The Greatness of India and Its Culture

6. The Greatness of Indian Literature – 4

The Upanishads – An Overview

Price : Rs. 15/-

Contents

The Upanishads – An Overview 3

The General Character of the Upanishads – The Secret of their Undying Vitality 10

The Imagery and Symbolism in the Upanishads 15

The Subject and the Aim of the Upanishads 25

The Means of Realisation of the Aims of Vedanta 29

The Progressive Intellectualisation of the Indian Mind and the Diminution of the Vedic and Vedantic Truth 33

Appendix 38

The Upanishads ..... Back Cover

The Upanishads – An Overview

Even a little of this law delivereth one out of great fear.
– Bhagavad Gita

What she appears when she smiles a little,
Cannot be spoken of, neither can the mind lay hold on it,
It is so sweet and strange and sublime a miracle.
– Dante

"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. Neither this inspiration nor this technique has been renewed or repeated in later human achievement."[1]

"The Upanishads have always been recognised in India as the crown and end of Veda; that is indicated in their general name, Vedanta. And they are in fact a large crowning outcome of the Vedic discipline and experience. The time in which the Vedantic truth was wholly seen and the Upanishads took shape, was, as we can discern from such records as the Chhandogya and Brihadaranyaka, an epoch of immense and strenuous seeking, an intense and ardent seed-time of the Spirit. In the stress of that seeking the truths held by the initiates but kept back from ordinary men broke their barriers, swept through the higher mind of the nation and fertilised the soil of Indian culture for a constant and ever increasing growth of spiritual consciousness and spiritual experience. This turn was not as yet universal; it was chiefly men of the higher classes, Kshatriyas and Brahmins trained in the Vedic system of education, no longer content with an external truth and the works of the outer sacrifice, who began everywhere to seek for the highest word of revealing experience from the sages who possessed the knowledge of the One. But we find too among those who attained to the knowledge and became great teachers men of inferior or doubtful birth like Janashruti, the

wealthy Shudra, or Satyakama Jabali, son of a servant-girl who knew not who was his father. The work that was done in this period became the firm bedrock of Indian spirituality in later ages and from it gush still the life-giving waters of a perennial and never failing inspiration. This period, this activity, this grand achievement created the whole difference between the evolution of Indian civilisation and the quite different curve of other cultures.

For a time had come when the original Vedic symbols must lose their significance and pass into an obscurity that became impenetrable, as did the inner teaching of the Mysteries in other countries. The old poise of culture between two extremes with a bridge of religious cult and symbolism to unite them, the crude or half-trained naturalness of the outer physical man on one side of the line, and on the other an inner and secret psychic and spiritual life for the initiates could no longer suffice as the basis of our spiritual progress. The human race in its cycle of civilisation needed a large-lined advance; it called for a more and more generalised intellectual, ethical and aesthetic evolution to help it to grow into the light. This turn had to come in India as in other lands. But the danger was that the greater spiritual truth already gained might be lost in the lesser confident half-light of the acute but unillumined intellect or stifled within the narrow limits of the self-sufficient logical reason. That was what actually happened in the West, Greece leading the way. The old knowledge was prolonged in a less inspired, less dynamic and more intellectual form by the Pythagoreans, by the Stoics, by Plato and the Neo-Platonists; but still in spite of them and in spite of the only half-illumined spiritual wave which swept over Europe from Asia in an ill-understood Christianity, the

whole real trend of Western civilisation has been intellectual, rational, secular and even materialistic, and it keeps this character to the present day. Its general aim has been a strong or a fine culture of the vital and physical man by the power of an intellectualised ethics, aesthesis and reason, not the leading up of our lower members into the supreme light and power of the spirit. The ancient spiritual knowledge and the spiritual tendency it had created were saved in India from this collapse by the immense effort of the age of the Upanishads. The Vedantic seers renewed the Vedic truth by extricating it from its cryptic symbols and casting it into a highest and most direct and powerful language of intuition and inner experience. It was not the language of the intellect, but still it wore a form which the intellect could take hold of, translate into its own more abstract terms and convert into a starting-point for an ever widening and deepening philosophic speculation and the reason's long search after a Truth original, supreme and ultimate. There was in India as in the West a great upbuilding of a high, wide and complex intellectual, aesthetic, ethical and social culture. But left in Europe to its own resources, combated rather than helped by obscure religious emotion and dogma, here it was guided, uplifted and more and more penetrated and suffused by a great saving power of spirituality and a vast stimulating and tolerant light of wisdom from a highest ether of knowledge."[2]

"The Upanishads are the supreme work of the Indian mind. The Upanishads are at once profound religious scriptures, – for they are a record of the deepest spiritual experiences, – documents of revelatory and intuitive philosophy of an inexhaustible light, power and largeness and, whether written in verse or cadenced prose, spiritual poems

of an absolute, an unfailing inspiration inevitable in phrase, wonderful in rhythm and expression. It is the expression of a mind in which philosophy and religion and poetry are made one, because this religion does not end with a cult nor is limited to a religio-ethical aspiration, but rises to an infinite discovery of God, of Self, of our highest and whole reality of spirit and being and speaks out of an ecstasy of luminous knowledge and an ecstasy of moved and fulfilled experience, this philosophy is not an abstract intellectual speculation about Truth or a structure of the logical intelligence, but Truth seen, felt, lived, held by the inmost mind and soul in the joy of utterance of an assured discovery and possession, and this poetry is the work of the aesthetic mind lifted up beyond its ordinary field to express the wonder and beauty of the rarest spiritual self-vision and the profoundest illumined truth of self and God and universe. Here the intuitive mind and intimate psychological experience of the Vedic seers passes into a supreme culmination in which the Spirit, as is said in a phrase of the Katha Upanishad*, discloses its own very body, reveals the very word of its self-expression and discovers to the mind the vibration of rhythms which repeating themselves within in the spiritual hearing seem to build up the soul and set it satisfied and complete on the heights of self-knowledge.

