consciousness? Even minus all these appurtenances of body, mind, intellect, if you can exist nevertheless, why should you imagine that you are the body, mind, intellect, etc.? If I can exist minus something, that thing from which I am withdrawn is not me, really speaking. If I can be safe without something, that something is redundant. Therefore, the body is a redundant thing, and the mind and intellect are also not us. You are pure *shuddha chaitanya*, as it is called – Pure Consciousness. In that state you existed. There is no other thing that can be regarded as an attribute of your being in that condition. Consciousness was your essential nature.

What were you conscious of? You were conscious of nothing; it was conscious of consciousness only. It was a consciousness of existence, about which we discussed earlier. It was not a consciousness of something; it was a consciousness of consciousness existing. You were aware that you were aware, that is all – nothing more, nothing less. It was Being-Consciousness, and you were very happy, so it was Bliss also. You know how happy you are after having gone into a good sleep. You rub your eyes and you would like to continue to sleep a little more. You were so free in sleep that you would like to go to sleep again. All the botheration, the turmoil of this world is no longer there.



Sometimes you feel: “Let me go to bed and forget the devil of this world.” Thus, in the state of deep sleep you existed as Pure Consciousness. *Sat-chit-ananda* was your real nature in the state of deep sleep.

This Consciousness, which is *sat-chit-ananda*, was not merely inside the body, as you may wrongly imagine once again, even after having deduced this wonderful conclusion that you were Pure Consciousness. It is a wonderful conclusion, indeed, that you are essentially Pure Consciousness, but again you may commit the mistake of thinking that it is inside the body. Pure Consciousness is not inside anything; it is all things. We have already concluded in earlier sessions that consciousness is all-pervading; it cannot be confined to one individuality only. To be conscious that it is only in one place and not in another place is to virtually accept that consciousness is in another place also. Otherwise, how would consciousness know that it is not in some other place unless it has already been there? Hence, the negation of consciousness in some other place is actually an affirmation of it in that place. Negation is determination.

Therefore, the second conclusion that we draw by this analysis is that in the state of deep sleep we existed as Pure Consciousness – not a little consciousness inside the body, but a pervading consciousness which is everywhere. Cosmic-consciousness was there; Universal-consciousness was our essential nature in deep sleep. But why is it that we are not aware of such a condition? We wake up as the same fools that we were before we entered the state of deep sleep. We do not wake up as wise persons. The same idiot goes

and the same idiot comes back. Why is this, in spite of this wondrous conclusion? A peculiar operation is catching hold of us. The impression and the impact caused by this operation is the reason why we come up as the old fools, though it appears that we were not really fools during deep sleep.

We have passed through various lives; we have taken many births. This life is one link in the long chain of the births that we have undergone, maybe thousands in number. In every birth we think something, feel something, do something; and every thought, every feeling, every action creates an impression in the psyche. The psyche is nothing but the individualised centre of consciousness. This impression is nothing but a remnant of a desire remaining after a particular experience. If we see something, we would like to see it again. If we like something, we want to continue with that liking again, as much as possible. The like and the dislike, so-called, which is a basic operation of the mind of an individual, create an impression in the mind – a groove, as it were – and create a propulsion in the psyche to repeat the experience again. This goes on day after day, every day, and we pile up impressions, one over the other, so that these heaped-up impressions become something like a thick cloud covering our consciousness.

This happens in one life; but if many lives are taken in this manner, what would happen? There would be complete darkness – like an eclipse of the sun or the experience of utter midnight during the monsoon season – even in the waking condition, even in the daytime. This

cloud weighs so heavily upon us that it does not permit us to know that we were aware in the state of deep sleep. Thus the transcendental being that we really are in the state of deep sleep is almost a negation of our existence because of the heavy weight that is sitting upon us.

Suppose you are given a very good lunch, very tasty, and at the same time five quintals of heavy weight are placed on your head. Will you enjoy the food? Unless that weight is removed, this eating has no meaning. So this experience of a transcendental awareness of your true nature in the state of deep sleep does not have any significance for you on account of the heavy weight of *karma* potentials which compel you to think only in one way, in a stereotyped fashion like with blinkers, as it were. And you cannot think in any other way. You may take any number of lives, pass through birth after birth, but you are the same person. You do not become different, because you are whipped by the desires which have produced those impressions earlier. As a horse being whipped by a rider is compelled to move in one direction only, you are forced to think only in one way: this space, this time, this causation, this object, this person, this me, this somebody else.

The Mandukya Upanishad gives this analysis of our basic nature, but it is said that we will attain *moksha* by gaining this knowledge: *Mandukyam ekam evalam mumukshunam vimuktaye*. How will we get *moksha* by knowing this? It is also added that we are the same foolish person; we have never become different. This foolishness of ours can be removed by the gradual practice of yoga. The suggestion of a particular kind of yoga that is made by the

Mandukya Upanishad is the recitation of *pranava*, or *omkara*. It has a simple way, a very easy means of meditation to tell us. It is no complicated thing – just recitation of *pranava*. OM is the *pranava*, or the *omkara*, which is a blend of three syllables or letters: A, U, M. A-U-M becomes OM.

When you chant OM, when you articulate your vocal organ in the recitation of OM, all parts of the vocal organ act simultaneously in such a way that they are supposed to be uttering every letter at that time. This is why all languages are supposed to be included in OM. All the articulatory process takes place in the recitation of OM, if you can properly observe it.

The *visva*, as I mentioned, is the name given to the waking consciousness; the dreaming consciousness is called *taijasa*; the sleeping consciousness is called *prajna* and the transcendental consciousness is the Atman. So, *visva*, *taijasa*, *prajna* and Atman are the designations of the very same consciousness involved in the physical body and the physical sensations involved in dream perception, involved in sleep, and not involved in anything – existing as transcendent. In a way, the letters of the mantra OM – A, U, M – are identified by the Mandukya Upanishad, with these three states. ‘A’ is waking, ‘U’ is dreaming, ‘M’ is sleeping and AUM, or OM, is the Atman. *Tasya vacakah pranavah* (Y.S. 1.27), says Patanjali in his Yoga Sutras: “OM is the name of the Ultimate Reality.” The Name of God is OM; He has no other name. As God is all-pervading, His name also should be all-inclusive. We do not call Him ‘ka’, ‘kha’, ‘ga’, ‘gha’ or ‘A’, ‘B’, ‘C’, ‘D’.

This AUM is an inarticulate universalised vibration. It is not actually a letter or a word, but a vibration. OM is to be chanted for the sake of the removal of the dross accumulated in your psyche, in the form of impressions of past *karmas*. Merge waking in dream, merge dreaming in sleep and merge sleep in the Atman. Draw the consciousness gradually from waking to dream; that is to say, draw it from the waking body consciousness to the psychological consciousness, from that to the sleep consciousness. How do you do this? In the beginning, you have to be seated in a suitable posture and slowly articulate this beautiful name of God, which is OM or *pranava*.

The scripture says that in the beginning, the Vedas did not exist. *Eka eva pura vedah pranavah sarva vanmayah* (Bhagavata 9.48), says the Srimad Bhagavata Maha Purana. In the Krita Yuga, the Golden Age as we call it, the Vedas did not exist; only *pranava* existed. Also, that religion was not Hinduism, Christianity, etc. Hamsa is the name of the religion of the Krita Yuga. Hamsa means just love of God. It is not love through some 'ism' – this community, that community. No communities existed in the Krita Yuga; it was total man loving total God, and OM was considered as inclusive of all the three Vedas. From Akara, Ukara, Makara, Prajapati is supposed to have extracted the Rig Veda, the Yajur Veda, the Sama Veda; and the three Padas of the Gayatri Mantra are supposed to be extractions of the three Vedas and are also supposed to be embedded in AUM, so that all the Veda is inside OM – all the three Vedas.

To practise this meditation according to the Mandukya Upanishad, be seated properly, without distractions, and chant Aaaaauuummmmm. Take a deep breath and then chant Aaaaauuummmmmmm, Aaaaauuummmmmmm, Aaaaauuuu-mmmmmmm, Aaaaauuummmmmmm, Aaaaauuummmmmmm. When you recite OM like this, don't you feel a sense of satisfaction inside? In a few seconds you feel the difference; you feel as if you are a different person altogether. You are not the same body; for a few seconds you are not even aware of the body. It was melting, as it were; it has actually melted. Every day practise this chant for fifteen minutes, in the morning and in the evening. You will feel as if the body is melting. Actually, physically it may not melt; the sensation of melting will arise on account of the withdrawal of the consciousness from the body. It will withdraw itself from even the mind and it will withdraw itself even from your personality consciousness.

Only by the chanting of OM can one enter into the Bliss of the Atman, is the teaching of the Mandukya Upanishad. All yogas are combined in this. So, do this practice yourself. When you are alone somewhere – under a tree, near the Ganga, in the temple, in your room, wherever you are – sit for a few minutes and chant in the same way as I told you, with a sonorous sound, beautifully, calmly, creating an equilibrated vibration in your personality. You will forget all your worries; you will feel happy inside; you will feel a tingling sensation in the body as if the consciousness were slowly getting withdrawn from the body. This is the practice of the yoga of the Mandukya Upanishad.

## Session 8

### THE AITAREYA UPANISHAD

We had occasion to probe into the implications of the involvement of consciousness in human individuality in terms of the five layers, or *koshas*, as they are called, in connection with the process of creation as described in the Taittiriya Upanishad. To recap, the Taittiriya Upanishad touches upon the structure of the human individuality, which is constituted of the five layers known as the *koshas* – *annamaya*, *pranamaya*, *manomaya*, *vijnamaya*, *anandamaya*, or the physical, vital, mental, intellectual and causal.

This suggestiveness of the involvement of consciousness in these *koshas* is also the subject of the Mandukya Upanishad. It lands us on the conclusion that this very consciousness which appears to be involved in the layers of creation – objectively as well as subjectively, macrocosmically as well as microcosmically – is basically universal in its nature.

The Aitareya is another Upanishad which, from another angle of vision, tells us how we as human beings, individuals, find ourselves in the predicament in which we are – one part of knowledge being available to us through the faculties of our understanding, and another part totally unknown to us. We live in this world in a particular condition, psychologically or socially. But why are we in this condition? Who placed us in this particular psychological, social context, especially as it does not seem to be a pleasant state of affairs? The world in which we live and in which we are involved does not appear to be a

pleasant state of affairs. We have only complaints from morning to evening about things happening outside and about our own selves also.

The creation theory becomes almost complete in the Aitareya Upanishad. The projection of an externality to the Universal Consciousness is the principle of creation; an 'other' to the Universal appears to be there, revealed before itself – and as the Taittiriya Upanishad mentions, this projection takes place not suddenly or abruptly, but by stages. One such description of the stages of the involvement of the Universal Consciousness in the process of creation is available to us in the Taittiriya Upanishad. Now another aspect of it is mentioned in the Aitareya Upanishad, which is often considered as a complete description of what has happened.

The Upanishad begins by telling us, "The Universal Atman alone was." We should not say that the Atman *was* or *will be*, and so on; such a way of putting things would not be in harmony with what the Atman actually is. "The Atman was" is not the proper way of putting it because It also is, and shall also be in the future. But the word 'was', in the past tense, has been used often in the Upanishads from the point of view of our understanding of the process of creation, because we seem to feel that this world is a present condition, and the condition prior to the condition of the world prevailing now should be considered as something past. We see this world that has been created, manifested or revealed; and this world, which is now before our sense organs, is presently an object of our consciousness. The world is a present; it is not something that *was*. It *is*, but it



was put in this fashion to imagine that the world of perception is something that is present. Thus, the condition prior to the creation of the world would be a 'past'. "God created the world"; this is what we generally say. We use the past tense, as if it took place many, many years back. Actually, God is not living in time. The Supreme Being is a timeless Existence and, therefore, to use the words 'is', 'was', 'will be', etc. – which have a meaning only in the world of time – is inappropriate in the case of a timeless and non-spatial Existence. Yet we, thinking in terms of time only, and absolutely unable to think in any other way, say "the Atman was" or "God created the world".

Inasmuch as time also is something that has been created, the creation itself could not have taken place in time itself. Space and time, which are also the evolutes of consciousness and which manifested from the Atman, could not be regarded as a condition of creation itself. The idea of time is involved in any statement like: "God created the world in ancient times. Many, many years back, centuries back, millions of years back, as it were, this world was created by God." When we say this, we imply that God created the world sometime. The word 'sometime' means time, but God is not in time. He is timeless, so we cannot think how creation actually took place.

However, we are eager to know how this world came to be. So, as a mother tells a story to a little child, the great metaphysical philosophers of the Upanishads, taking into consideration the weakness of human thought and its involvement in space and time absolutely, used the term – tentatively, for the time being, and not finally, of course –

“the Atman alone was”. *Atma va idam eka evagra asit, nanyat kin cana misat* (Ait. 1.1.1) is the first sentence of the Aitareya Upanishad. There was nothing alive anywhere at that time, when the Atman alone was. Outside the Atman, outside Brahman, outside the Absolute nothing can be, because it is a non-relative existence. The emanation of this universe is made possible by the appearance of space and time. It is humanly impossible to imagine how time can emanate from a timeless eternity. It is not possible for anyone to understand how that could be possible; yet, somehow, that has become possible. But when it has become possible, the process that actually follows this unthinkable, unintelligible, transcendental possibility is involved in certain stages, which are the very degrees mentioned in the Taittiriya Upanishad: inwardly, psychologically, the five *koshas*; outwardly, cosmically, the elements themselves – space-time, air, fire, water, earth. These are the names that we give to certain stages of the manifestation of matter – *prakriti*, concrete substance, object, or call it externality.

The Atman, the Universal Being which is Brahman universally, willed this cosmos. Usually religions tell us, “God created the world,” “He created the heaven, the earth,” and so on. As the Upanishad tells us, this Supreme Being, in willing this cosmos, firstly projected a negation of Universality. I touched upon this aspect of the matter some time earlier; I am briefly repeating it for your memory. The external, which is the universe, can become meaningful only on a tentative submerging of the Universal Principle; nothing that is external can be in harmony with the

Universal. The word 'Universal' implies that which is inclusive of all things, outside which nothing can be. So if you imagine that the world, which is created, is to some extent external to the Creator – the word 'externality' comes in here – you have to explain what happened to the Universal Being when the external manifested itself. It had covered Itself, as it were – made Itself completely oblivious to all external perception.

When God created the world, it appears as if He has ceased to be, and that is why we see only the world in front of us. We do not see God in front of us, because seeing the Universal is an impossibility. We can perceive, see, only that which is outside, external. The total inclusiveness cannot become an object of perception because that Universal inclusiveness naturally includes the perceiving individual also. Therefore, no one can perceive or know that which is Universal; hence, God cannot become an object of sense perception. The world, which is an object of sense perception, is somehow a kind of alienation of consciousness into a negation of Universality in the form of an emptiness that we see – space, a large dimension, an extension before us, which equally appears to be infinite for our comprehension. We cannot imagine the end of space; it is a negative infinity that is presented before us in contradistinction with the positive infinity of the Absolute. The concept of space goes together with the concept of time; we cannot separate one from the other. So, modern people generally say space-time rather than space and time.

Creation starts with the five elements, to which reference was made in our previous sessions. And when

creation starts in this manner, division takes place. Creation is not merely a manifestation of externality, it is also a manifestation of division or partition of the otherwise inclusiveness, or its extension. We do not merely see things outside but, at the same time, we see many things. So, creation involves two aspects of perception: externality and multiplicity. The externality aspect is caused by space-time manifestation. The very meaning of space-time is externality; extension and duration are the characteristics of space and time. As far as the multiplicity aspect of creation is concerned, it becomes very important for us, inasmuch as we ourselves seem to be involved in it, because we are all multiple beings – one person not having any connection with another person, as it were. Each one is for his own self. Every object, everything, every atom in the world may be said to be just for itself; one thing cannot become another thing. Here is the reason behind why we find ourselves in this condition in which we appear to be in this world.

When externality in the form of space-time, which is the basic principle of creation, also becomes a factor of multiplicity and division of things, the variety of species, as we say, appear to manifest themselves gradually: from the crude, earthly material existence of the elements to the living bodies of plants, vegetation, and animals, leading up to human beings. The Aitereya Upanishad takes us up to the level of the human being as evolved from the lower species, which are the mineral, vegetable and animal.

The Upanishad says, “The moment the individual was created, it was cast in the sea of sorrow.” In Sanskrit, the sea of sorrow is called *samsara*; the Sanskrit word ‘*samsara*’

actually means an aberration – an isolation, an externalisation, an alienation, a becoming other than what one is. You can imagine what will happen to you if you have become something other than what you are. Can there be a greater tragedy conceivable than for one to become other than what one is? Would you not like to be what you are? Don't you value self-identity as being of pre-eminent importance? "I am, and I am this." You assert yourself so vehemently and would not even like to be called by another name than what your assumed name is, let alone be clubbed with qualities which you do not appear to have. Would you like to be associated with characteristics with which you cannot associate yourself, personally? You regard it as an insult. "You call me by this name and think that I am like this, which I am not!"

Hence, this self-identity, the affirmation of the egoistic principle in the individuality, becomes so prominent that its consequence follows immediately. The more intense the affirmation of individuality, the more intense also is the negation of universality taking place at the same time. The more vehement is your affirmation of your personality, your isolated individuality, the worse it is for you. The more intensely you are, correspondingly, God is not, because the affirmation of an egoistic principle is the negation of Universality, which is God's nature. The sorrow that follows from the affirmation of the individuality of a person is the *samsara* that is spoken of in Sanskrit. And how we fell into the sea of sorrow, headlong, is also something that is to be noted very carefully. We did not fall vertically from heaven; we fell headlong, with head down

and legs up, as it were. There is basically a topsy-turvy event taking place at the time of the manifestation of human individuality in which we are presently concerned. Many things happened simultaneously; we cannot have time even to think as to what has happened to us. In a minute, a tragedy has fallen upon us.

Firstly, the Universal has been negated by the projection of the outer extension of space and time. That is bad enough, but then something worse took place. Multiplicity became the consequence of the further division of creation. That is worse, but even worse is to see things upside down. You are visualising the world of creation, as it were, by standing on your head with legs up. How would you see the world in that fashion? There was this predicament befalling the human individual, on account of the unavoidable involvement of individual consciousness in the externality, which is basic to all kinds of perception. Even your awareness that you are existing as an individual is spatio-temporally conditioned. Do not imagine that you are outside space and outside time. All that is in space and time is external; it is an object. It cannot be a subject. As space and time themselves are objects, all things conditioned by space and time are also objects; and to the extent you are involved in space and time, you are also an object only. The subjectivity in you becomes merely a veneer – an outer whitewash, a kind of coating over your pure subjectivity. You always consider yourself as one among many people, don't you? Where is the subjectivity in you? If you are a pure subject, which you sometimes, of course, assume yourself to be, why do you consider yourself as one among

many people? This is because the manyness is nothing but the objectivity considered as a part of creation.

To the extent you are only one among many, you are an object among many other objects. You are a physical body, a psycho-physical complex; you have no pure subjectivity in you; and your affirmation of your worth, of your individuality, becomes a fake affirmation. Therefore, the world seems to be very heavy upon you; society is too much for you and you cannot understand the things that happen in this world, and why they happen at all. Human history, which is a process of events over which you do not seem to have any kind of control, has converted you into objects, as units over which the whole history sweeps. You must listen to all these things very carefully. It is a little difficult to understand because if you understand what it means, you will also know why you are in the condition in which you are.

The topsy-turvy, headlong falling of individuality into the sea of sorrow is actually an involvement of consciousness in externality and multiplicity. It is very important to know that you are involved in externality and multiplicity at the same time. Because of the externality in which you are involved, you appear to be a person like any other person in the world; and because of the multiplicity and the headlong aspect of the falling, you see the inside as the outside and the outside as the inside. God, who is Universal, appears to be an external object. Don't you think that God is somewhere, far away in heaven? While the Universal Being cannot be far away, the concept of God being transcendent and being extra-cosmic as the Creator

of the cosmos, above space and time, is some fallacy that has been injected into your mind by the projection of space and time into your consciousness. And that has such an effect upon your own individuality that you think that you are somewhere cast in the world of space and time and there is a lot of distance between one thing and another. The idea of distance is the quality of space, and the idea of procession – coming and going, even birth and death – arises on account of the involvement of time. If space and time are only negations of the Ultimate Reality which is universal, in a way we may say the whole of creation is a negation of Truth.

