

# SIGNIFICANCE OF INDIAN YOGA

AN OVERVIEW

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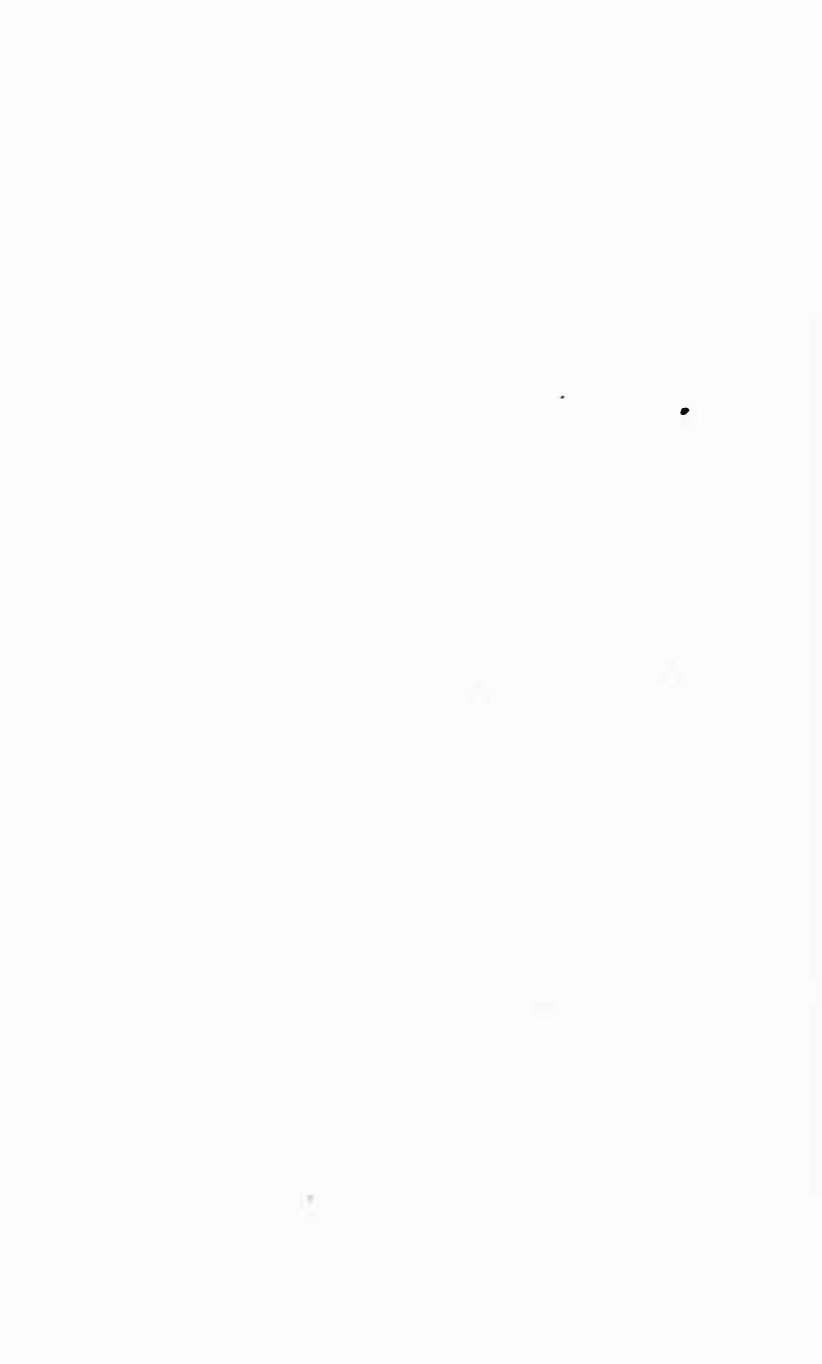
KIREET JOSHI

THE MOTHER'S INSTITUTE OF RESEARCH



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An Overview



*This book is addressed to all young people who, I urge, will study and respond to the following message of Sri Aurobindo:*

***“It is the young who must be the builders of the new world, — not those who accept the competitive individualism, the capitalism or the materialistic communism of the West as India’s future ideal, nor those who are enslaved to old religious formulas and cannot believe in the acceptance and transformation of life by the spirit, but all those who are free in mind and heart to accept a completer truth and labour for a greater ideal. They must be men who will dedicate themselves not to the past or the present but to the future. They will need to consecrate their lives to an acceding of their lower self, to the realisation of God in themselves and in all human beings and to a whole-minded and indefatigable labour for the nation and for humanity.”***

*(Sri Aurobindo, ‘The Supramental Manifestation Upon Earth’ Vol. 16, SABCL, p.331)*



*Dedicated to*

*Sri Aurobindo and the Mother*





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AN OVERVIEW

KIREET JOSHI

*Uday - Gopi*

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# **Significance of Indian Yoga**

## **(An Overview)**

### **I**

A momentous feature of Indian culture is characterised by a powerful current of three affirmations. There is, first, the affirmation that the truths of the physical and supra-physical realities can be best grasped, known and possessed by us through faculties which lie above the ranges of physical senses and rational intelligence. Secondly, it is affirmed that these faculties can be developed by pursuit of assured methods resulting from the principles, powers and processes that govern the experiences and realisations of the highest possible objects of knowledge. And, finally, there is the affirmation that science, philosophy, poetry, religion and other disciplines, whatever their specific distinctions from each other and whatever their conclusions, — they can reach or fulfil their goals when they open up to those higher faculties and powers and realisations achieved by the ever-progressive development of those faculties. These affirmations have been kept alive throughout the long history of our culture by an unbroken thread of luminous mystics, philosophers, scientists, thinkers, and leaders of action and creativity.

All this explains the constant concern for psychological explorations in our culture and the development of yoga, and

its special relationship with religion and philosophy. Yoga has been looked upon as practical psychology, and yogic methods have something of the same relation to the customary psychological workings of man as has the scientific handling of the natural force of electricity or of steam to the normal operations of steam and of electricity. And they, too, are formed upon a knowledge developed and confirmed by regular experiment, practical analysis and constant result. Yoga depends upon the perception and experience that our inner elements, combinations, functions, forces can be separated or dissolved, can be new-combined and set to novel and formerly impossible workings or can be transformed and resolved into a new general synthesis by fixed internal processes. Yoga is an attempt to realise psychological and physical perfection of our being by devising self-conscious means and willed arrangements of activity and by ever-increasing expression of inner potentialities in a persistent and guided effort to unite our being with the divine reality and divine nature.

Indeed, Yoga is a science, — an intuitive science, — which deals with the ranges of the psychical and spiritual being and discovers greater secrets of physical, psychophysical and other higher worlds. As in all true science, the object is an assured method of personal discovery or living repetition and possession of past discovery and a working out of all the things found. There is also in it a high intention to hold the truth, the light found in our inner power of being and turn it to a power of being, our psychic self, our spirit, our self of knowledge and will, our self of love and joy, our self of life and action.

## II

### (a)

When and how Yoga began to grow and develop is not known. But when we come to the Veda,<sup>1</sup> the most ancient extant composition of the world, we find in it quite a developed system, self-conscious and self-assured, of human psychology and of the methods and processes by which the psychological operations can be subtilised, recombined and heightened or else newer and higher operations can be generated and made active for their highest possible effectivity. Goals are known and fixed, and the path to reach those goals has been hewed and commonly known among the Rishis. Veda even declares that the Path was discovered by the human forefathers, *pitaro manushyah*.

According to the Veda, the spirits of these great ancestors still assist their offsprings; for the new dawns repeat the old and lean forward in light to join the dawns of the future. Kanwa, Kutsa, Atri, Kakshiwan, Gotama, Shunahshepa, have become types of certain spiritual victories which tend to be constantly repeated in the experience of humanity. The seven sages, the Angirasas, had chanted the word, rent the cave, found the lost herds of light and recovered the hidden sun, and even now they are waiting and are ready to help us in our struggle for the victory.

The Veda speaks of the Angirasas as the seers of Truth,

finders, and speakers of the word of the Truth and as the winners by the power of the Truth of the wide world of Light and Immortality described in the Veda as the True, the Right and the Vast (*Satyam, Ritam, Brihat*). Perhaps the most important discovery that was made by the Angirasas (also described as *Navagwas* and *Dashagwas*) was that of the *turiyam svid*, a certain fourth world, a world higher than the three worlds of ordinary experience, the earth, the mid-world and the heaven, *prithwi, antariksha* and *dyauh*, the worlds corresponding to our body, life and mind. This fourth world, the supramental world, the *Swar* was discovered, according to the Vedic legend, as a consequence of the discovery of the seven-headed thought which was born from the Truth. This discovery was made by Ayasya, the companion of the Navagwas. We are told that Ayasya became by this discovery universal, embraced the births in all the worlds and manifested a fourth world or four-fold world, *turiyam svid janayad vishwa janyah*.<sup>2</sup>

The Vedic legend of the cow and of the Angirasa Rishis is important, since if properly understood, it brings out a deeper secret of the Vedic Yoga. The legend is simple. The cows have been lost and the Angirasa Rishis are in search of those lost cows. The sacrifice is to be performed, and the Angirasas have to chant the true word, the *mantra*. Indra of all the gods is invoked. Indra comes down to help with the thunderbolt in which enter the powers of all the gods. Indra is the hero and fighter, and the battle is waged against certain powers, the *Dasyus* and the *Panis* and *Vala*. *Saramā*, the heavenly hound runs forward and finds out the cows in the cave of the *Panis*. Indra strong with the soma-wine and the Angirasas, the Rishis, who are his companions, follow the track. The battle with the adversaries continues for nine

months but there is no deliverance from the attacks of the adversaries. Ayasya joins the company of the Angirasas, and during the tenth month, Ayasya discovers the seven-headed Thought, becomes universalised, and victory becomes possible. Entry into the cave is effected and strong places of the hill are broken, Panis are defeated and the liberated herds of cows are driven upward. The hidden light is found, the Dawn is brought to birth, the lost sun is recovered, and the luminous world of *Swar* in which we possess the Truth or the one universal Deva, is disclosed and conquered.<sup>3</sup>

According to the Vedic mystics, there is the inferior truth here of this world mixed as it is with much falsehood and error, *anritasya bhureh*,<sup>4</sup> and there is a world or home of Truth, *sadanam ritasya*,<sup>5</sup> of the Truth, the Right, the Vast, where all is truth-conscious, *rita chit*.<sup>6</sup> There are many worlds between, but this is the world of the highest Light — the world of the Sun of Truth, *Swar*, or the Great Heaven. The Vedic Yoga finds the path to this Great Heaven, the path of Truth, *ritasya panthah*.<sup>7</sup> In its search it finds that our life is a battle between the powers of Light and the powers of Darkness, between the Gods who are the immortals and adversaries of various names, Vritra, Vala and the Panis and Dasyus and their Kings. To fight successfully, the Yogi is required to seek the help of the powers and beings of light and to build the way of ascent to the goal.

There are four features of the process of the conquest of *Swar* which need special attention. The first is the instrumentality of the sacrifice, the second is the discovery and chant of the Word, the third is the offering of the *ghrita*, and the fourth is the offering and drinking of the soma-wine.

## (b)

We may note that the Vedic sacrifice is symbolic in character, even though it may have also ritualistic significance for the Vedic religion. Just as in the Gita, — the word *Yajña*, sacrifice, is used in a symbolic sense for all action, whether internal or external, that is consecrated to the Gods or to the Supreme. *Yajña* in the Veda is works offered as a submission to the Divine Will, *Agni*; similarly, the *Yajamāna* is the soul or the personality of the doer. Gods are continually spoken of as officiating priests, and this can also be symbolic. The very first mantra of the Rig Veda brings this out very clearly when *Agni* is referred to as *purohita*, *ritwij*, and *hotā*. *Yajna* and *Agni* are inalienably related to each other. *Yajna* is the beginning of *Yoga*, and there can be no *Yajna* without the kindling of the *Agni*. Hence, the importance attached to *Agni* is fundamental. Just as *Yajna* is symbolic, even so *Agni*, too, is symbolic. Etymologically, *Agni* means mighty, supreme, splendid, forceful, bright, and it is these meanings that we find applicable when we study the various epithets of the Vedic *Agni*. Discovery of *Agni* was a momentous achievement of the Vedic seers. *Agni* is the divine Flame that is ever-pure and burns always purifying all that is offered to it. *Agni* is the rapturous priest of the sacrifice, the God-will intoxicated with its own delight, the young sage, the sleepless envoy, the ever-wakeful flame in the house, the master of our gated dwelling place, the beloved guest, the lord in the creature, the seer of the flowing tresses, the divine child, the invincible warrior, the leader on the path. He is the immortal in mortals, *martyeṣu amṛtaḥ*,<sup>8</sup> knower of all things that are born, *jātveda*, the sustainer of the sacrifice and discernor of its steps.



