The Real Awakener

The Light of Lights

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"Veda & Vedanta are the inexhaustible fountains of Indian spirituality. With knowledge or without knowledge, every creed in India, sect, school of philosophy, outburst of religious life, great or petty, brilliant or obscure, draws its springs of life from these ancient and ever flowing waters. Conscious or unwitting each Indian religionist stirs to a vibration that reaches him from those far off ages. Darshana and Tantra and Purana, Shaivism & Vaishnavism, orthodoxy & heresy are merely so many imperfect understandings of Vedic truth & misunderstandings of each other; they are eager half-illuminated attempts to bring some ray of that great calm & perfect light into our lives & make of the stray beam an illumination on our path or a finger laid on the secret & distant goal of our seeking. Our greatest modern minds are mere tributaries of the old Rishis. Shankara, who seems to us a giant, had but a fragment of their knowledge. Buddha wandered away on a bypath in their universal kingdom. These compositions of an unknown antiquity are as the many breasts of the eternal Mother of Knowledge from which our succeeding ages have been fed & the imperishable life in us fostered. The Vedas hold more of that knowledge than the Vedanta, hold it more amply, practically and in detail; but they come to us in a language we have ceased to understand, a vocabulary which often, by the change of meaning to ancient terms, misleads most where it seems most easy & familiar, a scheme of symbols of which the key has been taken from us. Indians do not understand the Vedas at all; Europeans have systematised a gross misunderstanding of them. The old knowledge in the Vedas is to us, therefore, as a river wandering in dark caverns inaccessible to the common tread. It is in the Upanishads that the stream first emerges into open country. It is there that it is most accessible to us. But even this stream flows through obscure forest & difficult mountain reaches and we only have it for our use at favourable points where the forest thins or the mountain opens. It is there that men have built their little artificial cities of metaphysical thought and

spiritual practice, in each of which the inhabitants pretend to control the whole river. They call their dwelling places Vedanta or Sankhya, Adwaita or Dwaita, Shaivism or Vaishnavism, with a hundred names beside and boast that theirs is the way & theirs is the knowledge. But, in reality, each of us can only command a little of the truth of the Sanatana Dharma, because none of us understands more than a little of the Upanishads. (CWSA 17: 361-62)

Selections from the Isha Upanishad (CWSA 17)

1. There Can be No Veda without Tapasya

"Our forefathers who discovered or received Vedic truth, did not arrive at it either by intellectual speculation or by logical reasoning. They attained it by actual & tangible experience in the spirit, – by spiritual & psychological observation, as we may say, & what they thus experienced, they understood by the instrumentality of the intuitive reason. But a time came when men felt an imperative need to give an account to themselves & to others of this supreme & immemorial Vedic truth in the terms of logic, in the language of intellectual ratiocination. For the maintenance of the intuitive reason as the ordinary instrument of knowledge demands as its basis an iron moral & intellectual discipline, a colossal disinterestedness of thinking, – otherwise the imagination and the wishes pollute the purity of its action, replace, dethrone it and wear flamboyantly its name & mask; Vedic knowledge begins to be lost & the practice of life & symbol based upon it are soon replaced by formalised action & unintelligent rite & ceremony. Without tapasya there can be no Veda. This was the course that the stream of thought followed among us, according to the sense of our Indian tradition. The capacity for tapasya belongs to the Golden Age of man's fresh virility; it fades as humanity ages & the cycle takes its way towards the years that are of Iron, and with tapasya, the basis, divine knowledge, the superstructure, also collapses or dwindles. The place of truth is then taken by superstition, irrational error that takes its stand upon the place where truth lies buried builds its tawdry & fantastic palace of pleasure upon those concealed & consecrated foundations, & even uses the ruins of old truth as stones for its irregular building. But such an usurpation can never endure. For, since the need of man's being is truth & light, the divine law, whose chief article it is that no just demand of the soul shall remain always unsatisfied, raises

up Reason to clear away Superstition. Reason arrives as the Angel of the Lord, armed with her sword of doubt & denial (for it is the nature of intellectual Reason that beyond truth of objective appearance she cannot confidently & powerfully affirm anything, but must always remain with regard to fundamental truth agnostic and doubtful, her highest word of affirmation "probably", her lowest "perhaps"), – comes & cuts away whatever she can, often losing herself in a fury of negation, denying superstition indeed, but doubting & denying also even Truth because it has been a foundation for superstition or formed with some of its stones part of the building. But at any rate she clears the field for sounder work; she makes tabula rasa for a more correct writing. The ancient Indian mind felt instinctively – I do not say it realised or argued consciously – the necessity, as the one way to avoid such a reign of negation, of stating to the intellectual reason so much of Vedic truth as could still be grasped and justifying it logically. The Six Darshanas were the result of this mighty labour. Buddhism, the inevitable rush of negation, came indeed but it was prevented from destroying spirituality as European negation destroyed it for a time in the eighteenth & nineteenth centuries by the immense & unshakeable hold the work of the philosophers had taken upon the Indian temperament. So firm was this grasp that even the great Masters of negation – for Brihaspati who affirmed matter was a child & weakling in denial compared with the Buddhists, – could not wholly divest themselves of this characteristic Indian realisation that subjective experience is the basis of existence & the objective only an outward term of that existence." (308-10)

2. The Hindu Explanation of the World and the Possibility of an Advanced Civilisation of the Vedic Age

"The Puranic account supposes us to have left behind the last Satya period, the age of harmony, and to be now in a period of enormous breakdown, disintegration and increasing

confusion in which man is labouring forward towards a new harmony which will appear when the spirit of God descends again upon mankind in the form of the Avatara called Kalki, destroys all that is lawless, dark and confused and establishes the reign of the saints, the Sadhus, those, that is to say, – if we take the literal meaning of the word Sadhu, who are strivers after perfection. Translated, again, into modern language – more rationalistic but, again, let me say, not necessarily more accurate – this would mean that the civilisation by which we live is not the result of a recent hotfooted gallop forward from the condition of the Caribbee and Hottentot, but the detritus and uncertain reformation of a great era of knowledge, balance and adjustment which lives for us only in tradition but in a universal tradition, the Golden Age, the Saturnia regna, of the West, our Satyayuga or age of the recovered Veda. What then are these savage races, these epochs of barbarism, these Animistic, Totemistic, Naturalistic and superstitious beliefs, these mythologies, these propitiatory sacrifices, these crude conditions of society? Partly, the Hindu theory would say, the ignorant & fragmentary survival of defaced & disintegrated beliefs & customs, originally deeper, simpler, truer than the modern, – even as a broken statue by Phidias or Praxiteles or a fragment of an Athenian dramatist is at once simpler & nobler or more beautiful and perfect than the best work of the moderns, – partly, a reeling back into the beast, an enormous movement of communal atavism brought about by worldwide destructive forces in whose workings both Nature and man have assisted. Animism is the obscure memory of an ancient discipline which put us into spiritual communion with intelligent beings and forces living behind the veil of gross matter sensible to our limited material organs. Nature-worship is another side of the same ancient truth. Fetishism remembers barbarously the great Vedic dogma that God is everywhere and God is all and that the inert stone & stock, things mindless & helpless & crude, are also He; in them, too, there is the intelligent Force that has built the Himalayas, filled with its

flaming glories the sun and arranged the courses of the planets. The mythologies are ancient traditions, allegories & symbols. The savage and the cannibal are merely the human beast, man hurled down from his ascent and returning from the sattwic or intelligent state into the tamasic, crumbling into the animal and almost into the clod by that disintegration through inertia which to the Hindu idea is the ordinary road to disappearance into the vague & rough material of Nature out of which we were made. The ascent of man, according to this theory, is not a facile and an assured march; on the contrary, it is a steep, a strenuous effort, the ascent difficult, though the periods of attainment & rest yield to us ages of a golden joy, the descent frightfully easy. Even in such a descent something is preserved, unless indeed we are entirely cut off from the great centres of civilisation, all energetic spirits withdrawn from our midst and we ourselves wholly occupied with immediate material needs. An advanced race, losing its intelligent classes and all its sources of intelligence and subjected to these conditions, would be in danger of descending to the same level as the Maori or the Basuto. On the other hand individuals of the most degraded race – a son of African cannibals, for instance – could under proper conditions develop the intellectual activity and high moral standard of the most civilised races. The spirit of man, according to the Vedic idea, is capable of everything wherever it is placed; it has an infinite capacity both for the highest and the lowest; but because he submits to the matter in which he dwells and matter is dominated by its surrounding contacts, therefore his progress is slow, uncertain and liable to these astounding relapses. Such is the Hindu explanation of the world and, so expressed, freed from the Puranic language & symbols which make it vivid & concrete to us, I can find nothing in it that is irrational. Western thought with its dogmatic materialism, its rigid insistence on its own hastily formed idea of evolution, its premature arrangements of the eras of earth, animal and man, may be impatient of it, but I see no reason why we Hindus, heirs of that ancient and wise

tradition, should so long as there is no definite disproof rule it out of court in obedience to Western opinion. We can afford at least to suspend judgment. Modern research is yet in its infancy. We, a calm, experienced & thoughtful nation, always deep & leisurely thinkers, ought not to be carried away by its eager and immature conclusions.