This character of the Upanishads needs to be insisted

---

*नायमात्मा प्रवचनेन लभ्यो न मेधया न बहुना श्रुतेन।
यमेवैष वृणुते तेन लभ्यस्तस्यैष आत्मा विवृणुते तनूं स्वाम्।।

The Self is not to be won by eloquent teaching, nor by brain power, nor by much learning: but only he whom this being chooses can win Him, for to him this Self bares His body. *(CWSA 18, P. 113)*

upon with a strong emphasis, because it is ignored by foreign translators* who seek to bring out the intellectual sense without feeling the life of thought vision and the ecstasy of spiritual experience which made the ancient verses appear then and still make them to those who can enter into the element in which these utterances move, a revelation not to the intellect alone, but to the soul and the whole being, make of them in the old expressive word not intellectual thought and phrase, but Sruti, spiritual audience, an inspired Scripture. The philosophical substance of the Upanishads demands at this day no farther stress of appreciation of its value; for even if the amplest acknowledgement by the greatest minds were wanting, the whole history of philosophy would be there to offer its evidence. The Upanishads have been the acknowledged source of numerous profound philosophies and religions that flowed from it in India like her great rivers from their Himalayan cradle fertilising the mind and life of the people and kept its soul alive through the long procession of the centuries, constantly returned to for light, never failing to give fresh illumination, a fountain of inexhaustible life-giving waters. Buddhism with all its developments was only a restatement, although from a new standpoint and with fresh terms of intellectual definition and reasoning, of one side of its experience and it carried it thus changed in form but hardly in substance over all Asia and westward towards Europe. The ideas of the Upanishads can be rediscovered in much of the thought of Pythagoras and Plato and form the profoundest part of Neo-platonism and Gnosticism with all their

---

** Please see the Appendix at the end for Sri Aurobindo's observations on Max Muller's translation of the Upanishads.*

considerable consequences to the philosophical thinking of the West, and Sufism only repeats them in another religious language. The larger part of German metaphysics is little more in substance than an intellectual development of great realities more spiritually seen in this ancient teaching, and modern thought is rapidly absorbing them with a closer, more living and intense receptiveness which promises a revolution both in philosophical and in religious thinking; here they are filtering in through many indirect influences, there slowly pouring through direct and open channels. There is hardly a main philosophical idea which cannot find an authority or a seed or indication in these antique writings – the speculations, according to a certain view, of thinkers who had no better past or background to their thought than a crude, barbaric, naturalistic and animistic ignorance. And even the larger generalisations of Science are constantly found to apply to the truth of physical Nature formulas already discovered by the Indian sages in their original, their largest meaning in the deeper truth of the spirit."[3]

g r h

The General Character of the Upanishads – The Secret of their Undying Vitality

"The Upanishads are an orchestral movement of knowledge*, each of them one strain in a great choral harmony. The knowledge of the Brahman, which is the Universality of our existence, and the knowledge of the world, which is the multiplicity of our existence, but the world interpreted not in the terms of its appearances as in Science, but in the terms of its reality, is the one grand and general subject of the Upanishads. Within this cadre, this general framework each Upanishad has its smaller province; each takes its own standpoint of the knower and its resulting aspect of the known; to each there belongs a particular motive and a distinguishing ground-idea. The Isha Upanishad, for example, is occupied with the problem of spirituality and life, God and the world; its motive is the harmonising of these apparent opposites and the setting forth of their perfect relations in the light of Vedantic knowledge. The Kena is similarly occupied with the problem of the relations between God and the soul and its motive is to harmonise our personal activities of mental energy and human will with the movement of the infinite divine Energy and the supremacy of the universal Will. The Isha, therefore, has its eye more upon the outward Brahman and our action in and with regard to the world we see outside us; the Kena fixes rather on our psychological action and the movements within us."[4]

**"Upanishad means inner knowledge, that which enters into the final truth and settles in it."* *(CWSA 18, 11)*

"… these works are not philosophical speculations of the intellectual kind, a metaphysical analysis which labours to define notions, to select ideas and discriminate those that are true, to logicise truth or else to support the mind in its intellectual preferences by dialectical reasoning and is content to put forward an exclusive solution of existence in the light of this or that idea of the reason and see all things from that viewpoint, in that focus and determining perspective. The Upanishads could not have had so undying a vitality, exercised so unfailing an influence, produced such results or seen now their affirmations independently justified in other spheres of inquiry and by quite opposite methods, if they had been of that character. It is because these seers saw Truth rather than merely thought it, clothed it indeed with a strong body of intuitive idea and disclosing image, but a body of ideal transparency through which we look into the illimitable, because they fathomed things in the light of self-existence and saw them with the eye of the Infinite, that their words remain always alive and immortal, of an inexhaustible significance, an inevitable authenticity, a satisfying finality that is at the same time an infinite commencement of truth, to which all our lines of investigation when they go through to their end arrive again and to which humanity constantly returns in its minds and its ages of greatest vision. The Upanishads are Vedanta, a book of knowledge in a higher degree even than the Vedas, but knowledge in the profounder Indian sense of the word, Jnana. Not a mere thinking and considering by the intelligence, the pursuit and grasping of a mental form of truth by the intellectual mind, but a seeing of it with the soul and a total living in it with the power of the inner being, a spiritual seizing by a kind of identification with the object of knowledge is