*Agni* symbolises also the inner and true soul seated in our hearts. The Rig Veda speaks of “the boy suppressed in secret cavern”.<sup>9</sup> There is also this cryptic description, “The son of heaven by the body of the earth”.<sup>10</sup> There are some other descriptions also: “He is there in the middle of his house”.<sup>11</sup> “He is as if life and the breath of our existence, he is as if our eternal child.”<sup>12</sup> He is “the shining King who was hidden from us”.<sup>13</sup> *Agni* is the aspiration, and as such it is the priest, *purohita*, that kindles the fire of aspiration and initiates man’s journey. *Agni* is the soul, that which guides from within and illumines the path of the journey. *Agni* is the all-pervading energy and heat in the earth and in the heaven and it has the secret power of uniting the light of the heaven and the heat of the matter. It is thus the secret power of spiritual transmutation of the physical.

It is *Agni* that is invoked by the initiate at the beginning of the journey of Yoga, the journey of the sacrifice. “Aspire first”, the Veda prescribes to us in effect, “burn within, kindle the Fire daily and for ever”. It is this aspiration that will bring the Response from the Gods and from the Supreme and will lead to fulfilment and perfection.

Experience and realisation of *Agni* can be regarded as a major step in the Vedic Yoga. We may refer in this regard to Vishwamitra’s description of the origin and various stages of the experience of *Agni* in his profound and majestic mantras contained in the first sukta of the third Mandala of the Rig Veda. We are told, first, that the gods discovered *Agni* visible in the Waters, in the working of the Sisters. Evidently, these waters and these sisters cannot be terrestrial and material streams, but they are what Vasishtha calls *āpo deviḥ*, *āpo divyaḥ*,<sup>14</sup> divine waters, or what Vamadeva calls

*madhuman urmiḥ, ghritasya dhārāḥ*,<sup>15</sup> the sweet intoxicating wave, the streams of clarity or clear intelligence, or what Atri calls *ṛitasya dhārāḥ*, waters of the Truth. They are figured as fostering cows, *dhenavaḥ*, mares, *aśvaḥ*, they are called *Sapta Vāṇīḥ*, the seven words of the creative goddess Vak, speech, the expressive power of Aditi. They are thus the seven streams or currents or forms of movement of the one conscious existence. Next, we are told that it is the Agni which is secret in the earth's growths, *oshadhis*, and has to be brought out by a pressure of the two *aranis*, earth and heaven, body and mind. At a higher stage, Agni rises to the state of vital kinesis, the *Prāṇa*, and it is here at this vital birth that Mares, *aśvaḥ*, move and labour about him. At this level, Agni purifies the nervous life in man pervading it with his own pure bright limbs, lifting upward its impulsions and desires, its purified will in works. Consequently, "he wears light as a robe about all the life of the Waters and formed in himself glories vast and without any deficiency". At the next higher stage, the sevenfold Waters become the pure mental activity, the Mighty Ones of Heaven. They then reveal themselves as the first eternal ever-young energies — separate streams but of one origin, the seven words, *sapta Vāṇīḥ*. There is a further ascent. The Force, Agni, rises into the womb of mental clarity where the waters flow as streams of the divine sweetness (*sravathe madhūnām*). Then the forms it assumes are universal forms. The result is that the lower members of our being, body and mind are nourished by the descending higher sweetness, and they become harmonised through this nourishing by the bliss. A kind of transformation of the body and the mind takes place.

Then comes the experience or realisation of the Agni that was within our narrow boundaries and which has now been

liberated by his entry into the Father of all things, i.e., the Lord. Agni enters there with his companion gods and with sevenfold Waters. But even in this liberated state of superconscience he does not disappear from our conscient existence, *na guha bahuva*. Agni finds there the source of the honeyed plenty of the Father of things and pours them out on our life. He bears and becomes the son, the pure *Kumāra*, the pure Male, the One, the soul in man revealed in its universality; the mental and physical consciousness in the human being accept him as their lord and lover; but, though one, he still enjoys the manifold movement of the rivers, the multiple cosmic energies.

In the next four verses (11-14) of this Sukta, Vishwamitra describes the highest manifestation of Agni. We are told that he has now reached his own natural seat,<sup>16</sup> where there is unobstructed Vast and where Truth is born, the shoreless infinite. There the Seven rivers, the sisters, work no longer separated though of one origin as on the earth and in the mortal life, but rather as indivisible companions. Agni is now manifest in many forms of bliss, and the gods or divine powers in man using the mind as an instrument reach him there, unite around him, set him to the great work of the world in this new, mighty and effective birth. They, the outshinings of the vast consciousness, cleave to this divine force, Agni, as its bright lightnings and from him in the superconscient, the shoreless vast, his own home, they draw for man the Immortality.

This and numerous other passages in the Veda bring out clearly that Agni is the leader of Yoga and that it operates in different parts of our being, the physical, the vital, and the mental to turn them and offer their energies and their

activities on the altar of the sacrifice. And sacrifice of what we are and what we have, enables us to rise upwards with the help of the gods that Agni procures (*devo devebhir āgamat*)<sup>17</sup> right up to *Swar*, the home of the Truth, where all the Seven streams of the Truth-consciousness, nourish the uplifted being with the Waters of Immortality.

### (c)

But apart from the sacrifice or as an accompaniment of the sacrifice, the Veda speaks of the search for the Word, for the Name, for the Hymn. Yoga aims at realisation, and realisation consists of making real to us what is really real. In our ordinary consciousness; reality is represented to us by sensations, feelings, emotions, ideas, and volitions, things which are fleeting and which are constantly sublated. But if our experiencing consciousness could directly touch the Permanent, the Immortal, if there is some such thing; it is quite possible that the Permanent or the Immortal would vibrate in our experiencing consciousness with what may be called ultimate sensations, emotions, ideas, volitions, and even Words, which emerge directly from the realised reality or realities. According to the Veda, there is a Truth deeper and higher than the truth of outward existence, a Light greater and higher than the light of human understanding which comes to us by revelation and inspiration, by *drishti* and *shruti*, and the word expressive of the light, of the Truth, is formed and expressed. This Word is the inevitable expression of the Truth, and it carries with it the vibration and meaning of the realisation of the Real. Words of this kind are mantras, and once discovered, they can be used, by

repetition, to strengthen the power of experience or realisation. Psychologically speaking, mantra stabilises the experience and also stabilises the Yogi in the experience. By the Word, says the Veda, Gods are called and by the power of the Word, Gods answer and come to us. This is the essence of the Mantra Yoga that we find in the Veda.

Mantra is the inspired word, and the agency that brings the inspiration is Saraswati. The seers of the Veda speak of Saraswati as one who impels the Words of Truth and awakes to right thinkings or as one opulent with the thought; Saraswati is also spoken of as the goddess who makes us conscious of the Great Ocean and illumines our thought. Along with Saraswati is also Mahi or Bharati who makes our consciousness vast and there is also Ila, the goddess that reveals the vision of the Truth.

The hymns of the Veda are the Words that have come from the superconscient. Hymns express prayer and God-attraction, praise and God-affirmation, God-attainment and self-expression. By these hymns man can house in himself the Gods, build in the gated house of his being the living image of the deity, grow into divine births, and form within himself vast and luminous worlds for his soul to inhabit. The secret potency of the Word is realised when we realise that it is by the Word of the Truth that all-engendering Surya creates; by the rhythm of the Word Brahmanspati evokes the worlds and Twashtri fashions them; finding the all-puissant Word in his intuitive heart, shaping it in his mind the human thinker, the mortal creature can create in himself all the forms, all the states and conditions he desires and, achieving, can conquer for himself all wealth of being and aid his gods to destroy the evil armies; the hosts of his enemies can be slain.

## (d)

To complete the sacrifice, two further operations are needed. These are the offering of *ghrita* and the offering and drinking of *soma*. *Ghrita* means ghee or clarified butter and this was one of the chief elements of the sacrificial rite, but *ghrita* could also mean light, from the root *ghri* — to shine, and it is used in this sense in the passages that are relevant to the Vedic Yoga. Thus the horses of Indra, Lord of Heaven, are described as dripping with *ghrita*, *ghritasnu*. The thought or the word expressing the thought is compared to *ghrita*, and there are expressions like *dhiyam ghritaachim*, which can be rendered as luminous thought or understanding. In one of the hymns, Agni is invoked as priest of the sacrifice to flood the offering with a mind pouring *ghrita*, *ghritapusha manasa*. The yogic meaning refers to the “mind pouring the light”, which is a labour of the clarity of the enlightened or illumined mind. Sometimes the Veda speaks plainly of offering intellect (*dhishana*) as purified *ghrita*, to the gods, *ghritam na putam dhishanam*, as in RV III.2.1. Offering of *ghrita* means, therefore, the *tapasya* by which intellect is purified, sharpened, clarified, illumined, and the subsequent submission of the clarity and illumination to Fire or Agni that can connect us to the Supreme.

The Vedic Rishis sought to establish close connection between *thought* and its final victorious illuminations, between *action* and its last supreme all-achieving puissances, and between *enjoyment* and its highest spiritual ecstasies. These connections are clearly discernable in some of the unveiled passages (e.g. RV I.3); we have here the luminous but synthetic seed of the later developments of

Karma Yoga, Jnana Yoga and Bhakti Yoga. In these passages the secret of the accomplishments of action, knowledge and joy is hinted at or clearly indicated. Works are energies pressed for result, and the secret of the yoga of works is the sacrifice or surrender of our desires and volitions symbolized in the Veda by the Horse, *ashwa*. Knowledge is the illumination of the activities of thought, understanding and intellect, and the secret of the Yoga of knowledge is the sacrifice or surrender of our mental activities by means of intensities of clarities, symbolised in the Veda as *ghrita* or *ghritasya dharah*. In the Yoga of Love or Delight, joy is the ecstatic transmutation of pleasure that is ordinarily manifest in sense-activities. Transmutation is effected by means of intensities of purification, symbolised in the Veda as the pressing of the soma-plant and straining its juice through the strainer of the human system in its activities of purification. Let us refer, as a brief illustration, to RV IX. 83, which is addressed to Soma. In this hymn we have an explicit statement of Soma as the divine delight and immortality. The human body is visualised as the strainer, and the hymn declares; "He tastes not that delight who is unripe and whose body has not suffered in the heat of the fire" (*atapta tanur na tad āmo ashnute*). It is further elucidated: "They alone are able to bear that and enjoy it who have been prepared by the flame". (*Shritasa id vahantas tat samashata*). It is when the delight in our members is sifted and strained that it is turned into honey sweetnesses (*madhunah*) which pour into all the members of the human system and flow through all of them completely in their every part (*prabhur gātraṇi paryeshi vishwatah*). The consequence is that the soma-juices are no longer spilled and lost as in the unbaked jar, but they foster and increase, *avanti*, mind and body of their purifier, *avantyasya pavītāram āshavah*. There is also the

further consequence: *Divasprishtham adhi tishtanti chetasā*. They rise with him to the highest level or surface of heaven, the luminous world of Swar [where mind capable of intuition, inspiration and revelation is bathed in the splendours of the Truth (ritam)]. In the concluding verse, Soma is described as the offering, *havih*, the divine food, as the vast, *mahi*, and as the divine home *sadma daivyam*. Soma is then addressed as a victorious king, sun like in force and glory, *sahasra bhrishṭih*, endowed with thousand burning brilliances. His chariot is described as the sieve of purification, and the concluding phrase gives us the climax of the movement of the purifying Soma. *Jayasi shravo brihat*, “Thou conquerest the vast knowledge of divine inspiration”.

Consecration in works, concentration in thought, and purification in sensations and emotions — this three-fold process appears to be the heart of the methods of the Vedic Yoga. With assured methods, there are in the Veda assured fruits, realisations and accomplishments, to which we may now turn.

### (e)

The Vedic Yoga aims at perfection. And that perfection can and must be attained on all our levels, —

- (i) In the wideness of earth, *prithwi*, our physical being and consciousness;
- (ii) In the full force of *prana*, of vital speed and action and enjoyment and nervous vibration, typified as *ashwa*, Horse, which *must* be brought forward to up bear our



endeavour;

- (iii) In the perfect gladness of the heart of emotion, *hrit*, and a brilliant heat and clarity of the mind, *ghrita*, throughout our intellectual and psychical being, *medha*, *dhi*, *smriti*;
- (iv) In the coming of the supramental Light, *rita chit*, by the arrival of the Dawn, *Usha*, and by the rising of the Sun, *Savitri*, and by the help of the shining Mother of the herds, *go*, *dhenu*, *aditi*, to transform all our existence. For so comes to us the possession of the Truth, *satya*, *rita*; by the Truth one reaches the admirable surge of the Bliss, *madhu*, *soma*; and in the Bliss is found the infinite consciousness of absolute being, *tridhātu*.<sup>18</sup>

But before one can reach there and establish oneself in the Truth and Bliss of *tridhātu*, four conditions have to be fulfilled. First, one has to become wide and universal with the help of Varuna; next, one has to master the laws of harmony of relationships by the help of Mitra; third, one must have mastery of effort and endurance, and this comes by the help of Aryaman; and, finally, one has to perfect the capacity to enjoy the delights of illumination, inspiration and highest ecstasies of the spirit. This comes by the help of Bhaga.