I will take this Puranic theory as a working hypothesis and suppose at least that there was a great Vedic age of advanced civilisation broken afterwards by Time and circumstance and of which modern Hinduism presents us only some preserved, collected or redeveloped fragments; I shall suppose that the real meaning & justification of Purana, Tantra, Itihasa & Yoga can only be discovered by a rediscovery of their old foundation and harmonising secret in the true sense of the Veda, and in this light I shall proceed, awaiting its confirmation or refutation and standing always on the facts of Veda, Vedanta & Yoga. We need not understand by an advanced civilisation a culture or a society at all resembling what our modern notions conceive to be the only model of a civilised society – the modern European; neither need or indeed can we suppose it to have been at all on the model of the modern Hindu. It is probable that this ancient culture had none of those material conveniences on which we vaunt ourselves, – but it may have had others of a higher, possibly even a more potent kind. (Perfection of the memory and the non-accumulation of worthless books might have dispensed with the necessity of large libraries. Other means of receiving information and the habit of thinking for oneself might have prevented the growth of anything corresponding to the newspaper, – it is even possible that the men of those times would have looked down on that crude and vulgar organ. Possibly the power of telepathy organised – it seems to persist disorganised, – in some savage races, – might make the telegraph, even the wireless telegraph unnecessary.) The social customs of the time might seem strange or even immoral to

our modern sanskaras, – just as, no doubt, many of ours will seem incredible and shocking to future ages. The organisation of Government may have been surprisingly different from our own and yet not inconsistent with civilisation; there may have been a simple communism without over-government, large armies or wars of aggression, or even an entire absence of government, a human freedom & natural coordination such as Tolstoy & other European idealists have seen again in their dreams, – for it is at least conceivable that, given certain spiritual conditions which would constitute, in the language of religion, a kingdom of Heaven on earth or a government of God among men, the elaborate arrangements of modern administration, – whose whole basis is human depravity & the needs of an Iron Age, – would become unnecessary. The old tradition runs that in the Satyayuga there was neither the desire nor the need of modern devices; the organised arrangement of men's actions, duties and institutions by an external compulsion representing the community's collective will began in the Bronze Age with the institution of government in Kingship. The Vishnu Purana tells us, conformably with this idea, that Vishnu in the Satya incarnates as Yajna, that is to say as the divine Master in man to whom men offer up all their actions as a sacrifice, reserving nothing for an egoistic satisfaction, but in the Treta he descends [as] the Chakravarti Raja, the King & standing forward as sustainer of society's righteousness, its sword of justice & defence, its preserver of the dharma gathers a number of human communities under his unifying sway. But it is unnecessary to my present purpose to consider these speculations, for which much might be said and many indications collected. It is sufficient that an ancient society might differ in every respect from our modern communities and yet be called advanced if it possessed a deep, scientific and organised knowledge and if it synthetised in the light of large & cultured conceptions all human institutions, relations and activities. This is all with which I am here and at present concerned. For I have only to inquire whether we have

not at any rate some part of such a profound and organised knowledge in the surviving Upanishads and the still extant Sanhitas of the Veda; – written long afterwards, mostly in the Dwapara & Kali when, chiefly, men sought the aid of the written word & the material device to eke out their failing powers & their declining virility of mind & body, we need expect from them no picture of that ancient civilisation, nor even the whole of its knowledge, for the great mass of that knowledge has been lost to us with the other numberless Sanhitas of Veda. The whole of it we cannot reconstitute, since a great mass of Vedic material has been lost to us, possibly beyond hope of recovery until Vishnu descends once more as the Varaha into the sea of oblivion and lifts up the lost Veda on his mighty tusks into the light of our waking consciousness and on to the firm soil of our externalised knowledge.

Not therefore the conception of semi-savages or half civilised philosophers, but the disjecta membra of a profound spiritual culture, a high and complex Yogic discipline and a well-founded theory of our relations with the unseen is what we shall expect in Veda & Vedanta." (311-15)

3. The Importance of Understanding the Real Sense of the Veda

"I believe the Vedas to hold a sense which neither mediaeval India nor modern Europe has grasped, but which was perfectly plain to the early Vedantic thinkers. Max Muller has understood one thing by the Vedic mantras, Sayana has understood another, Yaska had his own interpretations of their antique diction, but none of them understood what Yajnavalkya and Ajatashatru understood. We shall yet have to go back from the Nature-worship and henotheism of the Europeans, beyond the mythology and ceremonial of Sayana, beyond even the earlier intimations of Yaska and recover – nor is it the impossible task it seems – the knowledge of Yajnavalkya and Ajatashatru. It is because we do not understand the Vedas

that three fourths of the Upanishads are a sealed book to us. Even of the little we think we can understand, much has been insecurely grasped an superficially comprehended, so that these sublimest of all Scriptures have become, latterly, more often a ground for philosophic wranglings than an illumination to the soul. For want of this key profound scholars have fumbled and for want of this guidance great thinkers gone astray, – Max Muller emitted his wonderful utterance about the babblings of humanity's nonage, Shankara left so much of his text unexplained or put it by as inferior truth for the ignorant, Vivekananda found himself compelled to admit his non-comprehension of the Vedantins' cosmological ideas & mention them doubtfully as curious speculations. It is only Veda that can give us a complete insight into Vedanta. Only when we thoroughly know the great Vedic ideas in their totality shall we be able entirely to appreciate the profound, harmonious and grandiose system of thought of our early forefathers. By ignoring the Vedas we lose all but a few rays of the glorious sun of Vedanta.

But whether this view is sound or unsound, whether we decide that the sense of those ancient writings was best known to the ancient Hindus or to the modern Europeans, to Yajnavalkya or to Max Muller, two things are certain that the Vedantic Rishis believed themselves to be in possession of the system of their Vedic predecessors and that they surely did not regard this system as merely a minute collection of ritual practices or merely an elaborate worship of material Nature-Powers. Minds that saw the world steadily as a whole, they did not repel that worship or disown that ritual. Surya was to them the god of the Sun; Agni they regarded as the master of fire; but they were not – and this is the important point – simply the god of the sun and simply the master of fire. They were not even merely a Something behind both, unknown & vague, although deep, mighty & subtle; but because of the nature & origin of the sun, Surya was also a god of a higher

moral & spiritual function & Agni possessed of diviner & less palpable masteries. I will cite the single example of the Isha Upanishad in support of my point. The bulk of this poem is occupied with the solution of problems which involve the most abstruse and ultimate questions of metaphysics, ethics and psychology; yet after a series of profound and noble pronouncements on these deep problems the Upanishad turns, suddenly, without any consciousness of descent, without any lowering of tone to appeal with passion and power not to some Supernal Power but to Surya, to Agni. Is it to the earthly Fire and the material Sun that the Rishi lifts his mighty song? Does he pray to Surya to give him the warmth of his beams or to drive away night from the sky? Does he entreat Agni to nourish the sacrificial fire or to receive for the gods on his flaming tongues the clarified butter and the Soma-juice? Not even for a moment, not even by allusion; but rather to Surya to remove – from the sight of his mind – the distracting brilliance which veils from mankind the highest truth and form of things, to enable him to realise his perfect identity with God and to Agni to put aside this siege of the devious attractions of ignorance and desire and raise our kind to that sublime felicity reserved for purified souls. It is for the fulfilment of the loftiest spiritual ends that he calls upon Surya; it is for support in the noblest moral victories that he appeals to Agni. This is not Helios Hyperion but another Vivusvan, master of this sun & its beams (that is also evident) but master too of the soul's illumination, sa no dhiyah prachodayat; this is not the limping blacksmith Hephaistos, but another Hiranyaretas, master no doubt of this fire and its helpful & consuming flames, but master also of purified & illuminated action and force, hota kavikratuh satyas chitrasravastamah – agnih purvebhir rishibhir idyo nutanair uta, the priest, the seer, the true, the full of rich inspirations, Agni adorable to the sages of the past, adorable to the great minds of today. Here is no lapse of a great philosophic mind into barbarous polytheistic superstition, no material and primitive Nature-worship, no

extraordinary intellectual compromise and vague henotheism. We are in the presence of an established system of spiritual knowledge and an ordered belief in which matter, mind and spirit are connected and coordinated by the common action of great divine powers. When we know according to what idea of cosmic principle Surya and Agni could be at once material gods and great spiritual helpers, we shall have some clue to the system of the early Vedantins and at the same time, as I believe, to the genuine significance and spiritual value of that ancient & eternal bedrock of Hinduism, the Vedas." (320-22)

