The Real Awakener



The Light of Lights

Words of Sri Aurobindo – 42

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The Religion of Vedanta

"If it were asked by anyone what is this multitudinous, shifting, expanding, apparently amorphous or at all events multimorphous sea of religious thought, feeling, philosophy, spiritual experience we call Hinduism, what it is characteristically and essentially, we might answer in one word, the religion of Vedanta. And if it were asked what are the Hindus with their unique and persistent difference from all other races, we might again answer, the children of Vedanta. For at the root of all that we Hindus have done, thought and said through these thousands of years of our race-history, behind all we are and seek to be, there lies concealed, the fount of our philosophies, the bedrock of our religions, the kernel of our thought, the explanation of our ethics and society, the summary of our civilisation, the rivet of our nationality, this one marvellous inheritance of ours, the Vedanta. Nor is it only to Hindu streams that this great source has given of its life-giving waters. Buddhism, the teacher of one third of humanity, drank from its inspiration. Christianity, the offspring of Buddhism, derived its ethics and esoteric teaching at second-hand from the same source. Through Persia Vedanta put its stamp on Judaism, through Judaism, Christianity and Sufism on Islam, through Buddha on Confucianism" (413)

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Selections from Kena and other Upanishads (CWSA 18)

1. Selection from Sri Aurobindo's Commentary on the Brihad Aranyak Upanishad

a. Sankaracharya's Approach to the Upanishads

"The Brihad Aranyak Upanishad, at once the most obscure and the profoundest of the Upanishads, offers peculiar difficulties to the modern mind. If its ideas are remote from us, its language is still more remote. Profound, subtle, extraordinarily rich in rare philosophical suggestions and delicate psychology, it has preferred to couch its ideas in a highly figurative and symbolical language, which to its contemporaries, accustomed to this suggestive dialect, must have seemed a noble frame for its riches, but meets us rather as an obscuring veil. To draw aside this curtain, to translate the old Vedic language and figures into the form contemporary thought prefers to give to its ideas is the sole object of this commentary. The task is necessarily a little hazardous. It would have been easy merely to reproduce the thoughts & interpretations of Shankara in the modern tongue – if there were an error, one could afford to err with so supreme an authority. But it seems to me that both the demands of truth and the spiritual need of mankind in this age call for a restoration of old Vedantic truth rather than for the prolonged dominion of that single side of it systematised by the mediaeval thinker. The great Shankaracharya needs no modern praise and can be hurt by no modern disagreement. Easily the first of metaphysical thinkers, the greatest genius in the history of philosophy, his commentary has also done an incalculable service to our race by bridging the intellectual gulf between the sages of the Upanishads and ourselves. It has protected them from the practical oblivion in which our ignorance & inertia have allowed the Veda to rest for so many centuries – only to be dragged out by the rude hands of the daringly

speculative Teuton. It has kept these ancient grandeurs of thought, these high repositories of spirituality under the safeguard of that temple of metaphysics, the Adwaita philosophy – a little in the background, a little too much veiled & shrouded, but nevertheless safe from the iconoclasm and the restless ingenuities of modern scholarship. Nevertheless, it remains true that Shankara's commentary is interesting not so much for the light it sheds on the Upanishad as for its digressions into his own philosophy. I do not think that Shankara's rational intellect, subtle indeed to the extreme, but avid of logical clearness and consistency, could penetrate far into that mystic symbolism and that deep & elusive flexibility which is characteristic of all the Upanishads, but rises to an almost unattainable height in the Brihad Aranyaka. He has done much, has shown often a readiness and quickness astonishing in so different a type of intellectuality but more is possible and needed." (273-274)

b. Sri Aurobindo's Approach to Brihad Aranyak

"The time is fast coming when the human intellect, aware of the mighty complexity of the universe, will be more ready to learn & less prone to dispute & dictate; we shall be willing then to read ancient documents of knowledge for what they contain instead of attempting to force into them our own truth or get them to serve our philosophic or scholastic purposes. To enter passively into the thoughts of the old Rishis, allow their words to sink into our souls, mould them & create their own reverberations in a sympathetic & responsive material – submissiveness, in short, to the Sruti – was the theory the ancients themselves had of the method of Vedic knowledge – giram upasrutim chara, stoman abhi swara, abhi grinihi, a ruva – to listen in soul to the old voices and allow the Sruti in the soul to respond, to vibrate first obscurely in answer to the Vedantic hymn of knowledge, to give the response, the echo & last to let that response gain in clarity, intensity & fullness. This is the principle of

interpretation that I have followed – mystical perhaps but not necessarily more unsound than the insistence & equally personal standards of the logician & the scholar. And for the rest, where no inner experience of truth sheds light on the text, to abide faithfully by the wording of the Upanishad and trust my intuitions. For I hold it right to follow the intuitions especially in interpreting this Upanishad, even at the risk of being accused of reading mysticism into the Vedanta, because the early Vedantists, it seems to me, were mystics – not in the sense of being vague & loose-thoughted visionaries, but in the sense of being intuitional symbolists – who regarded the world as a movement of consciousness & all material forms & energies as external symbols & shadows of deeper & ever deeper internal realities. It is not my intention here nor is it in my limits possible to develop the philosophy of the Great Aranyaka Upanishad, but only to develop with just sufficient amplitude for entire clearness the ideas contained in its language & involved in its figures." (274-275)

2. The Horse of the Ashwamedha – the Horse of the worlds

"The Upanishad begins with a grandiose abruptness in an impetuous figure of the Horse of the Aswamedha. "OM" it begins "Dawn is the head of the horse sacrificial. The sun is his eye, his breath is the wind, his wide-open mouth is Fire, the universal energy; Time is the self of the horse sacrificial. Heaven is his back and the mid-region is his belly, earth is his footing, – the quarters are his flanks and their intermediate regions are his ribs; the seasons are his members, the months and the half months are their joints, the days and nights are that on which he stands, the stars are his bones and the sky is the flesh of his body. The strands are the food in his belly, the rivers are his veins, the mountains are his liver and lungs, herbs and plants are the hairs of his body; the rising day is his front portion and the setting day is his hinder portion. When he stretches himself, then it lightens; when he shakes himself,

then it thunders; when he urines, then it rains. Speech verily is the voice of him. Day was the grandeur that was born before the horse as he galloped, the eastern ocean gave it birth. Night was the grandeur that was born in his rear and its birth was in the western waters. These were the grandeurs that arose to being on either side of the horse. He became Haya and carried the gods, – Vajin and bore the Gandharvas, – Arvan and bore the Titans, – Aswa and carried mankind. The sea was his brother and the sea his birthplace."

This passage, full of a gigantic imagery, sets the key to the Upanishad and only by entering into the meaning of its symbolism can we command the gates of this many-mansioned city of Vedantic thought. There is never anything merely poetic or ornamental in the language of the Upanishads. Even in this passage which would at first sight seem to be sheer imagery, there is a choice, a selecting eye, an intention in the images. They are all dependent not on the author's unfettered fancy, but on the common ideas of the early Vedantic theosophy. It is fortunate, also, that the attitude of the Upanishads to the Vedic sacrifices is perfectly plain from this opening. We shall not stand in danger of being accused of reading modern subtleties into primitive minds or of replacing barbarous superstitions by civilised mysticism. The Aswamedha or Horse-Sacrifice is, as we shall see, taken as the symbol of a great spiritual advance, an evolutionary movement, almost, out of the dominion of apparently material forces into a higher spiritual freedom. The Horse of the Aswamedha is, to the author, a physical figure representing, like some algebraical symbol, an unknown quantity of force & speed. From the imagery it is evident that this force, this speed, is something worldwide, something universal; it fills the regions with its body, it occupies Time, it gallops through Space, it bears on in its speed men and gods and the Titans. It is the Horse of the Worlds, – and yet the Horse sacrificial." (275-276)