Jnana. And because it is only by an integral knowing of the self that this kind of direct knowledge can be made complete, it was the self that the Vedantic sages sought to know, to live in and to be one with it by identity. And through this endeavour they came easily to see that the self in us is one with the universal self of all things and that this self again is the same as God and Brahman, a transcendent Being or Existence, and they beheld, felt, lived in the inmost truth of all things in the universe and the inmost truth of man's inner and outer existence by the light of this one and unifying vision. The Upanishads are epic hymns of self-knowledge and world-knowledge and God-knowledge. The great formulations of philosophic truth with which they abound are not abstract intellectual generalisations, things that may shine and enlighten the mind, but do not live and move the soul to ascension, but are ardours as well as lights of an intuitive and revelatory illumination, reachings as well as seeings of the one Existence, the transcendent Godhead, the divine and universal Self and discoveries of his relation with things and creatures in this great cosmic manifestation. Chants of inspired knowledge, they breathe like all hymns a tone of religious aspiration and ecstasy, not of the narrowly intense kind proper to a lesser religious feeling, but raised beyond cult and special forms of devotion to the universal Ananda of the Divine which comes to us by approach to and oneness with the self-existent and universal spirit. And though mainly concerned with an inner vision and not directly with outward human action, all the highest ethics of Buddhism and later Hinduism are still emergences of the very life and significance of the truths to which they give expressive form and force, – and there is something greater than any ethical precept and mental rule

of virtue, the supreme ideal of a spiritual action founded on oneness with God and all living beings. Therefore even when the life of the forms of the Vedic cult had passed away, the Upanishads still remained alive and creative and could generate the great devotional religions and motive the persistent Indian idea of the Dharma.

The Upanishads are the creation of a revelatory and intuitive mind and its illumined experience, and all their substance, structure, phrase, imagery, movement are determined by and stamped with this original character. These supreme and all-embracing truths, these visions of oneness and self and a universal divine being are cast into brief and monumental phrases which bring them at once before the soul's eye and make them real and imperative to its aspiration and experience or are couched in poetic sentences full of revealing power and suggestive thought-colour that discover a whole infinite through a finite image. The One is there revealed, but also disclosed the many aspects, and each is given its whole significance by the amplitude of the expression and finds as if in a spontaneous self-discovery its place and its connection by the illumining justness of each word and all the phrase. The largest metaphysical truths and the subtlest subtleties of psychological experience are taken up into the inspired movement and made at once precise to the seeing mind and loaded with unending suggestion to the discovering spirit. There are separate phrases, single couplets, brief passages which contain each in itself the substance of a vast philosophy and yet each is only thrown out as a side, an aspect, a portion of the infinite self-knowledge. All here is a packed and pregnant and yet perfectly lucid and luminous brevity and an immeasurable completeness. A thought of this kind cannot

follow the tardy, careful and diffuse development of the logical intelligence. The passage, the sentence, the couplet, the line, even the half line follows the one that precedes with a certain interval full of an unexpressed thought, an echoing silence between them, a thought which is carried in the total suggestion and implied in the step itself, but which the mind is left to work out for its own profit, and these intervals of pregnant silence are large, the steps of this thought are like the paces of a Titan striding from rock to distant rock across infinite waters. There is a perfect totality, a comprehensive connection of harmonious parts in the structure of each Upanishad; but it is done in the way of a mind that sees masses of truth at a time and stops to bring only the needed word out of a filled silence. The rhythm in verse or cadenced prose corresponds to the sculpture of the thought and the phrase. The metrical forms of the Upanishads are made up of four half lines each clearly cut, the lines mostly complete in themselves and integral in sense, the half lines presenting two thoughts or distinct parts of a thought that are wedded to and complete each other, and the sound movement follows a corresponding principle, each step brief and marked off by the distinctness of its pause, full of echoing cadences that remain long vibrating in the inner hearing: each is as if a wave of the infinite that carries in it the whole voice and rumour of the ocean. It is a kind of poetry – word of vision, rhythm of the spirit, – that has not been written before or after."[5]

g r h

The Imagery and Symbolism in the Upanishads

"The imagery of the Upanishads is in large part developed from the type of imagery of the Veda and though very ordinarily it prefers an unveiled clarity of directly illuminative image, not unoften also it uses the same symbols in a way that is closely akin to the spirit and to the less technical part of the method of the older symbolism. It is to a great extent this element no longer seizable by our way of thinking that has baffled certain Western scholars and made them cry out that these scriptures are a mixture of the sublimest philosophical speculations with the first awkward stammerings of the child mind of humanity. The Upanishads are not a revolutionary departure from the Vedic mind and its temperament and fundamental ideas, but a continuation and development and to a certain extent an enlarging transformation in the sense of bringing out into open expression all that was held covered in the symbolic Vedic speech as a mystery and a secret. It begins by taking up the imagery and the ritual symbols of the Veda and the Brahmanas and turning them in such a way as to bring out an inner and a mystic sense which will serve as a sort of psychical starting-point for its own more highly evolved and more purely spiritual philosophy. There are a number of passages especially in the prose Upanishads which are entirely of this kind and deal, in a manner recondite, obscure and even unintelligible to the modern understanding, with the psychic sense of ideas then current in the Vedic religious mind, the distinction between the three kinds of Veda, the three worlds and other