“We live in a world of untruth,” says the Upanishad very, very poignantly. We are involved in the untruth of our physicality, our individuality, our sociality, our isolation of ourselves from other things and the compulsion that we feel to see things only as present outside us. We are very much concerned with things outside and concerned very little with our own selves. When we open our eyes, we see only that which we are not. The Aitareya Upanishad briefly mentions to us, “A sorrow struck the individuals, as if a thunderbolt fell on them, and they cried and wept.” When you lose yourself, you begin to cry. If you lose anything else, it does not matter, but if it is a question of losing yourself, you can imagine what it could be for you. Your sorrow becomes unimaginable when it is a question of the negation of your existence itself, but you would tolerate any other negation. “If all property goes, it does not matter, but why do I also go?” Here is a big question mark before you – and, you have really gone. Therefore, you are perpetually in a



state of anguish and agony in this world, and not a moment of peace can you have here. The reason is that the Universal, which is your real nature, has been obliterated from your experience and you see a false presentation of externality, division, and an inverted form of perception.

Allegorically, mythologically, in the fashion of an Epic or a Purana, the Aitareya Upanishad tells us that the individuals cried for food because they appeared to be dying of hunger. Here 'hunger' means the absence of the Universal Principle in the particular. To the extent to which the Universal is absent in our particular individuality, to that extent we are full of appetites – hunger, thirst and what not. When we are hungry and thirsty, we are actually hungry and thirsty for the Universal which we have lost. But the fallen individual cannot expect to gain the Garden of Eden once again; as the Bible tells us, “A flaming sword is kept at the gate of heaven,” so that we may not go back. What is given to us is only labour – hard work, sweat and suffering, by which we appear to be somehow or other getting over the sorrow of this headlong fall.

So, food was given to us, and through the *pranas* we consume a diet of this food. Through the eyes we assume that we are eating something in the form of colours and visions. We will be very unhappy if we cannot see things. “Oh, he is blind! He cannot see.” What does it matter if he does not see? It matters because a part of the diet of our sense organs has gone. Vision is a food, the sound that we hear is a food, taste is also a food, touch is a food, smell is a food. But this food cannot satisfy us for long. Every day we are hungry. If the food that is given to us today is actually

satisfying, tomorrow we should not be hungry again. Why is it that we are harassed like this every day? Why is it that two or three times a day, hunger and thirst come upon us like demons? We seem to be living only to appease this thirst and hunger that appear to be catching hold of us as the very principle of death itself.

Thus, God gave food to the human individual in the form of an external something, of which we are having plenty in this world. But, are we happy? A curse has fallen upon us. God extradites the human nature from the heaven of angels, and mortality befalls us. Immortality vanishes from us. The immortal is our essential nature – communion with God. We were with God; basically, we still are with God but we have lost the awareness of it. As in dream we completely forget what has happened to us in waking – we project a new world altogether – here, in this so-called long dream of waking experience, we have projected a world which is basically dream-like.

The Aitareya Upanishad tells us the Atman, the Universal Being which alone was, became the cause of the manifestation of this universe in this fashion: through the manifestation of the external space-time first, through multiplicity and through inverted compulsion of perception in respect of individuals. We cannot conceive of a greater tragedy. Even a concentration camp is better than this. The worst has befallen us. But we think we are still in heaven. Everything seems to be nice: the world is beautiful, society is good, friends are plenty, wealth is there. What is wrong with the world? The misconception has gone so deep into the very veins of our existence that we have started

imagining that we are actually lords, like angels, though actually we are sunk in the hell of the negation of universal perception.

The yoga system is the science, the technique of the reversal of this process into which we have fallen through the process of creation. From the lowermost condition in which we find ourselves, we attempt to lift ourselves up systematically to the preceding condition. This is actually the inner meaning of the systematic enumeration of the stages of yoga that Patanjali Maharishi tells us, as *yama*, *niyama*, *asana*, *pranayama*, *pratyahara*, *dharana*, *dhyana* and *samadhi*. These – rising from *yama*, etc., up to the point of *samadhi* – are the stages in our return journey from the condition of the fall back up to the Absolute, which is the precondition of creation.

This is something about the Aitareya Upanishad. In the beginning of this series, I told you something about the doctrine of the Isavasya Upanishad: the pervasion of God in all things and the duty which is incumbent upon human individuals, the necessity to combine knowledge and action in our daily life, the need to see a harmony between God and the world, etc. In the Kena Upanishad, we were told that ultimately God does everything, and even the imaginary actions of ours are ultimately motivated by the Ultimate Being. We went up to the creation theory of the Taittiriya Upanishad which brought us into contact with the knowledge of the five sheaths. Then we went to the Mandukya Upanishad where we studied the involvement of consciousness in the five sheaths, objectively as well as

subjectively, and today I have told you something about the Aitareya Upanishad.

Over and above what it has already told us about creation and the way in which we find ourselves in this world, the Upanishad goes into further detail of the reason why we are in this condition. Birth and death become a necessary result that follows from involvement in externality. What we call evolution in modern scientific language is the effort of the external to become the Universal. Every atom, everything living and non-living, is attempting to regain its universality. The whole world of externality is attempting to regain its universality. The world is craving for God, and every little atom of creation is crying for that which it has lost. The restlessness that we feel in this world, the kinds of agony of various types in which we are involved – all these are explicable only as a manifestation of a basic sorrow, which is what has followed as a consequence of the loss of our own selves.

*Atmanasha*, Self-loss, has taken place. As you have studied already, the Self is universal in Its nature. Self-loss is actually the loss of the Universal Principle – and if you lose the Universal, you have lost everything. There is nothing to hold on to afterwards. What can you grab, when the Universal has been lost sight of and escaped your notice? When you have lost the Universal, there is nothing with you afterwards. Everything has gone in one second. You are in the worst of conditions.

Birth and death follow. The rebirth of human individuality is nothing but the process of evolution accentuated in the human personality. What is called

evolution is the cessation of one condition of things and the birth of the subsequent condition. If matter has to become plant, matter has to die first in order that it may become plant; if plant has to become animal, the plant condition has to die in order that the animal condition may come. So is the case if animal has to become man. All the preceding conditions must subside in order that the succeeding condition may arise. Thus, if a new condition, a new state of experience, has to be evolved in our own personality, the previous condition should be shed. The shedding of this previous condition is what is called death of the personality, and rebirth is nothing but the involvement of the very same consciousness in a succeeding condition.

As we move onward and forward, upward through the ascent of consciousness from the lower to the higher, we not only enlarge the dimension of our individuality on the one hand, but also the distinction that appears to be there between the outer and the inner gets diminished. The subject and the object, which are 'divided', come nearer and nearer until a merger of the Universal Subject with the Universal Object takes place. And all that took place vanishes, as a dream passes. The tragedy of birth and death is part and parcel of the consequence of the negation of Universality and the affirmation of individuality. Yoga is the way, and the knowledge of the various yogas has been introduced to you.

## Session 9

### THE BRIHADARANYAKA UPANISHAD

We have been going through various important themes of the teachings of the Upanishads, and many subjects have been covered.

There was a great sage called Yajnavalkya. His name occurs in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad. He was a master of spiritual wisdom. One day, when he had become aged, he told his wife Maitreyi, and another wife known as Katyayani, that he was retiring; and he said: “Whatever property I have, I shall divide between both of you. I shall take to *sannyasa* and go for meditation, and you take my property.”

The younger wife, Katyayani, was very happy. “Good riddance! Now the old man goes,” she perhaps thought. But the other wife, Maitreyi, was very mature.

Maitreyi said, “Sire, you want to offer me all your wealth. May I ask you one question: Can I become immortal through wealth? With all the treasures that you are now prepared to offer to me, can I become immortal?”

Yajnavalkya replied, “Far from it. You will be a well-to-do person like any other in the world, but there is no hope of immortality through wealth.”

To that, Maitreyi said, “Then what for is this wealth that you are offering me? What shall I do with it, if through that I shall not become immortal?”

There is a very important psychological truth hidden in this query of Maitreyi, the consort of Yajnavalkya. Immortality is timeless existence. It can also mean, for our own practical purposes, a very long life that is not going to

end easily; and if immortality cannot be gained through wealth, perhaps long life also cannot be assured through wealth; and this would mean that our life can end at any time, even with all the wealth that we may be having. If tomorrow is the last day in this world for a person possessing large treasures, what good is that treasure? If the owner or the possessor of the wealth is not to exist at all, what can wealth do? What is its utility? Do we love wealth, and what is this love of wealth for?

“Your question is a very important one,” said Yajnavalkya. “You are very wise in raising this point. You are very dear to me. Come on; I shall teach you something. Sit down, and I shall speak to you.”

*Na va are patyuh kamaya patih priyo bhavati, atmanas tu kamaya patih priyo bhavati; na va are jayayai kamaya jaya priya bhavati; atmanas tu kamaya jaya priya bhavati;... na va are sarvasya kamaya sarvam priyam bhavati, atmanas tu kamaya sarvam priyam bhavati* (Brihad. 2.4.5): “Nobody loves anything for its own sake.” Here is a masterstroke of genius from Yajnavalkya, the great sage: Nobody loves anything for its own sake. We are accustomed to this slogan ‘love’, and we consider that as something very pre-eminent in our daily life. We love people, we love wealth, we love land, we love property. There is such a thing called love in this world, but who does love want, and what is the purpose of this love?

Psychologically, as well as metaphysically and philosophically, there seems to be an error in our notion that anything can be loved at all. The word ‘love’ becomes a misnomer when we investigate into its essence. If by love

we mean affectionately clinging to something that is other than our own self, then love does not exist in this world. If love means asking for something other than one's own self, clinging to something other than one's self, feeling happy with that which is not one's self – if that is the definition of love, then love is hypocrisy; it does not exist. But if we say that love does not always mean love for something other than one's own self – that it should be love for one's own self – who will love one's own self? That is, again, a psychological problem. Neither does love for another seem to be justifiable, nor does love for one's own self seem to be meaningful.

“For the sake of the Self, everything is dear” – is a very precise statement of Sage Yajnavalkya. This statement is so precise, so concentrated, that its meaning is not obviously clear on its surface because it does not appear that people love themselves, and it is difficult to make sense of this statement if you just say you love property because you are loving your Self. Nobody will understand what exactly this statement means. Am I loving myself when I love property? It does not look like that. I cling to something that I regard as my belonging. It does not mean that I am clinging to my own body when I am clinging to something which is my belonging – property, wealth, treasure, relation. Yajnavalkya says: “You do not understand things properly. That is why the meaning is not clear to you.”

We have, in our earlier discussions, concluded that everything in the world has a pure subjectivity in itself. It is not true that things are objects of perception. They are also subjects, from their own point of view. If you, as a perceiver



or a cogniser of a thing which you consider as an object, remain as a subject for that particular thing which you regard as an object, that other thing may consider you as an object from its own point of view when it beholds you as something outside itself. When I see you, I am a subject perceiving you as an object of my perception. So, you are an object and I am a subject. But when you perceive me, you are a subject and I am an object. Now tell me: Who is the subject and who is the object? Is there anything that we can permanently call an object?

The analysis of consciousness, into which we entered some time back, has shown us that the nature of the subjectivity of anything is essentially consciousness. You have to bring back to your memory this analytical study that we conducted in the course of our going through the Mandukya Upanishad, etc. Consciousness is the essence of the subjectivity of anything. There cannot be a perceiving of anything unless there is a consciousness of perceiving. This consciousness, as we noticed by an analysis of its nature, is incapable of being limited to a finitude of existence. Consciousness cannot be finite. That is to say, it cannot be located in any particular place. It cannot even be said to be inside somebody, because consciousness is the knower of the fact of its being inside someone. If someone says “consciousness is inside”, it is consciousness itself making this statement possible. The so-called consciousness, which appears to be inside, seems to be asserting that it is inside. Minus consciousness, no assertion is possible. Therefore, it is consciousness that is apparently holding the opinion that it is inside; that is to say, it is not outside.

I am just repeating briefly, in outline, the processes of analysis that we conducted earlier on this issue. Consciousness is inside and, therefore, it is not outside. How does consciousness know that it is not outside? The process of perception is the commingling of consciousness with that which it considers as its object. Consciousness has to contact the object in order that it may become aware that the object is existing at all. The contacting of consciousness in this manner, in respect of the object, would preclude the old opinion that it is only inside. If it is locked up within the personality of an individual, no one can know that there is anything outside one's own skin. You will not know that there is a tree standing in front of you. Consciousness has to be capable of outstripping the limitations that it appears to be imagining around itself. All perception is an obvious demonstration of the non-finite character of consciousness. It is not merely inside, it is also outside; that is to say, it is everywhere. It is infinite; this is the point.

Yajnavalkya tells us that when we love somebody, some thing, some object, whatever it be, that which pulls us in the direction of the so-called object is not the object by itself, because this object is a subject in its own status. Its essence is not objectivity; its essence is as much a centre of consciousness as our own subjectivity is a centre of consciousness. In all love, in all affections, in all attractions, the Self pulls the Self. It is as if one part of consciousness collides with another part of consciousness in perception. The Universal that is hidden in the so-called object outside pulls the Universal that is present in the subject, as it were,

in its own direction, and towards whichever side action is taking place. I hope you understand the point.

As the Bhagavadgita tell us, Sri Krishna, in another context, says that all perception which is sensory is actually the *gunas* of *prakriti* coming in contact with the *gunas* of *prakriti*. *Gunaha guneshu vartante* (Gita 3.28): The *gunas* of *prakriti* – *sattva, rajas and tamas* – which are the constituents of the sense organs, come in contact with the very same properties of *prakriti* which also constitute the object of sense. So the object and the subject come in contact with each other because of the fact that both are constituted of the same substance, *prakriti – sattva, rajas, tamas*. On a deeper level, we may say that consciousness is the subject and it is also the object.

In technical language, the subject consciousness is called *vishayi chaitanya*. *Vishayi* is a Sanskrit word which means something or someone which is conscious of a *vishaya*, or an object. *Vishaya* means object, and the object consciousness is called *vishaya chaitanya*. The process of perception of the object by the subject is called *pramana chaitanya*, or perceptive consciousness, or we may say perceptual consciousness; and the coming to be aware of the existence of an object – our being aware of the existence of an object – is called *prameya chaitanya*. The decision that we arrive at that we know the object – the conclusion that the object has been known – is also a consciousness; and that conclusion consciousness in respect of an object being known is called *prameya chaitanya*. The subject consciousness, which is *vishayi*, is also called *pramatr chaitanya*; the object, which is also essentially

consciousness, is called *vishaya chaitanya*; and the process is called *pramana chaitanya*. You can forget all these words. I am just casually mentioning this technology of perceptual psychology.

The idea is that in all attractions, in all processes of contact of the subject with the object, it may be true that the *gunas* of *prakriti* collide with the *gunas* of *prakriti*; but, more profoundly, we may say that consciousness collides with consciousness. The sea of consciousness is everywhere in the universe. One eddy or wave of this consciousness is touching another.

Why are we so much attracted towards things? When we are pulled in the direction of something lovable or dear, we seem to lose our senses. We become crazy. Why does it happen? It is because the whole universe is at the back of even this little drop of consciousness which appears as the object. A little wave that is rising up on the surface of the ocean has the entire sea at the back of it, which wells up as this eddy or the wave. The power of the entire sea is behind the wave. We are incapable of resisting the infinite, because nobody can resist an attraction. This is because attractions, which are also loves, arise on account of a psychological impasse created unconsciously by the involvement of consciousness in the sense organs and through the sense organs coming in contact with the object, not knowing the fact that the sense organs themselves are propelled by an inward consciousness of the subject and that there is also something in the object which is basically consciousness.

There is another psychological factor in the process of attraction. We do not get attracted to everything so easily.

For instance, a rock on the bank of the river may not attract us so powerfully as the rose flower that is blossoming in the garden, and so on. There are varieties of circumstances which differentiate one kind of perception from another kind of perception. Attractions are the outcome of a sympathy that is established between the subjective consciousness and the contour that is presented by the object outside, notwithstanding the fact that there is consciousness. Now I am touching upon another aspect of the matter altogether, not the metaphysical one.

There are three aspects of this issue. Why is it that we are pulled towards something? One aspect is what has been already told in the Bhagavadgita – *gunas* propel themselves toward *gunas*. *Prakriti*, as the subject, working through the sense organs, is pulled towards itself, as it were, outside, in the form of an object, which also is constituted of the very same *prakriti*. That is one answer to the question of why one feels pulled or drawn towards another object. The other aspect that I mentioned is that the consciousness that is infinite in nature is ‘infinitudinously’ – to take one’s understanding beyond ‘multitudinously’ – pulling the subject consciousness, and there is a vice-versa action; subject and object pull each other. The third aspect is that the attractions are conditioned by certain features of the object. The Atman, the Soul, the Self, the consciousness in us is a perfect symmetry in perfection. It is the most beautiful of things. The Soul is the most beautiful thing. Nothing can be beautiful like the Soul. Nobody has seen the Soul, but if you can imagine what beauty is, if you have seen any surpassingly beautiful thing in the world – not a little

beautiful thing, but enchanting, absorbing, enrapturing beauty – if you have seen that anywhere, you may say the Soul is something like that. Now, the Soul cannot be attracted to anything unless it sees some sympathy – that is to say, unless some quality of it is also present in that object to which it is attracted. Symmetry is one of these qualities. Any kind of hotchpotch arrangement cannot attract us. We are attracted to methodological arrangement, symmetry, proportion and meaningfulness. A meaningless object cannot attract us as much as a meaningful object.

You may ask me what ‘meaningful’ is. Meaning is that character in the object by which we can consider that object to be of some utility to us. If it is totally non-utilitarian, if it is a meaningless hotchpotch, then our mind cannot be attracted. Thus, symmetry of contour, perfection of presentation, precision and orderliness, together with the meaning that we see in it, pulls the subject towards the object. However, considering any aspect of the matter, it does not mean that we love the object for its own sake. There is some subjectivity involved in it. Unless a meaning is seen in the object, we will not be pulled towards that object. We want to put that object to some utility. If there is no meaning at all, no attraction takes place. So, *na va are sarvasya kamaya sarvam priyam bhavati, atmanas tu kamaya sarvam priyam bhavati* (Brihad. 2.4.5): “Nothing is dear for its own sake; for the sake of the Atman, everything is dear.” When we love a thing, we are loving our Atman. Now, you may again make the mistake of thinking, “My Atman is inside. How is it that I am loving something outside?” Do not make that mistake. Again and again the

same idea will come to the mind: “How can I say that I am loving my own Atman when I am loving something outside?” This Atman is not only inside you. Here is the point that you should always remember. The Atman is somehow or other masquerading in the form of all things outside. The Atman is Infinite Existence. The Infinite pulls the Infinite. The Supreme Self it is that pulls the Supreme Self.

Therefore, Yajnavalkya says to Maitreyi, “Nobody loves anything for its own sake.” All love is love of the Self, in the pure spiritual sense. Not this self or that self, myself or yourself, itself – this kind of self is not the point. It is the universal Self that is actually pulling you in some form, and you are not able to catch the point. There is an illusion that is presented to the sense organs, and under the impression – due to the delusion – you go to the object thinking that it is beautiful, that it is necessary, that it is meaningful. There is no meaning in anything in this world except the meaning of the Selfhood of that object. If the Self is absent in that object, it is a non-entity, and a non-entity cannot attract you. So if the Self it is that pulls you, it is yourself only that is pulling you.

After having said this much, Yajnavalkya continues by saying, “After departure, there is no consciousness.”

“I cannot understand,” Maitreyi says. “What are you saying? There is no consciousness? You are confusing me by saying this.”

“No, Maitreyi. I am not confusing you. You do not understand what I am saying. When I say there is no consciousness, I mean that when the consciousness departs

from this individuality of the bodily personality, there is no particularised consciousness,” is Yajnavalkya’s reply.