"Of this Horse of the Worlds, who bears up all beings, the

sea is the brother & the sea is the birthplace. There can be no doubt of the meaning of this symbol. It is the upper ocean of the Veda in which it imaged the superior & divine existence, these are the waters of supramaterial causality. From that this lower ocean of our manifestation derives its waters, its flowing energies, apah; from that when the Vritras are slain & the firmaments opened, it is perpetually replenished, prati samudram syandamanah and of that it is the shadow & the reproduction of its circumstances under the conditions of mental illusion, – Avidya, mother of limitation & death. This image not only consummates this passage but opens a door of escape from that which is to follow. Deliverance from the dominion of Ashanaya Mrityu is possible because of this circumstance that the sea of divine being is bandhu, kin & friend to the Horse. The aparardha proves to be of the same essential nature as the parardha, our mortal part is akin to our unlimited & immortal part, because the Horse of the Worlds comes to us from that divine source & in his essence partakes of its nature, & from what other except this Ocean can the Horse of the Worlds who is material yet supramaterial be said to have derived his being? We, appearing bound, mortal & limited, are manifestations of a free & infinite reality & from that from which we were born comes friendship & assistance for that which we are, towards making us that which we shall be. From our kindred heavens the Love descends always that works to raise up the lower to its brother, the higher." (287)

3. The Kaivalya Upanishad

"ॐ अथाश्वलायनो भगवन्तं परमेष्ठिनमुपसमेत्योवाच ।
अधीहि भगवन् ब्रह्मविद्यां वरिष्ठां सदा सद्भिः सेव्यमानां निगूढाम् ।
यथाचिरात् सर्वपापं व्यपोह्य परात्परं पुरुषं याति विद्वान् ॥१॥

OM. Aswalayana to the Lord Parameshthi came and said, Teach me, Lord, the highest knowledge of Brahman, the secret knowledge ever followed by the saints, how the wise man swiftly putting from him all evil goeth to the Purusha who is higher than the highest. …

There are three necessary elements of the path to Kaivalya, – first, the starting point, vidya, right knowledge, implying the escape from ignorance, non-knowledge and false knowledge; next, the process or means, escape from सर्वपापं, all evil, i.e., sin, pain and grief; last, the goal, Purushottam, the Be ing who is beyond the highest, that is, beyond Turiya, being the Highest. By the escape from sin, pain and grief one attains absolute ananda, and by ananda, the last term of existence, we reach that in which ananda exists. What is that? It is not Turiya who is shivam, shantam, adwaitam, sacchidanandam, but that which is beyond shivam and ashivam, good and evil, shantam and kalilam, calm and chaos, dwaitam and adwaitam, duality and unity. Sat, Chit and Ananda are in this Highest, but He is neither Sat, Chit nor Ananda nor any combination of these. He is All and yet He is neti, neti, He is One and yet He is many. He is Parabrahman and He is Parameswara. He is Male and He is Female. He is Tat and He is Sa. This is the Higher than the Highest. He is the Purusha, the Being in whose image the world and all the Jivas are made, who pervades all and underlies all the workings of Prakriti as its reality and self. It is this Purusha that Aswalayana seeks." (288-89)

4. The Sole Secret Meaning and Purpose of Evolution

"All this world is only one conscious Being. Matter to the Vedantist is only one of several states – in reality, movements – of this conscious being, – a state in which this universal consciousness, having created forms within & out of itself as substance, absorbs & loses itself by concentration in the idea of being as substance of form. It is still conscious, but, as form, ceases to be self-conscious. The Purusha in matter, the Knower in the leaf, clod, stone, is involved in form, forgets himself in this movement of his Prakriti or Mode of Action and loses hold in outgoing knowledge of his self of conscious being & delight. He is not in possession of himself; He is not Atmavan. He has to get back what he has lost, to become Atmavan, and that simply means that He has to become

gradually aware in matter of that which He has hidden from Himself in matter. He has to evolve what He has involved. This recovery in knowledge of our full and real self is the sole secret meaning & purpose of evolution. In reality it is no evolution, but a manifestation. We are already what we become. That which is still future in matter, is already present in Spirit. That which the mind in matter does not yet know, it is hiding from itself – that in us which is behind mind & informs it already knows – but it keeps its secret." (299)

5. The Mind of the European Versus the Mind of the Asiatic

"The mind of the European is an Iliad or an Odyssey, fighting rudely but heroically forward, or, full of a rich curiosity, wandering as an accurate and vigorous observer in landlocked seas of thought; the mind of the Asiatic is a Ramayan or a Mahabharat, a gleaming infinity of splendid and inspiring imaginations and idealisms or else an universe of wide moral aspiration and ever varying and newly-grouped masses of thought. The mind of the Westerner is a Mediterranean full of small and fertile islands, studded with ports to which the owner, a private merchant, eagerly flees with his merchandise after a little dashing among the billows, and eagerly he disembarks and kisses his dear mother earth; the mind of the Eastern man is an Ocean, and its voyager an adventurer and discoverer, a Columbus sailing for months over an illimitable Ocean out of reach of land, and his ports of visit are few and far between, nor does he carry in his bottoms much merchandise you can traffick in; yet he opens for the trader new horizons, new worlds with new markets. By his intuitions and divinations he helps to widen the circles the European is always obstinately tracing. The European is essentially scientific, artistic and commercial; the Asiatic is essentially a moralist, pietist and philosopher. Of course the distinction is not rigid or absolute; there is much that is Asiatic in numbers of Europeans, and in particular races, notably the

South Germans, the Celt and the Slav; there is much that is European in numbers of Asiatics, and in particular nations, notably the Arabs and the Japanese. But the fundamental divergence in speculative habits is very noticeable, for in the things of the mind the South imposes its law on the whole Continent." (346-47)

6. The Four Pillars of the Lofty Philosophy of the Upanishads

"… the seers of ancient India had, in their experiments and efforts at spiritual training and the conquest of the body, perfected a discovery which in its importance to the future of human knowledge dwarfs the divinations of Newton and Galileo; even the discovery of the inductive and experimental method in Science was not more momentous; for they discovered down to its ultimate processes the method of Yoga and by the method of Yoga they rose to three crowning realisations. They realised first as a fact the existence under the flux and multitudinousness of things of that supreme Unity and immutable Stability which had hitherto been posited only as a necessary theory, an inevitable generalisation. They came to know that It is the one reality and all phenomena merely its seemings and appearances, that It is the true Self of all things and phenomena are merely its clothes and trappings. They learned that It is absolute and transcendent and, because absolute and transcendent, therefore eternal, immutable, imminuable and indivisible. And looking back on the past progress of speculation they perceived that this also was the goal to which pure intellectual reasoning would have led them. For that which is in Time must be born and perish; but the Unity and Stability of things is eternal and must therefore transcend Time. That which is in Space must increase & diminish, have parts & relations, but the Unity and Stability of things is imminuable, not augmentable, independent of the changefulness of its parts and untouched by the shifting of their relations, and must therefore transcend Space; – and if it

transcends Space, cannot really have parts, since Space is the condition of material divisibility; divisibility therefore must be, like death, a seeming and not a reality. Finally that which is subject to Causality, is necessarily subject to Change; but the Unity and Stability of things is immutable, the same now as it was aeons ago and will be aeons hereafter, and must therefore transcend Causality.

This then was the first realisation through Yoga, NITYO 'NITYÂNÂM, the One Eternal in many transient.

At the same time they realised one truth more, – a surprising truth; they found that the transcendent absolute Self of things was also the Self of living beings, the Self too of man, that highest of the beings living in the material plane on earth. The Purusha or conscious Ego in man which had perplexed and baffled the Sankhyas, turned out to be precisely the same in his ultimate being as Prakriti the apparently non-conscious source of things; the non-consciousness of Prakriti, like so much else, was proved a seeming and no reality, since behind the inanimate form a conscious Intelligence at work is to the eyes of the Yogin luminously self-evident.

This then was the second realisation through Yoga, CHÉTANAŞ CHÉTANÂNÂM, the One Consciousness in many Consciousnesses.

Finally at the base of these two realisations was a third, the most important of all to our race, – that the Transcendent Self in individual man is as complete *because identically the same* as the Transcendent Self in the Universe; for the Transcendent is indivisible and the sense of separate individuality is only one of the fundamental seemings on which the manifestation of phenomenal existence perpetually depends. In this way the Absolute which would otherwise be beyond knowledge, becomes knowable; and the man who knows his whole Self knows the whole Universe. This stupendous truth is enshrined to us in the two famous formulae of Vedanta, SO 'HAM, He am I, and AHAM BRAHM' ÂSMI, I am Brahman the Eternal.