4. The Vedic Base of the Vedantic Thinkers

"The Vedantic thinkers positively believed that they were proceeding on a Vedic basis. They quote Vedic authority, appeal to Vedic ideas, evidently thinking themselves standing on the secure rock of Veda. Either, then, they were indulging in a disingenuous fiction, inconsistent with spiritual greatness & that frank honesty, arjavam, on which the nation prided itself, – either they were consciously innovating under a pretence of Vedic orthodoxy or else quite honestly they were reading their own notions into a text which meant something entirely different, as has often been done even by great & sincere intellects. The first suggestion – it has, I think, been made, – is inadmissible except on conclusive evidence; the second deserves consideration.

If it were only a matter of textual citation or a change of religious notions, there would be no great difficulty in accepting the theory of an unconscious intellectual fiction. But I find in the Upanishads abounding indications of a preexisting philosophical system, minute & careful at least & to my experience profound as well as elaborate. Where is the indication of any other than a Vedic origin for this well-appointed metaphysics, science, cosmology, psychology? Everywhere it is the text of the Veda that is alluded to or quoted, the knowledge of Veda that is presupposed. The study

of Veda is throughout considered as the almost indispensable preliminary for the understanding of Vedanta. How came so colossal, persistent & all-pervading a mistake to have been committed by thinkers of so high a capacity? Or when, under what impulsion & by whom was this great & careful system originated & developed? Where shall we find any documents of that speculation, – its initial steps, its gradual clarifying, its stronger & more assured progress? The Upanishads are usually supposed themselves to be such documents. But the longer I study these profound compositions, the less I feel able to accept this common and very natural hypothesis. If we do not prejudge their more recondite ideas as absurd, if we try sympathetically to enter into the thoughts & beliefs of these Rishis, to understand what precise facts or experiences stand behind their peculiar language, especially if we can renew those experiences by the system they themselves used, the system of Yoga, – a method still open to us – it will, I think, very soon dawn upon our minds that these works are of a very different nature from the speculative experiments they are generally supposed to be. They represent neither a revolt nor a fresh departure. We shall find that we are standing at a goal, not assisting at a starting-point. The form of the Upanishads is the mould not of an initial speculation but of an ultimate thinking. It is a consummation, not a beginning, the soul of an existing body, not the breath of life for a body yet to come into being. Line after line, passage after passage indicates an unexpressed metaphysical, scientific or psychological knowledge which the author thinks himself entitled to take for granted, just as a modern thinker addressing educated men on the ultimate generalisations of Science takes for granted their knowledge of the more important data and ideas accepted by modern men. All this mass of thought so taken for granted must have had a previous existence and history. It is indeed possible that it was developed between the time of the Vedas and the appearance of these Vedantic compositions but left behind it no substantial literary trace of its passage and progress. But

it is also possible that the Vedas themselves when properly understood, contain these beginnings or even most of the separate data of these early mental sciences. It is possible that the old teachers of Vedanta were acting quite rationally & understood their business better than we understand it for them when they expected a knowledge of Veda from their students, sometimes even insisting on this preliminary knowledge, not dogmatically, not by a blind tradition, but because the Veda contained that basis of experimental knowledge upon which the generalisations of Vedanta were built." (325-27)

5. The Misinterpretation of the Veda by the Europeans

"So far as I have been able to study & to penetrate the meaning of the Rigvedic hymns, it seems to me that the Europeans are demonstrably wrong in laying so predominant a stress on the material aspects of the Vedic gods. I find Varuna and Mitra to be mainly moral and not material powers; Surya, Agni, Indra have great psychical functions; even Sarasvati, in whom the scholars insist on seeing, wherever they can, an Aryan river, presents herself as a moral and intellectual agency, – "Pâvakâ nah Sarasvatî Vâjebhir vâjinîvatî, Yajnam vashtu *dhiyâvasuh*. *Chodayitrî sûnritânâm Chetantî sumatînâm*, Yajnam dadhe Sarasvatî. Maho arnas Sarasvatî Prachetayati ketunâ, *dhiyo visvâ virâjati*." If we accept the plain meaning of the very plain & simple words italicised, we are in the presence not of personified natural phenomena, but of a great purifying, strengthening and illuminating goddess. But every word in the passage, pavaka, yajnam dadhe, maho arnas, ketuna, it seems to me, has a moral or intellectual significance. It would be easy to multiply passages of this kind. I am even prepared to suggest that the Vritras of the Veda (for the Sruti speaks not of a single Vritra but of many) are not – at least in many hymns – forces either of cloud or of drought, but Titans of quite another & higher order. The insight of Itihasa and Purana in these matters informed by old tradition seems to

me often more correct than the conjectural scholarship of the Europeans. But there is an even more important truth than the high moral and spiritual significance of the Vedic gods and the Vedic religion which results to my mind from a more careful & unbiassed study of the Rigveda. We shall find that the moral functions assigned to these gods are arranged not on a haphazard, poetic or mythological basis, but in accordance with a careful, perhaps even a systematised introspective psychology and that at every step the details suggested agree with the experiences of the practical psychology which has gone in India from time immemorial by the name of Yoga. The line Maho Arnas Sarasvati prachetayati ketuna dhiyo visva virajati is to the Yogin a profound and at the same time lucid, accurate and simple statement of a considerable Yogic truth and most important Yogic experience. The psychological theory & principle involved, a theory unknown to Europe and obscured in later Hinduism, depends on a map of human psychology which is set forth in its grand lines in the Upanishads. If I am right, we have here an illuminating fact of the greatest importance to the Hindu religion, a fact which will light up, I am certain, much in the Veda that European scholarship has left obscure and will provide our modern study of the development of Hindu Civilisation with a scientific basis and a principle of unbroken continuity; we may find the earliest hymns of the Veda linked in identity of psychological experience to the modern utterances of Vivekananda and Sri Ramakrishna." (327-28)

6. The Profound System of Psychology Behind the Upanishads

"We have behind the Upanishads a profound system of psychology. We must find our way back into that system. We perceive indications of equally elaborate ideas about the processes underlying physical existence, human action and the subtle connections of mind, body and spirit. We must

recover in their fullness these ideas and recreate, if possible, this ancient system of psychical mechanics & physics. We find also a cosmology, a system of gods and of worlds. We must know what were the precise origin and relations of this cosmology, on what experiences subjective or objective they rested for their justification. We shall then have mastered not only Vedantadarshana but Vedanta, not only the truth that Badarayana or Shankara arrived at but the revelation that Yajnavalkya & Ajatashatru saw. We may even be compensated for our descent by a double reward. By discovering the early Vedantic interpretation of Veda, we may pour out a great illumination on the meaning of Veda itself, – to be confirmed, possibly, by the larger & more perfect Nirukta which the future will move inevitably to discover. By recovering the realisations of Yajnavalkya & Ajatashatru, we shall recover perhaps the inspired thoughts of Vasishta and Viswamitra, of Ghora from whom perhaps Srikrishna heard the word of illumination, of Madhuchchhandas, Vamadeva and Atri. And we may even find ourself enriched in spiritual no less than in psychological knowledge; rejoice in the sense of being filled with a wider & more potent knowledge & energy, with jnanam, with tapahshakti, & find ourselves strengthened & equipped for the swifter pursuit & mightier attainment of the One whom both Veda & Vedanta aspire to know & who is alone utterly worth possessing." (329-30)