To us, all consciousness is psychological consciousness; to us, every consciousness is sensory consciousness. When we make a statement like “I am conscious”, we mean that we are conscious of something – which is psychological perception, sensory perception. Consciousness by itself does not perceive anything. It is the Self, the Universal Perceiver. “So why did you say that there is no consciousness after the absolution of consciousness from entanglement in this body?” is Maitreyi’s question. The reason is: *yatra hi dvaitam iva bhavati, tad itara itaram pasyati* (Brihad. 2.4. 14): “You will see another only when there is duality.” If there is something outside consciousness, consciousness can see something; but if there is only consciousness everywhere, what will it see? What does God see, for instance? You can put a more poignant question to yourself, in a more intelligible manner. Does God see anything? What does He see? If the entire creation is pervaded by God, what does God see? He sees nothing; He sees Himself only. The awareness by God is awareness of Himself. The so-called omniscience of God, which we attribute to Him, is actually an all-knowledge of Himself. The very quality that is attributed to God is actually connected with Himself, His own existence.

Therefore, when there is no duality, no consciousness outside Itself – It is Itself all things – there is no knowledge of anything. It is pure Being-Awareness.

*Yatra tv asya sarvam atmaivabhut, tat kena kam jighret, tat kena kam pasyret, tatra kena kam manvita, tat kena kam*



*vijaniyat? Vijnataram are kena vijaniyad* (Brihad. 2.4.14): “Who will know the knower? Who will think of the thinker? Who will understand the understander? Who will be conscious of consciousness?” *Yad vai tan na pasyati, pasyam vai tan na pasyati* (Brihad. 4.3.23): “Knowingly, It knows not anything; not-knowing, It knows all things.” You will be wonderstruck. What kind of thing is being told? No knowledge of anything – all-knowing and yet not knowing anything outside? It knows all things because It alone is everywhere. It does not know anything because outside It, nothing is. You understand the point. God does not know anything, because outside Him nothing is; but God knows everything because He Himself is everything. That is the meaning of this interesting instruction of Yajnavalkya at another place – *yad vai tan na pasyati, pasyan vai tan na pasyati; na hi drastur drister viparilopo vidyate* (Brihad. 4.3.23): “There is no gulf between the seer and the seen.” Therefore, the seer alone reigns supreme.

These are all Sanskrit verses I am quoting. You may not be able to understand them. Anyhow, they are interesting.

*Salila eko drastadvaito bhavati, esa brahma-lokah, samrad iti. Hainam anuhasasa yajnavalkya* (Brihad. 4.3.32): “This is the sole seer, the sea of consciousness.” *Salila*: Like the ocean it is. It spreads itself like the sea. *Eko drasta*: Single seer is that. The entire sea of consciousness, the universe, which is all seeing, is aware of itself. *Eko drasta bhavati, esa brahma-lokah*: This is called the supreme *brahma-loka*, the region of the Absolute. Yajnavalkya tells Janaka, in another context, *esa brahma-lokah samrad iti*: “O your Highness! This is *brahma-loka*.”

*Esasya parama gatih:* “This is the goal of life.” *Esasya parama sampat:* “This is the greatest treasure that you can think of.” *Eso’sya paramo lokah:* “This is the greatest possession you can imagine.” *Eso’sya parama anandah:* “This is the supreme Bliss.” With a drop of this universe of Bliss, the entire creation is sustained. All the joys of this world, of all the creation put together, are said to be one drop of this universal Brahman Bliss, the Bliss of the Absolute.

Having said this to Maitreyi, Yajnavalkya retired. This is a famous conversation in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad called Yajnavalkya-Maitreyi Samvada, the conversation between Yajnavalkya, the sage, and Maitreyi, his consort. No teaching can go beyond this. This is the highest pinnacle of human thought. All philosophy is crushed into the essence of this teaching. However much we may think philosophically, our mind will not go beyond this thought. Indian thought has reached its peak in this teaching of Yajnavalkya, recorded for us in his conversation with Maitreyi.

Can you attain this state? This question will arise in your mind. Why should you ask such a question? It must be attained, because it has been already declared that this is your goal, this is your aim, this is what you are asking for. Even when you are asking for the silliest joys of life, you are actually asking for this infinite Bliss – asking unknowingly, not knowing what is happening to you.

How will you get it, if you want it? Great discipline of the consciousness is necessary. At the present moment, there is an outward trend of consciousness. You are

extrovert sensorily, objectively, spatially and temporally. You are causation-bound, and you are living in a relativistic world – one part hanging on something else. A daily practice of the abstraction of consciousness from its involvement in the senses is to be practised. It can be done as a natural habit of your life, if you are mature enough and your mind is strong enough – that is, if it can think only in this way and there is no other way of thinking. Why should you not think in this way, when this is the aim of life? Have you any suspicion that there is something else in this world other than this?

Or if your mind is not strong enough that it can think only in this way, you can find time for your own self. This analysis that we made just now should be the analysis that you carry on during the process of this wisdom meditation. Be seated in a particular posture and deeply think over this issue. “What do I want?” One hundred questions will arise in the mind. “I want all kinds of things.” Yajnavalkya has given the answer to your question. Do you really want all kinds of things? What are those “all kinds of things”? “So many things, so many objects,” you may say. Do you love objects? “Yes, sir.” Is it true that you are in fact loving the objects? Now comes Yajnavalkya to your assistance. You are not loving objects for their own sake – neither building, nor land, nor property, nor relatives, nor people, nor any blessed thing – not even this body itself. You do not want any of this. It is the great Bliss of Universal Existence that is summoning you, and the establishment of oneself in that Consciousness is the liberation of the spirit, *moksha*. This is

*moksha* yoga that Yajnavalkya speaks of – the yoga of the liberation of the spirit.

This sage, Yajnavalkya, is very famous in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad. A very powerful person was he. I can tell you a little story as an example of how powerful he was. Yajnavalkya was one of the disciples of a sage called Vaisampayana, and Vaisampayana was the promulgator of the Yajurveda Samhita. There are four Vedas: Rigveda, Yajurveda, Samaveda and Atharvaveda. Yajurveda was the prerogative of this particular sage called Vaishampayana. They say there was a conference of sages to take place on a mountain, and a condition was stipulated that all the invitees must come. If any invitee did not come, he would incur the sin of killing a Brahmin. Vaisampayana somehow or other could not attend that conference. He had some other occupation that day, and the sin came upon him. He called all his disciples. Yajnavalkya was one of them.

“You see, my dear boys, this sin has come upon me in accordance with the ordinance, because I could not attend that meeting. Will you do some *prayaschitta*, something to expiate my sins? All of you!” said Vaisampayana.

Yajnavalkya stood up. “Why these little boys? I can do it myself,” he said. “These are little boys. What can they do? I will do it myself.”

His Guru got very upset. He said, “You are a very proud boy. You are insulting the others by saying that they know nothing and you yourself will do everything. Give back all the Yajurveda, whatever I have taught you!”

Yajnavalkya vomited out the Yajurveda in the form of some exudation from his mouth. The other disciples took

the form of some birds – *tittiris* as they were called – and sucked up that which he vomited. That black stuff which is the embodiment of the knowledge which Yajnavalkya gained from his Guru, which he vomited, was partaken of by the *tittiris*, the forms assumed by the other students, and so that particular Veda became Taittiriya-veda. *Tittiri's* Veda is the Taittiriya-veda, and it is also called the Black Veda because he vomited some black stuff.

Yajnavalkya decided: “I shall not have any teacher any more. I shall go to the supreme teacher for getting new knowledge.” He went to the Sun directly and prayed to the Sun: “Give me fresh knowledge of the Vedas which nobody else knows. Whatever I learnt from my Guru, I have given back. I do not want to have any further Guru. Surya Bhagavan! You are my Guru. Give me a fresh Veda.” And it seems that Suryanarayana appeared before him in the form of a horse and spoke unto him a new Veda, a new Yajurveda – white Yajurveda, not black – and it is called Shukla Yajurveda. It is also called Vajasaneya – connected with *ashva*, or horse – because Suryanarayana came in the form of a horse. The last Skanda of the Bhagavata Purana narrates this story, and a beautiful prayer that Yajnavalkya offered to the Sun is also recorded there – worth committing to memory. Yajnavalkya then became the teacher of a new Veda, called the White Yajurveda or Shukla Yajurveda. He also wrote a Smriti, called Yajnavalkya Smriti, and there is also a yoga text under the name of Yajnavalkya, which is not very much known to people. It is called Yoga-Yajnavalkya, and a special psychic method of meditation is described there.

Yajnavalkya is the highlighting feature of the central portion of the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad. He once went to the court of king Janaka. Janaka was a learned person, and he invited learned people to his court to have discussions – learned discussions or arguments on lofty themes in spirituality. Hundreds of these great learned Brahmins were seated there in the audience, and the king stood up and said, “Great ones! Lords of learning! Here is a large number of cattle, with horns decked with gold, looking as big as bulls or elephants. Whoever considers himself as the best among the knowers may drive all these cattle to his house.”

Nobody uttered a word; all kept quiet, because who can get up and say “I know everything” and “I am the best”?

Yajnavalkya stood up and told his disciple. “Boy, drive all these cows to my house.”

All were agitated. “What kind of person are you? You consider yourself as the most all-knowing here? We will put questions to you. Answer all the questions. Let us test you,” they said.

One of them stood up. Another stood up. Some eight people bombarded Yajnavalkya and threw arrows of complicated questions at him, which were difficult to understand ordinarily, and every one of them he answered on the spur of the moment. So Yajnavalkya actually justified the driving of the cattle to his home. We will not go into the details of all these arguments, as it is not necessary for you. I am just mentioning casually, for your information, the greatness of this wonderful master Yajnavalkya.

The Brihadaranyaka Upanishad is the vehicle of the teachings of this great master. Many questions were put to Yajnavalkya. One of the questions raised by a person in the audience was, “What is it that is inside and outside? What is its nature?”

“Yes, I know that,” said Yajnavalkya.

“What is the good of saying ‘I know that?’” asked the same person. “Tell me what it is. Everybody can say ‘I know that, I know that.’ Let me hear what it is.”

Then Yajnavalkya gives a description of *antaryami brahmana*, as it is called. Much of the Vaishnava theology of Ramanuja Sampradaya is based on this doctrine of the interconnecting consciousness, or *antaryami* consciousness, delineated by Yajnavalkya in one of the sections of the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad. Everything is connected to everything else.

To Maitreyi he told something different, which actually landed us in the conclusion that all existence is scintillating with awareness, and One Reality alone sees Itself, and It loves Itself, and nobody loves anything else. Now here, Yajnavalkya gives another sidelight of this issue: The fact of the unitary existence of this sole sea of consciousness also implies the interconnection of all things. There is one entity in us – the Atman. Because of the presence of this Atman, which is the consciousness in us, every limb of the body appears to be connected to every other limb of the body. Isn't there interconnection of the limbs of the body? There is an organism which is our physical personality. The word ‘organism’ implies an interconnected body, an organisation which is complete in itself, of which every part is connected

to every other part. Modern science has confirmed this truth of everything being connected to everything else. Scientists today tell us that every cell of the brain of a person is connected to every atom in the cosmos. Can you grasp this astounding conclusion? Every cell of your brain is vitally, organically connected to every atom in the cosmos, so that in your head you are carrying the entire cosmos; but because of a blockage, you are not omniscient.

So Yajnavalkya mentions here, in answer to another question, that everything is connected to everything else. The inwardness and outwardness of things is a fallacy. There is a totality of interrelation, and all things are everywhere; you can find anything at any place. Everything is everywhere at any time. Remember this interesting recipe: Everything can be found at any place, at any time. You need not go to any distant place for getting things; it is just here. Wonderful is Yajnavalkya! Glory to his teaching! Blessed are you all!



## Session 10

### THE KATHA UPANISHAD

*Anyac chreyo anyad utaiva preyaste ubhe nanarthe purusam sinitah: tayoh sreya adadanasya sadhu bhavati, hiyate'rthad ya u preyo vrinite. sreya ca preya ca manusyam etas tau samparitya vivinakti dhirah* (Katha 1.2.1-2). These are the sentences which Lord Yama, the great master, spoke to Nachiketas, the great student whose story occurs in the Katha Upanishad. I mentioned earlier the incidents that led to the ascent of the student Nachiketas to the abode of the Lord of Death, Yama, and how he could not meet the Lord when he went there and for three days he had to stand at the gates of Yama's palace without food or sleep. After three days the great master returned and asked for pardon.

“My dear boy, you are an *atithi*, a guest come to my place. Unfortunately I had to make you stand here, without eating and sleeping, for three days and nights. As a recompense for this pain that I had unwittingly caused you, I ask you to choose three boons from me,” said Yama.

The boy Nachiketas replied, “I am glad that you have offered to give me three boons.”

“Yes, please ask,” said Yama.

Nachiketas said, “Now I shall ask for the first boon. When I return to the world from your abode, may I be received with affection by my father, by the world, by everyone.”

I mentioned to you casually, in this context, that this boon has also a special mystical significance, though the words of the Upanishads are couched in some sort of an

epic, mythological style. The borderland of Universal Knowledge is the death of the human personality. The great Lord Yama here, in the context of the Upanishadic teaching, may be regarded as the lord over the borderland between the empirical and the transcendental realms. Death is the greatest teacher. Ordinarily, even the very notion of death shakes our personality, and we learn the wisdom of life only when we are on the verge of dying. Until that time, we are mostly ignoramuses. When we are drowning in water and there is no hope of surviving, when death is imminent and there are only a few minutes left, or we have lost everything that we considered as our own, at that time we learn the wisdom of life. When everything is gone and nothing is remaining – even the very ground under our feet is shaking – at that time, we know what life is made of, what the wisdom of life is.

When Nachiketas asked for this boon as a student of the highest mysticism conceivable, we may understand from his request that when we return to the world after the attainment of the wisdom of life, the world becomes a friend. At present, the world is not our friend; it stands outside us as a glaring, staring reality, of which we have very little knowledge. The world is very heavily sitting on us; too much is this world for us, many a time. We dread it. We cannot consider anything in the world as our real friend, because it has its own laws and regulations that we are obliged to obey. It compels us to obey its dictates and mandates, but it suddenly changes its colour and becomes part and parcel of our personal life. The *jivanmukta* is the name that we give to the transmuted personality of the

spiritual seeker. Nachiketas may be regarded as a *jivanmukta*, especially having contacted the great master of Knowledge, Yama himself.

“When I return to the world after having seen you – the abode of wisdom – may the world receive me with affection. May there be nothing dissonant, incongruent, disharmonious in this world, and may there be a communion of spirits and purposes between me and the world,” said Nachiketas.

This boon was granted at one stroke. “Yes,” replied Yama. “It is a simple thing for me; you shall have what you have asked for. Now ask for the second boon.”

The second boon was something more complicated. It was deeper than the first one.

“I have heard,” said Nachiketas, “that there is a mystery called Vaisvanara, having known which one becomes allknowing, omniscient. May I be blessed with this boon.”

“Yes, I shall initiate you into this mystery of the supreme wisdom of the Vaisvanara, the Universal Reality,” replied Yama. The necessary initiation process was carried out.

“Now ask for the third boon,” said Yama.

Nachiketas raised a crucial issue when he asked for the third boon. He asked, “What happens to the soul after death? After the death of this body, or it may be after the death of the individuality itself – in either case, what happens to the soul?”

While Lord Yama was very eager and quick in responding to the earlier two questions of Nachiketas, in

the case of the third question he was not willing to say anything.

Yama replied, “You should not ask this question. Nobody can understand what it is. The gods themselves have doubts about this matter. Therefore, a young boy like you should not raise a question of this kind. Ask for better things – gold and silver, health, the emperorship of the whole world and long life, as long as this world lasts. All the wealth of the world, all the glory, all the majesty and the magnificence of an emperor of the world, I shall grant you. Don’t ask this question.”

Nachiketas said, “What good is this? What is the use of this long life? What do you mean by ‘long life’? How long will it be? One day it has to end. So, anything that has to end is to be considered as short. It may be long from one point of view, but it has to end one day. Even if it is millions of years, after that it stops. Then, why do you call it long life? It is short. *Api sarvam jivitam alpam eva* (Katha 1.1.26). All the life put together is puerile and petty. I do not want a long life. And what is the good of all the glory, the majesty and the beauty of the enjoyments to which you have made reference? What is enjoyment to the person whose sense organs have been worn out? As long as the sense organs are vigorous, things look beautiful, tasty and worthwhile; when the senses wither away, who will enjoy the world? So, why do you tempt me with these offerings? ‘Ask for better things,’ you said. What can be better than the knowledge of this mystery of the soul after the departure from this body, this tabernacle?”

When Yama was cornered like this from all sides, he found that there was an impossible student in front of him. Yama may have even been testing him, testing the mettle of the student. Whatever be the case, it is also an indication as to the difficulty in knowing what the soul is.

The answer, however, does not come abruptly from Yama, though he finally agrees to give the answer. What he says is, "There are two ways available for every person in this world: the way of the good and the way of the pleasant."

The good is called *sreyas*; the pleasant is called *preyas*. There are two roads you can tread; you can choose what is good or you can choose what is pleasant. It is proper for a person to choose the good. It is improper for any person to choose the pleasant, because the good does not always look pleasant and the pleasant is certainly not always good. That which is pleasant is nothing but the reaction of the sense organs in respect of objects outside. The pleasantness is only in the sensations. If you scratch your body, there is a little sensation of pleasure, but the itching is necessary in order that the sensation of scratching may be pleasant. Unless there is itching, there is no satisfaction in scratching. If you are not hungry, no lunch can be delicious. If you are not healthy, the world looks stupid and meaningless. If the senses are not vigorous, nothing looks beautiful; everything appears to be ugly and dark. So, what is meant by pleasant experiences?

There is no such thing as a pleasant experience as such, by itself. It is only a relative condition created under the circumstances of an action and reaction process taking

place between the sense organs, the mind and the objects outside. Would anybody pursue this path which is utter foolishness? He who pursues the path of the pleasant will fall short of his aim. *Sreya adadanasya sadhu bhavati, hiyate'rthad ya u preyo vrinite* (Katha 1.2.1). It is good that we follow the good, while we understand, to some extent, that the pleasant is actually not something existent in the objects outside; it is only a sensation, a reaction of the sense organs and, therefore, unreliable to the hilt.

Take an old person in a dying condition – does that person have any pleasant experience of anything in this world? The sensations are dying completely; there is no appetite of any kind. If pleasant things are really pleasant, they should be pleasant even at the last moment of your departure. Where is the pleasantness at that time? The condition of your body, mind and sense organs determines what you call pleasant. Also, what is pleasant to you need not be pleasant to another person. If there is real pleasantness in things, there should be pleasantness for all people equally; why should it be attractive to you and not attractive to another person? Why is it that what you like is not liked by somebody else? This shows that there is no such thing as pleasantness in anything. The pursuit of the pleasant, therefore, is a folly on the part of an individual.

The good is the proper path. What is the good? While you know something about this pleasant, what is the good? “Ok, I will not follow the path of the pleasant; I shall follow the way of the good, but I should understand what is good, isn't it?” This also is a little difficult question. The ultimately good is to be considered as really good. He who

will help you at the time of the death of your body is a real friend. That which will come with you when you are departing from this world is your real comrade; anything else is not your friend. That which appears to be good now and is bitter tomorrow may not be considered as good. It should be always good. As they say, "A friend in need is a friend indeed." So also is the case with the good. The good should be always good, like a well-meaning mother.

Nothing in this world, as far as the objectivity of the things in the world is concerned, can be regarded as always good. There is nothing in this world which can be considered as always good. It appears to be good for some time only, for some reason. You have covered yourself with a blanket now because it is cold; it is good to have a blanket over your body. But will it be good always? All the 12 months, all the 365 days of the year will you cover yourself with blankets and woollen shawls? No; it is relatively good – under certain conditions only. Under other conditions it is not. All appetites, all needs, all requirements, anything that you consider as necessary – all these are relative to conditions, circumstances prevailing within you as well as without you. Therefore, nothing in this world can be regarded as finally good.