Based on these four grand truths, NITYO 'NITYÂNÂM,

CHÉTANAŞ CHÉTANÂNÂM, SO 'HAM, AHAM BRAHM' ÂSMI, as upon four mighty pillars the lofty philosophy of the Upanishads raises its front among the distant stars." (355-57)

7. Steps to the Realisation of the Nature of the Absolute Brahman

"The first great step to the realisation of the Brahman is by the knowledge of Him as manifested in the phenomenal Universe; for if there is no reality but Brahman, the phenomenal Universe which is obviously a manifestation of *something* permanent and eternal, must be a manifestation of Brahman and of nothing else, and if we know it completely, we do to a certain extent and in a certain way, know Him, not as an Absolute Existence, but under the conditions of phenomenal manifestation. While, however, European Science seeks only to know the phenomena of gross matter, the Yogin goes farther. He asserts that he has discovered an universe of subtle matter penetrating and surrounding the gross; this universe to which the spirit withdraws partially and for a brief time in sleep but more entirely and for a longer time through the gates of death, is the source whence all psychic processes draw their origin; and the link which connects this universe with the gross material world is to be found in the phenomena of life and mind. His assertion is perfectly positive and the Upanishad proceeds on it as on an ascertained and indisputable fact quite beyond the limits of mere guesswork, inference or speculation. But he goes yet farther and declares that there is yet a third universe of causal matter penetrating and surrounding both the subtle and the gross, and that this universe to which the spirit withdraws in the deepest and most abysmal states of sleep and trance and also in a remote condition beyond the state of man after death, is the source whence all phenomena take their rise. If we are to understand the Upanishads we must accept these to us astounding statements, temporarily at least; for on them the whole scheme of Vedanta is built. Now Brahman manifests Himself in each of these Universes, in the Universe

of Causal Matter as the Cause, Self and Inspirer, poetically styled Prajna the Wise One; in the universe of subtle matter as the Creator, Self and Container, styled Hiranyagarbha the Golden Embryo of life and form, and in the universe of gross matter as the Ruler, Guide, Self and Helper, styled Virat the Shining and Mighty One. And in each of these manifestations He can be known and realised by the spirit of Man.

Granted the truth of these remarkable assertions, what then is the relation between the Supreme Self and man? The position has already been quite definitely taken that the transcendent Self in man is identically the same as the transcendent Self in the Universe and that this identity is the one great key to the knowledge of the Absolute Brahman. Does not this position rule out of court any such differences between the Absolute and the human Self as is implied in the character of the triple manifestation of Brahman? On the one hand completest identity of the Supreme Self and the human is asserted as an ascertained & experienced fact, on the other hand widest difference is asserted as an equally well-ascertained and experienced fact; there can be no reconciliation between these incompatible statements. Yet are they both facts, answers Vedanta; identity *is* a fact in the reality of things; difference *is* a fact in the appearance of things, the world of phenomena; for phenomena are in their essence nothing but seemings and the difference between the individual Self and the Universal Self is the fundamental seeming which makes all the rest possible. This difference grows as the manifestation of Brahman proceeds. In the world of gross matter, it is complete; the difference is so acute, that it is impossible for the material sensual being to conceive of the Supreme Soul as having any point of contact with his own soul and it is only by a long process of evolution that he arrives at the illumination in which some kind of identity becomes to him conceivable. The basal conception for Mind as conditioned by gross matter is Dualistic; the knower here must be different from the Known and his whole intellectual development consists

in the discovery, development and perfected use of ever new media and methods of knowledge. Undoubtedly the ultimate knowledge he arrives at brings him to the fundamental truth of identity between himself and the Supreme Self, but in the sphere of gross phenomena this identity can never be more than an intellectual conception, it can never be verified by personal realisation. On the other hand it can be *felt* by the supreme sympathy of love and faith, either through love of humanity and of all other fellow-beings or directly through love of God. This feeling of identity is very strong in religions based largely on the sentiment of Love and Faith. I and my Father are One, cried the Founder of Christianity; I and my brother man & my brother beast are One, says Buddhism; St Francis spoke of Air as his brother and Water as his sister; and the Hindu devotee when he sees a bullock lashed falls down in pain with the mark of the whip on his own body. But the feeling of Oneness remaining only a feeling does not extend into knowledge and therefore these religions while emotionally pervaded with the sense of identity, tend in the sphere of intellect to a militant Dualism or to any other but always unMonistic standpoint. Dualism is therefore no mere delusion; it is a truth, but a phenomenal truth and not the ultimate reality of things.

As it proceeds in the work of discovering and perfecting methods of knowledge, the individual self finds an entry into the universe of subtle phenomena. Here the difference that divides it from the Supreme Self is less acute; for the bonds of matter are lightened and the great agents of division and disparity, Time and Space, diminish in the insistency of their pressure. The individual here comes to realise a certain unity with the great Whole; he is enlarged and aggrandized into a part of the Universal Self, but the sense of identity is not complete and cannot be complete. The basal conception for Mind in this subtle Universe is Dualo-Monistic; the knower is not quite different from the known; he is like and of the same substance but inferior, smaller and dependent; his sense of

oneness may amount to similarity and consubstantiality but not to coincidence and perfect identity.

From the subtle Universe the individual self rises in its evolution until it is able to enter the universe of Causal matter, where it stands near to the fountain-head. In this universe media and methods of knowledge begin to disappear, Mind comes into almost direct relations with its source and the difference between the individual and the Supreme Self is greatly attenuated. Nevertheless there is here too a wall of difference, even though it wears eventually thin as the thinnest paper. The knower is aware that he is coeval and coexistent with the Supreme Self, he is aware in a sense of omnipresence, for wherever the Supreme Self is, there also he is; he is, moreover, on the other side of phenomena and can see the Universe at will without him or within him; but he has still not necessarily realised the Supreme as utterly himself, although the perfect realisation is now for the first time in his grasp. The basal perception for Mind in this Universe is Monism with a difference, but the crowning perception of Monism becomes here possible.

And when it is no longer only possible but grasped? Then the individual Self entering into full realisation, ceases in any sense to be the individual Self, but merges into & becomes again the eternal and absolute Brahman, without parts, unbeginning, undecaying, unchanging. He has passed beyond causality and phenomena and is no longer under the bondage of that which is only by seeming. This is the *laya* or utter absorption of Hinduism, the highest *nirvana* or extinction from phenomena of the Upanishads and of Buddhist metaphysics. It is obviously a state which words fail to describe, since words which are created to express relations and have no meaning except when they express relations, cannot deal successfully with a state which is perfectly pure, absolute and unrelated; nor is it a condition which the bounded & finite intellect of man on this plane can for a moment envisage. This unintelligibility of the supreme state is naturally a great stumbling block to

the undisciplined imagination of our present-day humanity which, being sensuous, emotional and intellectual, inevitably recoils from a bliss in which neither the senses, emotions nor intellect have any place. Surely, we cry, the extinction or quietude of all these sources & means of sensation and pleasure implies not supreme bliss but absolute nothingness, blank annihilation. "An error", answers the Vedanta, "a pitiful, grovelling error! Why is it that the senses cease in that supreme condition? Because the senses were evolved in order to sense external being and where externality ceases, they having no action cease to exist. The emotions too are directed outwards and need another for their joy, they can only survive so long as we are incomplete. The intellect similarly is and works only so long as there is something external to it and ungrasped. But to the Most High there is nothing ungrasped, the Most High depends on none for His joy. He has therefore neither emotions nor intellect, nor can he either who merges in and becomes the Most High, possess them for a moment after that high consummation. The deprivation of the limited senses in His boundlessness is not a loss or an extinction, but must be a fulfilment, a development into Being which rejoices in its own infinity. The disappearance of our broken & transient emotions in His completeness must bring us not into a cold void but rather into illimitable bliss. The culmination of knowledge by the supersession of our divided & fallible intellect must lead not to utter darkness and blank vacuity but to the luminous ecstasy of an infinite Consciousness. Not the annihilation of Being, but utter fullness of Being is our Nirvana." And when this ecstatic language is brought to the touchstone of reason, it must surely be declared just and even unanswerable. For the final absolution of the intellect can only be at a point where the Knower, Knowledge and the Known become one, Knowledge being there infinite, direct and without media. And where there is this infinite and flawless knowledge, there must be, one thinks, infinite and flawless existence and bliss. But by the very conditions of this state, we can only say of it that it is, we cannot define

it in words, precisely because we cannot realize it with the intellect. The Self can be realized only with the Self; there is no other instrument of realization.