In the course of the process of perfection, we also realise three largest puissances of the supreme Godhead which make possible our development and upward ascension. We realise Brihaspati,<sup>19</sup> who creates by the word, by his cry, *ravéna*, and who brings out all existence and conscious knowledge and movement of life and eventual forms from the darkness of the Inconscient, *tamas*. We realise Rudra,

the violent and Merciful, the Mighty One, who presides over the struggle of life and who lifts forcibly the creation upward, smites all that opposes, scourges all that errs and resists, heals all that is wounded and suffers and complains and submits. And we realise Vishnu of the vast pervading motion who holds in his triple stride all the worlds. We realise that it is Vishnu<sup>20</sup> who makes a wide room for the action of Indra, the Giver of Light, in our limited mortality. We also realise that it is by Vishnu and with Vishnu that we rise into his highest seats where we find waiting for us the Friend, the Beloved, the Beatific Godhead. But the seeker can go still further.

Dirghatamas declares: *ekam sat, viprā bahudhā vadanti*. (RV., I.164.46), Reality is One, although the wise call it by various names. Impersonally, it is That, *tad*, the One Existence, *tad ekam*. Reality is also described, in terms of personality, as *Sah*, He who is nameless, although he has many names, immeasurable and beyond description, though he holds in himself all descriptions of name and knowledge and all measures of form and substance, force and activity. That wonderful reality is Timeless and immeasurable, behind and above all things, Unknowable and not seizable by the studious pursuit of the mind. Says Indra: "It is not now, nor is It tomorrow; who knoweth that which is Supreme and Wonderful? It has motion and action in the consciousness of another, but when It is approached by the thought, It vanishes".<sup>21</sup>

In the process of these realisations there is also the experience of the liberated powers of the mind like wide-winged birds; there happens also to be the experience of the "boy" whom the young mother bears in herself when she is

compressed into form but in her vastness gives him birth; and then one sees far off in the field of being one tusked with golden light and pure bright of hue who was shaping the weapons of his war (RV., V.2); and one realises this being, this soul as the uproaring Swan or Falcon that breaks out from a hundred iron walls and wrests from the jealous guardians of Felicity, the wine of Soma. And, as in Ribhus, there is confirmation in the Soul of the entire delight of the Beatitude, the thrice seven ecstasies of the divine Life (RV., I.20). And one invites Ribhus to the human sacrifice to fashion for man the things of immortality even as they fashioned them for themselves (RV., IV.36.6-9).

The Vedic Yoga aims at immortality, which comes by crossing the path to the great heaven, by finding the Day and Swar and vision and the luminous cows. Parashara Shaktya describes the realisation effected by the fathers, Angirasas, in the following verses:

“Our fathers broke open the firm and strong places by their words, yea, the Angirasas broke open the hill by their cry; they made in us the path to the great heaven; they found the Day and Swar and vision and the luminous Cows.”<sup>22</sup>

He elucidates the path as the path to immortality, *amritasya gatum*, and explains:

“They who entered into all things that bear right fruit formed a path towards the immortality; earth stood wide for them by the Greatness and by the Great Ones, the mother Aditi with her sons came for the upholding.”<sup>23</sup>

Vamadeva also declares the same experience and realisation in the following words:

“Vanished the darkness, shaken in its foundation; Heaven

shone out; upward rose the light of the divine Dawn; the Sun entered the vast fields beholding the straight things and crooked in mortals. Thereafter indeed they awoke and saw utterly; then indeed they held in them the bliss that is enjoyed in heaven. Let all the Gods be in all our homes, let there be the truth for our thought, O Mitra, O Varuna".<sup>24</sup>

And, in the following verse, Vamadeva declares:

"We have done the work for thee, we have become perfect in works the wide-shining Dawns have taken up their home in the Truth (or, have robed themselves with the Truth), in the fullness of Agni and his manifold delight, in the shining eye of the God in all his brightness."<sup>25</sup>

The Veda looks upon the soul of man as a world full of beings, a kingdom in which armies clash to help or hinder a supreme conquest, the attainment of perfection of works and of immortality. In the Vedic Yoga, the soul of man is a house where gods are guests and which the demons strive to possess; but by means of fullness of its energies and wideness of its being, the soul makes a seat of sacrifice spread, arranged and spread, and attains ultimately to the eternal Day.

### III

#### (a)

The Vedic Yoga and its synthesis was not lost, in spite of an increasing tendency towards ritualism and development of an emphasis on *Karmakānda*, reflected so prominently in the Brahmanas. The luminous seed of the Veda continued to sprout, and we find in the Upanishads a fresh stir of yogic search and reconfirmation of Vedic methods and Vedic realisations, even new formulations, deeper subtilisation and clearer elaboration. In respect of the element of Jnana Yoga, there came to be even a culmination, justifying the tradition which regards Upanishads as *Jñānakānda* and as Vedanta, the crown of the Veda.

It is true that in the later Upanishads there is an over-emphasis on the salvation of the individual and on the rejection of the lower cosmic life. This note increases later in date, and it swells afterwards into the rejection of all cosmic life. This explains the dominant note of a later yoga, where cosmic life came to be the outcome of Ignorance and Desire, and escape from life and refusal of the ascetic became an all-challenging cry. In the Vedic revelation, however, the individual salvation is regarded as a means towards a great cosmic victory, the eventual conquest of heaven and earth by the Superconscious Truth and Bliss, and those who achieved the victory in the past, such as the Angirasa Rishis and the Ribhus, continue to be conscious

helpers of their yet battling posterity. This note seems to be missing in the later Upanishads, but the earlier Upanishads are quite explicit in their acceptance of a larger Vedic ideal and in their synthesis of the transcendental and the cosmic, even the integration of the individual and collective life on the earth with the supra-terrestrial life and the supra-cosmic existence.

The Upanishads have been rightly looked upon as the supreme work of the Indian mind. They are a record of the deepest spiritual experiences, written in a language which is profoundly poetic, manifesting an unfailing inspiration inevitable in phrase, wonderful in rhythm and expression. Like the Veda, they express the intuitive mind and intimate psychological experience, but although they start from concrete images and symbols of the Vedic seers, there is here a less covertly expressive language, and they pass over to another magnificently open and sublime imagery and diction which reveals the spiritual truth in all its splendour.

The Upanishads give us without veil or stinting, with plenitude and a noble catholicity the truth of the Brahman, of the *tad ekam* of the Veda. 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 glory of his eternal transcendence and his manifold self-revelation. Upanishads have deep and sublime philosophical substance but they are no philosophical speculations of the intellectual kind, a metaphysical analysis which labours to define notions, to select ideas and discriminate those that are true and those that are false, and to logicise truth by dialectical reasoning. The Upanishadic seers saw Truth rather than merely thought it. It is true that visions have been clothed with a strong body

of intuitive idea and disclosing image. But the clothing is transparent and we can look through it into the illimitable.

The Yoga of the Upanishads centres on the realisation of the Brahman, and on the methods and consequences of that realisation. That realisation is not a mere thinking, *manana*, but seeing the truth with the soul and total living in it with the power of the inner being, a spiritual seizing by a kind of identification with the object of knowledge, *Jñāna*. 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 Upanishadic seers sought to know, to live in and to be one with it by identity. And through this endeavour they came 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 Existence and Existent, 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 thus the records of self-knowledge, world-knowledge and God-knowledge.

As a first step of the yoga, there has to be an inquiry, such as that of Nachiketas, which impels the distinction between the pleasant, *preyas*, and the good, *shreyas*, and the choice for the latter even when the former is guaranteed. Next, this inquiry is to be aided by a competent teacher, such as Yama in the Katha Upanishad, or as Pippalada in the Prashna Upanishad, or Brahma, the first of the Gods — *devānām prathamah*, to Atharvan, he to Angir, Angir to Satyavaha the Bhardwaja, or Angiras in the Mundaka Upanishad or as Uma Haimavati, the Divine Mother who knows the Supreme, in the Kena Upanishad. "Arise, awake, find out the great ones and learn from them; for sharp as a razor's edge, hard to

traverse, difficult of going is that path, say the sages.”<sup>26</sup> This is what Yama demands of Nachiketas and through him to all those who seek truly and sincerely. The demand of the seeker results in response of the teacher in the form of that secret teaching that enters into the ultimate truth, which is the real meaning of the Upanishad.

The teacher reveals that the ultimate truth, the Brahman or the Self “is not won by exegesis, nor by brain-power, nor by much learning of scripture. Only by him whom It chooses can It be won; to him this Self unveils its own body.”<sup>27</sup> The basic conditions of Yoga are stated briefly thus: “None who has not ceased from doing evil, or who is not calm, or not concentrated in his being, or whose mind has not been tranquilised, can by wisdom attain to Him.”<sup>28</sup> Again, “This Self cannot be won by any who is without strength, nor with error in the seeking, nor by an askesis without the true mark: but when a man of knowledge strives by these means, his self enters into Brahman, his abiding place.”<sup>29</sup> Sacrifice in works, purification and concentration as also adoration are considered necessary, and other basic qualities and attitudes include (i) discrimination of eternal objects from the transient; (ii) detachment from enjoyment; (iii) calm and self-conquest; and (iv) desire for salvation.

## (b)

“Turn inwards” is the first message of the yoga of the Upanishad. In the following passage from the Katha Upanishad, we have a description of the method of turning inwards as also some indications of the realization that follows:



“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 knows by this Self, form and taste and odour and touch and its pleasures and what then is here left over? The wise man comes to know the great Lord and Self by whom one sees all that is in the soul that wakes and all that dreams and has grief no longer. He who knows the Jiva, the Self, the eater of sweetness, the lord of what was and what will be, shrinks thereafter from nothing that is. He knows him who is that which was born of old from Tapas and who was born of old from the waters and has entered in and stands in the secret cavern of being with all these creatures. He knows her who is born by the life force, the infinite Mother with all the gods in her, her who has entered in and stands in the secret cavern of being with all these creatures. This is the Fire, Agni, that has 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, 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 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.”<sup>30</sup>

We notice here allusions to the experiences of Agni described in the Rig Veda, particularly those by Vishwamitra (RV., 3.1) and Vrisha Jana (RV., 5.2), the experiences of the “boy suppressed in the secret cavern”, of Kumara, of the immortal in the mortals, *amartyeshu amritah*. Immortality of the inmost soul derived from the immortality of Aditi, the Supreme Mother, who is one with the eternal and immortal Purusha, revealed in the Veda is described here in a less veiled language and with a very vivid figure of that soul as “no bigger than a thumb”, a figure which has been adopted in the later development of the Indian yoga to indicate the inmost individual soul, distinct from but constituting individual mind, life and body.

Mandukya Upanishad speaks of the four-fold Self and describes the process of rising from stage to stage in terms of psychological symbolism, which can be understood more clearly in the light of the process of meditation and experience of Samadhi. The lowest state of the Self is what is experienced by us in our ordinary wakefulness, *jagrita*; the next higher state of the Self is what is experienced in the dream state, *swapna*, the state that comes when we withdraw from the outer, *bahirmukha*, consciousness; it is a state of deeper awareness, but it appears dreamy to our ordinary wakeful stage; the objects of that deeper awareness are subtle. The third state is much profounder, so dense that it resembles sleep, *sushupti*, but it is in reality intensely aware of the in-gathered oneness constituted of delight. And the fourth state of the Self, the highest, reveals the Self as so conscious that it transcends all levels of communication of communicability; it is unthinkable and the unnameable. Here are descriptions of the Self that is four-fold, *chatuspat*:

“He whose place is the wakefulness, who is wise of the outward, who has seven limbs, to whom there are nineteen doors, who feels and enjoys gross objects, Vaishwanara, the Universal Male, He is the first.”

“He whose place is the dream, who is wise of the inward, who has seven limbs, to whom there are nineteen doors, who feels and enjoys subtle objects, Taijasa, the Inhabitant in Luminous Mind, He is the second.”

“When one sleeps and yearns not with any desire, nor sees any dream, that is the perfect slumber. He whose place is the perfect slumber, who is become Oneness, who is made of mere delight, who enjoys delight unrelated, to whom conscious mind is the door, Prajna, the Lord of Wisdom, He is the third. This is the Almighty, this is the Omniscient, this is the Inner Soul, this is the Womb of the Universe, this is the Birth and Destruction of creatures.”