7. The Interference of Preferences with the Text of the Sruti

"… the Sruti carries with it, in its very words, a certain prakash, a certain illumination. The mind ought to wait for that illumination and receiving it, should not because it is contrary to our expectation or our desire, labour to reject or alter what has been seen. Our pitfalls are many. One man has an active, vital & energetic temperament; he is tempted to read into Sruti the praise of action, to slur over anything that

savours of quietism. Another is temperamentally quietistic; any command enjoining action as a means towards perfection his heart, his nerves cannot endure, he must get rid of it, belittle it, put it aside on whatever pretext. This is the interference of temperamental preference with the text of the Sruti. A man is attached to a particular thinker or teacher, enamoured of a definite view of life & God. Any contradiction of that thinker, teacher or view irritates his heart & cannot be borne, even though the contradiction seems to stand there plainly on the face of sacred writ; the mind at once obeying the heart sets about proving to itself that the words do not mean what they seem to mean. This is the interference of emotional preference. Or else the mind has always been accustomed to a particular philosophy, mode of thinking, idea of religion or dogma. Whatever contradicts these notions, strikes our fixed mental idea as necessarily wrong. Surely, it says, the philosophy, the thought, the dogma to which I am accustomed must be the thought of the Scriptures; there cannot, in the nature of things, be anything in them inconsistent with what I believe; for what I believe is true and the Scriptures are repositories of truth. So begins the interference which arises from association & fixed opinions. There is, finally, the intervention of the intellect when a speculative philosopher with a theory or a scholar reaching out after novelty or conscious of an opening for scholastic ingenuities, meddles powerfully with the plain drift of the text. All these interferences, however brilliantly they may be managed, are injuries to the truth of Veda; they diminish its universality and limit its appeal." (331-32)

8. Shankara and Vivekananda

"Among the intellectual interpreters of Sruti, Shankara towers like an unreachable giant above his fellows. As a philosopher, as a metaphysician, as a powerful logician & victorious disputant his greatness can hardly be measured. For a thousand years and more he has stood in the heavens of

Indian thought, his head far away in the altitudes of Adwaita, his feet firmly planted on the lifeless remnants of crushed systems and broken philosophies, the wreckage of his logical conquests, his mouth like Trishira's swallowing up the world, lokan grasantam, annihilating it in the white flame of the Mayavada, his shadow covering our intellects & stunting the efforts of all who have dared to think originally & dispute his conclusions. Not Madhwa, not even Ramanuja can prevail against this colossal shadow. Yet I have ventured throughout to differ from this king of commentators – almost even to ignore this great & invincible disputant. If I have done so, it is because I think the decree of our liberty has already been pronounced by another giant of thought. When the great Vivekananda, potent seedsower of the future, in answer to the objection of the Pundits, "But Shankara does not say that," replied simply but finally, "No, but I, Vivekananda, say it," he pronounced the decree of liberation not only for himself but for all of us from the yoke, the golden but heavy yoke, of the mighty Dravidian. For this was Vivekananda's mission to smite away all obstacles, however great & venerable, & open the path to the resurgence of Indian originality & the direct confrontation of the soul of man with the living Truth. He was our deliverer not only from ignorance & weakness, but from the systems of knowledge that would limit us and impose a premature finality." (336-37)

9. Why the Hindus Insisted on Veda as the Supreme Authority

"It has been well said that to deny Veda by hetuvada, divine revelation by intellectual rationality, is, in the end, to become a pashanda, – a word which has now acquired only the significance of an abusive epithet but meant originally and etymologically a materialist, one who denies his higher self in order to enthrone & worship the brute matter in which he is cased. A harmony is needed in which the higher shall illumine the lower, the lower recognise & rise to the higher. The ancient

Hindus, therefore, insisted on Veda as the supreme authority, allowing Philosophy, Science & Religion only as subordinate helps to knowledge, because they perceived the danger of giving too unlicensed a freedom to these great but inferior powers. Religion, putting Veda away into a sacred oblivion, follows the impulses of the undisciplined heart, not purified, but full of the vital impulses, chittam pranair otam, and becomes spasmodic, ignorant, narrow, obscurantist, sectarian, cruel, violent. Philosophy acknowledging Veda in theory but relying instead on her own intellectual self-sufficiency, ends by living in words, a thing of vain disputations & exultant logic-splitting, abstract, unpractical and visionary. Science, denying Veda altogether, arrogant & bigoted in her own conceit, makes man a materialist, a pashanda. For all her analytical knowledge she knows not that that in man which believes only in matter is the beast in him, – the beast so long & with such difficulty subdued & disciplined by Philosophy, Religion & Veda; she keeps telling him, "Thou, O brute body & nerve system, art Brahman," Annam vai Brahma, Prano vai Brahma, until his whole nature begins to believe it. One day, while she yet reigns, he is sure to rise, – the egoistic heartless lust of power & pleasure in man, – and demand that she shall be his servant with her knowledge, her sophistries, her organisation, her appliances, shall justify to him his selfishness, lusts & cruel impulses and arm them with engines of irresistible potency. Already the shadow of this terrible revival is cast upon the world; already Science is bowing her head to this tremendous demand. What the Hindus foresaw and dreaded and strove to organise their society against it, erecting barrier upon artificial barrier as their own knowledge & grasp upon Veda diminished, is now growing actual and imminent. The way to avoid it is not to deny the truth of Science, but to complete, correct and illuminate it. For the Veda also says with Science, Annam vai Brahma, Prano vai Brahma; it acknowledges the animal, the Pashu in man & God as the Master of the Animal, the Pashupati; but by completing the knowledge and putting it in its right relations, it completes him also & liberates him,

lifts the Pashu to the Pashupati and enables him to satisfy himself divinely by enjoying even in matter the supramaterial and replacing egoistic and selfish power by an universal mastery & helpfulness and egoistic & unsatisfying pleasures by a bliss in which he can become one with his fellows, a bliss divine & universal." (347-48)

10. Shankara's Dealings with the Shruti

"He has dealt with the Upanishad, and with this Upanishad more than any other, as a master of the Sruti & not its servant. He has sought to include it among his grandiose intellectual conquests. But the Sruti cannot be mastered by the intellect, and although the great Dravidian has enslaved men's thoughts about the Sruti to his victorious intellectual polemic, the Sruti itself still preserves its inalienable freedom, rising into its secret heights of knowledge & being superior to the clouds & lightnings of the intellect, awaiting & admitting only the tread of the spirit, opening itself only to experience in the soul & vision in the supra-intellectual faculty of ideal knowledge. I trust I shall not be considered as wanting in reverence for the greatest of Indian philosophers, – in my opinion, the greatest of all philosophers. Nevertheless the greatest have their limitations. In profundity, subtlety & loftiness Shankara has no equal; he is not so supreme in breadth & flexibility of understanding. His was a spirit visited with some marvellous intuitions & realisations, but it would be to limit the capacities of the human soul to suppose that his intuitions exclude others equally great or that his realisations are the only or final word of spiritual knowledge. Shankara of the Commentaries on the Upanishad, – although the greatest commentaries on them that we have, – is not so great as Shankara of the Bhashya on the Vedanta Sutras. In the latter he is developing in full freedom his own philosophy, which even those who disagree with it must recognise as one of humanity's most marvellous intellectual achievements; in the former he is attempting to conquer for his own system the entire & exclusive authority

of the Sruti. A commentary on the Upanishads should be a work of exegesis; Shankara's is a work of metaphysical philosophy. He does not really approach the Sruti as an exegete; his intention is not to use the philosophical mind in order to arrive at the right explanation of the old Vedanta, but to use explanation of the Vedanta in order to support the right system of philosophy. His main authority is therefore his own preconceived view of Vedantic truth, – a standard external to the text & in so far illegitimate. Accordingly he leaves much of the text unexplained, because it does not either support or conflict with the conclusions which he is interested in establishing; he gives merely a verbal paraphrase or a conventional scholastic rendering. Where he is interested, he compels the Sruti to agree with him. Without going quite to the same extent of self-will as the Dwaita Commentator who does not hesitate to turn the famous Tat twam asi into Atat twam asi, "Thou art *not* that, O Swetaketu," he goes far enough & uses a fatal masterfulness. The Isha especially, it seems to me, is vitiated by the defects of his method, because in the Isha the clear & apparent meaning of the text conflicts most decisively with some of his favourite tenets. The great passage on Vidya & Avidya, Sambhuti & Asambhuti bristles for him with stumbling blocks. We find him walking amid these difficulties with the powerful but uneasy steps of Milton's angels striding over the burning marl of their prison house. I for my part am unwilling to keep to the trace of his footsteps. For, after all, no human intellect can be permitted to hold the keys of the Sruti & fix for us our gate of entrance & the paths of our passage. The Sruti itself is the only eternal authority on the Sruti." (365-67)

11. What the Upanishads Contain and Aim at

"The Upanishads have but one subject without a second and yet by the very nature of that subject they take all life & being & knowledge for their portion. Their theme is the