Granted, it may be said, that such a state is conceivably possible, – as certainly it is, starting from your premises, the only and inevitable conclusion, – but what proof have we that it exists as a reality? what proof can even your Yoga bring to us that it exists? For when the individual Self becomes identified with the Supreme, its evolution is over and it does not return into phenomena to tell its experiences. The question is a difficult one to handle, partly because language, if it attempts to deal with it at all precisely, must become so abstract and delicate as to be unintelligible, partly because the experiences it involves are so far off from our present general evolution and attained so rarely that dogmatism or even definite statement appears almost unpardonable. Nevertheless with the use of metaphorical language, or, in St Paul's words, speaking as a fool, one may venture to outline what there is at all to be said on the subject. The truth then seems to be that there are even in this last or fourth state of the Self, stages and degrees, as to the number of which experience varies; but for practical purposes we may speak of three, the first when we stand at the entrance of the porch and look within; the second when we stand at the inner extremity of the porch and are really face to face with the Eternal; the third when we enter into the Holy of Holies. Be it remembered that the language I am using is the language of metaphor and must not be pressed with a savage literalness. Well then, the first stage is well within the possible experience of man and from it man returns to be a Jivanmukta, one who lives & is yet released in his inner self from the bondage of phenomenal existence; the second stage once reached, man does not ordinarily return, unless he is a supreme Buddha, – or perhaps as a world Avatar; from the third stage none returns nor is it attainable in the body. Brahman as realised by the Jivanmukta, seen from the entrance of the porch, is that which we usually term

Parabrahman, the Supreme Eternal and the subject of the most exalted descriptions of the Vedanta. There are therefore five conditions of Brahman. Brahman Virat, Master of the Waking Universe; Brahman Hiranyagarbha, of the Dream Universe; Brahman Prajna or Avyakta of the Trance Universe of Unmanifestation; Parabrahman, the Highest; and that which is higher than the highest, the Unknowable. Now of the Unknowable it is not profitable to speak, but something of Parabrahman can be made intelligible to the human understanding because – always if the liberal use of loose metaphors is not denied, – it can be partially brought within the domain of speech." (359-65)

8. Parabrahman

"So far the great Transcendent Reality has been viewed from the standpoint of the human spirit as it travels on the upward curve of evolution to culminate in the Supreme. It will now be more convenient to view the Absolute from the other end of the cycle of manifestation where, in a sense, evolution begins and the great Cause of phenomena stands with His face towards the Universe He will soon create. At first of course there is the Absolute, unconditioned, unmanifested, unimaginable, of Whom nothing can be predicated except negatives. But as the first step towards manifestation the Absolute – produces, shall we say? let the word serve for want of a better! – produces in Itself a luminous Shadow of Its infinite inconceivable Being, – the image is trivial and absurd, but one can find none adequate, – which is Parabrahman or if we like so to call Him, God, the Eternal, the Supreme Spirit, the Seer, Witness, Wisdom, Source, Creator, Ancient of Days. Of Him Vedanta itself can only speak in two great trilogies, subjective and objective, Sacchidanandam, Existence, Consciousness, Bliss; Satyam Jnanam Anantam, Truth, Knowledge, Infinity.

SACCHIDANANDAM. The Supreme is Pure Being, Absolute Existence, SAT. He is Existence because He alone *Is*, there being nothing else which has any ultimate reality

or any being independent of His self-manifestation. And He is *Absolute* Existence because since He alone is and nothing else exists in reality, He must necessarily exist by Himself, in Himself and to Himself. There can be no cause for His existence, nor object to His existence; nor can there be any increase or diminution in Him, since increase can only come by addition from something external and diminution by loss to something external, and there is nothing external to Brahman. He cannot change in any way, for then He would be subject to Time and Causality; nor have parts, for then He would be subject to the law of Space. He is beyond the conceptions of Space, Time and Causality which He creates phenomenally as the conditions of manifestation but which cannot condition their Source. Parabrahman, then, is Absolute Existence.

The Supreme is also Pure Awareness, Absolute Consciousness, CHIT. We must be on our guard against confusing the ultimate consciousness of Brahman with our own modes of thought and knowledge, or calling Him in any but avowedly metaphorical language the Universal Omniscient Mind and by such other terminology; Mind, Thought, Knowledge, Omniscience, Partial Science, Nescience are merely modes in which Consciousness figures under various conditions and in various receptacles. But the Pure Consciousness of the Brahman is a conception which transcends our modes of thinking. Philosophy has done well to point out that consciousness is in its essence purely subjective. We are not conscious of external objects; we are only conscious of certain perceptions and impressions in our brains which by the separate or concurrent operation of our senses we are able to externalise into name and form; and in the very nature of things and to the end of Time we cannot be conscious of anything except these impressions & perceptions. The fact is indubitable, though Materialism and Idealism explain it in diametrically opposite directions. We shall eventually know that this condition is imperative precisely because consciousness is the fundamental thing from

which all phenomenal existence proceeds, so much so that all phenomena have been called by a bold metaphor distortions or corruptions (*vikaras*) of the absolute consciousness. Monistic philosophers tell us however that the true explanation is not corruption but illation (*adhyaropa*), first of the idea of not-self into the Self, and of externality into the internal, and then of fresh and ever more complex forms by the method of Evolution. These metaphysical explanations it is necessary indeed to grasp, but even when we have mastered their delicate distinctions, refined upon refinement and brought ourselves to the verge of infinite ideas, there at least we must pause; we are moored to our brains and cannot in this body cut the rope in order to spread our sails over the illimitable ocean. It is enough if we satisfy ourselves with some dim realisation of the fact that all sentience is ultimately self-sentience.

The Upanishads tell us that Brahman is not a blind universal Force working by its very nature mechanically, nor even an unconscious Cause of Force; He is conscious or rather is Himself Consciousness, CHIT, as well as SAT. It necessarily follows that SAT and CHIT are really the same; Existence is Consciousness and cannot be separated from Consciousness. Phenomenally we may choose to regard existence as proceeding from sentience or culminating in it or being in and by it; but culmination is only a return to a concealed source, an efflorescence already concealed in the seed, so that from all these three standpoints sentience is eventually the condition of existence; they are only three different aspects of the mental necessity which forbids us to imagine the great Is as essentially unaware that He Is. We may of course choose to believe that things are the other way about, that existence proceeds from insentience through sentience back again to insentience. Sentience is then merely a form of insentience, a delusion or temporary corruption (*vikara*) of the eternal and insentient. In this case Sentience, Intelligence, Mind, Thought and Knowledge, all are Maya and either insentient Matter or Nothingness the only eternal reality. But the Nihilist's

negation of existence is a mere reductio ad absurdum of all thought and reason, a metaphysical *harakiri* by which Philosophy rips up her own bowels with her own weapons. The Materialist's conclusion of eternal insentient Matter seems to stand on firmer ground; for we have certainly the observed fact that evolution seems to start from inanimate Matter, and consciousness presents itself in Matter as a thing that appears for a short time only to disappear, a phenomenon or temporary seeming. To this argument also Vedanta can marshal a battalion of replies. The assertion of eternally insentient Matter (*Prakriti*) without any permanently sentient reality (*Purusha*) is, to begin with, a paradox far more startling than the Monistic paradox of Maya and lands us in a conclusion mentally inconceivable. Nor is the materialistic conclusion indisputably proved by observed facts; rather facts seem to lead us to a quite different conclusion, since the existence of anything really insentient behind which there is no concealed Sentience is an assumption (for we cannot even positively say that inanimate things are absolutely inanimate,) and the one fact we surely and indisputably know is our own sentience and animation. In the workings of inanimate Matter we everywhere see the operations of Intelligence operating by means and adapting means to an end and the intelligent use of means by an unconscious entity is a thing paradoxical in itself and unsupported by an atom of proof; indeed the wider knowledge of the Universe attainable to Yoga actually does reveal such a Universal Intelligence everywhere at work.

Brahman, then, is Consciousness, and this once conceded, it follows that He must be in His transcendental reality Absolute Consciousness. His Consciousness is from itself and of itself like His existence, because there is nothing separate and other than Him; not only so but it does not consist in the knowledge of one part of Himself by another, or of His parts by His whole, since His transcendental existence is one and simple, without parts. His consciousness therefore does not proceed by the same laws as our consciousness, does not

proceed by differentiating subject from object, knower from known, but simply *is*, by its own right of pure and unqualified existence, eternally and illimitably, in a way impure and qualified existences cannot conceive.