similar subjects; but, leading as they do in the thought of the Upanishads to deepest spiritual truths, these passages cannot be dismissed as childish aberrations of the intelligence void of sense or of any discoverable bearing on the higher thought in which they culminate. On the contrary we find that they have a deep enough significance once we can get inside their symbolic meaning. That appears in a psycho-physical passing upward into a psycho-spiritual knowledge for which we would now use more intellectual, less concrete and imaged terms, but which is still valid for those who practise Yoga and rediscover the secrets of our psycho-physical and psycho-spiritual being. Typical passages of this kind of peculiar expression of psychic truths are Ajatashatru's explanation of sleep and dream or the passages of the Prasna Upanishad on the vital principle and its motions, or those in which the Vedic idea of the struggle between the Gods and the demons is taken up and given its spiritual significance and the Vedic godheads more openly than in Rik and Saman characterised and invoked in their inner function and spiritual power.

I may cite as an example of this development of Vedic idea and image a passage of the Taittiriya in which Indra plainly appears as the power and godhead of the divine mind:

> He who is the Bull of the Vedas of the universal form, he who was born in the sacred rhythms from the Immortal, – may Indra satisfy me through the intelligence. O God, may I become a vessel of the Immortal. May my body be full of vision and my tongue of sweetness, may I hear the much and vast with my ears. For thou art the sheath of Brahman covered over and hidden by the intelligence.

And a kindred passage may also be cited from the Isha in which Surya the Sun-God is invoked as the godhead of knowledge whose supreme form of effulgence is the oneness of the Spirit and his rays dispersed here on the mental level are the shining diffusion of the thought mind and conceal his own infinite supramental truth, the body and self of this Sun, the truth of the spirit and the Eternal:

> The face of the Truth is covered with a golden lid: O fostering Sun, that uncover for the law of the truth, for sight. O fosterer, O sole Rishi, O controlling Yama, O Surya, O son of the Father of creatures, marshal and mass thy rays: the Lustre that is thy most blessed form of all, that I see, He who is this, this Purusha, He am I.

The kinship in difference of these passages with the imagery and style of the Veda is evident and the last indeed paraphrases or translates into a later and more open style a Vedic verse of the Atris:

> Hidden by your truth is the Truth that is constant for ever where they unyoke the horses of the Sun. There the ten thousands stand together, That is the One: I have seen the supreme Godhead of the embodied gods.

This Vedic and Vedantic imagery is foreign to our present mentality which does not believe in the living truth of the symbol, because the revealing imagination intimidated by the

intellect has no longer the courage to accept, identify itself with and boldly embody a psychic and spiritual vision; but it is certainly very far from being a childish or a primitive and barbarous mysticism; this vivid, living, luminously poetic intuitive language is rather the natural expression of a highly evolved spiritual culture.

The intuitive thought of the Upanishads starts from this concrete imagery and these symbols, first to the Vedic Rishis secret seer words wholly expressive to the mind of the seer but veils of their deepest sense to the ordinary intelligence, link them to a less covertly expressive language and pass beyond them to another magnificently open and sublime imagery and diction which at once reveals the spiritual truth in all its splendour. The prose Upanishads show us this process of the early mind of India at its work using the symbol and then passing beyond it to the overt expression of the spiritual significance. A passage of the Prasna Upanishad on the power and significance of the mystic syllable AUM illustrates the earlier stage of the process:

> This syllable OM, O Satyakama, it is the supreme and it is the lower Brahman. Therefore the man of knowledge passeth by this house of the Brahman to the one or the other. And if one meditate on the single letter, he getteth by it knowledge and soon he attaineth on the earth. And him the Riks lead to the world of men and there perfected in Tapas and Brahmacharya and faith he experienceth the greatness of the spirit. Now if by the double letter he is accomplished in the mind, then is he led up by the Yajus to the middle world, to the moon-world

> of Soma. He in the world of Soma experienceth the majesty of the spirit and returneth again. And he who by the triple letter again, even this syllable OM, shall meditate on the highest Purusha, is perfected in the light that is the Sun. As a snake putteth off its skin, even so is he released from sin and evil and is led by the Samans to the world of Brahman. He from this dense of living souls seeth the higher than the highest Purusha who lieth in this mansion. The three letters are afflicted by death, but now they are used undivided and united to each other, then are the inner and the outer and the middle action of the spirit made whole in their perfect using and the spirit knows and is not shaken. This world by the Riks, the middle world by the Yajus and by the Samans that which the seers make known to us. The man of knowledge passeth to Him by OM, his house, even to the supreme spirit that is calm and ageless and fearless and immortal.

The symbols here are still obscure to our intelligence, but indications are given which show beyond doubt that they are representations of a psychical experience leading to different states of spiritual realisation and we can see that these are three, outward, mental and supramental, and as the result of the last a supreme perfection, a complete and integral action of the whole being in the tranquil eternity of the immortal Spirit. And later in the Mandukya Upanishad the other symbols are cast aside and we are admitted to the unveiled significance. Then there emerges a knowledge to which modern thought is returning through its own very different

intellectual, rational and scientific method, the knowledge that behind the operations of our outward physical consciousness are working the operations of another, subliminal, – another and yet the same, – of which our waking mind is a surface action, and above – perhaps, we still say – is a spiritual superconscience in which can be found, it may well be, the highest state and the whole secret of our being. We shall see, when we look closely at the passage of the Prasna Upanishad, that this knowledge is already there, and I think we can very rationally conclude that these and similar utterances of the ancient sages, however perplexing their form to the rational mind, cannot be dismissed as a childish mysticism, but are the imaged expression, natural to the mentality of the time, of what the reason itself by its own processes is now showing us to be true and a very profound truth and real reality of knowledge.