Yet there is something that is finally good, which is the good of the soul of an individual. That which is permanent can be regarded as good. As things in the world are transient and passing, they cannot also be regarded as finally good. We also pass away, as far as our body is concerned, but the soul will not pass away. Therefore, that which is commensurate with the needs of the soul of a

person may be regarded as really good. And, there is nothing in this world which can feed our soul. The world can feed our sensations: our mind, intellect and ego can be fed by the diet of this world, but the soul is suffering. Our soul is hungry; its appetite cannot be properly met by anything in this world, because the impermanent cannot satisfy that which is permanent. *Na hy adhruvaih prapyate hi dhruvam tat* (Katha 1.2.10). “The permanent cannot be attained through that which is impermanent.” The impermanent cannot satisfy what is permanent – that is, that which is relatively good cannot be set in tune with the soul, which is the ultimate good.

“So, Nachiketas, one has to follow the path of the good,” said Yama. Now, here the good does not necessarily mean an ethical instruction that Nachiketas was being given. “Here is a good person.” When we make a statement like this, we mean that in conduct, in character, in behaviour, the person is socially adaptable to conditions; therefore, we say, “Here is a good person.” But the goodness that we are referring to here, in the context of the Upanishadic teaching, is a spiritual good; it is not a conditioned good. Conditioned good means that under certain circumstances one has to behave in this way, and under other circumstances one may have to behave in another way. If this is the mandate of ethics and morality, all the ethical and moral instructions stand relative to circumstances. But the metaphysical good, the spiritual good, the ultimate transcendental good is that which is good for the soul. It is not good for some time only, or for some people only, or



for certain conditions only. For all conditions, for all times and for all individuals, it is good.

This is the soul, and Nachiketas was asking what happens to the soul. A vague answer to this question comes forth in the Katha Upanishad. A complete, satisfying answer has to be found in some other Upanishads, like the Chhandogya and the Brihadaranyaka Upanishads. Tentatively Yama tells Nachiketas that when the body is shed, one takes rebirth. One can become anything, according to the thoughts and the feelings entertained by the person during the tenure of this life. Your thoughts and feelings will congeal into a solid substance, as it were, of the personality which you will assume in the next incarnation. The process of incarnation is actually the process of the evolution of things. As I mentioned to you some time earlier, the evolutionary process is the process of the cessation of one condition to bring about the birth of the subsequent condition. Something has to die in order that something may be born. If nothing dies, nothing will be born. There will be no transformation and improvement of any kind if death does not take place. So many parts of the body have died in order that we could become this adult personality that we are now. If evolution is something worthwhile, death also is worthwhile. Unless some previous condition dies, the new condition cannot be born. So, everyone will be reborn because of the fact that the birth of a body, such as this body of ours which is now with us, is the instrument manufactured by this psychological organ within us for the fulfilment of its needs, desires and wants.

Our desires have no end. You cannot count your desires. Though today, at this moment, you may feel that your desires are half a dozen, when these half-a-dozen desires are fulfilled, you will find that another half a dozen will project themselves forth, and there will never be an end of this. Infinite are the desires of man because of the infinitude that is hidden in the recesses of the being of man. Inasmuch as longings and desires and needs of the mind are infinite, a finite body cannot be a suitable instrument for the fulfilment of all these desires. An infinite series of incarnations may be necessary in order that infinite desires may be fulfilled through the instrumentality of these instruments. What are the instruments? This body. What kind of body will you assume in the next birth? It will be exactly commensurate with the thoughts and desires that you entertain at this moment.

*Yam yam vapi smaran bhavam tyajaty ante kalevaram, tam tam evaiti* (Gita 8.6) is the famous doctrine, the teaching of the Bhagavadgita. Whatever thought enters your mind at the moment of departure, at the time of death, that will concretise itself and will be extracted out of your personality, like butter being sucked out of milk. Are you entertaining a hope that, "At the last moment I will entertain a suitable thought so now I can think whatever I like"? No; the last thought is the fruit of the tree of the life you have lived in this world. You cannot have one kind of tree and another kind of fruit. Whatever kind of life you have lived through this body in the sojourn of your existence in this world, that will become solid substance of the thought that will occur to your mind at the time of

departure from this body. So, do not be foolish enough to imagine that, “Now I can be living a merry life. There is no need of bothering as to what will happen to me, because the time for passing has not come. Many years are there for me. I shall think a good thought at the time of going.”

Two mistakes are committed in this kind of imagination. Firstly, it is not true that many years are there, ahead of us. No one can say that. So, no one should entertain the idea that, “After fifty years only I shall have the need to think of a good thought, because it is said that the last thought determines my future.” Who tells you that you will be living for another fifty years? It may be another fifty minutes, or even less.

The second mistake is regarding this idea that, “I shall think a good thought at the time of going.” The last thought is nothing but the essence of all the thoughts entertained in this life. So, a person cannot be a good person at the time of dying and a bad person before. Whatever goodness you entertain in your thoughts and feelings will congeal itself, and whatever was in the milk, that alone will come out as butter. You cannot have butter from somewhere when the milk was another thing altogether. So Yama, in one sentence, in one place, says that, ordinarily speaking, everybody will take birth, if Self-realisation does not take place before passing. If you realise the Self before the end of this life, no birth will take place. Why? Because the need for birth will not arise.

Why do you take birth? It is because you have a necessity to fulfil the desires that you could not fulfil through this tabernacle. The desires were many and the

body was feeble and finite, and an infinite number of desires cannot be fulfilled through a finite body, which is a feeble instrument. So, another body, another series of bodies have to be undergone. But in the realisation of the Self, which is universal in Its nature, desires get extinguished. This is the Nirvana that people speak of. *Brahma nirvanam ricchati* (Bhagavata 4.11.14): “Nirvana is the extinguishing of the flame of life.” This flame, which is the transitory movement of the succession of human desire, vanishes, extinguished completely. This is Nirvana that is taking place. If there is even a single desire, rebirth is unavoidable for the fulfilment of that desire. If you have fulfilled all your desires in this birth itself and nothing more is left, that would be good for you.

*Paryapta-kamasya kritatmanas tu ihaiva sarve praviliyanti kamah* (Mundaka 3.2.2), says the Mundaka Upanishad. “All your desires melt here, in the light of the Self.” No desire can stand before the blaze of the knowledge of the Self. As the cloud of mist cannot stand before the blaze of the sun, this muddle of the cloud of desires cannot stand before the light of the Self, which is the Atman. Therefore, “What happens to the soul after death?” is the question raised by Nachiketas. “Ordinarily, rebirth takes place,” is the answer. And most people in the world are ordinary people only, because everyone has a desire of some kind or the other. Everyone is filled with egoism, a self-assertive nature; therefore, everyone will be reborn. Even if we are reborn, it is good to be born in more advanced circumstances. If you live like a tree, you may become a tree; if you live like an animal, you may become

an animal; if you are humanitarian, you will be reborn as a very good human being. But why should you not live like an angel? You can live like a veritable god in this world and you will be reborn as an angel, a divinity in heaven. You will enter heaven, you will go to *brahma-loka*. But no entry of any kind will be there if the Self is realised.

*Athakamayamanah, yo'kamo niskama apta-kama atma-kamah, na tasya prana utkramanti, atraiva samviliyante brahmaiva san brahmapyetyi* (Brihad. 4.4.6), says Sage Yajnavalkya to King Janaka in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad. In the context of the transmigration of the soul, Yajnavalkya again mentions here that whatever your wish is, that will be fulfilled. Remember very well that every wish of yours, even the pettiest, has to be fulfilled. If you think that you want something, it shall come to you. If it is a very strong desire, it may be fulfilled in this life itself. If it is a mild desire, you may have to take time for the fulfilment of that wish. It may be the next birth, or after two or three births.

What happens to the person who has no desires? Now, I shall tell you about the man, the person who has no desires. *Athakamayamanah yo'kamo*: who has no desire of any kind; *niskama*: who is bereft of any desires; *apta-kama*: who has fulfilled all desires; *atma-kama*: who loves only the Self. Only he who has love for the Universal Self can be said to have fulfilled all desires; every other person has some extraneous desire. What happens to such a person when he departs from the body? *Na tasya prana utkramanti*: He will not depart. We generally say the soul departs. In the case of a Self-realised soul, no departure takes place. It sinks then

and there into the Absolute, like a bubble in the ocean. When the bubble in the ocean bursts, it does not travel some distance; it dissolves itself into the bosom of the sea there and then. *Na tasya prana utkramanti*: There is no space and time movement for the soul of that great soul. *Atraiva samviliyante*: They become one with the very Existence, then and there, here and now. They neither have to go to heaven, nor to *brahma-loka*, nor to the Garden of Eden. The question of going arises only because of the concept of space and time. A timeless Eternity, which is the true essence of the soul of a person, does not travel to any place. It melts here itself into Pure Existence. *Atraiva samviliyante brahmaiva san brahmapyeti*: The Soul is the Absolute and, therefore, it enters the Absolute. This is what we gather from the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad. So much detail cannot be found in the Katha Upanishad answer of Yama, but many other things are casually mentioned by way of a tentative elucidation of the answer expected by Nachiketas from Yama.

The Katha Upanishad is a most beautiful Upanishad. It is worth committing to memory, if possible. There are some ashrams in India where the residents are expected to recite it the whole day. It is, first of all, a very fitting introduction to spiritual life. The very first chapter of the Katha Upanishad is something like the first chapter of the Bhagavadgita. It places before us the conditions preceding the quest of the Spirit, as we have in the first chapter of the Bhagavadgita. The second chapter of the Katha Upanishad begins with similar circumstances to those in the second chapter of the Bhagavadgita. And as the Bhagavadgita goes

on, so the Katha Upanishad also goes on. There is some similarity, people think, between the Bhagavadgita's approach to things and the approach of the Katha Upanishad. Literally also, from the point of view of the Sanskrit language, it is melodious and artistic; lyrical beauty is there. Very fine, mellifluous style is the passage of the Katha Upanishad. Inasmuch as it touches our soul and it is relevant to our own predicament at the present moment, we seem to be something like Nachiketas. And perhaps we are searching for an answer of the same kind as the three types of boons that Nachiketas expected, and perhaps we are also expecting the same thing in some way, in some measure. So the Katha Upanishad is the best introduction even to the Bhagavadgita and all the Upanishads. With these words, the major point that is raised in the Katha Upanishad may be said to be complete.

## Session 11

### THE CHHANDOGYA UPANISHAD

The other day I told you the story of sage Yajnavalkya and explained, in brief, his wonderful teachings as they are recorded in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad. His sublime instructions to his consort Maitreyi and to King Janaka were a masterstroke of genius. I hope you all remember this story well and the teaching has registered in your minds.

Today I shall tell you something about another great sage, whose name appears in the Chhandogya Upanishad. This wonderful sage – great master – is a great contrast to Yajnavalkya. Yajnavalkya was, in some sense, a royal person, a majestic, well-known public personality, very controversial, argumentative and pushy in nature. He would not hesitate to establish his point by suitable logical disquisitions. But the other sage was the kind who does not speak, whose existence is not known to people and who lives like a poor nobody, not like a royal personage. This great sage, as we have it in the Chhandogya Upanishad, is known as Raikva. There is a very interesting anecdote in connection with the teaching of this great master, Raikva.

The story is like this. There was a king, well known for his charity and goodness of heart. The king was also a great sage – so great that people compared him with King Janaka himself. When he arrived, they would say, “Oh, Janaka is coming, Janaka is coming!” – that is to say, so wise and learned as Janaka, so highly advanced in spirituality as Janaka, so charitable, good-natured and service-minded as Janaka. All these characteristics of King Janaka were foisted upon this particular king. One day during the summer



season, this king was sitting on the terrace of his palace, enjoying the fresh breeze. Two birds were flying across the sky. The interpreters of the Upanishad tell us that these two birds were sages of a different type altogether, who had taken the form of birds and were flying. One bird was in front, the other was behind.

The bird that was behind told the bird that was ahead, “Oh idiot, oh blind one, don’t you see that a king is under you, just below you? Don’t you know that his radiance is rising up to the sky and it is burning, and you may be burnt if you cross over his head? A great king is there, just underneath, on the terrace of his palace; his spiritual power is rising from his head and it may burn you if you do not watch out. Oh blind one, don’t you understand?”

When this was told by the bird to its comrade, the comrade said, “Who is this king about whom you are talking so much, as if he is Raikva with a cart?” It was a kind of derogatory remark that the first bird made about this king, whereas the other bird praised him to such an extent, as if to say anybody who crossed over could be burnt by the king’s radiance. But the retort of the first bird was, “Who is this great man that you are talking of, as if he is equal to Raikva?”

The king himself heard this conversation as he was sitting there, on the terrace. He was very much distressed to hear this and thought, “They are comparing me and contrasting me with someone who seems to be greater than I. I never knew that in my kingdom there is somebody greater than I. This is a very important matter for me.”

He never slept that night. He was very much disturbed that a derogatory remark has been made about him, contrasting him with somebody about whom he knew nothing and whose name he had not even heard: Raikva. And the bird also added, "Do you know the greatness of this Raikva? If anybody does any virtuous deed in this world the credit of it goes to Raikva." What is the matter? If any one of us does some good deed, the credit will not come to us; it will go to that man, Raikva, who seems to be sitting without doing anything. All this the king heard, much to his own distress.

In the early morning, kings are generally awakened by music and bards who sing the glories of the king. The bards were singing the glories and the greatness of the king, so that by hearing them he would wake up. But the king had not slept.

The king told them, "Shut down! Stop! Whose greatness are you singing, as if I am Raikva? Stop your music! Go and find out who Raikva is. Until that time I shall have no peace of mind."

They did not understand what was the matter with the king. "What are you talking about?" they enquired.

The king replied, "I heard that in my country there is a great person called Raikva, with whom I have been unfavourably compared by someone whose words distressed me very much. Go and find out where this Raikva is."

He sent his sentinels throughout his country, in all directions, to find out where Raikva was.

“What is his greatness? That also is not clear. They simply say he is great – greater than the king himself. But what is the greatness? There must be something in it. It is not clear. Go and find out,” said the king.

So the king’s messengers ran here and there, to all the towns and villages – everywhere. They could not find anyone by that name. The birds had referred to the sage Raikva as having a cart with him – a cart without bulls, perhaps. Sometimes there are poor people on the streets with their luggage on a cart which they themselves pull, and Raikva was thus described. The messengers of the king came back in despair.

“Your Highness, there is no such person in your country,” they told the king.

“No, it cannot be. Did you search for him?”

“We searched in all the towns.”

“Fools! Do you think that sages live in towns? Go and find him out in proper places. Do you search for him in cities? Go!” ordered the king.

They went to all corners – here, there, to remote corners of villages, distant regions and forest areas. They found someone sitting under a cart, a very funny-looking, poor, beggarly individual, gazing up at the sky as if he cared for nothing. These messengers humbly went near him and prostrated themselves before him.

“May we know if you are Raikva with the cart?” they inquired.

“Hey, they say like that,” Raikva replied. “They say like that.”

The messengers said, “The king wants to see you.”

Raikva retorted, “I do not want to see the king. I have no connection with the king.”

The messengers immediately went back and told the king, “He is there. We have seen him.”

Having heard these words from his messengers, the king took large gifts of gold and silver, ornaments and what not. He humbly went to this unknown man, Raikva, falling prostrate before him and requested him, “I am the king of this country. I have heard about you, the great master; I have heard about your greatness. Please teach me what you know.”

“Hey, do you want to purchase my knowledge with this gold? Get away from this place! Get away from this place!” Raikva replied.

The king was very shocked. “So everything is null and void; all my efforts are in vain!” he thought.

But the king was determined. He wanted to get initiation from this sage into the wisdom that he possessed, to which was alluded his greatness. So he went a second time – with a larger gift. This time he took the dearest and the most beloved things. Again he prostrated himself before the great master.

“I have come again. Please teach me what you know,” requested the king.

This time the sage relented. The instruction, the teaching as we have it in the Chhandogya Upanishad, is very brief. It is not a large discourse or a great commentary. This great master, this sage, was great due to some meditation which he was carrying on. He was proficient in a wisdom, known as *vidya*, and this particular *vidya* in

which he was proficient is called the Samvarga Vidya. He gave instructions on this method of meditation known as the Samvarga Vidya.

This wisdom of sage Raikva, known as Samvarga Vidya, may be called the art of meditation on the Absorber of all things. 'Samvarga' is 'absorbing'. He was meditating on the Absorber – a very brief word with small significance, but immense meaning is hidden in that one word. How do you become as great as Raikva? You also would like to become as great as him. You can, provided you also commune your consciousness with that principle called the Absorber. When you are in a state of communion with the Absorber, you yourself become the Absorber. If you are in a state of identity with anything, you yourself become that thing. That is the meaning of identity. Whatever be the thing on which you are contemplating deeply, if the contemplation becomes so deep that you have merged yourself in that thing, then you cannot distinguish yourself from that thing on which you are contemplating.

Now, what is this Absorber of all things – Samvarga – with which one's consciousness is supposed to be identified or set in tune with? You have to go back to the earlier sessions of the subject where we concluded in our studies that the ultimate essence of all things is consciousness.

That the essence of all things is consciousness was what we understood earlier, during our studies of the mantras of the Isavasya Upanishad, etc. Inasmuch as it is the Self of all things, which is what we mean by saying that it is the essence of all things, it is the very existence of all things. All the forms, all the names, all the things, every object in this

world has a Self inside it – a nucleus, we may call it – which determines and controls the formation of the body of any object in the world. Inasmuch as this central nucleus, this consciousness – we call it the Atman of all things – is the formative force, the formative energy behind the structure of everything in the world, small and big, we may say that the very fate of the formation of things, the structure or the pattern of anything in this world, is decided by the soul of these things, which is the consciousness referred to. Consciousness projects the form and it also withdraws the form. For a particular purpose in the process of the creation of the universe and the evolution of things, this centrality of things manifests a form and also withdraws that form. The manifestation is called creation and the withdrawal is called dissolution.

We can compare this circumstance with what is happening to us in our own personalities. Our consciousness, this ‘me’, this ‘I’, this so-called ‘person’ is the determiner of everything that is happening in this body. The stability, the integrated formation, the organic activity of this body, is due to the central operation of the consciousness which is the so-called ‘I’ in us. When you say “I am coming”, you do not know whom you are actually referring to. Something in an entirety is coming; that is the meaning of saying “I am coming”. It is not that some part of the body is coming, like the legs. *I* am coming, not just the legs. It is not merely the body that is coming; the mind also is coming; the intellect also is coming. You are coming, not merely the intellect, the mind and the body. *You* are coming; that is what you mean by saying “I am coming”.

This 'I', this 'you', however you look at it, is an integrated total which decides the very existence and activity of the personality, or the organism, and stabilises it, so that when you walk, you feel that a whole structure blended into a compact wholeness is moving.

In this capacity of the soul, or the Atman, of a person or a thing, consciousness absorbs the form into itself. It holds it tightly in unison with itself. Whatever is in a state of identity, communion and inseparability with this Atman-consciousness may be said to be in a state of absorption into this consciousness. It has practically become one with that consciousness. This body of yours looks identical with the 'I', or your consciousness. "I am coming." You do not say "my body is coming", though it is true that only the body is coming. But you say "I am coming" even when the body is walking. The identity of the body with the consciousness is so intense, the form and the essence have combined in such intensity that the absorbed and the absorber have become one. This is one aspect of the matter. The other side of it is that consciousness is universal in its nature. It is not only in one place. We have studied this earlier, and we need not again go into the details. So, if the analogy of the absorbing character of our consciousness in respect of our own bodily organism is extended to the whole cosmic structure then, by that analogy, it is seen that the Universal Consciousness absorbs the whole of creation into itself. It decides, determines and regulates every inch and every atom of creation. Just as your so-called personality-consciousness is determining your body and its organic work, if in just the same way this consciousness can

extend its activity to the universal pervasive character of it, it will become the absorber of the cosmos.

In fact, *you* will become the absorber of the cosmos, not *it*. The idea of 'it' goes away here, because in a state of communion of consciousness with all things, the things themselves become inseparable from it.