The Supreme is, finally, Pure Ecstasy, Absolute Bliss, ÂNANDA. Now just as SAT and CHIT are the same, so are SAT and CHIT not different from ÂNANDA; just as Existence is Consciousness and cannot be separated from Consciousness, so Conscious Existence is Bliss and cannot be separated from Bliss. I think we feel this even in the very finite existence and cramped consciousness of life on the material plane. Conscious existence at least cannot endure without pleasure; even in the most miserable sentient being there must be pleasure in existence though it appear small as a grain of mustard seed; blank absolute misery entails suicide and annihilation as its necessary and immediate consequence. The will to live, – the desire of conscious existence and the instinct of self-preservation, – is no mere teleological arrangement of Nature with a particular end before it, but is fundamental and independent of end or object; it is merely a body and form to that pleasure of existence which is essential and eternal; and it cannot be forced to give way to anything but that will to live *more* fully and widely which is the source on one side of all personal ambition and aspiration, on the other of all love, self-sacrifice and self-conquest. Even suicide is merely a frenzied revolt against limitation, a revolt not the less significant because it is without knowledge. The pleasure of existence can consent to merge only in the greater pleasure of a widened existence, and religion, the aspiration towards God, is simply the fulfilment of this eternal elemental force, its desire to merge its separate & limited joy in the sheer bliss of infinite existence. The Will to live individually embodies the pleasure of individual existence which is the outer phenomenal self of all creatures; but the will to live infinitely can only proceed straight from the transcendent, ultimate Spirit in us which is our real Self; and it is this that availeth towards immortality.

Brahman, then, being infinity of conscious existence, is also infinite bliss. And the bliss of Brahman is necessarily absolute both in its nature and as to its object. Any mixture or coexistence with pain would imply a cause of pain either the same or other than the cause of bliss, with the immediate admission of division, struggle, opposition, of something inharmonious and self-annulling in Brahman; but division and opposition which depend upon relation cannot exist in the unrelated Absolute. Pain is, properly considered, the result of limitation. When the desires and impulses are limited in their satisfaction or the matter, physical or mental, on which they act is checked, pressed inward, divided or pulled apart by something alien to itself, then only can pain arise. Where there is no limitation, there can be no pain. The Bliss of Brahman is therefore absolute in its nature.

It is no less absolute with regard to its object; for the subject and object are the same. It is inherent in His own existence and consciousness and cannot possibly have any cause within or without Him who alone Is and Is without parts or division. Some would have us believe that a self-existent bliss is impossible; bliss, like pain, needs an object or cause different from the subject and therefore depends on limitation. Yet even in this material or waking world any considerable and deep experience will show us that there is a pleasure which is independent of surroundings and does not rely for its sustenance on temporary or external objects. The pleasure that depends on others is turbid, precarious and marred by the certainty of diminution and loss; it is only as one withdraws deeper and deeper into oneself that one comes nearer and nearer to the peace that passeth understanding. An equally significant fact is to be found in the phenomena of satiety; of which this is the governing law that the less limited and the more subjective the field of pleasure, the farther is it removed from the reach of satiety and disgust. The body is rapidly sated with pleasure; the emotions, less limited and more subjective, can take in a much deeper draught of joy;

the mind, still wider and more capable of internality, has a yet profounder gulp and untiring faculty of assimilation; the pleasures of the intellect and higher understanding, where we move in a very rare and wide atmosphere, seldom pall and, even then, soon repair themselves; while the infinite spirit, the acme of our subjectiveness, knows not any disgust of spiritual ecstasy and will be content with nothing short of infinity in its bliss. The logical culmination of this ascending series is the transcendent and absolute Parabrahman whose bliss is endless, self-existent and pure.

This then is the Trinity of the Upanishads, Absolute Existence; which is *therefore* Absolute Consciousness; which is therefore Absolute Bliss.

And then the second Trinity SATYAM JNANAM ANANTAM. This Trinity is not different from the first but merely its objective expression. Brahman is *Satyam*, Truth or Reality because Truth or Reality is merely the subjective idea of existence viewed objectively. Only that which fundamentally exists is real and true, and Brahman being absolute existence is also absolute truth and reality. All other things are only relatively real, not indeed false in every sense since they are appearances of a Reality, but impermanent and therefore not in themselves ultimately true.

Brahman is also JNÂNAM, Knowledge; for Knowledge is merely the subjective idea of consciousness viewed objectively. The word *Jnâna* as a philosophic term has an especial connotation. It is distinguished from *samjnâna* which is awareness by contact; from *âjnâna* which is perception by receptive and central Will and implies a command from the brain; from *prajnâna* which is Wisdom, teleological will or knowledge with a purpose; and from *vijnâna* or knowledge by discrimination. *Jnâna* is knowledge direct and without the use of a medium. Brahman is absolute *Jnâna*, direct & self-existent, without beginning, middle or end, in which the Knower is also the Knowledge and the Known.

Finally, Brahman is ANANTAM, Endlessness, including

all kinds of Infinity. His Infinity is of course involved in His absolute existence and consciousness, but it arises directly from His absolute bliss, since bliss, as we have seen, consists objectively in the absence of limitation. Infinity therefore is merely the subjective idea of bliss viewed objectively. It may be otherwise expressed by the word Freedom or by the word Immortality. All phenomenal things are bound by laws and limitations imposed by the triple idea of Time, Space and Causality; in Brahman alone there is absolute Freedom; for He has no beginning, middle or end in Time or Space nor, being immutable, in Causality. Regarded from the point of view of Time, Brahman is Eternity or Immortality, regarded from the point of view of Space He is Infinity or Universality, regarded from the point of view of Causality He is absolute Freedom. In one word He is ANANTAM, Endlessness, Absence of Limitation." (365-72)

9. Similarity in the Nature of Imagination and Maya

"Imagination is a fundamental energy of consciousness, and this marvellous, indomitable energy works on without caring whether she is put to use or misuse or no use at all; she exists merely for the sake of delight in her own existence. Here I think we touch bottom. Imagination is outside purpose, sometimes above, sometimes below it, sometimes united with it, because she is an inherent energy not of some great teleological Master-Workman, but of Ananda, the Bliss of existence or Will to live, and beyond this delight in existence she has no reason for being. In the same way Maya, the infinite creative energy which peoples the phenomenal Universe, is really some force inherent in the infinite Will to be; and it is for this reason that her operations seem so wasteful from the standpoint of utilitarian economy; for she cares nothing about utilitarianism or economy and is only obeying her fundamental impulse towards phenomenal existence, consciousness, and the pleasure of conscious existence. So far as she has a purpose, it is this, and all the teleologic element in Nature has

simply this end, to find more perfect surroundings or more exquisite means or wider opportunities or a grander gust and scope for the pleasure of conscious phenomenal existence. Yet the deepest bliss is after all that which she left and to which she will return, not the broken and pain-bounded bliss of finite life, but the perfect and infinite Bliss of transcendent undivided and illimitable consciousness. She seeks for a while to find perfect bliss by finite means and in finite things, the heaven of the socialist or anarchist, the heaven of the artist, the heaven of knowledge, the heaven of thought, or a heaven in some other world; but one day she realises that great truth, "The Kingdom of Heaven is within you," and to that after all she returns. *This* is Maya.

One metaphysical test remains to be satisfied before we can be sure that Avidya and Vidya, the outcurve and incurve of Maya, go back to something eternally existent in the Absolute and are not created by phenomenal causes. If inherent in the Absolute, Maya must culminate in conceptions that are themselves absolute, infinite and unconditioned. Vidya tapers off into infinity in the conceptions, SAT or Pure Existence, CHIT or Pure Consciousness, ANANDA or Pure Bliss; Avidya rises at her apex into ASAT, Nothingness, ACHETANAM, Non-sentience, NIRANANDAM, Blisslessness or Misery. Nothingness & Non-sentience are certainly absolute conceptions, infinite and unconditioned; but the third term of the negative Trinity gives us pause. Absolute pain, blank infinite unconditioned and unrelieved Misery is a conception which Reason shies at and Consciousness refuses, violently refuses to admit as a possibility. A cypher if you like to make metaphysical calculations with, but by itself sheer nought, nowhere discoverable as existing or capable of existence. Yet if infinite misery could be, it would in the very act of being merge into Nothingness, it would lose its name in the very moment of becoming absolute. As a metaphysical conception

we may then admit Absolute Blisslessness as a valid third term of the negative Trinity, not as a real or possible state, for no one of the three is a real or possible state. The unreality comes home to us most in the third term, just as reality comes home to us most in the third term of the positive Trinity, because Bliss and its negative blisslessness appeal to us on the material plane vividly and sensibly; the others touch us more indirectly, on the psychic & causal planes. Yet the Nothingness of nothingness is taught us by Science, and the unreality of non-sentience will become clear when the nature of sentience is better understood.