The metrical Upanishads continue this highly charged symbolism but carry it more lightly and in the bulk of their verses pass beyond this kind of image to the overt expression. The Self, the Spirit, the Godhead in man and creatures and Nature and all this world and in other worlds and beyond all cosmos, the Immortal, the One, the Infinite is hymned without veils in the splendour of his eternal transcendence and his manifold self-revelation. A few passages from the teachings of Yama, lord of the Law and of Death, to Nachiketas, will be enough to illustrate something of their character.

> OM is this syllable. This syllable is the Brahman, this syllable is the Supreme. He who knoweth the imperishable OM, whatso he willeth, it is his. This support is the best, this support is the highest; and

when a man knoweth it, he is greatened in the world of Brahman. The omniscient is not born, nor dies, nor has he come into being from anywhere, nor is he anyone. He is unborn, he is constant and eternal, he is the Ancient of Days who is not slain in the slaying of the body. . . .

He is seated and journeys far, and lying still he goes to every side. Who other than I should know this ecstatic Godhead? The wise man cometh to know the great Lord and Self established and bodiless in these bodies that pass and has grief no longer. This Self is not to be won by teaching nor by brain-power nor by much learning: he whom the Spirit chooses, by him alone it can be won, and to him this Spirit discloses its own very body. One who has not ceased from ill-doing, one who is not concentrated and calm, one whose mind is not tranquil, shall not get him by the brain's wisdom. He of whom warriors and sages are the food and death is the spice of his banquet, who knoweth where is He? . . .

The Self-born has cloven his doors outward, therefore man sees outward and not in the inner self: only a wise man here and there turns his eyes inward, desiring immortality, and looks on the Self face to face. The child minds follow after surface desires and fall into the net of death which is spread wide for us; but the wise know of immortality and ask not from things inconstant that which is constant. One knoweth by this Self form and taste and odour and touch and its pleasures and what then is here

left over? The wise man cometh to know the great Lord and Self by whom one seeth all that is in the soul that wakes and all that is in the soul that dreams and hath grief no longer. He who knoweth the Self, the eater of sweetness close to the living being, the lord of what was and what will be, shrinks thereafter from nothing that is. He knoweth him who is that which was born of old from Tapas and who was born of old from the waters and hath entered in and standeth in the secret cavern of being with all these creatures. He knoweth her who is born by the life force, the infinite Mother with all the gods in her, her who hath entered in and standeth in the secret cavern of being with all these creatures. This is the Fire that hath the knowledge and it is hidden in the two tinders as the embryo is borne in pregnant women; this is the Fire that must be adored by men watching sleeplessly and bringing to him the offering. He is that from which the Sun rises and that in which it sets: and in him all the gods are founded and none can pass beyond him. What is here, even that is in other worlds, and what is there, even according to that is all that is here. He goes from death to death who sees here only difference. A Purusha no bigger than a thumb stands in man's central self and is the lord of what was and what shall be, and knowing him thenceforth one shrinks from nothing that is. A Purusha no bigger than a man's thumb and he is like a light without smoke; he is the Lord of what was and what shall be; it is he that is today and it is he that shall be tomorrow.

The Upanishads abound with passages which are at once poetry and spiritual philosophy, of an absolute clarity and beauty, but no translation empty of the suggestions and the grave and subtle and luminous sense echoes of the original words and rhythms can give any idea of their power and perfection. There are others in which the subtlest psychological and philosophical truths are expressed with an entire sufficiency without falling short of a perfect beauty of poetical expression and always so as to live to the mind and soul and not merely be presented to the understanding intelligence. There is in some of the prose Upanishads another element of vivid narrative and tradition which restores for us though only in brief glimpses the picture of that extraordinary stir and movement of spiritual enquiry and passion for the highest knowledge which made the Upanishads possible. The scenes of the old world live before us in a few pages, the sages sitting in their groves ready to test and teach the comer, princes and learned Brahmins and great landed nobles going about in search of knowledge, the king's son in his chariot and the illegitimate son of the servant-girl, seeking any man who might carry in himself the thought of light and the word of revelation, the typical figures and personalities, Janaka and the subtle mind of Ajatashatru, Raikwa of the cart, Yajnavalkya militant for truth, calm and ironic, taking to himself with both hands without attachment worldly possessions and spiritual riches and casting at last all his wealth behind to wander forth as a houseless ascetic, Krishna son of Devaki who heard a single word of the Rishi Ghora and knew at once the Eternal, the ashramas, the courts of kings who were also spiritual discoverers and thinkers, the great sacrificial assemblies where the sages met and compared their knowledge. And we see