Now, what is the effect of this kind of meditation? What is the effect of your consciousness being identical with this body? You have perfect control over your body. You can tell the body "do it", and it does, and if you tell the body "don't do it", it will not do it. You tell your hand "lift" and it lifts; but if you tell another person "lift", he may not lift because your consciousness is not identified with the limbs of the body of another person. So another person may not obey your orders, but your body fully obeys you. "Walk" means it walks; "eat" means it eats; "look" means it looks. You have such mastery, such control over all parts of your body because the central consciousness, which you are, absorbs the body into its operation. This is exactly what will happen if this consciousness which is the Atman – known also as Brahman, the Universal Being – becomes, analogically, the experience of a person. The whole world gravitates towards that person. As rivers rush into the ocean, things move in the direction of this centre, which is the meditating individual so-called. There is nothing which this person cannot achieve, in the same way as there is nothing which you cannot do with your body.

Such detailed explanation cannot be found in the Chhandogya Upanishad. I am going into a larger extensiveness of description of this central teaching of the



Absorber Consciousness, which was the object of meditation of this great master Raikva. This is an interesting section of the Chhandogya Upanishad – worth remembering. If you understand it and retain it in your memory, you can take it as a system of your meditation, and no meditation can equal this method. This is the supreme art of universalising your existence and transforming yourself into a determining factor of everything anywhere. You become a Master.

In the Chhandogya Upanishad there are many other descriptions of teachings of this kind, one of which is the teaching on a *vidya* – another kind of *vidya*, like the Samvarga Vidya – known as the Bhuma Vidya. Bhuma in Sanskrit means Plenum, Fullness, That which is complete, That which fills all space, outside which nothing is. Such a thing is called Bhuma. Meditation on this plenum of existence is called Bhuma Vidya.

There was a great sage called Narada, whose name appears in all the Epics and Puranas. Narada was a very great angel, a Godman who could travel through all the realms of being. He went to a great master called Sanatkumara. Sanatkumara is supposed to be the son of Brahma, the Creator Himself.

Narada requested the master Sanatkumara, “Great sir, teach me.”

The master said, “First of all, let me know what you already know. Then I shall try to say something.”

Narada said, “I am a master of all the arts and the sciences – astronomy, cosmography, physics, chemistry, biology, psychology, psychoanalysis, axiology, ethics,

sociology, economics, military science, history, religion, philosophy and necromancy. There is nothing in which I am not proficient, but I have no peace of mind.”

After having learnt so much, mastered every science and every art of the world, the great Narada said, “I have no peace of mind. Please give me peace of mind.”

The great master retorted, “Oh, all that you have studied is mere words – *namaivaitat* – only words and words and words. Therefore, how can you have peace of mind?”

There is a very long discussion, which is the teaching of Sanatkumara to Narada. The essence of it is that the teacher gradually took the mind of the student from the lower level of comprehension to the next higher, and then stopped. Then the student asked, “Is there anything still further?”

“Yes,” replied the teacher. He took him to the third level.

Then the student asked, “Is there anything further?”

“Yes.”

Sanatkumara took him to the fourth level. He would not tell him all things at the same time. Then, he took him to another level, beyond which he said there is nothing.

“Are there objects in the world?” asked Narada.

“Yes, there are objects.”

“Is there anything beyond the objects?”

“That of which the objects are constituted is above the objects.”

“What is it, of which the objects are constituted?”

“The molecules.”

“What is above the molecules?”

“The atoms.”

“What is above the atoms?”

“Energy content.”

“What is above the energy?”

“There is only space and time.”

“Is there anything above space and time?”

I am not telling you the exact words recorded in the Upanishad, as they are too tedious and cumbersome to understand. I am putting it in a more moderate way, which will be intelligible to you. From the outer to the inner, from the external to the internal, from the lower to the higher is the mind gradually taken in this way of analysing the substance of all things.

The dialogue continued. “What is above space-time? If space-time is the essence of all things because nothing can exist without space-time, is there anything above space and time?” asked Narada.

“The consciousness of space and time is above,” replied Sanatkumara.

Are you not conscious that there is space and time? Don't you feel that consciousness precedes space and time? That which precedes is, therefore, higher than that which succeeds.

“This consciousness, please instruct me about it. What is it, sir? I am eager to hear about it,” said Narada. *Yatra nanyat pasyati nanyac chrinoti nanyad vijanati sa bhuma* (Chhand. 7.24.1): “That Consciousness is all-filling; it is complete in Itself.” What is that completeness? Where is that state? That state of consciousness where you see nothing outside you and hear nothing outside you, think

and understand nothing outside you, that is the Fullness. That state where you see something outside you, hear something outside you, think and understand something outside you, that is paltry, puerile, mortal, worth nothing. We are always conscious of something outside us. We see something, hear something, think something and understand something totally different from ourselves.

“This knowledge is puerile, worth nothing,” said the great master, “because it is sensory, conditioned, determinate and, therefore, not real.” In that condition of absorption – here again the word ‘absorption’ can be used – in that condition of the absorption of consciousness wherein you are in communion with That which pervades all things and, therefore, there is nothing for you to see externally, that state is the Bhuma – the fullness of all things. Whoever meditates like this becomes the master of all things. The mother is dear to all children. As children sit round their mother, seeking food from the mother, so will all things gather round this great person who is in a state of meditation of this kind, and seek his benediction. Sanatkumara, the great teacher, spoke thus to Narada, the learned sage, who had no peace of mind.

You shall have peace of mind only when there is nothing else to interrupt your peace. But as long as you are conscious of something outside you, there is inevitable disturbance from that thing which is outside you. But are you not living in a world where everything is outside you? And, do you not expect trouble from something or other? If that is the case, who in this world can have peace of mind? No one who is thinking in terms of sense organs can have

real peace of mind. There is no use searching for peace in the caves of the Himalayas. Peace of mind cannot be found anywhere in this world, because the entire world of creation is a space-time externality. Therefore, it is nothing but objectivity; therefore, it is a content of sensory experience; therefore, it is incapable of giving peace of mind to anyone. Where does peace of mind rest?

People come to the ashram saying, “I want peace of mind.” Where will you find it? Neither is it in you, nor is it outside you. It is everywhere. That is the Plenum, the Fullness, the Bhuma spoken of. Contemplate like this and be absorbed in this kind of consciousness, day in and day out, thinking of nothing other than this kind of thing, just as Raikva – the great master – concentrated on the Absorber of all things. Or, meditate on Bhuma – the great Plenum – as was told by the master, Sanatkumara, to Narada. Then you would have really studied something. Get transformed completely in your being and become a new person.

## Session 12

### THE FULLNESS OF THE INFINITE

Today is the full moon – Purnima, Purna – and there is a famous declaration in the Upanishads on this Purna: *purnam adah, purnam idam purnat purnam udachyate; purnasya purnam adaya purnam evavasisyate* (Brihad. 5.1.1). This passage occurs in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad. We recite it, chant it every day, but mostly we do not think about what it means when we chant it; it goes as a routine. Purna is fullness. Yesterday we referred to Bhuma, the plenum of felicity, the fullness of being. That Bhuma is also Purna. The Upanishad says, “*Purnam adah*: that origin of all things is full; *purnam idam*: this entire creation that has come from that origin of all things is also full; *purnat purnam udachyate*: from that Full this Full has come; *purnasya purnam adaya*: having taken away this Full from that Full; *purnam evavasisyate*: the Full still remains unaffected.”

If we take something from something, the source is supposed to be diminished in its content to the extent of that which has been taken away from it. This is common arithmetic. If we take something from something, the quantum of content in the original reservoir is lessened. If the world has come from God, some part of God must have gone to constitute this world and, to that extent, God must be less. Is it so? The Upanishad says it is not so. If we take away infinite from infinite, the Infinite is not reduced in any way, because one cannot take away anything from the Infinite. Therefore, if this so-called infinite of creation is taken to have emanated from that supreme Fullness of

Infinity, it need not follow that there is some diminution of content in the original Fullness. After the emanation of this full universe from the full Origin, the Fullness still continues to be as it was, undiminished.

This is beyond our calculative method. We have never heard such a thing happening anywhere – that we carry away something and yet the source of that thing is as it is, without getting diminished. The reason is the character of Infinity itself. Things in the world do not participate in Infinity. They are all finite things. There is a location and a limited quantum for everything that is finite. Everything in the world is of this nature. Your existence, the existence of anything in this world, is bound or limited to the locality of the finite being – of yourself or anything. So if some part of this finite is taken away, naturally the ordinary human arithmetic applies to it. If a limb of the body is taken away, to that extent the body has lost a part of itself. But you cannot take away a part of the soul. Here is the difference. You may take a part of your body, but a part of the soul cannot be removed, because the soul is not a substance. Therefore, it is not a finite thing. Therefore, it is not in any particular place. Therefore, something cannot be taken away from it.

As we have our own soul, God is the Soul of the universe. This Soul is unlimited in its nature, a fact that I have been trying to drive into your ears again and again during our studies these days. The infinite character of God Almighty explains the reason why anything emanating from this infinite God cannot affect the infinite God. In fact, you cannot take away anything at all from the Infinite.

The idea of something coming from something else is ridden over in the operation of the causal law – the effect coming from the cause or the cause producing the effect. Our world is run on the principle of causation. If something happens somewhere, it produces some effect somewhere else. But if in the Infinite something happens, nothing happens as an effect. It is as if no action is taking place. If God does anything, it is as if He does nothing, because His action is identical with His existence, while in our case action is not the same as existence. Our existence is our psycho-physical individuality, but our action is a modulation, a modification or a transformation in some particular given direction of our personality. Action is a transformation of personality and it is directed to an ulterior end. Therefore, our action is not identical with our being. This is also the reason why, in our case, action binds.

But there is a state of being where action cannot be separated from being. This is exactly the principle that is hammered upon again and again by the Bhagavadgita, for instance. There is an activity that binds; there is an activity that does not bind. Any activity or process that is an externalised manifestation of being will produce an equal reaction on its part. But if action can be inseparable from being itself, what kind of reaction can come? Is it possible for us to work in this world, identifying ourselves with the work itself? This is to go into the theme of the Bhagavadgita. Has any one of you thought over this matter? Is it possible for you to do anything by totally merging yourself in that act of doing? Or do you feel that you are separate and the doing is another thing? Do you say, “I have



done something”? This consciousness, this very idea that you are doing something implies that your doing is not identical with you. Otherwise, if your doing is the same as your being, it is another way of saying that you have done nothing at all. Then, in that case, *karma* cannot bind, because it is not *karma* at all. It is you yourself. How can you bind your own self? Somebody can bind you, but will you bind your own self? How can you be the cause and effect at the same time, the subject and object? That is not practicable.

The Bhagavadgita is here before us as a great quintessence of the Upanishads. If you have studied the Gita and entered into its spirit rather than merely the letter of its teaching, the one thing that rings aloud throughout the verses of the Gita is that, under certain circumstances, action cannot bind and it need not bind, if you are wise enough to conduct yourself in this world. Yoga is based on *samkhya*, says the Gita. Action is rooted in wisdom; that is the meaning. Whatever you do is based on proper understanding. What is that understanding? It is the understanding that your action need not necessarily be regarded as something outside you. In fact, the structure of the universe, the structure of being itself is such that one thing is not totally different from another thing. The relativity of the things in the world, the interdependence of things in this creation, precludes the possibility of considering anything as an isolated cause or a differentiated effect. If one thing hangs on another thing, you cannot know which is producing what – which is the cause, which is the effect in an organism – or which part of the body is

the cause and which part of the body is the effect in our own personality. It is a total action taking place from head to foot, from fingertips to toes. No part of the body can be said to be doing anything independently. Organic action is no action; but, empirical action is action. This is the Gita's point of view. But has any one of us the ability to commune our consciousness with the act of performance of any work to such an extent that we will not know that we are doing anything at all, that we ourselves are moving? When you work, you yourself are moving through that work; your being is there, flowing in the process of activity, so that activity is not there. You yourself are there in the form of activity, like the ocean appearing as the waves. There are no waves; there is only the sea.

Thus, also, there is no action; there is only being. God's action and God's being are identical in this sense and it is also the sense in which anyone can view this world, provided such a communion can be established in one's daily life. Such a communion is called yoga. Yoga is supposed to be union, but union of what with what? It can be of anything with anything else. It can be the union of yourself, as a created unit, with God Almighty who has created you. It can be the union of the mind with the soul. It can be considered as the union of the subject with the object, or vice versa. It can be the union of the cause with the effect and the effect with the cause. It can be the union of related parts in a relative atmosphere. The idea behind the union mentioned in yoga is that something does not stand outside something else. If something is there, outside something else, it is not in a state of yoga.

We are not supposed to be in a state of yoga now, because everything is scattered helter-skelter, as it were, in this world outside us. We are outside somebody and somebody is outside us. Everything is external to everything else. Therefore, there is no yoga in this world. It is a kind of *bhoga*, an enjoyment of the effect produced by the relation of subject and object. We live not because we have strength in our own selves, independently, as pure infinite subjects; rather, we concoct or manufacture a kind of apparent completeness in us by our contact with objects of sense. That is called the world of *bhoga*, or enjoyment – sensory indulgence. All things in the world live by sense organs and sense contact.

But yoga is, from this point of view at least, not anything that belongs to this world. Nothing in this world can be said to be in a state of yoga, on account of the exclusion of everything from everything else. A herculean effort has to be exercised on the part of anyone to be really in a state of yoga, if yoga means the exclusion of the externality of consciousness. It is the union of the related part, in the form of an object standing outside, with the consciousness thereof. God Almighty, as the Creator of this cosmos, is a Fullness in the sense that outside Him nothing exists. The creational action of God is not any action at all. In the sense of the principle of the Bhagavadgita mentioned just now, action need not be something outside the actor. Therefore, God is the highest *yogin*, and the greatest yoga is possible only in the state of God. Yogeshwara is God, or God is Yogeshwara, as He is called. His action is no action. *Tasya kartaram api mam viddhy akartaram avyayam* (Gita

4.13), says the Gita: “Though I am doing all things, know that I do nothing.” So, again, the same principle of *karma* yoga applies in an enlarged sense, in a universal sense, one may say; God is a *karma* yogi, though that word is not a proper application to Him. God’s action is God Himself.

Therefore, the infinitude that is God, appearing to be manifesting in this infinite of the cosmos, does not diminish the content of God. If your action is yourself, your being is not depleted in your action. Otherwise, you feel tired of work. “Oh, I have finished. I have done a lot of work today.” You will never feel that fatigue if the action is yourself, but if you are doing it for somebody else’s sake, within a few minutes it becomes fatiguing indeed. Not only that, if your action is outside you, it will take away much of your energy. All work is a toll on our body because something goes from our body, something goes from our mind. But, in a heightened spirit of performance, it is possible to do work in this world without really getting tired in the way we get tired, because the work that we do is not somebody’s work. We are not job hunters. We are not servants working in an office for somebody else’s profit. Work that is divine is a participation in the existence of things. Work is a participation in the nature of Reality. It is not something being done for some other purpose. The otherness of the purpose is ruled out in divine activity.

Coming to the point, the infinitude of God is not diminished in any way when the infinite universe proceeds, as it were, from God. Actually, nothing proceeds from God. Having done all things, He has done nothing. The idea of proceeding arises only on account of the cause-and-effect

relationship that has entered into our minds. Unless there is space and time, there cannot be cause and effect. Space and time are effects of creation and, therefore, cause and effect, having come after the manifestation of space and time, cannot affect Infinity, which is God. So, you cannot apply the principle of cause and effect to God Himself. Therefore, creation is not an effect coming from God as a cause. Even the word 'cause' is not a proper term that may be applied to God. He is a causeless cause, no doubt, but He also is not a cause at all. The Infinite is spaceless and timeless; therefore, it is neither a cause nor an effect. Hence, when the full universe comes from the full Almighty, nothing has happened. It may look as if God has not created the universe at all, if we go deep into it. All the faults that we generally find with God for having created a bad world – ugliness, evil and sin – will be ruled out in one second if we realise that perhaps He has created nothing. He is exactly in the same glory that He was prior to that action that we are imputing to Him as creation. Having created, He is full. This universe also appears to be full for us in a relative sense. God is Absolute Fullness and the universe is relative fullness.

Relatively, we feel filled when we become very rich or we have a very good meal or a very good sleep. Don't you feel a sense of fullness? A very grand, luxurious lunch is served to you; you feel fully satisfied, full and content. Also, during a good sleep you seem to be full. And if you have all things that you want, again you seem to be full. But this is relative fullness, not absolute fullness. Having eaten today, tomorrow again you are in a state of hunger, as before.

Even if you are rich, it is only an imaginary wealth; any time it will vanish and you will become a pauper. Also, you cannot go on sleeping throughout your life.

Therefore, fullness in this world is not possible, really speaking. It is only an apparent, imaginary feeling that we have sometimes that we are full and, therefore, our happiness, incumbent upon this fullness, is also artificial. Our fullness is artificial, and our happiness also is artificial; it is not worth a farthing, finally. Thus, the Upanishad's declaration, *purnam adah, purnam idam purnat purnam udachyate; purnasya purnam adaya purnam evavasisyate*, is explained in some way.

This is the grandeur of the Upanishadic philosophy. All this is beautiful to hear, but it is so beautiful that you may not be able to put it into practice. Something going beyond you, totally, may not be easily applicable to your daily life. There are obstacles. Many impediments are there in your life, even in attempting to go ahead along this path. What are the obstacles? This also is indicated in a little analogy in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad itself.

The gods, the demons and the human beings went to Prajapati, the Creator. It appears all of them said, "Great Master, please teach us."

Prajapati called the gods and said, "I am teaching you. Listen to what I am saying. Da." Only one letter was spoken – da.

Then Prajapati asked the gods, "Do you understand what I am saying?"

"Yes, yes; we understand," they replied.

Then Prajapati called the demons. “I am giving you one instruction. Listen to me. Da. Do you understand?”

“Yes, we understand,” they replied.

Then Prajapati called the human beings. “I am giving you an instruction. Da. Do you understand?”

“Yes, we understand,” they replied.

“What did you understand?” Prajapati asked.

The gods said, “We understand from this ‘da’ that you are telling us to practise *damyata*.” In Sanskrit *damyata* means ‘restrain yourself’.

Prajapati said, “Oh, very good, you have understood what I mean. Da means *damyata*. Restrain yourself; do not be indulgent.”

Then Prajapati asked the demons, “What is it that you have understood?”

“Yes, sir, we understand. By ‘da’ you meant *dayadhvam*: be compassionate.”

This is because the demons are very cruel in nature. The gods are supposed to be indulgent and so Prajapati said, “Restrain yourself.” The demons are cruel and so he said, “Be compassionate.”

And to the human beings Prajapati asked, “Da – what do you understand by this?”

“Yes, we understand. You told us *data*: give in charity,” they replied.

This is because human beings are usually greedy. They will not give anything; they only take. All human beings are business people. They are very miserly in giving, but very clever in taking. So he told the human beings “be charitable”. Thus, three categories of beings understood the

word 'da' in three different ways, according to their own view of things. Because the angels knew that they were indulging in joys, Prajapati made the point of self-restraint – *damyata* – to them. The demons, of course, knew they were very cruel, so *dayadhvam*: be merciful and compassionate. For the human beings, of course: be charitable.

Now, these three instructions have a great application to us. Though you may consider that we are human beings and that demons are somewhere and gods are somewhere else, all the three characteristics can be found in our own selves. The godly character is inside us. The demoniacal character also is inside us, and the human nature also is inside us. Sometimes you can behave like a god. You can behave like a gentleman – a grand majestic person, very attractive and composed, with a very good nature, highly considerate, and really divine. You can be like that if you want. Otherwise, you can go on doing work for accumulating wealth only, working hard for more and more of things, and will not part with a cent. This is commercial business mentality gone to the extreme. Or you can be a very violent person; you hate everything, you dislike all things; nobody is your friend; you are the dictator of things; you a tyrant and you want to swallow everything. This is demoniacal. Don't you feel like this sometimes? Sometimes you feel composed like a god, sometimes you feel irritated like a demon, and sometimes you feel miserly.