“He who is neither inward-wise, nor outward-wise, nor both inward and outward-wise, nor wisdom self-gathered, nor possessed of wisdom, nor unpossessed of wisdom, He Who is unseen and incommunicable, Whose essentiality is awareness of the Self in its single existence, in Whom all phenomena dissolve, Who is Calm, Who is Good, Who is One than whom there is no other. Him they deem the fourth: He is the Self, He is the Object of Knowledge.”<sup>31</sup>

That Self, called Atman or Brahman, is, according to the Upanishad, indescribable or describable in the highest terms as Sachchidananda, with the qualifying phrase, *neti, neti* — not this, not this. It is higher than the Highest,<sup>32</sup> and the Isha Upanishad indicates Its mystery by declaring: “That moves and That moves not; That is far and the same is near; That

is within all this and That also is outside all this.”<sup>33</sup> That is *tat*, It, and also *sah*, He. Says Isha Upanishad, “It is He that has gone abroad — That which is bright, bodiless, without scar of imperfection, without sinews, pure, unpierced by evil. The Seer, the Thinker, the One who becomes everywhere, Self-existent has ordered objects perfectly according to their nature from years sempiternal”.<sup>34</sup>

Of this mysterious and hardly knowable Reality, the Rishi of the Kena Upanishad speaks as follows:

“If thou thinkest that thou knowest It well, little indeed dost thou know the form of the Brahman. That of It which is thou, that of It which is in the Gods, this thou hast to think out. I think It known. I think not that I know It well and yet I know that It is not unknown to me. He of us who knows It, knows That; he knows that It is not unknown to him.”<sup>35</sup>

*Ekam eva advitiyam*, the One without the second, that Absolute, that Spaceless and Timeless Reality is also all this Universe, *sarvam khalu idam brahma*. Brahman is all this by his Yoga-Maya, by the power of his consciousness — Force put out in self-manifestation; he is the Conscious Being, Soul, Spirit, Purusha, and it is by his Nature, the force of his conscious self-existence that he is all things; he is the Ishwara, the Omniscient and Omnipotent All-ruler, and it is by his Shakti, his conscious Power, that he manifests himself in Time and governs the Universe.<sup>36</sup>

Our waking experience is conditioned by physical senses, *indriyāṇi*, and, according to the Upanishadic psychology, behind the physical senses, the real sense is the mind, *manas*, or the sense-mind. Our experience at this level consists of sensations, perceptions and ideas dependent on

physical gross objects, which constitute the physical universe.

Higher than the sense-mind is the genius, *sattwam*, *buddhi*, enlightened by *viijnana*, the faculty of the superconscience; the world corresponding to *sattwa* or *buddhi* is the world of subtle objects while that corresponding to *viijnana* is the world of the Mighty Spirit, *Prajna*, the Lord of Wisdom, described as the sleep-self in the *Mandukya Upanishad*. Above that Mighty Spirit is the Unmanifested, *avyakta*, — the Self that is the Fourth of the *Mandukya*. But that Fourth, the incommunicable, has behind it the *Purusha*, that is the highest that is both the unmanifest and the Mighty manifest Spirit. In simple but decisive terms, *Katha Upanishad* tells us that it is when that *Purusha* is known that the mortal man is released into immortality; for that *Purusha* is the Substance, the Stable and dynamic, that which does not move and that which moves, indestructible, permanent, immortal.<sup>37</sup>

“The mind is higher than the senses, and higher than the mind is the genius, above the genius is the Mighty spirit, and higher than the Mighty One is the unmanifested. But highest above the unmanifested is the *Purusha* who pervades all and alone and has no sign nor feature. Mortal man knowing Him is released into immortality.”<sup>38</sup>

### (c)

As in the *Veda*, so in the *Upanishad*, the goal is the attainment of immortality. As in the *Veda*, so in the *Upanishad*, there is recognition of our present mortal state, which is that of falsehood and darkness. We live in *avidyā*,

Ignorance; we are overwhelmed by multiplicity and are oblivious of the unity and oneness behind multiplicity; we live, think and act as though multiplicity is the only reality. One who lives in avidya, lives in his senses as wild horses and in unmindful and even unclear, and wanders in the cycle of phenomena.<sup>39</sup> Avidya is a veil of nescience that hides the real reality of the individual, universal and the transcendence and projects a false view centred on ego-consciousness. In avidya, the individual lives in his ego-consciousness, which tends always to assert its finitude and yet its independence, as though it were self-existent. Ego is a false sense, corresponding to which there is no real existent entity or reality. As a result, ego-sense continues to wander in cycles and in bondage to limitations of being, knowledge, joy, power, however much their boundaries or horizons may expand. Says the Katha Upanishad:

“They who dwell in the ignorance, within it, wise in their own wit and deeming themselves very learned, men bewildered are they who wander about stumbling round and round helplessly like blind men led by the blind. The childish wit bewildered and drunken with the illusion of riches cannot open its eyes to see the passage to heaven; for he thinks that this world is and there is no other, comes again and again into Death’s thralldom.”<sup>40</sup>

But the way of attaining to immortality is not by the self-dissolution of the individual formation into the flux of becoming, *Prakriti*, neither is it by prematurely dissolving it into the All-soul of the becoming. Man moves towards something which fulfils the universe by transcending it. He has to prepare his individual soul for the transcendence and for the fulfilment. If avidya is the cause of mortality, it is

also the path out of mortality. The first necessity is therefore for man continually to enlarge himself in being, knowledge, joy, power in the limits of the ego so that he may arrive at the conception of something which progressively manifests itself in him in those terms and becomes more and more powerful to deal with the oppositions of Prakriti and to change, individually, more and more the terms of the ignorance, the suffering and weakness into the terms of knowledge, joy and power and even death into a means of wider life. Says the Isha Upanishad, "It is by the Ignorance that one crosses beyond death and by the Knowledge enjoys Immortality,... that it is by the dissolution that one crosses beyond death and by the birth enjoys immortality."<sup>41</sup> When the life of avidya reaches a high degree of self-enlargement, one has to awaken to the perception of something exceeding itself, exceeding the personal manifestation. Man has to enlarge his conception of self as to see all in himself and himself in all.<sup>42</sup> He has to see that the real "I" which contains all and is contained in all, is the One, is universal and not his personal ego. To That he has to subject his ego, that he has to reproduce in his nature and become, That is what has to possess and enjoy with an equal soul in all its forms and movements.

There is still something more to do. He has to see that this Universal One is something entirely transcendent, the sole Being and that this universe and all its forms, actions, egos are only becomings of that Being. "He in whom it is the Self-Being that has become all existences that are Becomings, for he has the perfect knowledge, how shall he be deluded, whence shall he have grief who sees everywhere oneness?"<sup>43</sup>

In the Kena Upanishad, we have a parable that describes

the process of passage from Ignorance to Knowledge. Three powers in the physical, vital and mental being, symbolised as Agni, Vayu and Indra, have grown and affirmed the Good, the Light, the Joy and Beauty, the Strength and Mastery; they have found themselves victorious in their eternal battle with the adverse powers that deny, *vijaye devā amahiyanta*, the gods became mighty in their development, but their vision is as yet sealed to their own deeper truth; they know of themselves, they know not the Eternal; they know the godheads, they do not know God. Therefore they see the victory as their own, the greatness as their own. The victory was really due to the Brahman, the Eternal; *brahma ha devebhyo vijigye*, the Eternal conquered for the gods.<sup>44</sup> Therefore, Brahman manifests Himself before the exultant gods and puts to them by His silence the heart-shaking question: "If you are all, then what am I? For see, I am and I am here." Gods did not know what this mighty Presence was, *na vyajānata kim idam yaksham iti*. The three gods approach that Yaksha, one by one, Agni first, Vayu second, and Indra third. But none could move that Yaksha, none could find out what that Yaksha was. But while Agni and Vayu came back, Indra did not turn back from the quest. He pursued his way through the highest ether of the pure mentality and there he approached the Woman, the many-shining, Uma Haimavati. From her he learned that the Yaksha, this Daemon, is the Brahman by whom alone the gods of mind and life and body conquer and affirm themselves, and in whom alone they are great. She said to him: "It is the Eternal Brahman. Of the Eternal Brahman is this victory in which you shall grow to greatness."<sup>45</sup> Then alone Indra came to know that this was the Brahman. In the next few sentences, Kena Upanishad gives the description of the process of attaining to the Brahman.



“Therefore are these gods as it were beyond all the other gods, even Agni and Vayu and Indra, because they came nearest to the touch of That ....Therefore is Indra as it were beyond all the other gods because he came nearest to the touch of That, because he first knew that it was the Brahman. Now this is the indication of That, — as is this flash of the lightning upon us or as is this falling of the eyelid, so in that which is of the gods. Then in that which is of the Self, — as the motion of this mind seems to attain to That and by it afterwards the will in the thought continually remembers It. The name of That is “That Delight”; as That Delight one should follow after It.”<sup>46</sup>

In an earlier cryptic statement, Kena Upanishad seems to give us the same secret of the process of the realisation of the Brahman. It says:

“That of It which is thou, that of It which is in the gods, this thou hast to think out. I think It known.” *yadasya tvam yadasya deveshu atha nu mimansyeva te manye viditam.*<sup>47</sup>

The means of the knowledge of Brahman are, we are told in effect, to get back behind the forms of the universe to which is essential in the cosmos, and that which is essential is two-fold, the gods in Nature, the cosmic functionings through which the gods act, viz., mind, life, speech, senses, body, and the self in the individual. This means, first, that the functionings of the mind, life and body must turn from their ordinary operations; they must leave the false egoistic idea that they are independent in their action and self-ordering; and they must become consciously passive to the power, light and joy of something which is beyond themselves. What happens then is that the divine Unnameable reflects Himself openly in the gods.<sup>48</sup> His light

takes possession of the thinking mind, His power and joy of the life, His light and rapture of the emotional mind and the senses. Something of the Supreme image of the Brahman falls upon the world-nature and changes it into divine nature. All this is not done by a sudden miracle. It comes by flashes, revelations, sudden touches and glimpses; there is as if a leap of the lightning of revelation flaming out from those heavens for a moment and then returning into its secret source. The repetition of these touches and visitings from the Beyond fixes the functionings of the mind, life and body and their gods in their upward gaze and expectation; constant repetition fixes them in a constant passivity; they will more and more be fixed in the memory, in the understanding, in the joy of the touch and vision of that transcendent glory which they have now resolved to make their sole object. The silence which has fallen on them and what is now their foundation and status will become their knowledge of the eternal silence, which is Brahman; and the response of their functioning to a superconscient light, power, joy will become their knowledge of the eternal activity, which is also Brahman.<sup>49</sup>

But this is not all. There has to be, next, or at the same time, the entry of the Self, which is within us and which supports the actions of the mind, life and body and their gods, into the one Self of all existences, the indivisible Spirit to whom all souls are centres of Its consciousness. The self in us also turns towards its own reality, *tat twam asi*. Through its individualised mind, it goes to That, and it transcends that mind by the will of knowledge in the mental thought and by continuous remembrance, by continuous dwelling into that in which it has entered. It transcends the mind, it transcends its own mental individualisation of the being,

with which it is at present identified. It ascends and takes foundation in the Self of all and in the *status* of self-joyous infinity which is the supreme manifestation of the self. This is the transcendent immortality; this is the spiritual existence which the Upanishads declare to be the goal of man by which we pass out of the mortal state into the heaven of the spirit.<sup>50</sup>

Let us reiterate these two processes in different terms:

1. In the first process, there is an emphasis on the functionings of our various faculties, symbolised as gods; we develop them to their point of maturity; these functionings become aware of their source by the intervention of the divine Intelligence, symbolised as Uma Haimavati, the Mother of the gods; there are flashes from the higher functionings; to use the Vedic imagery, there are workings and descents of the powers of revelation, inspirations, intuitions, discriminations, the powers of Ilā, Saraswati, Saramā, Dakshā. And by constant repetition, we come to know the Universal and the Transcendental, the Third and the Fourth of the Mandukya Upanishad. As a consequence, the mind will know nothing but the Brahman, think nothing but the Brahman, the Life will move to, embrace, enjoy nothing but the Brahman, the eye will see, the ear hear, the other senses sense nothing but the Brahman. To use the words of the Kena Upanishad:

“That which is hearing of our hearing, mind of our mind, speech of our speech, that too is life of our life-breath and sight of our sight. The wise are released beyond and they pass from this world and become immortal.”<sup>51</sup>

Or else, as in the Isha Upanishad, we turn to the Sun and effect the same realisation:

“The face of Truth is covered with a brilliant golden lid;<sup>52</sup> that do thou remove, O Fosterer (Pushan), for the law of the Truth, for sight. O Fosterer, O sole Seer, O Ordainer, O illumining Sun, O power of the Father of creatures, marshal thy rays, draw together thy light; the Lustre which is thy most blessed form of all, that in Thee I behold. The Purusha there and there, He am I.”<sup>53</sup>

Or else, to use the terms of the Taittiriya Upanishad, we may perfect the faculties and activities of the annamaya purusha, prānamaya purusha, and manomaya purusha, the physical being, vital being and mental being, develop the operations and faculties of the vijñānamaya purusha and ānandamaya purusha, and come to know the law in the universe of the Truth and of the Bliss, and realise the Anandabrahman. This is the realisation that Taittiriya Upanishad describes in the following words:

“The Bliss of the Eternal from which the words turn back without attaining and mind also turns baffled: who knows the Bliss of the Eternal, he fears not for aught in this world or elsewhere.”<sup>54</sup>

2. In the second process, the individual self behind our desire-self or egoistic self asserts itself; it arrives at or takes advantage of that state of the mind where it can attain to That; the mind attempts to lift to That, and although it falls back, still by the mind the will of knowledge in the mental thought continually and at last continuously remembers That. In that favourable condition, our inner or inmost self repeatedly dwells on That and is able at last to dwell in the self of all and the self that transcends all, even the *parat para*, higher than the Highest. As Kena declares: as That Delight one

should follow after It. The two processes together would constitute a synthesis of yoga, with various elements combining works, knowledge and joy, — Karma, Jñāna, Bhakti, — a synthesis that is the continuation and development of the synthesis of the Veda.