One who is Many. It is an error which the Adwaitins have popularised to suppose that all the aim of the Upanishads is to arrive at the unconditioned Brahman. A very cursory examination of their contents reveals a much wider and more complex purpose. They strive rather to develop from various standpoints the identity of the One & the Many & the relations of the conditioned to the unconditioned. Granting the unconditioned One, they show us how this conditioned & manifold existence consists with, stands in and is not really different from the original unity. Starting from the multitudinous world they resolve it back into a single transcendental existence, starting back from the transcendental they show us its extension within itself in phenomena. Both the multitudinousness & the Unity, the manifestation & the Manifested they establish in the unknowable Absolute of which nothing can be proposed except that in some way different from any existence conceivable to mind or transferable to the symbols of speech, beyond all conception of Time & Space & Circumstance, beyond Personality & Impersonality, beyond Finite & Infinity It Is. They seek not only to tell us of the way of withdrawal from life into unconditioned existence, but also of the way to dwell here in the knowledge & bliss of the Supreme. They show us the path to heaven & the true joy of the earth. Dwelling on the origin of things & the secret of life & movement, they have their parts of science, – their physics, their theory of evolution, their explanation of heredity. Proceeding from the human soul to the Universal, they have their minutely scrupulous, subtle & profound system of psychology. Asserting the existence of worlds & beings other than those that live within the compass of our waking senses, they have their cosmogony, theogony, philosophy of Nature & of mental & material nature powers. The relations of mind to matter & soul to mind, of men to the gods & the illimitable Master Soul to the souls apparently limited in bodies, have all their authority in the Upanishads. The philosophical analysis of Sankhya, the practices of Tantra, the worship & devotion

of Purana, the love of the formed Divinity & the aspiration to the Formless, the atomic structure of Vaisheshika & the cardinal principles of Yoga, – whatever has been afterwards strong in development & influential on the Indian Mind, finds here its authority & sanction. Not the unmanifested & unconditioned alone but the identity of the Transcendental & the phenomenal, their eternal relations, the play of their separation & the might of their union, is the common theme of the Upanishads. They are not only for the anchorite but for the householder. They do not reject life but embrace it to fulfil it. They build for mankind a bridge by which we can cross over from the limited to the illimitable, the recurrent & transitory to the persistent & eternal, but by which also we can recross & cross again with delight & without danger that once unfathomable & irremeable abyss. They are God's lamps that illumine the stairs by which we ascend & descend no longer bound but freely & at will the whole scale of existence, finding Him there in His ineffability, concealed in utter luminousness, but also here in the garden of light & shade, manifest in every being.

The Upanishads have therefore a common field of thought, experience & knowledge; but in that field each has its own peculiar corner or province. There is nothing vague or ill-connected in their contents, nothing random in their structure. Each sets out with a certain definite thought & aim which it progressively develops & brings to a perfect culmination. The Aitareya for instance has for its subject the workings of the Self in the world as creator and master of evolution; creation, evolution, birth, heredity, death, our present human development are the matter of its brief & pregnant sentences. The Taittiriya takes for its subject the Anandam Brahman, the constitution of the soul in relation to the Infinite Delight in Conscious Being which is God & the reality of existence & reveals the way & the result of its attainment; it develops for us our gospel of eternal Bliss. The Kena starting from

the present constitution of consciousness in man affirms the universal Brahman & teaches knowledge & self-surrender to Him as the inscrutable Self & the ever-present Master. Similarly, the Isha has for its subject the nature of human life & action lived & done in the light of Vedantic knowledge & supreme realisation. It is the gospel of a divine life on earth, a consecration of works, the seed & foundation of Karmayoga.

The Upanishads are works of inspiration, not of reasoning; therefore we shall not find in them the development of thought or the logical connection of the sentences managed on the system of modern writers. The principle of our modern writing borrowed from the Greeks, who were the first nation to replace inspiration by intellect, resembles the progress of the serpent over a field, slow, winding, insinuating, covering perfectly every inch of the ground. The literary method of the ancients resembles the steps of a Titan striding from reef to reef over wide & unfathomable waters. The modern method instructs the intellect, the ancient illumines the soul. In the latter also there is a perfect logical sequence but this logic demands for our understanding & capacity to follow it something of the same illumination which presided at its construction. So profoundly characteristic is this difference that the Greek governs even his poetry by the law & style of the logical intellect, the Indian tends to subject even his prose to the law & style of the illuminated vision. The Sage of the Isha is an inspired poet writing of God & life in a style of clear, but massive & epic sublimity, lofty & grandiose, but without the European epical tendency to amplitude & period, exceedingly terse, pregnant, compactly decisive, – every word stored with meaning & leaving behind it a thousand solemn echoes. These conditions of his method of composition must be taken into full account when we try to interpret his thinking." (368-71)

12. The Religious Life of this Country

"The religious life of this country has divided itself into

two distinct & powerful tendencies, the Hinduism of the withdrawal from life which has organised itself in the monastery & the hermitage and the Hinduism of social life which has resolved itself into a mass of minute ceremony & unintelligent social practice. Neither is pure; both are afflicted with sankara, mixture & confusion of dharmas; for the life of the monastery is stricken with the tendency towards a return to the cares & corruptions of life, the life of society sicklied over & rendered impotent by the sense of its own illusion & worthlessness faced with the superiority of the monastic ideal. If a man or a nation becomes profoundly convinced that this phenomenal life is an illusion, its aims & tendencies of a moment & its values all false values, you cannot expect either the man or the nation to flourish here, whatever may be gained in Nirvana. For the nation any sustained & serious greatness of aim & endeavour becomes impossible. To get through the years of life, to maintain the body and propagate the race, since for some unreasonable reason that is demanded of us, but to get done with the business as soon as possible & escape by sannyasa into the unconditioned, this must obviously be the sole preoccupation of man in a society governed by this negative ideal. What is chiefly needed by it is an elaborate set of rules, the more minute & rigid the better, which will determine every action of life both social & religious, so as to save men the labour of thought & action & give them the assurance that they are doing only the nityakarma necessary to life in the body or the shastric karma which creates the least bondage for future lives & are not heaping up on themselves the burden of long continued existence in this terrible & inexplicable nightmare of the phenomenal world. But the attachment to works remains & it tends to satisfy itself by an excessive insistence on the petty field still left to it. We see an exclusive preoccupation with a petty money-getting, with the mere maintenance of a family, with the sordid cares of a narrow personal existence. The great ideals, the universalising & liberating movements which have continually swept rajasic

Europe & revivified it, have been more & more unknown to us in the later history of our country. We have had but one world-forgetting impulse & one world-conquering passion, – the impulse of final renunciation & the passion of self-devotion to the Master of all or to a spiritual teacher. It is this habit of bhakti that alone has saved us alive; preserving an imperishable core of strength in the midst of our weakness & darkness it has returned upon us from age to age and poured its revivifying stream always through our inert mass and our petrifying society. But for all that our great fundamental mistake about life has told heavily; it has cursed our rajasic activity with continual inefficiency and our sattwic tendencies with a perpetual weight of return to tamas. Andham tamah pravishanti ye avidyam upasate. Tato bhuya iva te tamo ya u vidyayam ratah. Both these sentences of gloom have weighed upon us; we have divided ourselves into the exclusive seekers after the unconditioned knowledge & the exclusive lingerers in the phenomenal ignorance. We have made the life divine well nigh impossible in the world, possible only in remote hermitage, desolate forest or lonely mountain. We have not known the harmony which the early Vedantins practised; we have given ourselves instead to a great negation which, however inspiring and strength giving by its positive side – for it has its strong positive side – to a few exceptional spirits, cannot be grasped by the ordinary soul even when it is accepted by the ordinary intellect, is not man's swadharma, and must therefore tend only to destroy his strength & delight in life by imposing upon him an effort beyond our average human capacity, from which it sinks back dispirited, weakened and nerveless. No nation, not even a chosen race, can with impunity build its life on a fundamental error about the meaning of life. We are here to manifest God in our mundane existence; our business is to express & formulate in phenomenal activity such truth as we can command about the Eternal; and in order to do that effectively we must answer the riddle set for us of the coexistence of the eternal & the phenomenal – we

must harmonise God & Nature on peril of our destruction. The European nations have invariably decayed after a few centuries of efflorescence because they have persisted in ignorance, & been obstinate in Avidya. We who possess the secret but misunderstand it, have taken two millenniums to decay, but in the end we have decayed & brought ourselves to the verge of actual death & decomposition. We can preserve ourselves only by returning to the full & harmonious truth of our religion, truth of Purana & Tantra which we have mistranslated into a collection of fables and of magic formulae, truth of Veda which we have mistranslated into the idea of vacant & pompous ceremonial & the truth of Vedanta which we have mistranslated into the inexplicable explanation, the baffling mystery of an incomprehensible Maya. Veda & Vedanta are not only the Bible of hermits or the textbook of metaphysicians, but a gospel of life and a guide to life for the individual, for the nation & for all humanity.