These three points are to be taken into consideration in our personal life. When a godly nature manifests itself, it need not necessarily mean an indulgent nature. Here, in



this particular context of the teaching of Prajapati to the three categories of beings as we have it in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, the gods are considered as rarefied, higher-bodied individuals in the heavens, who are supposed to be enjoying life on account of the meritorious deeds that they did earlier in their lower species of life. If you do some very good deeds and your life is short here, so that within the span of this little life you cannot enjoy the rewards of your good deeds, you will be transported to an ethereal, rarefied realm of satisfaction and enjoyment which will follow as a natural effect of all the good deeds that you did in this world. This is one kind of divine existence – celestial life. But godly behaviour need not mean only this kind of thing.

Godly behaviour is, in fact, to bring oneself to see things as the Divine Being would see, as God Himself would see the world outside. *Sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas* are three characteristics of *prakriti*, with which you are all very familiar through your study of the Bhagavadgita and the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali. You feel happy and you are delighted in enjoyment when there is *sattva* in your personality; you are greedy when there is *rajas*, and violent when there is *tamas*. Of course, there is no need of mentioning that you should not be *tamasic* in nature. It is also not good to be *rajasic*. It is always good to be *sattvic*. Now, *sattva* does not mean absence of action. *Rajas* is considered to be an impulsion to work, movement, action, etc.; *tamas* is lethargic activity; and *sattva* may be considered, therefore, as total freedom from work. But

*sattva* is intense activity of a different kind. There can be a kind of activity which may look like no activity.

*Yogarudhasya tasyaiva shamah karanam uchyate* is a passage in the sixth chapter of the Bhagavadgita. *Aruruksor muner yogam karma karanam uchyate, yogarudhasya tasyaiva shamah karanam uchyate* (Gita 6.3): “For the beginner in yoga, action is the means; for the established one in yoga, cessation of action is the means.” This may be interpreted to mean that when you are established in yoga, you do nothing. Bhagavan Sri Krishna does not say that, because the whole Gita is a song of action based on some principles of consciousness. So, how can He say that establishment in yoga is cessation of action? There must be some other meaning behind this word ‘*shamah*’. It is a peace that passeth all understanding, as people generally say. It is not a dead silence that is called peace. It is an intense activity of consciousness that creates a sense of satisfaction in us. When you have peace, it does not mean that everything is dead and still and nothing is moving. That does not mean peace. It is an intense feeling of satisfaction due to absence of turbulence of any kind. It is activity of a different kind altogether. Very intense activity may sometimes, under certain circumstances, look like no activity. A heightened voltage of electricity passing through a copper wire may look like it is doing nothing. Only if you touch the wire will you know whether there is electricity or not. The wire is there, but you cannot see anything happening. The very rapid movement of an electric fan may give the impression that it is not moving at all. You do not see the blades of the fan. Put a finger into it: you will know

whether it is working or not. So, a very heightened form of activity may look like no activity. A very heightened form of light may look like no light. This happened when Sri Krishna, in the court of the Kauravas, manifested His Cosmic Form and blazed forth like thousands of suns, which looked like darkness to mortal eyes. Those present closed their eyes. They could not see anything. If thousands of suns rise in the sky, will you see them? You will close your eyes; then, what you see will be pitch darkness. Even if you gaze at the sun for a few minutes and then look away, you will see black spots. You will not see light. So, *sattva*, in the sense of yoga, in the context of our practice of it, should be considered as a divine nature manifesting itself from within us. And a *sattvic* person, a divine person, a godly person, is not necessarily an inactive person, but he may be inactive from the point of view of ordinary perception.

Somebody went to Ramana Maharshi, it appears, and said: "Sir, why don't you do some good work for people instead of sitting quietly?" He replied, "How do you know that I am not doing any good work?" One thought from Masters of this kind will vibrate through the whole universe, and it will work such miracles that millions of people, sitting around tables or working hard with hands and feet, cannot achieve. The greatest Masters of the world are supposed to be unknown to human history. The greatest people of the world known to you in history are second-rate and third-rate heroes. The first-rate heroes come silently and go silently. They not only do not speak, their existence itself is not known. They are like Nara-Narayana in Badrikashrama. If you go, you cannot see them

there. Your mortal eyes are not fit enough to visualise the presence of these great masters. They are centres of intense vibration, and their one thought is sufficient; it is enough to last for the duration of the world. All this I am telling you, by way of a story, to show that intense *sattva* is activity of a divine character; it is something like God working.

Do you believe God works? But, He does not work as we do. He does not require instruments, materials, office, attendants, limbs, hands and feet, organs. He wants nothing. His very Being vibrates as action. That is divine action, and to that end Bhagavan Sri Krishna is trying to take our minds when He says that yoga is yoga of action. We are always afraid of action, because we always understand action in the sense of doing something which takes away some energy from us or depletes some property that belongs to us and we lose something rather than gain something. In all work we seem to be losing something. Therefore, we are afraid of work; we close our offices on holidays. A holy day does not mean a closing day. It is difficult to become a Godman. It is not easy. You may go on thinking about it, but you cannot become a Godman quickly, because of the sense organs being so turbulent. *Indriyani parany ahur indriyebhyah param manah* (Gita 3.42): “The senses are so powerful that they drag your mind in the direction of relative activity and even relative thinking, and will not permit you to think in this form of heightened thought, which is God-thought.”

The greatest yoga is to think, as far as possible, as God Himself perhaps would think. The infinite God does not think anything but Himself. God loves only Himself, and

He will love you also, provided you stand inseparate from Him. Therefore, *atmasukahatkara* is also *atmasamarpana*. The greatest renunciation brings the greatest realisation, and the greatest renunciation is the renunciation of your own existence itself. Then the greatest fulfilment follows.

## Session 13

### KNOWLEDGE IS EXISTENCE

The principle that consciousness is existence, *chit* is *sat*, also implies that the knowledge that you have gained has to become part of your life, part of your daily existence. Your existence is to be your consciousness; your learning, your knowledge, is your existence. You live in the same way as you know, and your knowledge has a meaning only insofar as it exists. A knowledge that does not exist cannot be regarded as knowledge. A non-existent knowledge is no knowledge. So if the learning, knowledge and wisdom that you have gained through study and the like is to become valid, it has to exist. How will it exist if it is merely in the books, in the libraries, in the tomes and the theses?

Knowledge can exist only if it is a part of your existence, because somebody else's knowledge cannot protect you. It is your knowledge that is of utility to you. If somebody is wise, in what way are you benefited by that? So your wisdom must exist, which means to say that it has to *be your existence*. The daily life of a person is a manifestation of the kind of existence which is embodied in that personality, and the value of that existence of the individual depends upon the extent of knowledge that is connected with it. The wider the insight, the greater the knowledge, the more secure is the existence.

“Knowledge is all things” is what we hear from ancient masters. It is power, it is righteousness, it is happiness, all because it is existence. Knowledge cannot be power, cannot be righteousness or virtue, cannot bring you joy unless it exists, and the way in which it should exist, as far as you are

concerned, is what is important. Knowledge exists for you only if it is identical with your existence; otherwise, the knowledge does not exist for you. Academic, professorial learning need not necessarily be existing for that person. It is a kind of overcoat which one puts on, a dress that you wear for the purpose of a given situation, but you are not the coat; you are not the dress. You know very well you are quite different from what you put on and that the professor's knowledge has no connection with his manner of living.

So, spiritual learning, spiritual insight – the knowledge that you are supposed to gain – is expected to help you in your daily life. Knowledge, here, does not mean mugging up or memorising some texts, learning things by rote. It is an embodied form of yourself. Your personality enhances itself when knowledge increases in you. Your personality is charged with a new kind of vitality; it becomes energised, strengthened, broadened in its vision. One feels more secure. Less and less are the desires, because of the greater satisfaction that one feels in the expanded form of one's own existence due to the entry of real knowledge into one's existence.

A stone exists, a plant or a tree exists, an animal or a creature exists, and a human being also exists. Don't you feel there is a difference in the dimension of the existence of these different species? Would you like to exist like a stone? Perhaps stones exist for a longer period than human beings. A human being cannot live as long as a rock, for instance. But would you like to be a rock because it would enable you to exist for longer than as a man or a woman? Would you

like to be a crawling creature, an elephant, a plant or a tree? Even trees are capable of surviving for hundreds of years. Do you like to consider a tree as superior to man because of the longer life that it enjoys? No, you consider man as superior to a tree or to a beast of the jungle, or to a stone. The reason is the transparency of consciousness in the human personality, the widened vision which a person, as a human being, is capable of. Man is more powerful than even an elephant; you know it very well. Man can control even an elephant, a tiger or a lion, though from the point of view of physical survival and physical strength, man is inferior to an elephant or a lion. It is said that knowledge is power, and here is an illustration of the way in which man considers himself to be more secure than the other species in creation. Animals are not as secure as human beings. Man guards himself in many ways; animals cannot do that. All this is to illustrate the fact that knowledge is security, power, satisfaction and true existence.

How will you blend knowledge with your existence? Every day you pass through the hours of the day and night; you have got the routine of your work. How does this knowledge benefit you in any way whatsoever? Are you in any way better, qualitatively, in your existence than you were yesterday – or are you only a quantity and there is no quality? The advantage of education is that every day you feel a greater clarity of your thoughts and a broadened form of your vision of life, a greater satisfaction within your own self, a lesser need for contact with things and persons, and a conviction within that you are approximating to the reality



of life in a greater measure than you could have done some years earlier.

Education is, actually, a gaining of insight into the nature of the truths of existence, the realities of life. If the realities of life stare at you even after you are educated, and you are not acquainted with the art of living in this world – you find yourself a stranger in this wide world of nature and society even after you are a degree-holder or a learned person in some way – that education cannot be regarded as real education, because it has not entered into your blood. It is not part of your personality. It is not you; it is a commodity that you are carrying, like luggage on the head. It is a property, and a property is not identical with the owner of the property. The property can leave you any day because it is something owned as an external item, not actually being a part of your own existence. If the knowledge that you have gained is only luggage that you are carrying, like bedding, and you can throw it away at any time you like – it is not *you*, but it is *yours* – then consciousness is not existence in this case. Existence does not possess consciousness. Consciousness is not a quality of existence; it is not a property. And, also, existence does not own consciousness as an external appendage. Existence *is* consciousness. *Sat is chit. Satyam-jnanam-anantam brahma* (Tait. 2.1.1), the Taittiriya Upanishad has told us: “Truth – Knowledge – Infinity is Brahman, the Absolute.” That is to say, Reality, Existence, Consciousness, Infinity mean one and the same thing.

Seekers of Truth – students of yoga – have to understand this point. If your efforts in life have not made

you a little happier than you were yesterday, your efforts in any direction whatsoever are a waste. You may be a student, you may be a business person, you may be an industrialist, you may be an official; all that goes well, of course, but what is the outcome of these efforts? Are you sweating for nothing? All your endeavours in life – in business, at work, in studies – all these efforts are intended to make you qualitatively better. The *quality* is the point to be underlined. Is the quality of your life today superior to the quality you enjoyed earlier? For this purpose, a special kind of discipline has to be undergone in one's life. In Sanskrit this is called *sadhana*.

*Sadhana* is a practice; it is a discipline; it is a manner of streamlining one's life – conducting oneself in daily life in a specifically ordered and scientific way. Doing anything that one thinks, going anywhere one likes – that is not a disciplined life. Even if it is necessary for you to do varieties of things in a particular day, those varieties have to be beautifully blended into the pattern of a unity, which is the day for you. The whole day is a unity of purpose. In every act of ours, every day, we are expected to take a further step of advance towards the realisation of Truth, an advance in the direction of Reality, which means to say an effort in the direction of imbibing in one's own personal life those characteristics which are to be found in Reality Itself. I am not going to tell you again what Reality means because throughout our studies of the Upanishads we have been discussing only this – what the Ultimate Reality is.

To the extent the quality or the characteristic of the Ultimate Reality has become part and parcel of your own

personal life, to that extent you are really educated in the wisdom of life. Otherwise, your life will be drudgery, a meaningless meandering in the desert of life, and you will leave this world in the way you came to this world. Our life, whatever be its span, is expected to be transformed into a school of education. Everyone is a student in this world; no one can be a master entirely. Everyone is a student in the sense that life cannot be fully understood even if one lives in this world, physically, for a hundred years. Life is a great mystery, and its mystery cannot be unravelled so easily. It remains a mystery because of the externality which is imposed upon it. Anything that is outside you is always a mystery for you; unknown things are difficult to understand. The world is unknown; it stands outside you as incapable of accommodation with you; you cannot accommodate yourself to the world. You are not able to fully accommodate yourself even to a neighbour, a person next door, a person sitting on your right or on your left, so near. If even to that person you cannot fully accommodate yourself, what to speak of the world as a whole? But, the more you are in a position to adjust and adapt your personality to the conditions of life, the more can you be said to be fit for living in this world. Some people say there is a principle of the survival of the fittest. Only the fittest survive in this world. Unfit persons are thrown into a limbo; nature discards them. Actually, who is the fittest? You become fit only insofar as you are in harmony with the law of nature, in all its manifestations; and each one of you is a witness to the success that you have achieved in this art.

You are all educated, and you know something of what life is. But what is it that you know about life? Do you curse it as something impossible to understand and accommodate; or do you think it is a heaven in which you are living; or is it something totally impossible for you and you cannot say what it is all about? Your studies in schools and colleges and academies are expected to be the process of burnishing your personality, transforming the iron that you are into the gold that you ought to be by widening the compass of your existence. “What does it mean?” – you may ask me. The widening of the area of your location is also involved in the expansion of your consciousness. In a relativistic way, we may say – not, of course, absolutely – the existential jurisdiction of a person appears to be expanded to the extent of the authority that one has over that corresponding area. An authorised person is one who has knowledge of the area over which he has that authority. An official who rules a particular area of administration has, relatively at least, expanded the location of his individuality. That is the meaning of the power and the authority that one exercises. It is relative in the sense that the person has not really expanded into the area of that jurisdiction because when an official retires, he becomes a little puny nothing in spite of his having wielded great authority or power earlier, during his periods of administration. But here, in our case, where Reality is to be a part of our existence, it is not like an official holding authority but an actual power which we can wield automatically as the spontaneous consequence of our identity with existence and consciousness.

You know a lot, but your existence should also be equal to that lot which you know. If you are very wide in your learning, your personality also has become wide to that extent. You are able to comprehend the existence not only of the area covered by your knowledge, but even the existence of things outside you, to the extent that knowledge is capable of communicating itself with them. If you know something, you have some authority over that thing. But if the thing remains totally outside you and defies your approach to it, your knowledge of it is perfunctory, purely of the name and form complex of that object; the essence of the thing is not understood. Spiritually speaking, from the point of view of yoga practice at least, the knowledge of a thing is actually the entry of your consciousness into that thing.

For instance, now you know that you are existing. Your knowledge that you are existing is not an artificial knowledge foisted upon you, because your knowledge that you are existing is identical with your existence. Therefore, you have complete control over your own personality; you can lift your hand, you can move your legs, you can operate any part of your body. But you cannot operate anything outside you, because your consciousness has remained locked up within your physical personality; it has not entered into the being of other persons or things. Yoga is union with reality; this is what you have heard. But what kind of reality is it with which you are supposed to be identical? It is the reality of that which you know, as I mentioned.

What is it that you know? Here is the whole point about your education. You tell me what it is that you know, what it is that you have learnt in your studies. "I know many things." Okay, let that be so; you may know all things. But, to what extent is the existence of those things which you know a part and parcel of your existence? Are you friendly? Are you accommodating? Are you one with them? Or are you, in your own meditative consciousness at least, able to feel that you are a larger individual, cosmically oriented, and not Mr. So-and-so or some particular individual? This is a very subtle point which you may not easily be able to understand, because the understanding of such a principle is a part and parcel of actual practice. What I am telling you is not a theory; it is a principle of actual practice, and whoever has not attempted this practice will not be able to make out the meaning of what I am saying. All life is actual practice. Life is not a theory. You are not just wool-gathering and wasting your time in theoretically computing things. Life is a valuable procedure of daily contact with Truth, and this contact is achieved gradually, stage by stage.

Reality by itself has no degrees. It is a composite, compact, indivisible perfection, but it appears to be manifest to some degree from our point of view, on account of the layers of personality in which our consciousness is shrouded. We are physical, we are vital, we are mental, we are sensory, we are intellectual, and we also aspire for the Spirit. We are social, we are political and we are many other things, as we know, in our daily life. These layers of personality determine, to a large extent, the manner of our

contact with Reality. From the standpoint of our own life, we have to achieve this perfection of contact with Reality.

The gradations of the practice of yoga, for instance, in Patanjali's System – *yama, niyama, asana, pranayama, pratyahara, dharana, dhyana, samadhi* as mentioned – or the stages of knowledge which have been adumbrated in scriptures like the Upanishads and the Yoga Vasishtha, or the psychic centres through which the consciousness is to rise gradually from the lower to the higher, or the cosmic contemplations of the different realms of being – Bhu-loka, Bhuvan-loka and other realms as are mentioned in the scriptures – all these suggest the involvement of our consciousness in certain degrees. We have to move gradually from the lowest of the degrees, the most palpable, tangible and visible involvement, to the higher ones.

In the yoga practice, in the life that is spiritual, abrupt action is not permitted. Nature does not move by leaps and bounds. Nature always moves through a process of evolution – as, for instance, you have evolved from babyhood to an adult condition. You did not jump from the babyhood to this adult stage in one day. So smooth and so harmonious and spontaneous was the growth of your personality from childhood that you never noticed that you were growing; otherwise, if there were jerks every minute when you were growing, you would have found life very hard. Without jerks, without jumps, without leaps, without skipping stages, the life of spirituality has to be attempted; yoga has to be practised.

When you actually come to the practice, you will find that you will not even be able to start or to take the first step

without proper guidance. Like a jackal which knows many tricks but may not be able to use even a single trick when danger comes upon it, you will find yourself at a loss in choosing the vital way or the proper method of starting yoga, or your spiritual life, because you know so much. Sometimes too much knowledge is a dangerous thing. It is said that a little knowledge is a dangerous thing, but sometimes too much knowledge may confuse your mind. All the libraries are in your head, but how will you start; from which side are you to take the initial step?

The involvements of your personality in life are the indicators of where you have to start. What are you involved in? What are your difficulties? What is it that you like and what is it that you do not like? There are people who are involved in something or the other in life. You are involved, of course, in human society because you are citizens of a nation, of a country, of a locality, of a village, of a state, of a community, of something. No human being, none of you, is totally isolated from human society; you are connected to other people. Your connection to other people, in some way, is your social involvement. Your belonging to a particular country may be your political involvement. You cannot say there is no involvement. You require protection from society and political administration, so that is also involvement. Now, how will you handle these things? How will you free your consciousness from involvement of this kind? What is your relationship to the external society?

You are involved not merely in human society; you are also involved in nature. The five elements – earth, water,



fire, air and ether – constitute your physical body. Do you know that they are outside you? Yes, they are outside you; you are seeing them. You see the earth outside you; water is there, fire is there, air is there, the sky is there. All these five elements appear to be totally outside, but you forget that your very body is made up of these five elements. The building bricks of your personality are the very things of which the world outside is made. So, do you know you are involved in the five elements? Your involvement is not merely in your neighbour, in society – but vitally, in nature.

‘Involvement’ is a peculiar word which has many connotations. You may be very pleasantly or unpleasantly involved in a thing. When consciousness is pleasantly involved in your body, you appear to be a very healthy person. When you say you are very healthy and robust, you mean to say that the *prana*, the vitality, the consciousness itself is very harmoniously involved in this bodily individuality, though it is also an involvement. But when it is unpleasantly involved, you feel odd, you are sick and you would like to go to bed. Hence, involvements may be of different kinds: necessary or unnecessary, pleasant or unpleasant, right or wrong. When the right involvement is resorted to, it automatically becomes pleasant. It is only wrong involvements that seem unpleasant. Therefore, with society outside, with the people around you, with nature, you have to conduct yourself in a harmonious manner – specifically, by practising the *yamas*, *niyamas*, *asana* postures and other things mentioned in the yoga system.

Never be in a hurry in the practice of yoga. Take only one step if it becomes necessary; do not try to make a

hurried movement. If today you are capable of taking only one step, that is good enough. It is better to take only one step, but a firm step, rather than many steps which may have to be later retraced due to some errors that you have committed. Quality is important, not quantity. Many days of meditation do not mean much; it is the kind of meditation that you have been practising, and the quality, that is involved there.