The culmination of the teaching of the Kena Upanishad, described towards its end, shows that the individual who has realised the all-blissful Ananda and is one with the infinite existence, continues to be a centre of the divine Delight shedding it on all the world and attracting all to it as too a fountain of joy and love and self-fulfilment in the universe. It says: “He who so knows That, towards him verily all existences yearn”, *sa ya etad evam vedābhi hainam sarvāṇi bhūtāni samvāchchhanti*.<sup>55</sup>

Earlier also, the Kena Upanishad declares that the highest immortality is to be attained here, and that if it is not attained here, it is a great loss of destruction.

“If here one comes to that knowledge, then one truly is; if here one comes not to the knowledge, then great is the perdition. The wise distinguish That in all kinds of becomings and they pass from this world and become immortal.”<sup>56</sup>

In the two concluding verses, the Kena Upanishad summarises the yoga of immortality in the following words:

“Of this knowledge austerity and self-conquest and works are the foundation, the Vedas are its limbs, truth is its dwelling place. He who knows this knowledge, smites evil away from him and in that vaster world and infinite heaven finds his foundation, yea, he finds his foundation.”<sup>57</sup>

Commenting on this, Sri Aurobindo writes:

“The goal of the ascent is the world of the true and vast existence of which the Veda speaks as the Truth that is the final goal and home of man. It is described here as the greater infinite heavenly world, (Swargaloka – Swarloka of the Veda), which is not the lesser Swarga of the Puranas or the lesser Brahmaloka of the Mundaka Upanishad; its world of the sun’s rays to which the soul arrives by works of virtue and piety, but falls from them by the exhaustion of their merit; it is the higher Swarga or Brahman-world of the Katha which is beyond the dual symbols of birth and death, the higher Brahman-worlds of the Mundaka which the soul enters by knowledge and renunciation. It is therefore a state not belonging to Ignorance, but to Knowledge. It is, in fact, the infinite existence and beatitude of the soul in the being of the all-blissful Existence; it is too the higher status, the light of the Mind beyond the mind, the joy and eternal mastery of the Life beyond the life, the riches of the Sense beyond the senses. And the soul finds in it not only its own largeness but finds and possesses the infinity of the One and it has firm foundation in that immortal state because there a supreme Silence and eternal Peace are the secure foundation of eternal Knowledge and absolute Joy.”<sup>58</sup>

## IV

### (a)

Beginning with the Veda or the pre-vedic age, Indian Yoga has continued to live uninterruptedly, and there have been in later periods greater clarities, deeper profundities, subtler precisions, effective specialisations, and even variations and enlargement of objectives and methods. It is true that the highest altitudes arrived at in the Veda and the Upanishads have not been surpassed. But this is as it ought to be. For Yoga is a quest of the highest and permanent Truth or Reality and if they are truly discovered they can only remain perennial. At the same time, Yoga has not been looked upon as a closed book; and hundreds of Yogas have been developed; there have even been conflicts and claims and counter-claims in respect of yogic systems. There have also been, like the synthesis of the Veda and of the Upanishads, new systems of synthesis.

The first synthesis of Yoga, after the age of the Upanishads is to be found in the Bhagawad Gita. Opulent and multi-sided intellectuality burst out as the demands of Reason began to assert themselves at the close of the age of Intuition that marked the Upanishads. This intellectuality is evident in the Mahabharata of which the Gita constitutes an important or even a crucial episode. As a result, the Gita is largely intellectual, ratiocinate, and philosophical in its method. It is, indeed, founded on the Truth discovered by

intuition and spiritual experience, and it is so highly esteemed as to be ranked almost as a thirteenth Upanishad.<sup>59</sup>

The Gita is a continuation of the basic teaching of the Upanishads, although its Vedantic ideas are throughout coloured by the ideas of the Samkhya and Yoga. It must also be stated that the Samkhya in the Gita is not the system of Samkhya Karika of Ishwara Krishna, and Yoga referred to in the Gita is not the Yoga of the Yoga aphorisms of Patanjali. The traditional Samkhya is atheistic, while the Samkhya of the Gita admits and subtly reconciles the theistic, pantheistic and monistic views of the universe. Similarly, the term "Yoga" in the Gita, even while admitting Rajayoga as a part connotes a large, flexible and many-sided system incorporating Karma Yoga and Bhakti Yoga. Action to Patanjali is only a preliminary, in the Gita it is a permanent foundation, and it is a means of the highest ascent and continues even after the complete liberation of the soul. Even the idea of Samadhi in the Gita is quite different from the notion of the Yogic trance found in the system of Patanjali.<sup>60</sup> At the same time, all that is essential in the Samkhya and Yoga, such as the theory of Gunas, theory of elements of Prakriti, and the idea of a subjective practice and inner change for the finding of the Self, is admitted by the Gita. The central concern of the Gita is to expound a practical system of yoga that it teaches and it brings in metaphysical ideas only as explanatory of its practical system; nor does it merely declare Vedantic knowledge, but it founds knowledge and devotion upon works, even as it uplifts works to knowledge, their culmination, and informs them with devotion as their very heart and kernel of their spirit.

The greatest significance of the Gita lies in the fact that it proposes a solution to a central typical problem of human



life that presents itself at a certain critical stage of development. We may say that Arjuna to whom the teaching is addressed is a representative man, and the problem that he faced arose at a certain height of ethical concern in the midst of an actual and symbolic battlefield (Kurukshetra which is also dharmakshetra). He had come to the battlefield motivated by the ideal of a fight for justice. But as he gazed at the armies and looked in the face of the myriads of the champions of unrighteousness whom he had to meet and conquer and slay, the revelation of the meaning of a civil and domestic war came home to him. He was then overcome suddenly by a violent sensational, physical and moral crisis. "What after all," he asked himself in effect, "is this fight for justice when reduced to its practical terms, but just this, a fight for the interests of oneself, one's brothers and one's party for possession and enjoyment and rule?" And he concludes that the entire enterprise was a sin and that there is no right nor justice in mutual slaughter. The question was whether Arjuna should be governed by the ethical sense of personal sin in slaughter or by the consideration equally ethical of his public and social duty, the defence of the Right, the opposition demanded by conscience from all noble natures to the armed forces of injustice and oppression. When ethical considerations collide — as they often do — can they be resolved at the ethical level? Or else are we to say that the problem is insoluble?

The Gita's solution is neither to escape from the problem nor declare it to be insoluble. It asks Arjuna to rise above his natural being and normal mind, above intellectual and ethical perplexities into another consciousness with another law of being and therefore another standpoint for action. For our problems arise because we do not know the origin of our

action; we relate our action to our desire, our preference, our choice; we are not aware that there is universal Prakriti with its three Gunas, which are at the root of our senses, senses of knowledge and senses of action, and of the ego-sense, even of our intelligent will. To deal with our action we have to deal with Prakriti, the universal Nature, the universal machine of action, on which we are mounted and by which we are determined in our desires and our so-called free choice, *prakṛtiṃ yānti bhūtāni, nigrahaḥ kiṃ kariṣyati*.

According to the Gita, there are three preliminary steps that we need to take. First, we must observe the chain of connection between our senses and our intelligent will, so that we may, by means of Buddhi Yoga, the yoga of the Intelligent Will, direct that Will towards the object on which it can become stable, unmoved, fixed, to arrive at the state of *sthitaprajña, samādhista*. According to the analysis of the Gita, the mind normally lends itself to the senses; it observes the object of sense with an inner interest; by that attachment comes, by attachment desire, by desire distress, passion and anger when the desire is not satisfied or is thwarted or opposed, and by passion the soul is obscured, the intelligence and will forget to see and be seated in the calm observing soul; there is a fall from the memory of one's true self, and by that lapse the intelligent will is also obscured, even destroyed. For the time being, we become passion, wrath, grief and cease to be self and intelligence and will.<sup>61</sup> This must be prevented. All the senses must be brought utterly under control; for only by an absolute control of the senses can the wise and calm intelligence be firmly established in its proper seat.

It is by the act of intelligence and by mental self-discipline, that the first step can be taken. The second

important step is contained in the famous prescription that — “Thou hast a right to action, but only to action, never to its fruits; let not the fruits of thy works be thy motive, neither let there be in thee any attachment to inactivity”.<sup>62</sup> This is practicable means of overcoming the knot of desire in which we are entangled. For desire is centrally fixed in the pursuit of attainment of fruits of action; therefore if fruits of action cease to be the motive of action, the knot of desire can be greatly loosened. Indeed, this is not the *mahāvākya* of the Gita, not the last word, for that is still to come much later; but the practice of this step will lead to the perception of the mechanism of the Universal Prakriti and also the glimpse of that which transcends Prakriti. For beyond the Prakriti, there is the immutable Brahman, described in terms reminiscent of the Upanishadic description, luminous, pure, sustaining the world but inactive in it, without sinews of energy, without flaw of duality, without scar of division, unique, identical, free from all appearance of relation and of multiplicity. And there is still a Beyond, higher than the Highest, the Lord of Prakriti, the Purusha, who subsists simultaneously in the inactive Purusha, *Akshara Purusha*, and active Purusha, *Kshara Purusha*. He is the Purushottama.<sup>63</sup> The third preliminary step is to realise that “Action is far inferior to the Yoga of Intelligence; take, therefore, thy refuge in intelligence.”<sup>64</sup> This is the prescription that startles Arjuna and perplexes him, since it seems to imply renunciation of action. But as Sri Krishna explains, while intelligence is superior to action, action is superior to inaction. Therefore, while seated in intelligence, in Samkhya, one must do actions, be fixed in Yoga. For it is by Yoga of Intelligence that these large visions of Prakriti and origin of Prakriti will come to the seeker. And, as a result, the seeker will begin to

consecrate himself to the Divine and to give up his whole self to the Divine. As Sri Krishna states: "He (the seeker) must sit firm in Yoga, wholly given up to Me."<sup>65</sup>

## (b)

These three steps prepare the seeker for a more advanced and integral sadhana. "To action alone hast thou the right"—was the first formulation of the categorical imperative. But now comes the second, the higher imperative; it says in effect that one has to realise that even to action one has no right; for the individual is not the doer of action; action is engendered at one end by Prakriti, that too, lower Prakriti, *Aparā Prakriti*, and at the other end by the Supreme, Purushottama, by means of *Parā Prakriti*, higher Prakriti. At the source of everything, lower and higher, is the One Doer, the Supreme, who is both mutable and immutable, the Doer who is also devoid of doing, who is eternally free. Towards this status of knowledge and this status of action the seeker has to move forward.

And what are the means? Works themselves are the means. That is why it is Karma yoga. But which works? All works. For all works in their totality find their culmination and completeness in knowledge of the Divine, *sarvaṁ karmākhilam pārtha jñāne parisamāpyate*.<sup>66</sup> There is, however, an important condition. All works are to be performed with sacrifice as the object. Sri Krishna declares, "By doing works other than for sacrifice, the world of men is in bondage to works; for sacrifice practise works, O son of Kunti, becoming free from all attachment".<sup>67</sup>

We have here the reiteration of the Vedic Yoga of Yajna,

not in its ritualistic sense, but in its esoteric sense, which is made explicit in the Gita. The universal energy into which action is poured is the Divine; the consecrated energy of the giving is the Divine; whatever is offered is only some form of the Divine; the giver of the offering is the Divine himself in man; the action, the work, the sacrifice is itself the Divine in movement, in activity; the goal to be reached by sacrifice is the Divine. Says Sri Krishna:

“Brahman is the giving, Brahman is the food-offering, by Brahman it is offered into the Brahman-fire, Brahman is that which is to be attained by Samadhi in Brahman-action.”<sup>68</sup>

Between the individual who offers his works as sacrifice and the Supreme, who is above all action and is the Real Doer and from whom all moves out as His sacrifice, there is a huge gulf and forest of obstacles. All that constitutes the gulf and all obstacles are to be offered as sacrifice in the fire of purification and concentration. As the Gita explains: “Some offer their senses into the fires of control, others offer the objects of sense and all the actions of the sense and all the actions of the vital force into the fire of the Yoga of self-control kindled by knowledge”.<sup>69</sup> The offering of the striver after perfection may be material and physical, *dravya yajna*; or it may be the austerity of his self-discipline and energy of his soul directed to some high aim, *tapoyajna*, or it may be some form of Yoga like the Pranayama of the Rajayogis or Hathayogis, or any other *yoga yajna*. All these tend to the purification of the being; all sacrifice is a way towards the attainment of the highest.

As a result, desire begins to fall away ego-sense begins to disappear; the hold of gunas begins to loosen; the seeker

gains equality, *samatvam*, and becomes free from the modes of the Nature, *nistraigunya*; his soul takes its poise not in the insecurity of Prakriti, but in the peace of the immutable Brahman, even while his actions continue in the movement of Prakriti.

Or, one even begins to gain entry into Para Prakriti, Higher Nature, and becomes a channel, instrument, *nimitta mātram*, of the Supreme Divine. One realises Him as the Sole Doer, and there follow momentous consequences. Here are now the heights, the revelation of the secrets, even of the Supreme secret, *rahasyam uttamam*, and the vision of the inter-relationship of individual action, world-action and God-action.