how the soul of India was born and how arose this great birth-song in which it soared from its earth into the supreme empyrean of the spirit. The Vedas and the Upanishads are not only the sufficient fountain-head of Indian philosophy and religion, but of all Indian art, poetry and literature. It was the soul, the temperament, the ideal mind formed and expressed in them which later carved out the great philosophies, built the structure of the Dharma, recorded its heroic youth in the Mahabharata and Ramayana, intellectualised indefatigably in the classical times of the ripeness of its manhood, threw out so many original intuitions in science, created so rich a glow of aesthetic and vital and sensuous experience, renewed its spiritual and psychic experience in Tantra and Purana, flung itself into grandeur and beauty of line and colour, hewed and cast its thought and vision in stone and bronze, poured itself into new channels of self-expression in the later tongues and now after eclipse reemerges always the same in difference and ready for a new life and a new creation." [6]

g r h

The Subject and the Aim of the Upanishads

"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 fulfill 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." [7]

g r h

The Means of Realisation of the Aims of Vedanta

"Vedanta is merely an intellectual assent, without Yoga. The verbal revelation of the true relations between the One and the Many, the intellectual acceptance of the revelation and the dogmatic acknowledgement of the relations do not lead us beyond metaphysics, and there is no human pursuit more barren and frivolous than metaphysics practised merely as an intellectual pastime, a play with words & thoughts, when there is no intention of fulfilling thought in life or of moulding our inner state and outer activity by the knowledge which we have intellectually accepted. It is only by Yoga that the fulfilment and moulding of our life and being in the type of the true relations between God and the soul can become possible. **Therefore every Upanishad has in it an element of Yoga as well as an element of Sankhya, the scientific psychology on which Yoga is founded. Vedanta, the perception of the relations between God in Himself and God in the world, Sankhya, the scientific, philosophical and psychological analysis of those relations and Yoga, called also by the Rishis Yajna, their practical application in social life, religious worship and individual discipline & self-perfection, is and has always been the whole substance of the Hindu religion. Whatever we know of God, that we ought in every way to be and live, is almost the only common dogma of all Hindu sects and schools of every description.**

If then we know this of God and ourselves that we and He are one, So 'ham asmi, but divided by a movement

of self awareness which differentiates our forward active movement of waking life from the great life behind that knows and embraces all, then to recover that oneness in our waking state becomes the supreme aim and meaning of every individual existence. Nothing connected only with the movement of division can be of any moment to us, neither our bodily life and health, nor our family welfare, nor our communal wellbeing compared with this immense self-fulfilment; they can only be of importance as means or movements in the self-fulfilment. If, farther, we know that by recovering our secret oneness with God we shall also be at one with the world and that hatred, grief, fear, limitation, sickness, mortality, the creations of the divided movement, will no longer be able to exercise their yoke upon us, then the abandonment of all else, if necessary, for the one thing needful, becomes not only the supreme aim and meaning of human life, but our only true interest. Even if, as is quite probable, we cannot in one birth attain to the fullness of this grand result yet it is clear that even a little progress towards it must mean an immense change in our life & inner experience and be well worth the sacrifice and the labour. As the Gita says with force, "A little of this rule of life saves man out of his great fear." If farther a man knows that all mankind is intended to attain this consummation, he being one life with that divine movement called humanity, it must also be part of his self fulfilment to pour whatever fullness of being, knowledge, power or bliss he may attain, out on his fellow beings. It is his interest also, for humanity being one piece, it is difficult for the individual to attain fullness of life here when the race creates for him an atmosphere of darkness, unrest and base preoccupation with

the cares of a half-intellectualised animal existence. So strong has this atmosphere become in the Iron Age, that it is the rule for the individual who seeks his own salvation to sever himself from life and society and content himself with only the inner realisation. Modern Hinduism has become, therefore, in all but its strongest spirits, absorbed in the idea of an individual salvation. But our Vedic forefathers were of a different stuff. They had always their eye on the individual in the race. Nothing is more remarkable in the Veda than the absolute indifference & even confusion with which the singular and plural are used by the Singer, as if "I" & "we" were identical in meaning, and the persistence with which the Rishi regards himself as a representative soul, as it were, of the *vishám devayatínám*, the peoples in their seeking after the Godhead. We find the same transition in the Isha from the singular "pashyami" of the successful representative soul realising his oneness with God to the plural "asman" when he turns to pray for the equal purification and felicity of his fellows. **Our ideal, therefore, 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 practiced 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." [8]

g r h

The Progressive Intellectualisation of the Indian Mind and the Diminution of the Vedic and Vedantic Truth

"It is now several thousands of years since men ceased to study Veda and Upanishad for the sake of Veda or Upanishad. Ever since the human mind in India, more & more intellectualised, always increasingly addicted to the secondary process of knowledge by logic & intellectual ratiocination, increasingly drawn away from the true & primary processes of knowledge by experience and direct perception, began to dislocate & dismember the many sided harmony of ancient Vedic truth & parcel it out into schools of thought & systems of metaphysics, its preoccupation has been rather with the later opinions of Sutras & Bhashyas than with the early truth of Scripture. Veda & Vedanta ceased to be guides to knowledge & became merely mines & quarries from which convenient texts might be extracted, regardless of context, to serve as weapons in the polemic disputes of metaphysicians. The inconvenient texts were ignored or explained away by distortion of their sense or by depreciation of their value. Those that neither helped nor hindered the polemical purpose of the exegete were briefly paraphrased or often left in a twilit obscurity. For the language of the Vedantic writers ceased to be understood; their figures, symbols of thought, shades of expression became antique & unintelligible. Hence passages which, when once fathomed, reveal a depth of knowledge & delicacy of subtle thought almost miraculous in its wealth & quality, strike the casual reader today as a mass of childish, obscure & ignorant fancies characteristic of an unformed and