The Isha Upanishad stands first in the order of the Upanishads we should read as of a supreme importance for us & more almost than any of the others, because it sets itself with express purpose to solve that fundamental difficulty of life to which since Buddha & Shankara we have persisted in returning so lofty but so misleading an answer." (373-75)

13. The Titans or Asuras of the Veda and Bali and Prahlad and Hiranyakashipu

"The Titans or Asuras of the Veda are souls of mere undisciplined might. They are those who found themselves not on light & calm but on asu, the vital force & might which is the basis of all energetic & impetuous feeling & action. The self-willed ones, who from temperamental passion wreck themselves by the furious pursuit in desire of a false object or from intellectual passion wreck themselves by the blind pursuit in belief of a false idea, they follow a path because it is their own from Titanical attachment, from an immense

though possibly lofty egoism. Mole ruit sua. They fall by their own mass, they collapse by excess of greatness. They need not be ignoble souls, but may even seem sometimes more noble than the gods & their victorious legions. When they hack & hew at the god within them, it may be in tremendous devotion to a principle; when they subdue, cloud & torture themselves till they stumble forward into misery & night, till they become demoniac in nature, it may be in furious & hungry insistence on a great aspiration. They may be grandiosely mighty like Hiranyakashipu, ostentatiously largehearted like Bali, fiercely self-righteous like the younger Prahlada. But they fall whether great or petty, noble or ignoble & in their fall they are thrust down by Vishnu to Patala, to the worlds of delusion & shadow, or of impenetrable gloom, because they have used the heart or intellect to serve passion & ignorance, enslaved the spiritual to the material & vital elements & subordinated the man in them to the Naga, the serpent. The Naga is the symbol of the mysterious earthbound force in man. Wisest he of the beasts of the field, but still a beast of the field, not the winged Garuda revered to be the upbearer of divinity who opens his vans to the sunlight and soars to the highest seat of Vishnu." (386-87)

"There are materialised states of darkness in the conscious being in which they must work out the bewilderment & confusion they have fastened on themselves by an obstinate persistence in self-will & ignorance. In either case the intention of the Sage is evident from the later passages of this Upanishad. Whether we follow exclusively after Avidya or exclusively after Vidya, we go equally astray, exclusiveness means ignorance, exclusiveness means confusion & division of the indivisible Brahman, & persistence in such error is an obstinacy fatal to the soul in its immediate prospects. Temporarily – because eternal perdition is impossible, – it fails to cross successfully over death & enters into trans-mortal darkness. Those who accept the unity of the Brahman, who see in Vidya &

Avidya only vyavahara, light & shadow reflected in Him for the use of self-expression in phenomena, who live in the knowledge of the One in the Many, embracing like Brahman all being in themselves, rejecting nothing, preferring nothing, bearing everything, effecting everything, infinite in calm by renunciation, infinite in might & bliss by enjoyment, they are men perfected, they are the siddhas." (387)

14. The Brahman as Matariswan

"Matariswan is the energy of God in Prakriti which enters into as into a womb or matrix (Matar), is first concealed in, – as a child in the womb – & then emerges out of the static condition of extension, represented to our senses in matter as ether. It emerges in the motional principle of expansion & contraction represented to the senses as the gaseous state, especially as breath & as air, called by us therefore Vayu, which by disturbing the even, self-contained vibration (shabda) of the ether, produces vibratory waves (kshobha), generates action & reaction (rajas) on which ether behind is continually impressing a tendency to equipoise (sattwa), the failure of which is the only cause of disintegration of movement (death, mrityu, tamoguna) & creates contact (sparsha) which is the basis of mental & material sensation & indeed of all relation in phenomenal existence. Matariswan, identifying himself with Vayu, supporting himself on these principles of wave-vibration, action-reaction & contact, valid not only in matter but in life & mind, using the other three elementary or fundamental states known to Vedic enquiry, – agni (fire), the formatory principle of intension, represented to our senses in matter as heat, light & fire, apas or jala (water), the materialising or outward flowing principle of continuation, represented to our senses in matter as sap, seed, rasa, & prithwi (earth), the stabilising principle of condensation, represented to us in matter as earth, the basis of all solids, – Matariswan, deploying existence in settled forms by the fivefold (panchabhautic) complex movement of the material Brahman, of conscious being as the essential substance of

things, reveals himself as universal life activity, upholder of our vitality, prompter & cause of our actions. He as Life, is latently active in the utter inanimate, present, but unorganised in the metal, organised for life and growth only in the plant, for sense & feeling & thought in the animal creation, for reason & illumination & progress to godhead in man, for sempiternal immortality in the gods. But who, ultimately, is this Matariswan? Brahman himself, as the Rigvedic Rishis already knew, manifesting himself in relation to His other movements as the cause, condition & master of vitality." (394-95)

15. The Practical Fruits and Possible Limitations of the Realisation of God as the Self in all Existences

"We shall not have any contempt, hatred or disgust for any person, nor shall we fear anyone, however powerful or inimical; for in all we shall see Narayan, we shall know the Lord, we shall recognise ourself. One equal regard will fall from us on the tiger & the lamb, the saint & the sinner, the tyrant who threatens us and the slave who is subject to our lightest caprice. Squalor, sin, disease will not conceal from us the god within nor wrath & cruelty from us God's love working by strange ways under grotesque & fearful masks. No sort of foulness or ugliness will repel us. An universal charity, a wide & tolerant love, a calm & blissful impulse of beneficence to all will be the ethical first fruits of our realisation. We shall make no distinctions, we shall be no respecters of persons. We shall not despise the hut of the peasant nor bow down in the courts of the princes, neither shall we have wrath or scorn against the palace & partiality for the cottage. All these things will be equal to us. The touch of the outcaste will be the same to us as the sprinkling of holy water by the Brahmin – for how shall God pollute God? Every human or living body will be to us a temple & dwelling place of the most High. None shall be to us vile or contemptible. And yet none shall be too sacred for us, too dear or too inviolable; for it is the house of our Friend & Playmate; nay, it is our own House, for the Lover is not

different from the Beloved, & it is a house, jagat not sthanu, a thing that can be changed & has to be changed, for which therefore we shall have deep love, but no fettering attachment. The sword of our enemy will have no terrors for us. For enmity is a play of the Lord & death & life make up one of His games of hide & seek. How shall God slay God? Even as our vision deepens, the touch of the sword shall be to us as much the kiss of His Love as the touch from the lips of a lover – one sharp, poignant & fierce, the other soft & wooing but the manner is the only difference. For we shall have torn aside the grotesque & unreal mask of hatred & seen in the apparent fulfilment of enmity & evil, the real fulfilment of love & good. By the divination of the heart & the vision of the higher knowledge we shall have found out the way of the Lord in His movement.

And because we shall have found out His way & seen everywhere Himself, things also will cause no kind of shrinking in us. We shall exceed the limitations of the senses & the ordinary aesthetic faculties, – we shall have gone beyond the poet & the artist. We shall know why the sages have called Him sarvasundara, the All-Beautiful. For things beautiful will have a more wonderful, intense, ecstatic beauty to us, but things foul, illshapen & ugly will also be to us beautiful, with a larger, more marvellous, more universal beauty than the artistic. We shall exceed the limitations of the mind & heart & conscience; we shall have gone beyond the saint & the moralist. For we shall no more be repelled by the sin of the sinner than by the dirt on our child who has fallen or wallowed in the mud of the roadside. We shall know why the Lord has put on the mask of the sinner & the perfect purpose that is served by sin & crime in the world's economy, & while knowing that it has to be put aside or transformed into good, we shall not be revolted by it, but rather view it with perfect calm & charity. This realisation, although it lifts us beyond the ordinary conceptions of morality & conventional ethics, does not incapacitate us for normal action, as it might seem to the

thought which holds all action impossible except that which proceeds from desire & liking & disliking. Whatever morality the Vedantist practises will be based on a higher & truer ground than the ethics of the ordinary man in love, sympathy & oneness. For an ethics proceeding in its practical action on contempt, dislike or repulsion is an immoral or imperfectly moralised ethics which seeks to drive out poison by poison & it has always failed & will always fail to eradicate sin & evil, – just as the ordinary methods of society have failed to eradicate or even diminish crime & vice, because its method & its spirit are ignorant & paradoxical. Only perfect knowledge & sympathy can give perfect help and these are impossible without oneness.