The question that Arjuna had raised can now be answered at this stage. The question: What ought I to do? can be transformed into the question; What is the Supreme Will acting through me? It is only if we know the Supreme Will and if we can give ourselves to that Will, — not because we are compelled, but because of our irresistible attraction born out of our own nature, *swabhāva*, and our own inevitable law of development, *swadharma*, or by that Supreme Love born out of our own inmost being, soul, *jīva*, in its inalienable union with the Supreme — then the human problem can be solved, our human life be delivered out of its confusions and crookedness into the clarity and freedom of divine life.

### (c)

The idea, on which this possibility is founded, is the conception of the individual soul in man as in its eternal essence and its original power a ray of the supreme soul and

Godhead and here a veiled manifestation of him, a being of his being, a consciousness of his consciousness, a nature of his nature, but in the obscurity of *avidya*, of this mental and physical existence self-forgetful of its source, its reality, its true character. Hence, there is the double nature of the Soul in manifestation, — the original nature in which it is one with its own true spiritual being, and the derived nature in which it is subject to the confusion of egoism and ignorance. The latter has to be cast away and the spiritual has to be inwardly recovered, fulfilled, made dynamic and active. Through an inner self-fulfilment, the opening of a new status, our birth into a new power, we return to the nature of the spirit and re-become a portion of the Godhead from whom we have descended.

The basis of this self-fulfilment in divine Nature is to be found in “the essential knowledge, attended with all the comprehensive knowledge, by knowing which there shall be no other thing here left to be known.”<sup>70</sup> As a foundation of this integral knowledge, the Gita makes a deep and momentous distinction between two Natures, the phenomenal and the spiritual Nature:

“The five elements (conditions of material being), mind, reason, ego, this is my eight-fold divided Nature. But know my other Nature different from this, the Supreme, which becomes the Jiva and by which this world is upheld.”<sup>71</sup>

If we study this in conjunction with the doctrine of the three Purushas, we get the basis of the path of Divine Love and also its synthesis with the path of knowledge and path of works.

Says Sri Krishna:

“There are two Purushas in the world, the *kshara* and

the *akshara*. *Kshara* is the totality of all the beings; and That which is above, imperturbably, is called *akshara*. But there is another and higher Purusha; it is called the Paramatman. It is He, the imperishable Lord, who penetrates the three worlds and supports them. Because I am above the *kshara*, above the *akshara* and superior to it, I am glorified in the world and in the Veda under the name of Purshottama."<sup>72</sup>

The practical effect for the seeker in the battlefield of life is that one has to ascend into the divine nature; one must, as already indicated, first fix oneself in a perfect spiritual equality and rise above the lower nature of the three Gunas. Next, there is also an ineffable eternal multiplicity of the Purushottama, a highest truest truth behind the primal mystery of soul manifestation. The Infinite has an eternal power and unending action of his divine Nature, and in that action the miracle of soul personality emerges from play of apparently impersonal forces, *prakritir jivabhuta*. This is possible because personality too is a character of the Divine, although this personality is something exalted, universal and transcendent, immortal and divine. That mystery of the supreme Person is the secret of love and devotion.

A new dimension is added to yoga. The spiritual person, the soul in us comes in front, becomes *purohita* in the sacrifice, to use the Vedic image, and it offers itself and all it has to the eternal Divine, the Supreme Person of whom it is a portion, *amsha*.<sup>73</sup> The completeness of knowledge finds itself in the self-offering, this uplifting of our personal nature by love and adoration; the sacrifice of works receives by it its consummation and perfect sanction. It is, then, through these things that the soul of man fulfils itself most



completely in this other and dynamic secret, this other great and intimate aspect of the divine nature and possesses by that fulfilment the foundation of immortality, supreme felicity and right law of action.

When, by the union of the *yogā* of works, knowledge and devotion, the individual rises to the realisation of the triple Purusha and of the divine Prakriti, the seeker is able to act out of a tranquil universality and oneness with all things and creatures. In what Sri Krishna calls his supreme word,<sup>74</sup> it is declared that when this yoga is perfected, and when the seeker become fixed in it, *avikampena yogena yujyate*, he is able to take up whatever poise of nature, assume whatever human condition, do whatever world-action without any fall from his oneness with the divine self, without any loss of his constant communion with the Master of existence. "The sages adore Me with fervour and devotion," says Sri Krishna, "their thought becomes full of Me, their life is melted in Me, and their speech utters only of Me, and their joy is concentrated in all the contentment of the being, all the play and pleasure of the nature."<sup>75</sup> There is, Sri Krishna continues, a continual union from moment to moment in the thought and memory, there is an unbroken continuity of the experience of oneness in the spirit. "I uplift the blazing lamp of knowledge in them and destroy the ignorance of the separative mind and will."<sup>76</sup> Thus the Eternal is fulfilled in the individual spirit and individual nature; the individual spirit is exalted from birth in time to the infinitudes of the Eternal.

Becoming Brahman, assumption into the self of eternal silence, *brahmabhūya*, is not final objective, but only the necessary immense base for a greater and more marvellous

divine becoming, *madbhāva*. For that perfection, we have also to act in the power, *shakti*, *Prakriti*. Transcending the law of the *gunas* of the lower *Prakriti*, we have to enter into inner immobility, we have to discover our *jiva*, its *swabhava*, *swadharma*, and the faculties and powers of the divine *Prakriti*, where the divine Will becomes manifest, not only both in its comprehensive wideness but also in its specificity as it has to work out in each individual. One is bestowed the boon of the vision of the world-spirit, as it was given to Arjuna, one comes to know also the secret of the descent of the Divine Himself in the physical, of the *avatara*, and one comes to know also the special manifestations of the Divine, *vibhuthis*. Love gives knowledge, and knowledge ends in love as its crown; knowledge becomes the foundation of a constant living in the Divine; and works end in knowledge; Love is the highest motive of works, and works give us the highest fulfilment in love. In the balanced synthesis of the yoga of the triple path, each is a mean, and each is an end; all are complementary, and all unite in a complex harmony. Works do not bind the doer, that is what the Isha Upanishad had declared. And the Gita reiterates it with an expanded emphasis: "And by doing all actions always lodged in Me, he attains by My grace the eternal and imperishable status."<sup>77</sup> In that state, our works proceed straight from the Self and Divine within us, are a part of the indivisible universal action, are initiated and performed not by us but by a vast transcendent *shakti*. All that we do is done for the sake of the Lord seated in the heart of all, for the Godhead in the individual and for the fulfilment of his will in us, for the sake of the Divine in the world, for the good of all beings, *lokasamgrahārthāya*; for the fulfilment of the world action and the world purpose — for the sake of the Purushottama.

## (d)

The synthesis of Yoga that the Gita gives us brings out the mystery of our own soul and its relationship with the Supreme, as also the mystery and miracle of the Supreme, Purushottama, and His relationship with our soul. As a consequence, a nearest oneness in all the being, profoundly individual in a divine passion even in the midst of universality, even at the top of transcendence is here enjoined on the soul as its way to reach the Highest. The life of the Jiva has to be utterly the life of the Purushottama in him. The individual has to be utterly passive, in every way, *sarva bhāvena*, to the Supreme. The laws of ignorance, of the *tamas*, *rajas*, *sattwa*, of the ego, even the laws of yoga are but crutches on the way; they do not bind that sweetest and freest relationship of the individual and his Lord; all dharmas are to be abandoned; there are no laws, not even of yoga, for there is only yoga, union, complete and integral; that is the true relationship, and once that relationship is accepted, the only imperative is that of the unconditional and categorical surrender to the Supreme. This is the secret of secrets, which Sri Krishna reveals:

“Become My-minded, My lover and adorer, a sacrificer to Me, bow thyself to Me, to Me thou shalt come, this is My pledge and promise to thee, for dear art thou to Me. Abandon all Dharmas and take refuge in Me alone. I will deliver thee from all sin and evil, do not grieve.”<sup>78</sup>

## V

### (a)

The next great synthesis after the Gita is that of the Tantra.<sup>79</sup> The literature concerned with the Tantra Shastra or Agamas appears to have been written and completed very largely during the Gupta period, although the traditions, practices and even texts are considered to have existed from very early times. A number of Agamas, such as those of Jainism and Buddhism and others are not in harmony with the Vedas, yet most of the Agamas are in consonance with the Vedas. Of these latter, there are three categories, those in which the object of worship and realisation is Vishnu (known also as *Pancharātra* or *Bhāgavata*), those in which the object of worship and realisation is Shiva, and those in which the object of worship and realisation is Shakti. In the Shaiva Agamas we find monism, qualified monism and dualism, in the Pancharatra Agama we find qualified monism, and in the Shakta Agama there is only monism. In all the Agamas there are four aspects, the aspect of *Jñāna*, the aspect of *Yoga*, the aspect of *Charyā*, and the aspect of *Kriyā*. *Jñāna* refers to the metaphysical position of the concerned agama; *Yoga* refers to the practices of self-discipline and psychological development; *charyā* refers to the conduct of the teacher and the example of self-realisation and self-mastery that he provides, and *kriyā* refers to the practices regarding the installation of the image of the deity, worship and ceremonies and congregations of devotees. All the four

aspects are important and complementary to each other. Three important features of the Tantric Yoga are that (a) they emphasise the role that the life-energy can play not only in the discovery and realisation of the higher and the highest objects of worship but also in arriving at control and mastery over the life-forces and activity in the physical world; (b) they emphasise the collective aspect of realisation; and (c) the knowledge and practice of Tantra is made available to all individuals and sections of society. Thus, the concern of Tantra for human life, both individual and collective, is unique and its contribution to the understanding of life is highly significant.

Since the field of Tantra is concentrated very largely on life activities, and since life activities represent a large multiplicity of forces and tendencies, Tantra tends to be multi-sided and even synthetic in character. It is evident that a number of specialised Yogas had already developed by the time we come to the Purano-Tantric age in our history. Prominent among them were Hatha Yoga, Raja Yoga, Mantra Yoga, Karma Yoga, Jnana Yoga and Bhakti Yoga. Hatha Yoga had fixed its aim at the conquest of the life and the body, and it sought to rectify the limits of physical and vital functioning and establish a new equilibrium by which the physical would be able to sustain the inrush of an increasing vital force of *prāṇa*. This new equilibrium would, according to Hatha Yoga, open a power to the universalisation of the individual vitality. Hatha Yoga also aimed at awakening by the processes of *āsana* and *prāṇāyāma*, of the coiled-up serpent energy of dynamism in the vital sheath, *prāṇamaya kosha*, and opening to the yogin, fields of consciousness, ranges of experience, abnormal faculties and striking results of control and mastery over the physical body. The secret of

the Hatha Yoga lies in its idea that the soul in the physical body can, by fixed scientific processes, develop power, light, purity, freedom and an ascending scale of spiritual experiences if it dwells more and more constantly in the subtle (*sukshma*), and the developed causal vehicle (*kāraṇa sharira*). Hatha Yoga also recognises the possibility of the action of *prāṇa* through *nādis* or nerve channels of the physical system and it has developed the knowledge of its action in the six chakras<sup>80</sup> or ganglionic centres of the nervous system. The Hatha Yogin attains a complete mastery of the body and the life of a free and effective use of them, and he can turn them for obtaining more important psychical and spiritual effects. Here the Hatha Yoga can come into line with the practices of Raja Yoga, and a point can be reached at which a transition can be made from Hatha Yoga to Raja Yoga.

Raja Yoga aims at the liberation and perfection not of the bodily being but of the mental being; although it admits the utility of *asana* and *pranayama*, but not as liberally as in the Hatha Yoga. It fixes its eyes on the *chitta*, that stuff of mental consciousness in which the activities of the emotional and sensational life and of thought and consciousness arise. The primary movement of Raja Yoga is a careful self-discipline consisting of *yama* and *niyama*. By the practice of truth, by renunciation of all forms of egoistic seeking, by abstention from injury to others, by purity, by constant meditation and inclination to the divine Purusha (Ishwara praṇidhāna), a pure, glad, clear state of mind and heart is established. Next, by simplified device of *asana* and *pranayama*, Raja Yoga aims at the control of the body and the vital functions and at the awakening of that internal dynamism, full of a latent super-normal faculty of the coiled and sleeping serpent of

internal Energy, which is called Kundalini in the Yogic terminology. Thereafter, Raja Yoga proceeds to the perfect quieting of the restless mind through the stages of *pratyāhāra*, *dhāraṇā* and *dhyāna*. Achievement of *dhyāna* in which the mind becomes concentrated leads to the state of *samādhi* which gives an entry into higher states of consciousness. Mental action is liberated from the confusions of the outer-consciousness, and it passes thence to the higher supramental planes in which the individual soul, Purusha, enters into its spiritual existence, distinct and independent of Prakriti, Nature. The ancient system of Raja Yoga aimed not only at the entire control of various states and activities proper to subjective consciousness but included also the control by the subjective consciousness of its outer-activities and environment; it aimed at both *swarājya* and *sāmrajya*.

The path of Knowledge, Jnana Yoga, aims at the realisation of the unique and supreme Self. It proceeds by the method of intellectual reflection, *vichāra*, to right discrimination, *viveka*. It insists on the rejection of our normal identification with body, life and mind, which are seen as creations of *māyā*, phenomenal consciousness. On its positive side, it is able to arrive at our right identification with the unique Self which is not mutable or perishable. From this point the path, as ordinarily followed, leads to the rejection of the phenomenal worlds from the consciousness as an illusion and the final immergence of the individual soul in the Supreme. A wider pursuit of the path of Knowledge may also lead to an active conquest of the cosmic existence for the divine, no less than to a transcendent.