Here, the Upanishads, or the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali, or the Bhagavadgita – all are telling you, finally, one and the same thing: “To thine own self be true,” as the poet has very rightly said. The whole of yoga can be said to be equanimous with this implication of the poet’s words: “To thine own self be true.” Are you true to yourself? *Svastha* – a person who is *svastha* is a person who is healthy. If you are in yourself, you are healthy; if you are not in yourself, you are not healthy. The word ‘*svasthya*’ in Sanskrit, or even in Hindi, comes from the word ‘*svastha*’ – one who is established in one’s own self. ‘*Swa*’ means one’s own self; ‘*stha*’ means establishment. Are you *svastha*? Generally we enquire: “Are you healthy, fine?” But the real meaning is: “Are you in yourself or outside yourself?”

Yoga is nothing but yourself being yourself. It is not a very complicated thing; it is easy to understand. You have to be what you are. But mostly we find it difficult to be what we are; we are other than what we are, on account of the involvement of our consciousness not in what we are, but in what appears to be what we are through the sense organs. All our affections are misdirected because the senses tell us that we are that which we love. All people who hug things

and love things wrongly imagine that they have gone into that thing which they hug or love, forgetting that they have lost themselves, in some percentage, in that act of movement of their consciousness to that which they consider as themselves. All sensory activity and mental operation in terms of sensory activity is an aberration of consciousness; it is un-yoga, non-yoga, anti-yoga, whatever one may call it.

Hence, a daily prescription has to be adopted by one's own self. I am not asking you all to become yogis, but to be sensible persons, good human beings, successful in your careers, friends of humanity and satisfied in your own self. Let that, at least, be achieved first, before trying to reach God or attain Self-realisation. It will take care of itself. Unless you are friendly with what you see, how will you be friendly with what you do not see? You are at loggerheads with people, in conflict with nature and dissonant in your own personality, psychologically, and you want to be in harmony with God Almighty! Is it possible? Psychological alignment within, social harmony outside and natural adaptation with creation as a whole form part and parcel of yoga. Psychologically, are you aligned? Do your understanding and feeling go together, or do you understand something and feel another thing? Are you brooding over something about the past which is not capable of accommodation with your present existence? Are you grieved in any manner whatsoever?

The four facets of your psyche – *manas*, *buddhi*, *ahamkara* and *chitta* – have to be blended together into a single act of mentation. It is not that you think something,

remember something else, brood over another thing and are conscious of another thing at the present moment. Otherwise, you will be a dichotomised personality, a split individual, a psychotic or schizophrenic; it may lead to that. People are suffering intensely: they cannot sleep; they cannot eat; they cannot speak one word with people with satisfaction inside on account of a split personality – the need that they feel every day to put on some kind of contour in their daily outer existence while being another thing inside. You are one thing in your house and another thing in your office. This kind of gulf that you have created within yourself – between your inner personality and your outer personality – will tell upon you to such an extent that you will never be integrated; you will not be what is called a gentleman. A gentleman is an integrated person. You feel attracted towards that individual. He is a whole and he does not have any kind of split between his inner feelings and the outer conduct. He is able to adapt his outer conduct to his inner feelings, and vice versa.

So, first and foremost, each student has to find out, by a probe into his own self, whether there is any kind of psychological conflict. Do you want something and you are unable to get it? Some years back, were you brooding over something that you wanted and did not get? Do you have a submerged memory of that which has caused you frustration? “Oh, I wanted it when I was a little child, but my mother did not give it.” A small thing that your mother did not give when you were a little baby can harass you till your death unless you have been able to refurbish your personality and overcome that little trouble that is in your

mind. The earlier days of your life determine your later days. The kind of life that you lived when you were a little child in a family, with your father and mother, will have a direct impact upon you when you are an elderly person. It is not that you can forget it completely. Even the breast milk of the mother will tell upon you; it is not unimportant. The first twenty-five years of your life, at least, should be well-guarded. How did you live for the first twenty-five years, tell me? That will take care of you for the rest of your life. If you lived a broken life, a dissipated life, a distracted life, a frustrated life during the first twenty-five years, then you will feel broody and suffer for the rest of your life. You will become weak physically. If you have guarded your personality well and strengthened your individuality, led a very disciplined life of a student for the first twenty-five years, you will live a long life, you will be a healthy person, you can walk a long distance, and it is unlikely that you will fall sick so easily.

Therefore, I am mentioning to you as a precaution, as you are all students, that it is necessary for you to guard yourself psychologically and never brood and think over things that are past – dead and gone. Of course, many a time we have certain difficulties with memories of the past, with which we have to be very well accommodated in some way or the other. They have to be put an end to, in some way or the other. If you want something and you feel that it is necessary to have it and you have the means to have it, then have it – no problem. But there are cases where you cannot get all the things that you want. These are the frustrations. Some person may have died and you cannot

get that person back. Many people come to this ashram: their mother died, father died, son died, the only child died in an accident and the mother stopped speaking. She cannot open her mouth. The only child has been crushed in an accident: "I cannot live, I cannot speak; everything is finished." There is a complete blockage of the personality. How will you handle these things?

It is not that we should wait for problems to arise and then try to solve them. As far as possible, we should see that unnecessary psychological problems do not arise. These are problems that arise on account of attachments and aversions, intense liking and intense hatred for certain things. They are embedded in the human personality, and they cannot go. As long as you are a pure subject, cut off from the objective world outside, love and hate are unavoidable. But you are a yoga student, you are a spiritual seeker yearning for God and, therefore, it is no use merely living a humdrum life like an ordinary man of the street. A greater discipline is called for.

Again I repeat, if any one of you has got internal tensions, frustrations of any kind caused by not having what you wanted or having what you do not want, either way, you have to handle the situation before you take to *japa*, meditation or any such thing. Otherwise, it will be like a thorn in your foot and you will never have peace as long as the thorn is there, whatever is the diet that you eat. You have very good meals every day, everything is fine, but the thorn in your foot will not give you peace. It has to be removed. Whatever be the finery and the beauty of your life, a little canker will upset the whole thing. Harmony is

yoga: *samatvam yoga uchyate* (Gita 2.48). What kind of harmony? Harmony with yourself, first. This is the meaning of the saying: "To thine own self be true." Are you one thing outside and another thing inside? Are you happy? Can you smile with people? There are people who cannot smile; they close their mouths and live like persons who have lost everything in the world. Even a few words cannot come out of their mouths. Very few people can smile. A laughter a day keeps the doctor away, and also keeps many problems away. Why don't you smile? Why don't you be happy? Why don't you be happy with people, be accommodative? Let people be your friends; don't consider any person as your enemy. "He is an idiot. I will finish him." You should not think like that. There is no idiot in this world. You are the idiot, really speaking, so why should you condemn other people?

Hence, psychologically guarding oneself is very important in the primary stage, which is comprehended within the *yamas* and *niyamas* of Patanjali's Yoga Sutras. Afterwards, the greater advance starts with the meditational process, which takes into consideration the cosmic structure of things and the Creator of the universe. When you get up in the morning, what do you think first? In your diary, make a note of it. "What did I think, as the first thought, when I woke up in the morning today?" This will give you some indication as to what kind of person you are. What was the first thought that arose in your mind today when you got up from bed? Make a note of it, and tomorrow morning make another note. "Yesterday, when I went to bed, what was the last thought?" What is the first

thought in the morning and, also, what is the last thought in the evening? These entries may be made in your diary every day. For one month continuously keep a note of what it is that you thought first thing in the morning and what is that you thought last thing in the evening. Then, to that extent, you can gauge the depth of your personality.

Spend some time by yourself. Be alone to yourself, at least for one hour. Don't be busy always. Can you be alone to yourself for one hour every day? Many of you can be alone to yourselves for several hours, unless of course you are engaged in some business or some official engagement. Nevertheless, a practice has to be started. At least for one hour every day you will not see anybody and will not lift the telephones. You will not talk; you are literally alone to yourself. What is it that you are thinking during that one hour? Make a note of that also. I already mentioned two things: the first thought in the morning and the last thought in the evening. Now I am telling you: what is it that you are thinking during that one hour when you are totally alone? How many thoughts arise? Make a list of these thoughts also. Let them be twenty thoughts, thirty thoughts, fifty thoughts; every day make an attempt to keep track of the thoughts that arise in the mind when you are alone for one hour. You will find the thoughts will diminish gradually, because you are watching. Thieves are not very likely to lurk when policemen are everywhere. Similarly, your watch over the thoughts is like a police action that you are taking against the thoughts, so they will not arise too much. Go on doing this for one month: the first thought in the morning, the last thought in the evening, and what you think for one



hour when you are alone to yourself. This will check the unnecessary meandering and the movement of thought and you will learn the art of self-control, gradually.

The actual practice consists of many steps that you may take according to your own predilection. These are the yogas, as they are called. If you want to remember something noble, you have to take its name. Business people say “gold, gold, silver, silver, dollar, dollar, pound, pound, what is the conversion rate, how much?” This is the god for business people; they go on taking the names of that. “How many rupees? How many dollars? What is the dollar value?” The whole day, this is their only thought. When you take the name of a thing, it has an impact upon you. Anything that is noble can also be accommodated in your personality by taking its name. Suppose you want to think of some person; you take the name of that person. Like that, you can take the name or formula of something which you want to remember; that is your meditation. Abstract thinking is of course good, but it is difficult. If you take the name of a thing, the idea of that thing also arises automatically. The name and the form are so intimately connected with each other that it is easy to entertain the thought of the form when the name is recited.

What is the name that you are thinking of in your mind? Take the name of anything which you consider as most valuable for you: your Ishta, your Beloved, your Ishta Devata. Everybody has some beloved; it is this, it is that, it is something material, something psychic, something literary or something spiritual. This is the principle of mantra *japa*, as it is called. A formula that you go on reciting and the

name that you take constantly is the *japa* thereof. This will help in keeping in your memory the thought of that which you want to remember, and meditation will become very easy. In the Bhagavadgita it is said that *japa* is the best of spiritual sacrifices: *yajnanam japa-yajno'smi* (Gita 10.25). I myself feel that nothing is equal to *japa*. Go on reciting the same thing, with the mind thinking of only that. "God, God, God, God, God" – even that much is good enough. Let God be anything, but the idea itself is good. "God Almighty, God Almighty, God Almighty" – go on saying that; this is also a kind of mantra. You can create a mantra for yourself. "God, I want you! God Almighty, I want you! God Almighty, I want you! I want nothing else! God Almighty, I want you!" This is a mantra that I have created for you. It will have such a force upon you, such a force upon your mind that you will not think anything else. It will bombard your mind. "Oh, God Almighty! Oh, God Almighty! Wonderful! Wonderful! How glorious! How glorious! How glorious! I want Him!" This is a mantra. Go ahead like this, gradually, slowly, blessed people. God bless you!

## Session 14

### STAGES OF SADHANA

I have told you everything connected with this series of lessons on the Upanishads. There is practically nothing left now. Yesterday I touched upon certain practical aspects and personal issues involved in living your daily life, not merely as a student of yoga and spiritual life, but as a person aspiring to live a good life, a comfortable and happy life, a perfect life, a satisfied life and an integrated life.

Our relationship to things, to this world, as I mentioned in the previous session, is to a large extent conditioned by the structure of our own personality. We see outside what we actually are inside. I told you that degrees of Reality do not really exist. Reality has no degrees; it is ever perfect, but it appears as if there is an evolutionary process taking place with gradations of descent and ascent – which is what is meant by degrees. This perception is engendered by our involvement in certain degrees of perception through the coverings of consciousness in ourselves.

To repeat briefly what I told you yesterday, our involvements are external as well as personal, social, political, physical, material, sensory, vital, psychological, intellectual and spiritual. These gradations of apperception of the nature of things reflect upon the way in which we approach things in general in the world, even God Himself, and it appears as if we can approach Reality only through certain stages of graduated ascent.

We cannot run out of our own skin; we are included within our own selves. We cannot escape noticing the kind of involvements of our own selves in this psycho-physical

individuality, and this is a hard nut indeed before us – a kind of Gordian knot, as they call it, traditionally known as a *granthi*. *Granthi* is a knot. The way in which consciousness gets tied up to certain locations of perception and experience is known as *granthis*, or knots. There are supposed to be three types of knots, known as Brahma-granthi, Vishnu-granthi and Rudra-granthi. The manner in which consciousness is tied to psycho-physical individuality is the way of the knot, actually. Either you untie the Gordian knot, or you cut it. But, you cannot cut the knot; you have to untie it gradually. Nothing can be cut asunder; everything has to be opened gradually, like the blossoming of a flower. You cannot give a blow to the bud and expect it to blossom into a rose! It has to organically develop into blossoming in a spontaneous, healthy and happy manner. Actually, life has to be a happy process; it is not intended to be a torture.

Life is a movement from one degree of reality to another degree of reality; one stage of perfection to another stage of perfection; one level of wholeness to another level of wholeness. You are not moving from fraction to whole; you are living a life of wholeness even now, in this so-called fragmentary existence. You may be an isolated individual in human society, maybe an unwanted person; nevertheless, you are a whole person. Socially you may look like a fraction of human society, a part of the large mass of humanity; that is one way of looking at things. But each individual, even to the level of the minute cell or atom – everything – is a whole in itself. You are not a half human being, even if you are totally isolated from all other things.

You are not a one-fourth human being at any time. You may have nothing; you may be a poor man with no relations of any kind, owning nothing, completely discarded, as it were, for all practical purposes. Nevertheless, you are not a part. You never feel that you are a chip cut off some larger whole. You are a complete person in yourself, under every circumstance. Inasmuch as life appears to be a movement from one level of wholeness of perfection to another level, it should not really be a source of suffering to anybody.

*Anandena jatani jivanti, anandam prayanty abhisamvisanti* (Tait. 3.6.1), says a great passage in the Taittiriya Upanishad: "From bliss this world has come." The world has not come from a grief-stricken gestation. From the joy of God this world of joy has come, it is sustained by the joy which is the nature of perfection, and it shall return to the Ultimate Joy, finally. "From joy it has come, by joy it is sustained and to joy it shall return." The Upanishads never say that life is a curse, that it is a hell. Nothing of the kind is the message of the Upanishads. The perfection of God can create only a perfection that is the world. Every part of your body is a perfection by itself. The littlest unknown limb of your personality is a perfection in its own way, which is why it is working in a harmonious manner. An imperfect limb cannot give you a perfect orderliness and a harmony of feeling. There are millions of little cells in the body – so many limbs and organs. Do you feel any kind of awkwardness because there are so many parts to your body? The manyness does not affect the unitariness of your individuality. Therefore, the way in

which you have to live in this world and conduct yourselves as seekers of Truth has to be in terms of the involvement of your consciousness in the stages of ascent and descent. Ascent is the progressive march of the soul to the Supreme Being; descent is the evolution of the world from God down to the earth, down to the lowest atom.

We are physically involved, from the outermost part of our personality. Nobody can forget that there is a body. You may be essentially pure, unadulterated consciousness, but the physical body hangs very heavily upon this consciousness; therefore it is that you have a weight. Consciousness has no weight, and the mind also cannot be measured on a weighing scale. It is the body that is heavy; it is a concentrated mass of location, involving a pattern of material forces in which the consciousness, which is your real nature, is involved. It has to be counted, taken care of. Even a naughty child in a family is not to be totally ignored as if it is non-existent. An intractable, disobedient and naughty boy in the house is not an irrelevant item in the house; he has to be taken care of and put to the pattern of the wholeness of the family structure. If some part of the body is sick, we do not cut it off; we see that it is healed and made part and parcel of the wholeness of our personality.

Likewise, the involvement of your consciousness in your physicality is to be taken care of by an adjustment which is in a state of harmony with the physical structure. The body is very active; the senses are active. The senses and the body work together. Actually, the body moves on account of the vibrations set up by the sense organs. This activity is perpetual. Nobody can keep quiet without doing

something. This is what the Gita has said: *na hi kascit ksanam api jatu tisthaty akarmakrt* (Gita 3.5). You cannot sit quiet without doing something. A little bit of action, a little bit of your movement is unavoidable. This is so because there is an agitation created in ourselves by the preponderance of what is called *rajas* – the distracting and active part of *prakriti*, the matrix of all things. There are three qualities, or properties, of *prakriti*: *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. We are not always in a state of *sattva*; clarity of perception and the feeling of satisfaction and happiness within are not always given to us. We are mostly turbulent in our personality, agitated and distracted. To put down this agitating medium in ourselves we have to employ certain means which are commensurate with this agitation. This is the work that we perform in a harmonious manner. The agitation, which is also a kind of activity, can be subdued only by another kind of activity, as a disease is cured by homeopathic medicines of a character similar to the disease already prevailing in the body. *Similia similibus curantur*: Like cures like. Action can be controlled only by action; diamond can be cut by diamond. This is a psychological secret in the approach to things, generally.

But what kind of action is it that can subdue agitated activity? A wholesome action. While it is true that *karma*, or action, binds, it is also true that certain *karmas* liberate. *Na karma lipyate nare* (Isa 2), says the Isavasya Upanishad. Action cannot bind the human being, provided it is oriented in the light of the omnipresence of God. *Isavasyam idam sarvam* (Isa 1). Otherwise, every action will produce a reaction. The fruit of action, the binding power of action, is

nothing but the reaction set up by action which is motivated by externality and conditioned by space and time and objectivity.

So it should be wholesome, God-oriented work. It is work, of course – underline it. It is nevertheless work; God-oriented work is the means of putting down work that causes agitation. Binding action can be subdued by liberating action. This is known as *karma yoga*. *Karma yoga* is the art of uniting oneself with God Himself through action. You may be wondering how action can contact God, inasmuch as every activity is directed towards some objective that is ulterior. This is not the kind of action that we are referring to here, when we talk of God-oriented activity. The Bhagavadgita is difficult to understand. It is not easy to make out its meaning when we are asked to do work in a liberating manner. A wholesome work – spiritually conditioned work, God-oriented work, unselfish work, perfected alignment of oneself in work – will liberate you from the disadvantages of ordinary work.

You are also very busy every day. Everybody is doing work of some kind or the other, but they are binding works. The consequence of an action will tell upon you so heavily that afterwards you may repent for having done it. As the Gita tells us, the result of an action is not entirely in our hands. Even if the farmer takes all precaution to plough the field and sow the seed and pour water and manure it, it does not follow that it will yield the harvest. Other factors must also cooperate, such as rain, climate, sunlight and many other things which are of a natural character. Inasmuch as the fruit of an action is not in our hands – it is



determined by forces which are cosmic in their nature – it is unwise on the part of any person to expect a particular result from a particular action. This is what the Bhagavadgita is telling us.

Therefore, by very carefully manoeuvring your life in this world through well-ordered activity, dissociating it from the idea of any fruit accruing therefrom, you will find yourself in harmony with two things at the same time. You are in harmony with Reality because of the wholesome character of your work. You are also in harmony with the agitations which are caused by *rajo-guna prakriti* in your personality so that you oppose neither the prevailing conditions at the present moment by way of *rajasic* work, nor do you oppose the conditions imposed upon you by the nature of Reality. You are a friend of this world, and also a friend of the other world.

This is the preliminary step that one can take in the practice of spiritual life: *karma yoga*. By *karma* alone is *karma* controlled and overcome. When your mind is active, the physical body craves for work of some kind or the other. Keeping quiet without doing anything physically, but mentally brooding, is not supposed to be action which is liberating. This is what the Gita has told us.

After having attained some kind of mastery over this technique of conducting yourself in the world of action, you may take to concentration, which is called *upasana*. You cannot take to meditation, worship – *upasana* or devotion, as it is called – directly, when your mind is distracted or agitated. Agitations are caused by disharmony with nature, disharmony with human society, disharmony

with one's own psycho-physical individuality. You can bring to your memory what I told you yesterday. Alignment of the psycho-physical individuality within, harmony with society and a kind of concordance with nature as a whole is expected. Until this is achieved, direct meditational work may not be of much success. There are varieties of prejudices in the minds of people; everybody has a prejudice. You prejudge things from your own point of view and foist your ideas upon things outside. This is the dirt that is in the mind; it is called *mala*.