It will be said that the escape from pleasure as well as pain is after all the common goal of Buddhism & Vedanta. True, escape from limited pleasure which involves pain, escape from pain which is nothing but the limitation of pleasure. Both really seek absolute absence of limitation which is not a negative condition, but a positive, infinity and its unspeakable, unmixed bliss; their escape from individuality does not lead them into nothingness, but into infinite existence, their escape from sensation does not purpose the annihilation of sentience but pure absolute consciousness as its goal. Not ASAD ACHETANAM NIRANANDAM, but SACCHIDANANDAM is the great Reality to which Jivatman rises to envisage, the TAT or sole Thing-in-itself to whom by the force of Vidya he tends ever to return." (392-93)

10. The Aim of Hindu Life

"To put the individual Self in intimate relation with the Eternal is the aim of Hindu life, its religion, its polity, its ethics. Morality is not for its own sake, nor for the pleasures of virtue, nor for any reward here or in another life, nor for the sake of society; these are false aims and false sanctions. Its true aim is a preparation and purification of the soul to fit it for the presence of God. The sense-obscured, limited and desire-driven individual self must raise itself out of the dark pit of sense-obsession into the clear air of the spirit, must

disembarrass itself of servile bondage to bodily, emotional & intellectual selfishness and assume the freedom & royalty of universal love and beneficence, must expand itself from the narrow, petty, inefficient ego till it becomes commensurate with the infinite, all-powerful, omnipresent Self of All; then is its aim of existence attained, then is its pilgrimage ended. This may be done by realising the Eternal in oneself by knowledge, by realising oneself in Him by Love as God the Beloved, or by realising Him as the Lord of all in His universe and all its creatures by works. This realisation is the true crown of any ethical system." (403-04)

11. The Four Conclusions of Vedanta

"The first conclusion of Vedanta is that the Brahman in this shifting, multifold, mutable Universe is One, stable & unmoving, therefore permanent and unchanging.

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The second conclusion of Vedanta is that Brahman pervades this Universe & possesses it.

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The third conclusion of Vedanta is that Brahman which pervades, possesses, causes and governs the world is the same as the Absolute Transcendental Existence of which metaphysics speaks. Of this Transcendental Existence Vedanta always speaks in the neuter as Tat, that or it; of the Eternal Will which pervades & governs the Universe it speaks in the masculine as स, He. But in the [fourth] verse we find that to Tat are attributed that universal action and pervasiveness which is properly only attributable to स, the Eternal & Universal Will; the identification of the two could not be more complete. It is yet more strikingly brought out in the [eighth] verse where the description of the cosmical action of Brahman begins with स but the negative attributes of this masculine subject immediately following are in the neuter as appropriate only to the Conditionless Brahman and those that follow later on & apply to the Universal Will revert to the masculine, – all

without any break in the sentence.

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The fourth conclusion of the Vedanta is that Brahman [is] not only the Absolute Transcendental Self, not only the One, Stable Immutable Reality in the phenomenal Universe, not only pervades, possesses, causes and governs it as an Eternal Universal Will, but contains and in a figurative sense is it as its condition, continent, material cause and informing force." (405-06)

12. Whatever a Man Does is Always for the Sake of His Self

"Know thyself, is still and always he supreme command for humanity, and if we seek to know the universe, it is because that knowledge is necessary to the more important knowledge of ourselves. Science has adopted a different view; looking only at man as a separate bodily organism it fairly enough regards the Universe as more important than man and seeks to study its laws for their own sake. But still it remains true that humanity persists in its claim and that only those discoveries of the physicist, the zoologist and the chemist have been really fruitful which have helped man practically to master physical nature or to understand the laws of his own life and progress. Whatever moralist or philosopher may say, Yajnavalkya's great dictum remains true that whatever man thinks or feels or does he thinks, feels & does not for any other purpose or creature but for the sake of his Self." (407)

13. The Semetic Religions and the Claims of Reason, Science and Philosophy

"A question of the first importance arises at once, how far does the Vedanta sanction the ordinary ideas of God as a Personal Active Being with definite qualities which is all the average religionist understands by the Divine Idea? Whether we regard him with the Jews as a God of Power and Might & Wrath and Justice, or with the Moslems as God the Judge

and Governor and Manager of the world or with the early Christians as a God of Love, yet all agree in regarding Him as a Person, definable, imaginable, limited in His Nature by certain qualities though not limited in His Powers, omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent & yet by a mysterious paradox quite separate from His creatures and His world. He creates, judges, punishes, rewards, favours, condemns, loves, hates, is pleased, is angry, for all the world like a man of unlimited powers, and is indeed a Superior Man, a shadow of man's soul thrown out on the huge background of the Universe. The intellectual and moral difficulties of this conception are well-known. An Omnipotent God of Love, in spite of all glosses, remains inconsistent with the anguish and misery, the red slaughter and colossal sum of torture and multitudinous suffering which pervades this world and is the condition of its continuance; an Omnipotent God of Justice who created & caused sin, yet punishes man for falling into the traps He has Himself set, is an infinite & huge inconsistency, an insane contradiction in terms; a God of wrath, a jealous God, who favours & punishes according to His caprice, fumes over insults and preens Himself at the sound of praise is much lower than the better sort of men and, as an inferior, unworthy of the adoration of the saints. An omnipresent God cannot be separate from His world, an infinite God cannot be limited in Time or Space or qualities. Intellectually the whole concept becomes incredible. Science, Philosophy, the great creeds which have set Knowledge as the means of salvation, have always been charged with atheism because they deny these conceptions of the Divine Nature. Science and Philosophy & Knowledge take their revenge by undermining the faith of the believers in the ordinary religions through an exposure of the crude and semi-savage nature of the ideas which religion has woven together into a bizarre texture of clumsy paradoxes and dignified with the name of God. They show triumphantly that the ordinary conceptions of God when analysed are incredible to the intellect, unsatisfactory and sometimes revolting to the moral sense and, if they succeed in one or two cases in satisfying

the heart, succeed only by magnificently ignoring the claims of the reason. They find it an easy task to show that the attempts of theologians to reconcile the difficulties they have created are childish to the trained reason and can find no acceptance with any honest and candid intellect. Theology in vain denies the right of reason to speak in matters of spiritual truth, and demands that the incredible should be believed. Reason is too high a faculty to be with impunity denied its rights. In thus destroying the unsatisfactory intellectual conceptions with which it has been sought to bring the Eternal Being into the province of the reasoning powers, the core & essence of popular religion which is true and necessary to humanity is discredited along with its imperfect coverings; materialism establishes itself for a while as the human creed and the intellect of man holds despotic empire for a while at the expense of his heart and his ethical instincts, until Nature revenges itself and saves the perishing soul of mankind by flooding the world with a religious belief which seeks to satisfy the heart and the ethical instincts only and mocks at and tramples upon the claims of the intellect. In this unnatural duel between faculties which should work harmoniously for our development, the internal peace and progress of the human self is marred & stunted. Much that has been gained is repeatedly being lost and has to be recovered with great difficulty and not always in its entirety.