The path of devotion, Bhakti Yoga, aims at the enjoyment of the supreme Love and Bliss. It utilises normally the

conception of the supreme Lord in His personality as the divine lover and enjoyer of the universe. Bhakti Yoga turns all the normal relations of human life and applies them no longer to transient worldly relations, but to the joy of the All-Loving, the All-Beautiful and the All-Blissful. The normal means used are those of worship and meditation, so as to increase the intensity of the divine relationship. This path, as ordinarily practised, leads the seeker ultimately away from the world-existence to an absorption in the transcendent and supra-cosmic. But a larger path of devotion may extend to the elevation of the whole range of human emotion, sensation and aesthetic perception to the divine level, its spiritualization and the justification of the cosmic labour towards the love and joy of humanity.

The path of works, Karma Yoga, aims at the discovery of the supreme Will and dedication of every human activity to that Will. It begins by the renunciation of all pursuit of action for an interested aim or for the sake of the worldly results. By this renunciation, the seeker becomes aware of the Lord of Prakriti as the ultimate doer of all activity. The individual then recognises himself as an instrument of the Supreme and as a conscious centre of divine action in the world. Here also, the object can be the release of the soul from its bondage to the reactions of phenomenal activities and a departure into the Supreme. But a larger path of action would lead to a free and unegoistic participation of the soul in the cosmic action.

### (b)

Tantra adopted all these yogas and improved upon them with its special knowledge of the occult worlds and applied



these means for opening up the inner centres, chakras, that window upon the supra-physical and still higher regions. Tantra developed also another *sāadhanā* which had its origin in the Veda. This is Mantra Yoga. A mantra is considered a sound-body of a Power charged with the intense vibrations of the spiritual personality or the creator or the seer of the mantra. When a mantra is uttered, under proper conditions, the flame of *tapasyā* and realisation that is lying coiled up in the body of that utterance goes forth to evoke the response of the gods to whom it is addressed. The form of a mantra may be coherent word or may be single letters arranged in a certain order. Tantra has formulated some seed-letters, *bījāksharas*, which the seeker uses as mantra. These *bījāksharas* have been endowed with a perennial store of Power by the Tantric seers and it needs only the touch of the Guru to set them awake in the disciple.

As far as the central principle of the Tantric Yoga is concerned, we find that it expressly differentiates itself from the Vedic method of Yoga. All the Vedic methods rely on the force of Knowledge, knowledge that comes by discernment by the intellect or the knowledge of the heart expressed in love and faith or a knowledge in the Will working out through action. In all of them the Lord of the Yoga is the Purusha, the conscious Soul that knows, observes, attracts, and governs. But in Tantra it is rather Prakriti, the nature-Soul, the Energy, the Will-in-Power executed in the universe. Tantra learns and applies the intimate secrets of this Will-in-Power, its method, its tantra, and the tantric Yogin pursues the aims of discipline, mastery, perfection, liberation and beatitude. Instead of drawing back from Manifested Nature and its difficulties, he converts them, seizes them and conquers them. The Tantra emphasises one very important

aspect of the truth, namely the worship of the Energy, Shakti, as the effective force for all attainments. Tantra raises nature in man into manifest power of spirit and it concentrates on the whole nature of the human being for the purpose of the spiritual conversion. It utilises the instrumentation of the forceful Hatha Yogic process, particularly, in the opening up of the nervous centres or the chakras and the passage through them of the awakened Shakti on her way to her union with the Brahman. It also utilises the subtler strain of the Raja Yogic purification, meditation and concentration. It also utilises the leverage of Will force of Karma Yoga, the motive power of devotion, Bhakti Yoga, and the key of Knowledge, Jnana Yoga. But it enlarges their aims and methods in two directions by means of synthetic turn. First, it lays its hands firmly on many of the mainsprings of the human quality, desire, action and it subjects them to an intensive discipline with the self-mastery of its motives as a first aim and their elevation to a diviner spiritual level as its final utility. And secondly, it includes in its objects of Yoga not only liberation, *mukti*, but also a cosmic enjoyment, *bhukti*, of the power of the Spirit. Thus Tantra becomes a bolder and larger system. It is true that the Tantric system makes liberation the final, but not the only aim. It takes on its way a full perfection and enjoyment of the spiritual power, light and joy in the human existence, and even it has a glimpse of a supreme experience in which liberation and cosmic action and enjoyment are unified in a final overcoming of all opposition and dissonances.<sup>81</sup>

It is true that owing to certain of its developments Tantra fell into discredit with those who are not tantrics. This is particularly true in connection with the development of its *Vāmamārga*, left hand path. This path was not content with

exceeding the duality of virtue and sin, but it seemed to make self-indulgence a method of unrestrained social immorality. But in its origin, its two-fold division into the right-hand and left-hand path, *dakshina mārga* and *vāma mārga*, started from a certain profound perspective. In the ancient symbolic sense it was the distinction between the way of Knowledge and the way of Ananda. In the way of Knowledge, nature in man liberates itself by the right discrimination in power and practice of its own energies, elements and potentialities. In the way of Ananda, nature in man liberates itself by joyous existence in power and practice of its own energies, elements and potentialities. But the history of the Tantra shows that in both paths there was in the end an obscuration of principles, a deformation of symbols and a fall.

## VI

### (a)

It is possible to look upon Yoga as a means of escape from the world and its life. It may be argued that the world-existence is a cosmic illusion or that it is born out of cosmic ignorance and desire, and that there is no issue in it except to find out the quickest means to come out of this sorrowful world-existence. In fact, extreme forms of Yoga have preached asceticism and world-negating attitudes. In these cases, Yoga has become divorced from life and some kind of antagonism between yoga and life has been conceived and practised. These extreme forms of Yoga have been exclusive in character, and where yoga and life do not meet, there can be no question of any synthesis of yoga. But even without recourse to any extreme positions, mere multiplication of Yogic processes brings about some kind of distance between life and yoga. Preoccupation with yogic processes and their exceptional results often impel the yogin to draw away from the common existence and lose his hold upon it. If he gains God, he loses life, or if he turns his efforts outward to conquer life, he is in danger of losing God. Fortunately, there has been throughout the history of Indian Yoga a powerful tendency to reunite Spirit and Nature, God and Life. This is what we have seen in respect of the Veda, Upanishad, and the Gita. In Tantra, we have seen a bolder effort to utilise the obstacles which life presents to yoga as gates of higher realisation. But all turns ultimately on the central question

as to what the human being is precisely expected to realise and whether human life has a potentiality of sustaining the highest possible realisations and powers. This is a question that Indian Yoga has constantly raised, but in the latest effort of yoga represented by Sri Aurobindo we have the sharpest formulation of the question and a new answer and also a new synthesis of yoga, the very formula of which is that "All life is Yoga."

Sri Aurobindo writes, "all life, when we look behind its appearances, is a vast Yoga of Nature attempting to realise her perfection in an ever increasing expression of her potentialities and to unite herself with her own divine reality. In man, her thinker, she for the first time upon this Earth devises self-conscious means and willed arrangements of activity by which this great purpose may be more swiftly and puissantly attained. Yoga, as Swami Vivekananda has said, may be regarded as a means of compressing one's evolution into a single life or a few years or even a few months of bodily existence... It is this view of Yoga that can alone form the basis for a sound and rational synthesis of Yogic methods."<sup>82</sup> According to Sri Aurobindo, man is that term and symbol of a higher Existence descended into the material world in which it is possible for the lower to transfigure itself and put on the nature of the higher and the higher to reveal itself in the forms of the lower. He concludes that the true and full object and utility of yoga can only be accomplished when the conscious yoga in man becomes, like the subconscious yoga in Nature, outwardly conterminous with life itself.

In a letter addressed to a disciple, Sri Aurobindo has explained the novelty of his synthesis of yoga. He points out

that his yoga is new as compared with the old yogas because (1) it aims not at a departure out of world and life into Heaven or Nirvana, but at a change of life and existence, not as something subordinate or incidental, but as a distinct and central object; (2) the object sought after is not an individual achievement of divine realisation for the sake of the individual, but something to be gained for the earth consciousness here, a cosmic, not solely a supra-cosmic achievement; and (3) a method has been preconized for achieving this purpose which is as total and integral as the aim set before it, namely, the total and integral change of the consciousness and nature, taking up old methods but only as a part action and present aid to others that are distinctive.<sup>83</sup>

Sri Aurobindo points out that an indiscriminating combination of different systems of yoga would not be a synthesis but a confusion. At the same time, he shows that successive practice of each of them in turn would not be easy in the short span of our human life, even though in an exceptional example of Sri Ramakrishna one sees "a colossal spiritual capacity, first driving straight to the divine realisation, taking, as it were, the kingdom of heaven by violence, and then seizing upon one Yogic method after another and extracting the substance out of it with an incredible rapidity, always to return to the heart of the whole matter, the realisation and possession of God by the power of love, by the extension of inborn spirituality into various experience and by the spontaneous play of an intuitive knowledge."<sup>84</sup> Such an example, he points out, cannot be generalised. His solution is to effect a synthesis by neglecting the forms and outsides of the yogic disciplines and seizing rather on some central principle common to all which will include and utilise in the right place and proportion their

particular principles, and on some central dynamic force which is the common secret of their divergent methods and therefore capable of organising a natural selection and combination of their varied energies and different utilities. Each special system of yoga selects an instrument, purifies it, subtilises it, and focuses it on the object of realisation. Concentration and purification of the instrument lead to the realisation. In the integral Yoga all the instruments of our consciousness are taken up, all of them are placed through the process of purification, and they are concentrated on the supreme object in all its integrality. In his own words, "In an ordinary Yoga one main power of being or one group of its powers is made the means, vehicle, path. In a synthetic Yoga all powers will be combined and included in the transmuting instrumentation".<sup>85</sup>

The method of synthesis in Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga seems to start from the method of Vedanta to arrive at the aim of Tantra. In the Tantric method Shakti is all-important, becomes the key to the finding of spirit. In Sri Aurobindo's synthesis, spirit or soul, is all-important and becomes the secret of the taking up of Shakti. The Tantric method starts from the bottom and grades the ladder of ascent upwards to the summit; therefore, its initial stress is upon the action of the awakened Kundalini in the nervous system of the body and its centres. In Sri Aurobindo's synthesis man is taken as a spirit in mind much more than a spirit in the body and assumes in him the capacity to begin on that level, to spiritualise his being by the power of the soul in mind opening itself directly to a higher spiritual force and being and to perfect by that higher force so possessed and brought into action the whole of his nature. Therefore, the initial stress here falls upon the utilisation of the powers of soul in

mind and the turning of the triple key of knowledge, works and love in the locks of the spirit. The Hathayogic methods can be dispensed with here, although there is no objection to their partial use. And the Rajayogic methods enter in as an informal element. In Sri Aurobindo's words, "To arrive by the shortest way at the largest development of spiritual power and being and divinise by it a liberated nature in the whole range of human living is our inspiring motive."<sup>86</sup>

The central principle of the integral yoga is a self-surrender, a giving up of the human being into the being, consciousness, power, and delight of the Divine, a union or communion, at all the points of meeting in the soul of man, the mental being, by which the Divine himself, directly and without veil, master and possessor of instrument, shall perfect the human being by the light of his presence and guidance in all the forces of nature for a divine living. Normally, liberation of the soul of man is considered to be purpose of all yogas. In Sri Aurobindo's yoga, the spirit in man is looked upon not merely as an individual being travelling to a transcendent unity with the Divine, but as a universal being capable of oneness with the Divine in all souls and all nature with all its practical consequences. As Sri Aurobindo explains:

"The human soul's individual liberation and enjoyment of union with the Divine in spiritual being, consciousness and delight must always be the first object of the Yoga; its free enjoyment of the cosmic unity of the Divine becomes a second object; but out of that a third appears, the effectuation of the meaning of the divine unity with all being by a sympathy and participation in the spiritual purpose of the Divine in humanity. The individual Yoga then turns from its



separateness and becomes a part of the collective Yoga of the divine Nature in the human race. The liberated individual being, united with the Divine himself and spirit, becomes in his natural being a self-perfecting instrument for the perfect out flowering of the Divine in humanity.”<sup>87</sup>

This out flowering implies a perfection which amounts to the elevation of the mental into the full spiritual and what Sri Aurobindo calls supramental nature. Therefore, the integral yoga of knowledge, love and works is extended into a Yoga of spiritual and supramental perfection.