immature thinking. Rubbish & babblings of humanity's nonage an eminent Western scholar has termed them not knowing that it was not the text but his understanding of it that was rubbish & the babblings of ignorance. Worst of all, the spiritual & psychological experiences of the Vedic seekers were largely lost to India as the obscurations of the Iron Age grew upon her, as her knowledge contracted, her virtue dwindled & her old spiritual valiancy lost its daring & its nerve. Not altogether lost indeed for its sides of knowledge & practice still lived in cave & hermitage, its sides of feeling & emotion, narrowed by a more exclusive & self-abandoned fervour, remained, quickened even in the throbbing intensity of the Bhakti Marga and the violent inner joys of countless devotees. But even here it remained dim & obscure, shorn of its fullness, dimmed in its ancient and radiant purity. Yet we think, however it may be with the Vedas we have understood & possess the Upanishads! We have understood a few principal texts & even those imperfectly; but of the mass of the Upanishads we understand less than we do of the Egyptian hieroglyphics and of the knowledge these great writings hold enshrined we possess less than we do of the wisdom of the ancient Egyptians. Dabhram evapi twam vettha Brahmano rupam! *

I have said that the increasing intellectualisation of the Indian mind has been responsible for this great national loss. Our forefathers who discovered or received Vedic truth, did not arrive at it either by intellectual speculation or by logical

---

*" *Little indeed dost thou know the form of the brahman."*

SABCL 30, P. 301

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." [9]

"The denial of the Transcendent Personality, the Paratpara Purusha is a strong tendency of the present-day

Adwaita. "God", say these modern Adwaitins, "is a myth, or at most a dream like ourselves. Just as there is no I, so there is no God." Under this figure of thought, there lies a philosophical blunder. Personality is not necessarily individual Personality, neither is it a selection & arrangement of qualities, any more than existence is necessarily individual existence or a selection & arrangement of movements in our being. Personality can be & is Universal; this Universal Personality is God in relation to our individual experiences. Personality also can be & is Transcendent, self-existent, beyond individuality & Universality, – this transcendent Personality, a blissful unlimited self-conscious Awareness in self-existence is the Paratpara Purusha – adityavarnas tamasah parastat, drawing us like a sun beyond the darkness of ignorance & the darkness of the Asat. This is He – God universal, but also God transcendent – the Lilamaya Krishna who transcends His lila. Therefore the Upanishads everywhere insist not upon mere Existence, like the later Adwaitin, but on the sole Existent; and they speak continually on the Brahman as the creator, Master, enjoyer of the worlds, by meditating on whom we shall attain to perfect liberation. Neither Buddha nor Jada Bharata are the true guides & fulfillers of our destiny; it is Yajnavalkya, it is Janaka &, most of all, it is Krishna son of Devaki who takes us most surely & entirely into the presence & into the being of the Eternal."[10]

g r h

APPENDIX

"The series of translations called the Sacred Books of the East, edited by the late Professor Max Muller, was executed in a scholastic and peculiar spirit. Professor Max Muller, a scholar of wide attainments, great versatility and a refreshingly active, ingenious & irresponsible fancy, has won considerable respect in India by his attachment to Vedic studies, but it must fairly be recognized that he was more of a grammarian and philologist, than a sound Sanscrit scholar. He could construe Sanscrit well enough, but he could not feel the language or realise the spirit behind the letter. Accordingly he committed two serious errors of judgment; he imagined that by sitting in Oxford and evolving new meanings out of his own brilliant fancy he could understand the Upanishads better than Shankaracharya or any other Hindu of parts and learning; and he also imagined that what was important for Europe to know about the Upanishads was what he and other European scholars considered they ought to mean. This, however, is a matter of no importance to anybody but the scholars themselves. What it is really important for Europe to know is in the first place what the Upanishads* really do mean, so far as their exoteric teaching extends, and in a less degree what philosophic Hinduism took them to mean. The latter knowledge may be gathered from the commentaries of

---

* *"The word, Upanishad, itself meant, I would suggest, originally not a session of speculative inquirers (the ingenious & plausible German derivation) but an affirmation and arrangement of essential truths & principles."* *(CWSA 17, P. 319)*

Shankaracharya and other philosophers which may be studied in the original or in the translations which the Dravidian Presidency, ignorantly called benighted by the materialists, has been issuing with a truly noble learning & high-minded enterprise. The former this book makes some attempt to convey.

But it may be asked, why these particular Upanishads alone, when there are so many others far larger in plan and of a not inferior importance? In answer I may quote a sentence from Professor Max Muller's Preface to the Sacred Books of the East. "I confess" he says "it has been for many years a problem to me, aye, and to a great extent is so still, how the Sacred Books of the East should, by the side of so much that is fresh, natural, simple, beautiful and true, contain so much that is not only unmeaning, artificial and silly, but even hideous and repellent." Now I am myself only a poor coarse minded Oriental and therefore not disposed to deny the gross physical facts of life & nature or able to see why we should scuttle them out of sight and put on a smug, respectable expression which suggests while it affects to hide their existence. This perhaps is the reason why I am somewhat at a loss to imagine what the Professor found in the Upanishads that is hideous and repellent. Still I was brought up almost from my infancy in England and received an English education, so that sometimes I have glimmerings. But as to what he intends by the unmeaning, artificial and silly elements, there can be no doubt. Everything is unmeaning in the Upanishads which the Europeans cannot understand, everything is artificial which does not come within the circle of their mental experience and everything is silly which is not explicable by European science and wisdom. Now this attitude is almost inevitable

on the part of an European, for we all judge according to our lights and those who keep their minds really open, who can realise that there may be lights which are not theirs and yet as illuminating or more illuminating than theirs, are in any nation a very small handful. For the most part men are the slaves of their associations.