If reason unaided could solve the enigma of the world, it would be a different matter. But the reason is able only to form at the best an intellectually possible or logically consistent conception of the Eternal in the Universe; it is not able to bring Him home to the human consciousness and relate the human soul to Him as it should be related if He exists. For nothing is more certain than this that if a universal & eternal Consciousness exists, the life and development of the human soul must be towards It and governed by the law of Its nature; and a philosophy which cannot determine these relations so as to bring light and help to humanity in its long road is merely

an intellectual plaything and might just as well have been kept as a private amusement when minds of a ratiocinative turn meet in the lecture-room or the study. Philosophy can see clearly that the Universe can be explicable only in the terms of the Eternal Consciousness by which it exists. Either God is the material universe in which case the name is a mere convenient abstraction like the materialist's "Nature", or He is the Self within the Universe. If the Self, then He is either transcendent and beyond phenomena and the phenomenal Universe can only be Maya, an imagination in the Universal Mind, or else He is involved in phenomena, Consciousness His soul, the Universe His form, Consciousness the witnessing and inspiring Force, the Universe the work or Energy of the Consciousness. But whichever of these possibilities be the truth, Knowledge is not complete if it stops with this single conception and does not proceed to the practical consequences of the conception. If the universe is Maya, what of the human soul? Is that also Maya, a phenomenon like the rest which disappears with the dissolution of the body or is it permanent and identical with the Eternal Consciousness? If permanent, why then has it confused itself with phenomena and how does it escape from the bondage of this confusion? On the other hand if He is involved in phenomena, what is the relation of the human consciousness to the Eternal? Are our souls parts of Him or manifestations or emanations? And if so do they return into Him at the dissolution of the body or do they persist? And if they persist, what is their ultimate goal? Do they remain by individuality separated from Him for ever even after the end of phenomena or are both the Universe and the individual soul eternal? Or is the individual soul only phenomenally different from the eternal, and the phenomenal difference terminable at the pleasure of the Eternal or by the will of the individual Ego? What are the present relations of the self to the Eternal? What are sin & virtue? pleasure & pain? What are we to do with our emotions, desires, imaginations? Has the Eternal Consciousness any direct action on the phenomenal Universe and, if so, how is He different from the popular conception of God?

These are the questions which Philosophy has to answer, and in answering them the great difficulty it has to meet is its inability to find any better sanction for its conclusions than the play of speculative logic or to evolve anything better than a speculative system of metaphysics which may satisfy the argumentative faculty of the mind but cannot satisfy the reason of the heart or find its way to a mastery of that inner self in man which controls his life. Religion, however imperfect, has the secret of that mastery; religion can conquer the natural instincts and desires of man, metaphysics can only convince him logically that they ought to be conquered – an immense difference. For this reason philosophy has never been able to satisfy any except the intellectual few and was even for a time relegated to oblivion by the imperious contempt of Science which thought that it had discovered a complete solution of the Universe, a truth and a law of life independent of religion and yet able to supersede religion in its peculiar province of reaching & regulating the sources of conduct and leading mankind in its evolution. But it has now become increasingly clear that Science has failed to substantiate its claims, and that a belief in evolution or the supremacy of physical laws or the subjection of the ephemeral individual to the interests of the slightly less ephemeral race is no substitute for a belief in Christ or Buddha, for the law of Divine Love or the trust in Divine Power & Providence. If Philosophy failed to be an ethical control or a spiritual force, Science has failed still more completely, and for a very simple reason – the intellect does not control the conduct. There is quite another mental force which controls it and which turns into motives of action only those intellectual conceptions of which it can be got to approve. We arrive therefore at this dilemma that Philosophy & Science can satisfy the reason but cannot satisfy the heart or get mastery of the source of conduct; while Religion which satisfies the heart and controls conduct, cannot in its average conceptions permanently satisfy the reason and thus exposes itself to gradual loss of empire over the mind." (408-12)

14. A Religion to be Eternal Must Satisfy the Claims of Reason, Science and Philosophy

"A religion therefore which claims to be eternal, must not be content with satisfying the heart and imagination, it must answer to the satisfaction of the intellect the questions with which philosophy is preoccupied. A philosophy which professes to explain the world-problem once for all, must not be satisfied with logical consistency and comprehensiveness; it must like Science base its conclusions not merely on speculative logic, but on actual observation and its truths must always be capable of verification by experiment so that they may be not merely conceivable truth but ascertained truth; it must like religion seize on the heart & imagination and without sacrificing intellectual convincingness, comprehensiveness & accuracy impregnate with itself the springs of human activity; and it must have the power of bringing the human self into direct touch with the Eternal. The Vedantic religion claims to be the eternal religion because it satisfies all these demands. It is intellectually comprehensive in its explanation of all the problems that perplex the human mind; it brings the contradictions of the world into harmony by a single luminous law of being; it has developed in Yoga a process of spiritual experience by which its assertions can be tested and confirmed; the law of being it has discovered seizes not only on the intellect but on the deepest emotions of man and calls into activity his highest ethical instincts; and its whole aim and end is to bring the individual self into a perfect and intimate union with the Eternal." (412)

15. Evolution in the Vedantic View

"Evolution is not an universal law, it is a particular process, nor as a process has it any very wide applicability. Some would affirm that every particle of matter in the universe is bound to evolve life, mind, an individualised soul, a finally triumphant spirit. The idea is exhilarating, but impossible. There is no such rigid law, no such self-driven & unintelligent destiny

in things. In the conceptions of the Upanishads Brahman in the world is not only Prajna, but Ishwara. He is not subject to law, but uses process. It is only the individual soul in a state of ignorance on which process seems to impose itself as law. Brahman on the other hand has an omnipotent power of selection and limitation. He is not bound to develop self-conscious individuality in every particle of matter, nor has He any object in such a colossal and monotonous application of one particular movement of things. He has nothing to gain by evolving, nothing to lose by not evolving. For to Him all being is only a play of His universal self-consciousness, the will so to exist the only reason of this existence and its own pleasurability its only object in existence. In that play He takes an equal delight in all, He is sama in ananda – an equal delight in the evolved state, the unevolved & the evolving. He is equal also in Being; when He has evolved Himself in the perfect man, He is no more than He already was in the leaf & clod. To suppose that all existence has one compelling purpose of growth, of progress, of consummation is to be guilty of the Western error and misunderstand the nature of being. Existence is already consummate, all change & variety in it is for delight, not for a gain or a development. The Vedantist cannot admit that anything is really developed in the sense of something new emerging into existence by whatever combination or accident which had no previous being. Nasato vidyate bhavah. That which was not cannot come into existence. The play of Brahman is not in its real nature an evolution, but a manifestation, it is not an adding of something that was wanting or a developing of something that was non-existent, but merely a manifesting of something that was hidden. We are already what we shall become. That which is still future in matter, is present in spirit." (414-15)

16. The Nature of the Universe

"It is Brahman who moves densely as the stability of matter, forcefully as the energy of life, elastically in the

subtlety of mind. Just as different vibrations in ether produce the appearances to sense which we call light & sound, so different vibrations in Chit produce the various appearances to Chit which we call matter, life & mind. It is all merely the extension of the same principle through stair & higher stair of apparent existence until, overcoming all appearances, we come to the still & unvibrating Brahman who, as we say in our gross material language, contains it all. The Sankhya called this essential vibration the kshobha, disturbance in Prakriti, cosmic ripple in Nature. The Vedanta continually speaks of the world as a movement. The Isha speaks of things as jagatyam jagat, particular movement in the general movement of conscious Being steadily *viewed* by that Being in His own self-knowledge, atmani atmanam atmana, self by self in self. This is the motion & nature of the Universe." (419)

17. Our Ideal and Our Means

"Our ideal .. is fixed, – to become one with God and lead individually the divine life, but also to help others to the divine realisation and prepare, by any means, humanity for the kingdom of God on earth, – satyadharma, satyayuga.

Our means is Yoga. Yoga is not, as the popular mind too often conceives, shutting oneself in a room or isolating oneself in a monastery or cave and going through certain fixed mental and bodily practices. These are merely particular and specialised types of Yogic practice. The mental and bodily practices of Rajayoga and Hathayoga are exercises of great force and utility, but they are not indispensable. Even solitude is not indispensable, and absolute solitude limits our means and scope of self-fulfilment. Yoga is the application, by whatever means, of Vedanta to life so as to put oneself in some kind of touch with the high, one, universal and transcendent Existence in us & without us in our progress towards a final unity. All religious worship, sincerely done, all emotional, intellectual and spiritual realisation of that which is higher than ourselves, all steadily practised increase

of essential power, purity, love or knowledge, all sacrifice and self-transcending amounts to some form of Yoga. But Yoga can be done with knowledge or without knowledge, with a higher immediate object or with a lower immediate object, for a partial higher result or for the fullest divine perfection and bliss. Yoga without knowledge can never have the force of Yoga with knowledge, Yoga with the lower object the force of Yoga with the higher object, Yoga for a partial result the force of Yoga for the full & perfect result. But even in its lowest, most ignorant or narrowest forms, it is still a step towards God." (423)