At the same time it is true that the jivanmukta is not governed by ordinary moral considerations. He shrinks from no actions which the divine purpose demands or the divine impulse commands. He has no wish to kill, but he will not shrink from slaying when it is demanded, for he is bound neither by the rajasic ahankara nor by the sattwic; sattwic obstacles to slaying are therefore taken from him and his knowledge delivers him both from the desire to take life which is the evil of hinsa [and] from the emotional horror of taking life & the nervous fear of taking life which are the rajasic & tamasic basis of outward ahinsa. So also with other actions. For this morality or dharma is of the soul & does not depend upon the action which is a mere outward symbol of the soul & has different values according to the times, the social ideas & environments, the religious creed or the actual circumstances. To men who are not free a conventional morality is an absolute necessity, for there must be a fixed standard to which they can appeal. It is as necessary for the ordinary practice of the world as a standard value of coin for the ordinary commerce of a country. The coin has not really an immutable value; the pound is not perhaps really worth 15 Rs but fluctuates owing to circumstances; nevertheless

to allow a fluctuating value is to bring a certain amount of confusion, uncertainty & disorder into finance & commerce. Therefore the liberated man though he knows the truth will not contravene the fixed rules of society unless he is impelled by divine command or unless the divine purpose is moving towards a change in the fixed morality. Then, if it is the part given to him, he will act as fearlessly against social rules as under ordinary circumstances he will adhere firmly to the law of the environment in which he dwells. For his one care & purpose will be to observe the divine purpose & carry out the divine will.

Neither will events bring to him grief or disappointment, fear or disgust with things, because he follows that divine will & purpose in himself & in others, in the inner world & the outer, watching everywhere the play of the Self. He has divined God's movement. Disgrace & dishonour, obloquy & reproach cannot move him. He is equal in soul to honour & dishonour, respect & insult, mana & apamana, because both come from himself to himself & not from another. Success & failure are equal to him, since he knows that both are equally necessary for the fulfilment of the divine intention. He will no more quarrel with them than with the cold of winter or the breath of the stormblast. They are part of the jagat, part of God's play, of the Self's action on the Self. He acquires a perfect titiksha or power to bear; he moves towards more than titiksha, towards an equal & perfect enjoyment.

Such, then, are some of the practical fruits of the realisation of God as the Self in all existences & the Brahman containing all existences. It raises us towards a perfect calm, resignation, peace & joy; a perfect love, charity & beneficence; a perfect courage, boldness & effectiveness of action; a divine equality to all men & things & equanimity towards all events & actions. And not only perfect, but free. We are not bound by these things we acquire. Our calm does not stay us from even the most colossal activity, for the calm is within us, of the

soul & is not an activity in the jagat, in the movement. Our resignation is of the soul & does not mean acquiescence in defeat, but acceptance of it as a circumstance in the struggle towards a divine fulfilment; our peace & joy do not prevent us from understanding & sympathising with the trouble & grief of others; our love does not prevent an outward necessary sternness, our charity a just appreciation of men & motives nor does our beneficence hold back the sword when it is necessary that it should strike – for sometimes to strike is the highest beneficence, as those only can thoroughly realise who know that God is Rudra as well as Shiva, Chamunda Kali with the necklace of skulls no less than Durga, the protectress & Gauri, the wife & mother. Our courage does not bind itself by the ostentations of the fighter, but knows when flight & concealment are necessary, our boldness does not interfere with skill & prudence, nor our activity forbid us to rest & be passive. Finally our equality of soul leaves room to the other instruments to deal with each thing in the vyavahara according to its various dharma & utility, the law of its being & the law of its purpose.

These are the perfect results of the perfect realisation. But in practice it is difficult for these perfect results to be attained or for this perfect realisation to be maintained, unless after we have attained to it, we go farther & exceed it. In practice we find that there is a flaw, somewhere, which causes us either not perfectly to attain or to slip back after we have attained. The reason is that we are still removed by one considerable step from perfect oneness. We have realised oneness of the self within & the self without, of the self in us & the self in all other existences. But we still regard the jagat, the movement, as not entirely the Self – as movement & play of God, but not itself God, as action of the Lord, but not itself all the Lord expressed to Himself in His own divine awareness. Therefore when things come to us, when action or event affects us, we have to adopt an attitude towards it as something different

from ourselves, something that comes, something that affects us. As the result of that attitude we have jugupsa. We have realised oneness, but by what kind of realisation? By seeing, – anupashyati, by action of the seeing faculty in the buddhi or the feeling faculty in the heart – for both these things are vision. Our realisation is a realisation of identity by attitude, not of absolute identity by nature, realisation through instruments of knowledge, not through our conscious being in itself. Subtle as the distinction may seem, it is not really so fine as it appears; it makes a wide difference, it is of first rate importance in its results. For so long as our divine state depends on our attitude, the least failure or deficiency in that attitude means a waning of the divine state or a defect in its fullness. So long as it rests on a continued act of knowledge in mind & heart, the least discontinuity or defect of that knowledge means a defect of or a falling from our divine fullness. Only if identity with all existences has become our whole nature & being of our being, is the divine state perfected, is its permanent and unbroken enjoyment assured. And so complete & exacting is the oneness of Brahman, so absolute is the law of this Adwaita that if even the name & form & the play & the movement are regarded as Brahman's & not themselves as Brahman, an element of bheda, difference & dissonance, is preserved which tends to prevent this absolute identity of being & preserve the necessity of attitude & the identity only through the instruments of knowledge." (411-16)

16. Buddhi in the Psychological System of the Veda

"… in the psychological system of the Veda intellectual vichara, reason, even pure reason, is not the highest nor does it lead to the highest results. The real buddhi is not in mind at all, but above mind. For beyond & behind this intellect, heart, nervous system, body, there is, says the Veda, a level, a sea of being out of which all these descend & here take form, a plane of consciousness in which the soul dwells by

the power of perfect truth, in a condition of pure existence of knowledge, satyam, pure arrangement of its nature in that knowledge, ritam or vratam, pure satisfying wideness in being of that knowledge-nature, brihat. This is the soul's kingdom of heaven, its ideal state, immortality, amritatwam. All things here are in the language of [the Vishnu Purana] vijnanavijrimbhitani; they live here in fragments of that wide & mighty truth, but because of bheda, because they are broken up & divide truth against truth, they cannot enjoy Truth of knowledge, Truth of Nature, Truth of being & bliss, but have to strive towards it with much failure, pain & relapse. But if man can rise in himself to that plane and pour down its knowledge upon the lower system, then the whole system becomes remoulded in the mould of the vijnana. Man can get himself a new heart, a new mind, a new life, navyam ayu, even a new body, punah kritam. This whole system will then consent & be compelled to live in the truth – & that truth to which vijnana itself is the door, is Brahman as Sacchidananda. All things here will be Sacchidananda." (419)

17. The Four Propositions of the First Movement of Isha Upanishad

"In his first movement the Rishi advanced four propositions, – that the purpose of our existence is the fulfilment of God in the world, realising that the Lord & his movement alone exist, He is the only inhabitant, His movement the only cause of the forms in which He inhabits; secondly that the golden rule of life is to enjoy all God's movement or God in all his movement but only after the renunciation of demand & desire, for only so can it all be enjoyed; thirdly, that life & action in this world are intended, must be maintained & do not interfere with divine freedom & bliss; fourthly, that any self-marring movement leads only to confusion & darkness here & beyond & not to our divine realisation. In order to lay down on a firm basis his justification of these teachings, he shows us first that God &

the world are one, both are Brahman & therefore the world also is our divine Self compassing by a certain divine power movement of action & phenomenon in its still unmoving Self & without parting with its superiority to the movement, on this basis he shows us that existence & bliss not only can be made one, but if we realise this one Brahman who is our divine Self & God (antar asya sarvasya), all existence must necessarily become bliss & cannot be anything else; grief & fear & dislike & delusion have no farther place in us." (421-22)

18. A Quadruple Knot in our Mentality and the Working of Desire

"Desire, the cause of our pain, has itself its cause or rather its secret essence in the ego-sense transferred from the discriminating mind to the responsive heart. Vedantic psychology sums up the motion of the Jagati in our mentality, – the complex thing we call mind, – in a quadruple knot; – the nodus of sense-forming mind reactive to outward impacts, the nodus of discriminating mind receptive and critical of these reactions, the nodus of responsive & formative heart or temperamental mind setting in motion waves of emotional or temperamental consciousness which first forms the stuff of the others & shapes itself out as their reaction and their criticism, the nodus of ego-sense which centralises & relates to one mental self-idea all these functionings; – buddhi, manas, chitta, ahankara. Formed in the discriminating mind, egoism enslaves its creator & descends to dominate the heart. "I am I" cries the discriminating mind, enslaved by egoism, "he is he; mine is mine & not his; his is his & so long as I cannot have or take, I can never regard it as mine." Thus discriminative ego shuts up man in his one bodily habitation and prevents him from enjoying his proper estate, the rich universe, rájyam samriddham, full of beautiful and noble possessions. Egoistic reason turns man into a sort of monomaniac emperor self-confined & limited who fancies himself a prisoner in his

single palace, although, really, & if he chose, the wide earth is freely his and all that it contains. The heart accepts from the discriminating mind this false limitation & delusion, undergoes sense of want, sense of confinement, sense of difference & is tortured by their evil emotional results. While desire is our counsellor, pain and suffering must always be our heritage.