Let us suppose that the ceremonies & services of the Roman Catholic were not mere ceremonies and formularies, borrowed for the most part from Eastern occultisms without understanding them, – that they had been arranged so as to be perfect symbols of certain deep metaphysical truths and to produce certain effects spiritual and material according to a scientific knowledge of the power of sound over both mind and matter; let us suppose that deep philosophical works had been written in the terminology of these symbols and often in a veiled allusive language; and let us suppose finally that these were translated into Bengali or Hindustani and presented to an educated Pundit who had studied both at Calcutta & at Nuddea or Benares. What would he make of them? It will be as well to take a concrete instance. Jesus Christ was a great thinker, a man who had caught, apparently by his unaided power, though this is not certain, something of the divine knowledge, but the writers who recorded his sayings were for the most part ordinary men of a very narrow culture and scope of thought and they seem grossly to have misunderstood his deepest sayings. For instance when he said "I and my Father are one" expressing the deep truth that the human self and the divine self are identical, they imagined that he was setting up an individual claim to be God; hence the extraordinary legend of the Virgin Mary & all that followed from it. Well, we all know the story of the Last Supper and Jesus'

marvellously pregnant utterance as he broke the bread and gave of the wine to his disciples "This is my body and this is my blood" and the remarkable rite of the Eucharist and the doctrine of Transubstantiation which the Roman Catholic Church has founded upon it. "Corruption! superstition! Blasphemous nonsense!" cries the Protestant. "Only a vivid Oriental metaphor and nothing more." If so, it was certainly an "unmeaning, artificial and silly" metaphor, nay, "even a hideous and repellent" one. But I prefer to believe that Jesus' words had always a meaning & generally a true & beautiful one. On the other hand the Transubstantiation doctrine is one which the Catholics themselves do not understand, it is to them a "mystery". And yet how plain the meaning is to an Oriental intelligence! The plasm of matter, the foodsheath of the universe to which bread and wine belong, is indeed the blood and body of God and typifies the great primal sacrifice by which God crucified himself so that the world might exist. The Infinite had to become finite, the Unconditioned to condition himself, Spirit to evolve matter. In the bread and the wine which the communicant eats, God actually is but he is not present to our consciousness, and he only becomes so present by an act of faith; this is the whole doctrine of the Transubstantiation. For as the Upanishad says, we must believe in God before we can know him; we must realise him as the "He is" before we realise him in his essential. And indeed if the child had not believed in what his teacher or his book told him, how could the grown man know anything? But if a deep philosophical work were written on the Eucharist hinting at great truths but always using the symbol of the bread and wine and making its terminology from the symbol & from the doctrine of Transubstantiation based upon the symbol,

what would our Hindu Pundit make of it? Being a scholar & philosopher, he would find there undoubtedly much that was fresh, natural, simple, beautiful & true but also a great deal that was unmeaning, artificial & silly & even to his vegetarian imagination hideous & repellent. As for the symbol itself, its probable effect on the poor vegetarian would be to make him vomit. "What hideous nonsense," says the Protestant, "we are to believe that we are eating God!" But that is exactly what the Protestant himself does believe if he is sincere & not a parrot when he says "God is everywhere", which is true enough, though it would be truer to say everything is in God. If God is everywhere, He must be in the food we eat. Not only is God the eaten, but He is the eater and eventually, says the Vedanta, when you come to the bottom fact of existence there is neither eaten or eater, but all is God. These are hard sayings for the rationalist who insists on limiting knowledge within the circle of the five senses. "God to whom the sages are as meat & princes as excellent eating & Death is the spice of his banquet, how shall such an one know of Him where He abideth?"

Many of the Upanishads are similarly written round symbols and in a phraseology and figures which have or had once a deep meaning and a sacred association to the Hindus but must be unintelligible and repellent to the European."[11]

g r h

List of References:

1. *CWSA 18, Page 433,*
2. *CWSA 20, Pages 203-05,*
3. *CWSA 20, Pages 329-31,*
4. *CWSA 18, Page 311,*
5. *CWSA 20, Pages 331-34,*
6. *CWSA 20, Pages 334-41,*
7. *CWSA 17, Pages 368-71,*
8. *CWSA 18, Pages 421-23,*
9. *CWSA 17, Pages 307-10,*
10. *CWSA 17, Pages 407-08,*
11. *CWSA 18, Pages 163-67,*
12. *CWSA 18, Page 305.*

CWSA : Collected Works of Sri Aurobindo

(All the quotations from the writings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother are copyright of Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry - 605 002)

RNI NO. RAJENG/2002/9480

Name of the Publisher:	Peoples awakening and Service organisation
Name of the Printer :	Peoples awakening and Service organisation
Name of the Owner :	Peoples awakening and Service organisation
Printed at :	Sri Aurobindo Divine Life Press Seth Rambilasrai Kothi, Khetan Mohalla Jhunjhunu - 333 001, Rajasthan
Published at :	Mira Ambica Bhawan, Khetan Mohalla, Jhunjhunu - 333 001, Rajasthan **email:** sadlecjjn@rediffmail.com
Editor :	Anjana Dharnidharka