18. The Central Truth of Veda and Upanishads

"It is knowledge that loosens our bonds, that snaps asunder the toils of sense & dispels the force of the world-enchantment. In order to be free, we must pass from intuition to illumination. We must get the direct perception of the knowledge of which intuitive reason is the memory. For within us there are unawakened folds in folds of conscious experience which we have yet to set in action in order to fulfil our nature's possibilities. In these inner realms we are sushupta, asleep; but the whole movement of humanity is towards the awakening of these centres. Science is in error when it imagines that man is from all time & to all time a rational animal & the reason the end & summit of his evolution. Man did not begin with reason, neither will he end with it. There are faculties within us which transcend reason and are asleep to our waking consciousness, just as life is asleep in the metal, consciousness in the tree, reason in the animal. Our evolution is not over, we have not completed even half of the great journey. And if now we are striving to purify the intellect & to carry reason to its utmost capacities, it is in order that we may discourage the lower movements of passion and desire, self-interest and prejudice and dogmatic intolerance which stand in the way of the illumination. When the intellectual buddhi is pure by vichara & abhyasa of these things, then it becomes ready to

rise up out of the mind into the higher levels of consciousness and there lose itself in a much mightier movement which because of its greatness & perfection is called in the Rigveda mahas and in the Vedanta vijnana. This is what [is] meant in the Veda by Saraswati awakening the great ocean. Pavaka nah saraswati maho arnash chetayati. This is the justification of the demand in our own Yoga that desire shall be expelled, the mind stilled, the very play of reason & imagination silenced before a man shall attain to knowledge, – as the Gita puts it, na kinchid api chintayet.

The illumination of the vijnana, when it is complete, shows us not a collective material unity, a sum of physical units, but a real unity. It reveals to us Space, Time and the chain of apparent circumstance to be merely conventions & symbols seen in His own being by One Seer and dependent purely on a greater transcendental existence of which they are not separate realities & divisions but the manifold expressions of its single Truth. It is this knowledge that gives us freedom. We escape from the enchanted forest, we know once more the world outside this petty world, see the boundless heavens above & breast the wide & circumambient air of our infinite existence. The first necessity is to know the One, to be in possession of the divine Existence; afterwards we can have all the knowledge, joy & power for action that is intended for our souls, – for He being known all is known, tasmin vijnate sarvam vijnatam, not at once by any miraculous revelation, but by a progressive illumination or rather an application of the single necessary illumination to God's multiplicity in manifestation, by the movement of the mahat & the bhuma, not working from petty details to the whole, but from the knowledge of the one to the knowledge of relation & circumstance, by a process of knowledge that is sovereign & free, not painful, struggling & bound. This is the central truth of Veda & Upanishad & the process by which they have been revealed to men." (428-29)

19. Drishti, Sruti and Smriti

"This free & great movement of illumination descending from above to us below and not like our thought here which climbs painfully up the mountain peaks of thought only to find at the summit that it is yet far removed from the skies to which it aspires, this winged & mighty descent of Truth is what we call Sruti or revelation. There are three words which are used of illumined thought, drishti, sruti & smriti, sight, hearing and remembrance. The direct vision or experience of a truth or the thought-substance of a truth is called drishti, and because they had that direct vision or experience, that pratyaksha not of the senses, but of the liberated soul, the Rishis are called drashtas. But besides the truth and its artha or thought-substance in which it is represented to the mind, there is the vak or sound symbol, the inevitable word in which the truth is naturally enshrined & revealed & not as in ordinary speech half concealed or only suggested. The revelation of the vak is sruti. The revealed word is also revelatory and whoever has taken it into his soul, though the mind may not understand it, has the Truth ready prepared in the higher or sushupta reaches of his being from whence it must inevitably descend at a future date or in another life to his lower & darkened consciousness in order to liberate & illumine. It is this psychological truth which is the foundation of the Hindu's trust in the Name of God, the vibrations of the mantra and the sound of the Veda. For the vak carries, in the right state of the soul, an illumination with it of the truth which it holds, an inspiration of its force of satyam which is less than drishti but must in the end lead to drishti. A still more indirect action of the vijnana is smriti; when the truth is presented to the soul and its truth immediately & directly recognised by a movement resembling memory – a perception that this was always true and already known to the higher consciousness. It is smriti that is nearest to intellect action and forms the link between vijnanam & prajnanam, ideal thought & intellectual thought, by leading to the higher forms

of intellectual activity, such as intuitive reason, inspiration, insight & prophetic revelation, the equipment of the man of genius." (429-30)

20. Faith in the Instruments of Knowledge

"It is only by faith in the instruments of our knowledge that we can acquire knowledge, – by faith in the evidence of the senses that we can think at all, by faith in the validity of reason that we can deduce, infer and argue. So also it is only by faith in illumination that we can see truth from above & come face to [face with God.] It is true that all faith must have its limits. The faith in the senses must be transcended & checked by the faith in our reason. The faith in the reason itself is checked by agnosticism [and] will one day be transcended & checked by the faith in the vijnana. The faith in the vijnana must be checked & harmonised by a faith in a still higher form of knowledge, – knowledge by identity. But within its own province each instrument is supreme and must be trusted. In relying, therefore, upon the vijnana, in asserting and demanding a preliminary faith in it, the Yogin is making no mystic, irrational or obscurantist claim. He is not departing from the universal process of knowledge. He claims to exceed reason, just as the scientist claims to exceed the evidence of the senses. When he asserts that things are not what they seem, that there are invisible forces and agencies at work about us and that the whole of our apparent existence and environment is only phenomenal, he is no more departing from rationality or advancing anything wild or absurd than the scientist when he asserts that the earth moves round the sun and the sun is relatively still, affirms the existence of invisible gases or invisible bacilli, or finds in matter only a form of energy. Nor are faith in the Guru & faith in the Sruti irrational demands, any more than the scientist is irrational in saying to his pupil "Trust my expert knowledge, trust my method of experiment & the books that are authoritative and when you have made the experiments, you can use

your intellect to confirm, refute, amend or enlarge whatever scientific knowledge is presented to you in book or lecture or personal instruction," – or than the man of the Indian village who has been to London is irrational in expecting his fellow villagers to accept his statement of the existence, sights, scenes and characteristics of London or in supporting [it] by any book that may have been written with authority on the subject. If the Indian Teacher similarly demands faith in himself as an expert, faith in the Sruti as the evidence of ancient experts, drishti as revealed truth coming direct to them by vijnanam from the divine Knowledge, he is following the common, the necessary rule. He has the right to say, Trust these, follow these, afterwards you will yourself look on the unveiled face of Truth & see God. In each case there is a means of confirmation, – the evidence of the observation & deduction has to be confirmed by observation & deduction; the evidence of the senses by the senses, the evidence of the vijnanam by the vijnanam. One cannot exceed one's instrument.

There is also the evidence of common experience – there is this eternal witness to the truth of the vijnana, that men who have used it, in whatever clime & whatever age, however they may differ in their intellectual statement or the conclusions of the reason about what they have seen, are at one in the substance of their experience & vision. …" (431-32)

21. The Upanishads

"The Upanishads stand out from the dim background of Vedic antiquity like stupendous rock cathedrals of thought hewn out of the ancient hills by a race of giant builders the secret of whose inspiration and strength has passed away with them into the Supreme. They are at once Scripture, philosophy and seer-poetry; for even those of them that dispense with the metrical form, are prose poems of a rhythmically mystic thought. But whether as Scripture, philosophical theosophy or literature, there is nothing like them in ancient, mediaeval or modern, in Occidental or Oriental, in Egyptian, Chaldean,

Semitic or Mongolian creation; they are unique in style, structure and motive, entirely *sui generis*. After them there were philosophic poems, aphorisms, verse and prose treatises in great number, Sutras, Karikas, Gitas, their intellectual children; but these are a human progeny very different in type from their immortal ancestors. Pseudo-Upanishads there have been in plenty, a hundred or more of them; some have arrived at a passable aping of the more external features of the type, but always betray themselves by the pseudo-style, the artificial falsetto, the rasping creak of the machine; others are pastiches; others are fakes. The great Upanishads stand out always serene, grand, inimitable with their puissant and living breath, with that phrase which goes rolling out a thousand echoes, with that faultless spontaneous sureness of the inevitable expression, with that packed yet easy compression of wide and rich wisdom into a few revelatory syllables by which they justify their claim to be the divine word." (433)

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