We must always remember that if ego were the truth of our being, limitation would not be painful, grief would not be the reaction of our activity. The heart, incapable of excessive yearnings, would rest in its proper circle. But we are capable of excessive yearnings because we ourselves exceed our bodies & circumstances. We are driven by an infinite stress towards increase, because we are ourselves elastic and really infinite. There is always something within us which is dissatisfied with the Is & gropes for the May be, something which is soon tired of present accomplishment & possession & reaches out for something larger, better or at the lowest new. It is the universe, it is infinity that the hidden Angel within us seeks. The Self within us knows its own infinity & sees itself as the lord of its [creation] [.....] the heart, more passive & therefore more responsive, receives dimly & without understanding – for it is not its function to understand, but to feel – the silent message. Hence it has this striving, this dissatisfaction, this torture of pain, unease & grief. God puts the heart upon the rack of desire so that it may not be satisfied with smallness. He forces it to aspire towards the greatness & infinity of the Spirit, the mahat, brihat, bhúmá. "Nalpena sukham asti, bhumna sukham asti," cries the Upanishad. There is no abiding happiness in the small; happiness comes by the vast & free.

From the strife of this secret truth & this open falsehood desire in the heart contracts its disquieting double nature of wants terribly unlimited & capacities for enjoyment & satisfaction terribly limited & soon exhausted. The Nature-

force available to the individual through his ego-centre is normally confined to the small amount of energy necessary for the maintenance of body, life & mind in their habitual & indispensable activities; there is no real provision in this limited nature for the greater things to which man in his expansion aspires. That he must seek from the infinite; that he must acquire from God or the gods, by effort, by sacrifice. The sound, sane, normal, animal man hardly aspires, perhaps would not aspire at all, but for the stress of hunger, the irritation of other men pressing upon his little share of the world & above all the stimulus of that class of beings just above him whom God has partially or entirely awakened to the beyond. But when we strain beyond the normal circle of our energies, – unless we have sought refuge in God first, – then, after the first fervent joy of struggle and partial success, our instruments begin to fail us, the pleasure we are seeking loses itself or turns into pain, pain of effort, pain of longing, pain of disappointment, pain of incapacity. We advance by suffering, & water the tree of our growth with our blood & tears.

All this pain would be unnecessary, the journey as well as the goal would be Ananda, not suffering but delight, if the ego-sense had not taken possession of our heart & reason. We seek our infinity not only through the finite, but by insisting on the conditions of the finite & exaggerating them. Physical, vital & mental man, acting & striving under these conditions, must always be limited in his realisation and in his best satisfactions never entirely or permanently satisfied. He reaches towards physical, vital and emotional satisfactions which, in the quantity, range or intensity he covets, are & must be forbidden or opposed by his habitual capacities, by his imprisoning & determining environment and by his constant clash with the equally outreaching egoistic desires of other men. He escapes perhaps into mind and seeks an unlimited satisfaction in the enjoyments belonging to that

more elastic principle, in art, science or literature; but there too, though freer & better satisfied, he is both fettered by his nerves and body and hedged in by the limitations of the mind itself. The mind in sensational & vital man, incapable of an universal catholicity of possession and enjoyment, measures, divides, erects standards & hedges, rooted customary habits of capacity, fixed associations of enjoyment and fixed associations of failure in enjoyment, till we have built up a whole system of conventional values of pleasant and unpleasant, good and bad, beautiful and ugly, attractive and repellent, and in this mighty forest of conventions, this jungle of dualities move & live; as the forest is unseen for its trees so the fictions of mind, – mind, the purblind stumbler among details, – obscure from us the truth and real bliss of existence. The mentalised body, too, has its own habitual standards of contacts which it can bear and contacts which it cannot or does not wish to bear; therefore we are divided between bodily pleasure and pain and those neutral sensations which conform decidedly to neither of these values. The mentalised nervous energy has, no less, its standards of contacts which it can assimilate and contacts which it wishes to reject, and we have, therefore, to reckon among the links of our life-chain vital enjoyments & vital sufferings, these also divided by their neutral borders. Even when busy with its own proper experiences, the mind has its standard of contacts with which it can harmonise itself and contacts with which it is at discord or else remains unattracted, – grief, joy and indifference are the resultant emotional responses. Based upon these standards each individual or species has built up its own system of habitual wants & cravings and its own arrangement of accumulated conventions. So has grown the huge tree of desire and its associations, sanskaras as they are termed in our philosophies, which has grown out of the seed of ego-sense in the heart and conceals that seed in every part of its flowerings and branchings. Nor is the uprooting of that upas tree a facile undertaking. For desire does not perish easily by enjoyment;

it seeks always to renew enjoyment or go beyond; hardly it perishes by surfeit, for it revives or it seeks other objects; nor is it, either, readily slain by coercion, for it sulks concealed in some invisible den awaiting for a treacherous or violent re-emergence and revenge. To finish with desire altogether by attacking & destroying its seed of ego-sense in the heart, is our only escape from present pain and our only safety from renewed suffering." (472-75)

19. Truth is Imperative and Demands Inexorably Its Satisfaction

"Throughout the human ages we seek an escape or a remedy, but all our solutions fail because either they seek escape from the results of ego by affirming the ego or else deny or unduly limit God's purpose in the ego. "Accept your limitations, work and enjoy as perfectly as you may within boundaries," is the creed of a practical Paganism. For a century or two it may serve man's need indifferently, but he is infinite and universal and after a time Nature in him heaves restlessly and strains out towards its element. She accepted the Greek ideal for a century, then rose up and broke it to pieces. "Recognise that you are yourself, others not yourself, and make a rule of life out of the moral consequences of that distinction; desire only that to which you have a right," – this is the solution of ordinary ethics. But still man remains universal; if egoistic vice is the poison of his life, egoistic virtue is not its fulfilment; he breaks back towards sin and unregulated desire or forwards towards something beyond vice and virtue. "Desire what you please, enjoy what you can, but without violating my laws and conventions," is the dyke raised by society; but man is a universal as well as a social unit and the societies he creates are a Procrustean bed which he moulds and remoulds without ever finding his measure. He supports himself on social conventions, laws & equities, but cannot limit himself by his supports. "Desire is sinful; observe duty and the Shastra,

discourage & punish enjoyment," is the Puritan's law of self-repression; but duty is only one instinct of our nature and duty satisfied cannot eradicate the need of bliss. Asceticism digs deeper into the truth of things, "Compromise will not do" it cries; "flee utterly from the objects of desire, escape from the field of ego, shun the world." It is an escape, not a solution; God in man may admit escape for the few, but He denies it to the many, for He will not allow His purpose in life and world to be frustrated. Religion digs still deeper: "Replace many desires by one, drive out the desires of this miserable earth by the desire of God and of a future world not besieged by these unsatisfied yearnings." But to postpone the problem to another life is not to solve it; and to desire God apart from life and not in life is to divide the unity of His being. He will indulge a few in that evasion, but not the mass of mankind; therefore the many have to return with hearts still hungry from the doors of the temple; therefore the successive moulds of religion fail, lose their virtue and are cast away and broken. For Truth is imperative and demands inexorably its satisfaction. And the truth is always this that man is universal being seeking an universal bliss and self-realisation and cannot repose permanently on the wayside, in hedged gardens, or in any imperfect prison whatsoever or bounded resting place." (476-77)