It is believed that the mind has three defects, known in Sanskrit as *mala*, *vikshepa* and *avarana*. *Mala* is the dirt which covers the mind – like dust covering a clean mirror; thereby, the mirror cannot reflect light. And even if the dust is removed, the glass may be broken and it may not give you a wholesome reflection. The craving for things, the impulses of like and dislike, love and hatred, create impressions in the mind every day. They are piled up, one over the other, like thick clouds – which is what is meant by the dirt of the mind – and these impressions cannot be removed except by hard work. Why should you work? Why should you not keep quiet? Because it is not possible for you to keep quiet. *Prakriti*, nature, will not permit you to keep quiet; you have to do something. If you don't do a right thing, you do a wrong thing. Instead of doing something wrong, why not do something right, when it is found that doing something is unavoidable? The scriptures give a long list of the nature of this dirt that is covering the mind: *raga*, *dvesha*, *kama*, *krodha*, *lobha*, *moha*, *mada*, *matsarya*, *irsya*, *asuya*, *dambha*, *darpa*, *ahamkara*. There

are thirteen types of dirt. I am not going into the details of all these things. It is not necessary for you to know all the details; it is enough to understand the meaning of it.

There is a kind of cloud hovering around our consciousness which is our heritage from various births that we have passed through earlier. It has to be scrubbed by *karma* yoga, which includes not merely the highly elevated cosmic work of the Bhagavadgita type – which, of course, is the highest thing that we have to aspire for. But *karma* yoga also implies and includes holy worship – rituals that you perform in altars, in temples, in places of pilgrimage, on special occasions, etc. They are also part of *karma* yoga. Anything that you do is a kind of work. All performance of every kind is a kind of doing. This doing of yours, which is the work, has to be an emanation of your being and it should not be an extraneous foisting of yours. If the doing is totally unconnected with your being, it ceases to produce any result which is worthwhile. What you are doing is nothing but the projection of what you are; then it is that your work will have a productive effect. If you speak and think what you are really inside, it will have a tremendous force; it will have a power of conviction. But if you think and speak what is not what you are, then it will be like an empty gale that is blowing for nobody's good. So the first step in yoga, in the art of spiritual living, is *karma* yoga, an outline of which I have mentioned just now. Only when you have attained palpable, tangible success in the control of your mind, bringing about a cessation of its extreme agitation caused by unnecessary likes and dislikes,

will you be able to sit quiet and concentrate your mind. This is *upasana*, the next stage.

*Karma* scrubs the dirt of the mind, which is *mala*; *upasana* subdues the distractions of the mind, which is *vikshepa*. Even if you are a good person, unselfish in your behaviour, and for all practical purposes you are a well-behaved individual, the mind may not be under control. It will have its own distractions of a different nature. The agitations are not merely in the physical body; they are also in the mind. The mind is also constituted of the three *gunas*, which are *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. The distractions of the mind can be subdued by *upasanas* – attempted concentration. What kind of concentration? On what are you going to concentrate? Doubts of this kind also may arise in the mind. For all practical purposes we may say the concentration is to be directed only on that which is your aim. An aimless life is no life. Many people live a desultory life, doing everything in a perfunctory manner, with nothing positive in their approach. Life is short. We cannot go on wasting our time in experimenting with things and achieving nothing, finally. Even a little good that we do, in the smallest measure, is a great achievement. *Nehabhikrama-naso'sti* (Gita 2.40): “Good deeds cannot perish; they will produce good results, always.”

Do not try to do too many things in a day. Do small things. These small things will become big later on. The seed will become a large banyan tree later. The concentration has to be directed on what you consider as your great aim. The aim is also of a gradational character, and you cannot immediately pitch upon what kind of aim it

is on which you have to concentrate. That which is immediately above your present condition may look like an aim for the present purpose. There is something just above you, and that is your aim at the present moment. If you are sick, the gaining of health is your aim; there is no use of thinking of anything else at that time. If the body is ill, what is the thing that you do at that time? Do everything; move earth and heaven to see that health is restored and you are robust in your personality. If you are hungry, or you have starved for days together, or you have not slept for days together for some reason or the other, what do you do at that time? You take rest and do whatever is necessary to appease your hunger and thirst. These are the little things of life, but they are not in any way unimportant things. A little toothache can kill you, and you know how painful an earache is. These are not unimportant things.

Thus, the immediate present is the object of concentration and, as I mentioned to you in the previous session, nature does not gallop like a horse. It moves smoothly like the flowing river and, therefore, little things are to be taken care of first. "Take care of the pennies; the pounds will take care of themselves," as the saying goes. Little drops make the ocean. So do not say "I am a spiritual seeker; I am thinking of God", while you are aching otherwise in your psyche, in your body or in your social relations. Let firm steps be taken gradually. Fine physical health is necessary, and a reasonably secure and comfortable life in the world is, of course, very, very important. All this has to be taken care of and should never be neglected. Do not allow the body to run riot or the mind

to go hither and thither in its own way. Care has to be taken in these little, small things. Sometimes small things upset us much more than big things. One event, one occurrence, one word is enough to upset you totally, and a tornado or a whirlwind will not upset you so much. Hence, little things are big things; they have to be taken notice of in a very concentrated manner. From the physical, from the social, you rise to the sensory, the psychological, the intellectual and the spiritual. These are the grades of the ascent of yoga practice.

One of the ways to achieve concentration of the mind, the performance of *upasana*, is to adopt some means of loving what you consider as your aim. Finally, it is the love that you evince towards things that actually counts in life. Whatever be the aim or the thing that you are pursuing, it should not be mechanically pursued – and, also, it should be loved from the heart. A thing that you do not love will not come to you. Not even a dog will come near if you don't like it; if you dislike it, it will run away from you. The affections that you evince from your heart are, to a large extent, the thermometer which will decide the nature of the success in your concentration. The concentration of the mind on your concept of God Almighty, for instance, may be what you understand by *upasana*, or worship. From your own point of view of understanding, it may be perfectly right, but there must be an ardent longing for it. The Yoga Sutra tells us *tivra samveganam asannah* (Y.S. 1.21): "It is near only to that person who ardently longs for it." Anything that you intensely long for will come to you. This is the secret of life. You must ask for it wholly, from

the bottom of your heart; and if you ask for it really – not unreally, from the lips only – and entirely, totally, and want only that and nothing else, in keeping with the law of things, it has to come. Therefore, the success in life, whether spiritual or otherwise, is in the manner of your whole-souled pouring yourself upon it, and your *karma*, your work, also should be a pouring of yourself upon it. If you pour yourself on the work, the work will be beautiful. All work is beauty; it is not ugly. It just looks ugly and a disastrous drudgery because it is an outside thing weighing heavily upon you. Anything that is outside you is not yours, and it is not worth attempting at all.

Therefore, the love of God must manifest itself in an appreciable measure and, as you know very well, your mind is constituted in such a way that you cannot love anything in this world wholly. You have some kind of affection for certain things, but you cannot love anything entirely, unconditionally. Here is the whole point. Unconditionally you cannot want anything. All your wants are conditional. “Under these circumstances I want it. If these conditions are fulfilled I like you. If these conditions are not fulfilled, go; I don’t want you.” Do you call it love? And you use the same yardstick to measure God Himself. “If these things come from Him, I like Him. If it does not come, I may even think that He does not exist.”

There was a devotee in Hong Kong, a well-wisher of the ashram and a devotee of Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj. He had no children. Once, twice, thrice, four times, five times he tried, but he could not beget children. He asked people to do *japa* and so on. When he failed the sixth time also, he

wrote a letter: "I had a doubt that perhaps God does not exist; now it is clear to me that He does not exist." This is the kind of expectation that we have from God. If our bread and jam and our house and property are secure from our own point of view, God must exist. If He is pouring rain for the need of a farmer, but that rain causes a nearby building under construction to collapse, what do you call God – a kind person, or an unkind person? There is a farmer with a dry field who expects rain, and nearby somebody is building a house and he would not like heavy rain to fall on it. So, what should God do at that time? Should He send rain or should He not send rain? One person will praise God; another will curse Him.

This is to point out how difficult it is to understand things in a holistic manner. If you cannot love a human being, you cannot love God either. Saints tell you that if you cannot love what you see, how can you love what you do not see? An abstract woolgathering manner, where you build castles in the air about your love for God, cannot be regarded as affection because even when you think that you love God, there may be suspicions inside: "After all, I don't know what will happen. After all, nothing may take place. After all, I may not achieve It. After all, It may not be existing at all."

Varieties of doubts are listed in the Vedanta scriptures. "Such a Thing may not be there; even if It is there it may be not possible for me to achieve It; and even if I achieve It, what will be my fate, afterwards?" Many of you must be having this difficulty: "After reaching God, what will happen to me?" Do not say it is an unnecessary question; a



very serious matter it is. After attaining God, what will you do there? Will you go on sweeping the floor of God's palace or looking at Him or receiving His commands? If you find that it is a very unpleasant existence, what will you do there? Here is the question: "What will I do there?" Purification of the mind by way of unselfish *karma*, or action, will set at rest all these difficulties. Because we are now thinking with a turbid mind, all these questions arise which are partly humorous and partly foolish. Such questions will arise because our concept of God is inadequate – inadequate because our mind itself is not prepared for such a concept. So, by an arduous attempt on our part to purify ourselves through worship, even by way of ritual, *japa sadhana*, etc., much of this dirt can be scrubbed out and we can attempt real concentration on the nature of Reality.

For your purposes as seekers of God, the object of meditation would be, of course, your own notion of the Creator of the universe. This universe must have come from some creative power. Ordinarily, you posit this creative power as a transcendent element, above the world. You cannot immediately imagine that It is just now, here, because It has created this which you are seeing before your eyes and, therefore, It must have existed prior to that which It has created. It is prior and, therefore, It is also transcendent. The aboveness, the extra-cosmic nature, the transcendent character of God is also something ingrained in our mind, however much we may go on saying that He is immanent. God is above us; He is a distant object. The idea of distance arises on account of spatiality and temporality

involved in our experience, and also due to our belief that God created the world and, therefore, He must be above the world. Hence it is that we look up to the skies with open eyes when we pray to God in our own humble way.

The personality of God is also something unavoidable in the earlier stages. You may be told by people that God has no form. What is the use of saying that? You cannot conceive a formless thing. Even the concept of the formless is also a form only. Even water, which has no form by itself, will assume form when it is poured into a bucket. The bucket's nature, the shape, is the actual shape of the water. Thus, the manner of your thinking will decide the form of the object of your meditation. Concentration on a particular thing is what is insisted upon, and the point in concentration is that you should not think more than one thing. To the extent you are able to concentrate on one thing continuously for a large extent of time, to that extent you are successful in concentration. If two thoughts arise in the mind, it is not a successful concentration.

In the earlier stages, especially in the case of a novice, several thoughts will arise. You will be struggling hard to fix your mind on some particular thing and, at the same time, struggling to avoid thoughts which are irrelevant from your point of view. When you think of God, you would not like ungodly thoughts to enter your mind. If you think of God, you would not like the thought of the marketplace to enter your mind. This is how you will feel when you actually sit for meditation. That is, you will strive to shut out certain thoughts which you regard as disharmonious with the characteristics of that on which you are concentrating. So,

there are two thoughts. Even in your attempt at concentration on one thing, two thoughts are there: the thought of avoiding unnecessary things and the thought of that which you consider as necessary.

There is also a third variety of thought – the mental placement of the ideal in front of you. God Almighty, or whatever it is, is placed in the context of your perception, through the mind. A kind of holy distance is maintained between you and the object; it is not just touching you. It is difficult to imagine such a thing. The thought that there is a little distance between you and the object of meditation is one thought; the thought that you would like to avoid is another thought; the thought of the nature of the object is the third thought; and the thought that you are contemplating and you are existing is the fourth thought. So, even when you are actually concentrating on one thing – at least attempting to concentrate on one thing – you will find that there are four thoughts automatically arising in your mind, though apparently it appears that you are concentrating on one thing only. The Yoga Sutras go into all these details.

These four thoughts are not actually distracting media; they are necessary processes of overcoming the distractions of the mind. Later on, after some time, having attained success in your concentration, you will find there would be no necessity for you to avoid certain thoughts. It is only in the earliest stages that you feel certain thoughts are unnecessary. “I should not think of the jungle; I should not think of an animal; I should not think of a railway station or a marketplace or something which is unpleasant.” This is

what you think. But later on you will find there is nothing unpleasant anywhere. The unpleasantness is only the wrong placement of your personality in the context of that particular reference. You are disharmoniously placed with that thing which you consider as evil, unholy, unnecessary, etc. If you are harmoniously placed with an event that is taking place or a thing that is there outside you, you will find that it ceases to be something unnecessary or interfering; it will never interfere with you. Your considering that it is unnecessary is the reason why it starts interfering. When you have decided that you do not want a thing, naturally you cannot expect any cooperation from that thing. But why should you consider that a thing is unwanted and should be rejected? It is because you have not understood it properly. The context of its existence in relation to the context of your existence has not been properly grasped. Therefore, in a certain advanced stage you will find that unnecessary thoughts will not exist, because there is nothing totally unnecessary in this world. This is a little advanced stage; in the early stages you will not be able to realise this. Thus, with this precaution, take to concentration, and take for granted that you have now achieved some success in making yourself acquainted with the truth that there is nothing that you have to avoid in this world. Thus, the world becomes friendly with you. A cool breeze will blow and everything will be fragrant to you.

Then comes your difficulty with the object itself. How will you adjust yourself with the presence of that object in front of you which does not seem to be touching you, which is a little distant from you? Let the object be at a

distance; it does not matter. You can glory in the beauty and the grandeur of that object for the time being. Inasmuch as you have concluded that this object is ultimately real – if it had been not for that fact, you would not be concentrating on it – it is the final thing for you, and all things that you expect from anything will also be there in that thing, and it will bestow upon you all that you expect. The Ishta Devata, the object of your meditation, is capable of bestowing upon you all things that are anywhere; it can give you anything. All the world's blessings will come from that one thing, as it is a concentrated point of the whole cosmos.

The idea of the object, the concept of the ideal before you, the Ishta Devata so-called, is a concentrated spot of cosmic power. You can touch it, and you will be touching the switchboard of the cosmos. It is not some isolated dot or a thing that you are concentrating upon. The idea of isolatedness must be removed. It is touching one part of your body, as it were. When you touch a part of the body, even a little spot, you are touching the whole body. You know very well how it is, because the entire body is concentrated on every part of the body. That is why you feel an entire occurrence taking place even if only a little touch is made. Such a concept has to be introduced into the object of meditation. It is not sitting somewhere. "My God is somewhere; his God is somewhere else." It is not like that. Actually, no object is in one place only. There is an interconnection, vitally, of every object with every other object, as the limbs of the body are connected integrally and internally. So you will feel happy to realise that this object

of your meditation is the touchstone of the success of your meditation. It is the root of the whole cosmos; it is the vitality which you are concentrating upon, by which you can evoke the powers of the entire creation. It is something like an incarnation. An incarnation of God may look like a particular individual, but it is the focussing point of the entire power. The whole thing is concentrated there – all the world, all creation. Then you will feel a joy inside. “I am not wasting my time in concentration, because I am actually at one with that Force, which is gazing at me with eyes that are multifaceted as if the whole cosmos is looking at me.” Great joy it is to realise this.

Thus, concentration will become an art of feeling joy. Concentration and meditation are happy processes. You will never be tired, you will never be exhausted by sitting for meditation. You will feel greater and greater satisfaction, and every session of meditation will make you healthier, stronger, more wholesome in your outlook, and you will be able to convince yourself you have actually achieved something substantial. Today you have become better than yesterday.

## PRACTICAL HINTS ON SADHANA

1. First of all, there should be a clear conception of the Aim of one's life.
2. The Aim should be such that it should not be subject to subsequent change of opinion or transcendence by some other thought, feeling or experience. It means the Aim should be ultimate, and there should be nothing beyond that.
3. It will be clear that, since the ultimate Aim is single, and set clearly before one's mind, everything else in the world becomes an instrument, an auxiliary or an accessory to the fulfilment of this Aim.
4. It is possible to make the mistake that only certain things in the world are aids in the realisation of one's Aim of life, and that others are obstacles. But this is not true, because everything in the world is interconnected and it is not possible to divide the necessary from the unnecessary, the good from the bad, etc., except in a purely relative sense. The so-called unnecessary items or the useless ones are those whose subtle connection with our central purpose in life is not clear to our minds. This happens when our minds are carried away by sudden emotions or spurts of enthusiasm.
5. All this would mean that it is not advisable or practicable to ignore any aspect of life totally, as if it is completely irrelevant to the purpose of one's life. But here begins the difficulty in the practice of *sadhana*, because it is not humanly possible to consider every aspect of a situation when one tries to understand it.

6. The solution is the training which one has to receive under a competent Teacher, who alone can suggest methods of entertaining such a comprehensive vision of things, which is the precondition of a true spiritual life, or a life of higher meditation.
7. There are economic and material needs as well as vital longings of the human nature which have to be paid their due, at the proper time and in the proper proportions, not with the intention of acquiring comfort and satisfaction to one's self, but with a view to the sublimation of all personal desires or urges, whether physical, vital or psychological. An utter ignorance of this fact may prove to be a sort of hindrance to one's further practice on the path of *sadhana*.
8. It is, of course, necessary that one should live a life of reasonable seclusion under the guidance of a master until such time when one can stand on one's own legs and think independently, without help from anyone.
9. But, one should, now and then, test one's ability to counteract one's reactions to the atmosphere even when one is in the midst of intractable and irreconcilable surroundings. Seclusion should not mean a kind of self-hypnotism or hibernation and an incapacity to face the atmosphere around.
10. It should also not mean that one should be incapable of living in seclusion alone to oneself, when the occasion for it comes. In short, the ideal should be achievement of an equanimous attitude to circumstances, whether



one is alone to oneself or in the midst of an irreconcilable social atmosphere.

11. While in seclusion, the mind should not be allowed to go back to the circumstances of one's family life, official career or to problems which are likely to disturb the concentration of the mind on God, because the pressure of these earlier experiences may sometimes prove itself to be greater in intensity than one's love of God.
12. It is impossible to concentrate on God unless one has a firm conviction and faith that whatever one expects in this world can also be had from God – nay, much more than all these things which the world has as its treasures and values.
13. It is difficult to have the vision of one's Aim of Life when the mind goes out of meditation to whatever it longs for in the world. Hence, a deep study of the Upanishads and the Bhagavad Gita, the Srimad-Bhagavata and such other scriptures is necessary to drive into the mind the conviction about the Supremacy of God.
14. Study or *svadhyaya*, *japa* of *mantras* and meditation are the three main aspects of spiritual practice.
15. *Svadhyaya* does not mean study of any book that one may find anywhere at any time. It means a continued and regular study, daily, of selected holy texts, or even a single text, from among those that have been suggested above. A study in this manner, done at a fixed time,

every day, for a fixed duration, will bring the expected result.

16. The *japa* of the *mantra* should, in the beginning, be done with a little sound in the mouth so that the mind may not go here and there towards different things. The loud chant of the *mantra* will bring the mind back to the point of concentration. Later on, the *japa* can be only with movement of lips, but without making any sound. In the end, the *japa* can be only mental, provided that the mind does not wander during the mental *japa*.
17. A convenient duration, say, half an hour or one hour, should be set up at different times, so that the daily *sadhana* should be at least for three hours a day. It can be increased according to one's capacity, as days pass.
18. During *japa*, the mind should think of the meaning of the *mantra*, the surrender of oneself to the Deity of the *mantra*, and finally, the communion of oneself with that Great Deity. Effort should be put forth to entertain this deep feeling during *japa*, every day.
19. Meditation can be either combined with *japa*, or it can be independent of *japa*. Meditation with *japa* means the mental repetition of the *mantra* and, also, at the same time, meditating deeply on the meaning of the *mantra*, as mentioned above.
20. Meditation without *japa* is a higher stage where the mind gets so much absorbed in the thought of God, surrender to God and union with God that in this

meditation *japa* automatically stops. This is the highest state of meditation.

21. Throughout one's *sadhana*, it is necessary to feel the oneness of oneself and the universe with God.