### (b)

Supermind is the key-word. For supermind is an integral consciousness; it is at once the self-awareness of the Infinite and Eternal and a power of self-determination inherent in that self-awareness. All that a Timeless eternity of self-awareness seizes in itself as truth of being, a conscious power of its being manifests in Time-eternity. To supermind, therefore, the Supreme is not a rigid Indeterminable, and all-negating Absolute; the Infinite of Being is also an Infinite of Power. The Supreme and Eternal Infinite determines itself to our consciousness in the universe by real and fundamental truths of its Being which are beyond universe and in it and are the very foundation of its existence. The Supreme is *tad ekam* and *sah* of the Veda; it is *parāt para* higher than the highest, of the Upanishad; it is *Purushotamma* of the Gita; it is the Supreme Lord of the Shakti of the Tantra. It is unknowable to our mental consciousness but self-evident to knowledge by identity of which the spiritual being in us is capable. It is That which is known to us when it is manifest

to us as Sachchidananda, an Eternal and the Infinite and Absolute self-existence, self-awareness, self-delight of being. According to Sri Aurobindo, this founds all things and secretly supports and pervades all things. Supermind is the self-determining power of expression of that Supreme Reality. It is the Divine Maya and Aditi of the Veda; it is Haimavati Uma of the Upanishad; it is the Para Prakriti of the Gita, it is the Supreme Shakti of the Tantra. Supermind is also termed as Real-Idea, for in Supermind knowledge the Idea is not divorced from Will in the Idea, but one with it — just as it is not different from being or substance, but is one with the being, luminous power of the substance. As the power of burning light is not different from the substance of the fire, so the power of the Idea is not different from the substance of the Being which works itself out in the Idea and its development. Supermind is, therefore, described as the Truth-Consciousness, *rita chit* of the Veda.

Sri Aurobindo speaks of the triple status of the Supermind, (i) the status of the comprehensive consciousness which founds the inalienable unity of things, (ii) the status of apprehending consciousness in which the Divine Consciousness stands back in the idea from the movement which it contains resulting in the individual play of movement where the conscious Self is the same everywhere in soul-essence, but varying in soul-form, — corresponding to Gita's *Parā prakṛtir jīva bhūtā*, and (iii) the status where the supporting concentration of the individual play projects itself into the movement and becomes in a way involved in it so as to create a fundamental blissful dualism in unity between the individual Divine and its universal souls. These three statuses of the Supermind correspond, respectively, to unitary consciousness, qualified oneness and

blissful dualism. In the Supermind these three do not conflict with each other but express a total harmony. As Sri Aurobindo states: "We cannot stamp any of these three poises with the stigma of falsehood and illusion. The language of the Upanishads, the supreme ancient authority for these truths of a higher experience, when they speak of the Divine existence which is manifesting itself, implies the validity of all these experiences."<sup>88</sup>

The conflict among various positions of Vedantic philosophy finds a resolution in the experience of the three poises of the Supermind. The conflict arises when human mentality lays an exclusive emphasis on one side of spiritual experience. As Sri Aurobindo explains:

"Thus, emphasising the sole truth of the unitarian consciousness, we observe the play of the divine unity, erroneously rendered by our mentality into the terms of real difference, but, not satisfied with correcting this error of the mind by the truth of a higher principle, we assert that the play itself is an illusion. Or, emphasising the play of the One in the Many, we declare a qualified unity and regard the individual soul as a soul-form of the Supreme, but would assert the eternity of this qualified existence and deny altogether the experience of a pure consciousness in an unqualified oneness. Or, again, emphasising the play of difference, we assert that the Supreme and the human soul are eternally different and reject the validity of an experience which exceeds and seems to abolish that difference. But the position that we have now firmly taken absolves us from the necessity of these negations and exclusions: we see that there is a truth behind all these affirmations, but at the same time an excess which leads to an ill-founded negation."<sup>89</sup>

In the Supermind various spiritual experiences become integrated and find their right place in its integrality. It is true that beyond the supramental planes of consciousness there are greater heights of the manifested Spirit. As in the Veda and in the Upanishad, so in Sri Aurobindo, the Supermind is a link between the Supreme Sachchidananda and the lower world of Ignorance, the world of Matter, Life and Mind. Supramental world is the world of Vedic *swar*, the supramental world is a world corresponding to the Upanishadlic *vijnāna*; and one can rise into higher worlds of Ananda, Chit and Sat. But even then, as Sri Aurobindo points out, “the Supramental Truth-Consciousness would not be absent from these planes, for it is an inherent power of Sachchidananda: the difference would be that the determinations would not be demarcations, they would be plastic, interfused, each a boundless finite. For there all is in each and each is in all radically and integrally,....”<sup>90</sup>

Thus supramental integrality is not a fixed quantity, but there is in the supramental consciousness a possibility of constant progression, but this progression would not be from Ignorance to Knowledge but from Knowledge to Knowledge. In Sri Aurobindo’s words: “...its very nature is knowledge: it has not to acquire knowledge but possesses it in its own right; its steps are not from nescience or ignorance into some imperfect light, but from truth to greater truth, from right perception to deeper perception, from intuition to intuition, from illumination to utter and boundless luminousness, from growing widennesses to the utter vasts and to very infinitude.”<sup>91</sup>

## (c)

The aim of Sri Aurobindo's integral yoga is not only to ascend to the supermind and above, but to bring about full descent and manifestation of the supermind in the physical existence. This is the distinctive and differentiating aim, which makes it radically turned to earthly life. In this yoga all life is accepted; but there is a supreme qualification in this acceptance. All life is accepted but all life is transformed by the highest supramental consciousness. The aim is to work for the establishment of supermind as a grade in physical life, in the same way as life is established in matter and mind is established in material life by the evolutionary process of Nature. It was this work which was undertaken by Sri Aurobindo and by the Mother who joined him from 1914 onwards for accomplishing this work. This entire work required the treading of an uncharted path and hewing a new path. This path is called the path of triple transformation. In a briefest description of the triple transformation, Sri Aurobindo points out that "there must first be the psychic change, the conversion of our whole present nature into a soul-instrumentation; on that or along with that there must be the spiritual change, the descent of a higher Light, Knowledge, Power, Force, Bliss, Purity into the whole being, even into the lowest recesses of the life and body, even into the darkness of our subconsciousness; last, there must supervene the supramental transmutation, — there must take place as the crowning movement the ascent into the Supermind and the transforming descent of the supramental Consciousness into our entire being and nature."<sup>92</sup>

It is this process of triple transformation that is described in detail in Sri Aurobindo's *'The Life Divine'*, *'The Synthesis*

of Yoga', *'The Supramental Manifestation upon Earth'*, and in his many thousand letters. An account of the highest efforts of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother and of the accomplishment of the task is given in thirteen volumes of *'Mother's Agenda'*. This great effort resulted in what the Mother has called the Yoga of physical cells which involved the action of the Supermind directly into the physical aiming at the mutation of the human species.

Looking at this supreme work and accomplishment, the long history of Indian Yoga finds its full justification and its fulfilment in earthly life. And resulting from this yoga we get a supreme message that, to use the Mother's words, "Salvation is collective and physical".<sup>93</sup>

## Notes and References

- <sup>1</sup> It is believed that in its original condition Veda was one, but it was Rishi Vyasa who divided it into collections, Samhitas, Rig Veda, Yajur Veda, Sama Veda, and Atharva Veda. The antiquity of the Veda has been a subject of discussion and dispute. But it is acknowledged that it is the oldest available record in the world.
- <sup>2</sup> *Rig Veda (RV)*, X.67.1.
- <sup>3</sup> The Angirasa legend and the conquest or recovery of the Sun and the Dawn are frequent subjects of allusion in the hymns of the *Rig Veda*. See in particular, I.62; VI.17.3; VII.90.4; VII.98.6; see also VI.60.2; VI.44.22; VI.62.11; I.93.4; IV.50.4-5; VI.73.1; VI.66.8; VI.54.5-6.
- <sup>4</sup> *RV*, VII.60.5.
- <sup>5</sup> *RV*, I.164.47.
- <sup>6</sup> *RV*, IV.3.4.
- <sup>7</sup> *RV*, III.12.7; VII.66.3.
- <sup>8</sup> *RV*, I.77.1.
- <sup>9</sup> *RV*, V.2.1.
- <sup>10</sup> *RV*, III.25.1.
- <sup>11</sup> *RV*, I.70.2.
- <sup>12</sup> *RV*, I.66.1.
- <sup>13</sup> *RV*, I.23.14.
- <sup>14</sup> *RV*, VII.49.
- <sup>15</sup> *RV*, IV.58.
- <sup>16</sup> Cf. I.1.8, where Agni is described as increasing in his own home, své damé.
- <sup>17</sup> *RV*, I.1.5.
- <sup>18</sup> *RV*, I.154.4; *tridhātu* can be understood as triple Infinite, which is in the Upanishads called Sachchidananda.

- <sup>19</sup> RV, IV.50; Brihaspati becomes Brahma in the Puranic tradition.
- <sup>20</sup> RV, I.154.
- <sup>21</sup> RV, I.170.1; Compare the description of the Supreme in the Kena Upanishad, and Katha Upanishad.
- <sup>22</sup> RV, I.71.2.      •
- <sup>23</sup> RV, I.72.9.
- <sup>24</sup> RV, IV.1.17-18.
- <sup>25</sup> RV, IV.2.19
- <sup>26</sup> *Katha Upanishad* 3.1.14.
- <sup>27</sup> Ibid. 2.1.23; *Mundaka Upanishad* 3.2.3.
- <sup>28</sup> *Katha Upanishad* 2.1.24.
- <sup>29</sup> *Mundaka Upanishad* 3.2.4.
- <sup>30</sup> *Katha Upanishad* 2.1.1-13.
- <sup>31</sup> *Mandukya Upanishad* 3-7.
- <sup>32</sup> See *Kaivalya Upanishad* I.
- <sup>33</sup> *Isha Upanishad* 5.
- <sup>34</sup> Ibid.8.
- <sup>35</sup> *Kena Upanishad* II.1.2.
- <sup>36</sup> See *Shwetashwatara Upanishad* V.20. See also VI. 1,7,8,11: "It is the might of the Godhead in the world that turns the wheel of Brahman. Him one must know, the supreme lord of all lords, the supreme Godhead above all Godheads. Supreme too is his Shakti and manifold the natural working of her knowledge and her force. One Godhead, occult in all beings, the inner self of all beings, the all-pervading, absolute without qualities, the overseer of all actions, the witness, the knower."
- <sup>37</sup> That Permanent, which is inexpressible and indefinable, can be described in the only expressive term, Sachchidananda, the object of the highest sheath, kosha. anandamaya kosha in us, to use the term of the Taittiriya Upanishad.
- <sup>38</sup> *Katha Upanishad* 2.3.7-8.
- <sup>39</sup> Ibid. 1.3.5,7.



<sup>40</sup> Ibid. 1.2.5,6.

<sup>41</sup> *Isha Upanishad* 11.14.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid. 6.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid. 7.

<sup>44</sup> *Kena Upanishad* III.1.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid. IV.1.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid. IV.2-6.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid. II.1.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid. II.4.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid. IV.4.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid. IV.5, 6.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid. I.2.

<sup>52</sup> Which means, probably, the brilliant action of our aspiring faculties, of Agni, Vayu and Indra.

<sup>53</sup> *Isha Upanishad* 15, 16.

<sup>54</sup> *Taittiriya Upanishad*, Brahmanandavalli Chapter 9.

<sup>55</sup> *Kena Upanishad* IV.6.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., II.5; Compare also, *Isha Upanishad*, 2, where it states: "Doing verily works in this world one should wish to live a hundred years. Thus it is in thee and not otherwise than this; action cleaves not to a man." See also verse 14, where it states: "(He) by Birth enjoys immortality." meaning that it is not merely in featureless inactive Brahman that one attains to immortality, but it is by Birth, in the very process of becoming, that one enjoys immortality.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid. IV.8, 9.

<sup>58</sup> Sri Aurobindo, *The Upanishads*, Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library (SABCL), 1971, Pondicherry, Vol. 12, pp.226-7.

<sup>59</sup> There are more than two hundred Upanishads, but most important of them are twelve in number. They are: Brihadaranyaka, Chhandogya, Taittiriya, Aitareya, Kaushitaki, Kena, Katha, Isha, Mundaka, Prashna, Mandukya, and Shwetashwatara.

<sup>60</sup> *Bhagavad Gita*, II. 54,72.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid. II.62,63.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid. II.47.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid. VII.4,5; XV.16,17,18.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid. II.49.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid. II.61.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid. IV.33.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid. III.9.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid. IV.24.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid. IV.26,27.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid. VII.2.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid. VII.4,5.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid. XV.16-18.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid. XV.7: "An eternal portion of Myself becomes the Jiva in the world of the Jivas".

<sup>74</sup> Ibid. X.1.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid. X.7,8,9.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid. X.10,11.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid. XVIII.56.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid. XVIII.65,66.

<sup>79</sup> "Tantra" has been used in various senses in the Sanskrit literature. Apte has given 31 meanings in his Sanskrit-English dictionary. Tantra is so-called because it gives a body of "acts", which are required for the realisation of the highest. Tantra is so-called also because it provides the means or methods of realising the supreme objective. Madhavāchārya has said that tantra is that by which, once propounded, is extended and spread the benefit of many: *Tanyate vistāryate bahunām upakāraḥ yena sakrit pravartitena tat tantram*. Among the āgamas, those which are called Shāktāgamas, are particularly called Tantra. In Āgamātattvavilāsa, there is a list of 64 tantras. According to some, the original number of books relating to tantras was more than one lakh. Some Tantra books belong to the period of 1st century B.C.

- <sup>80</sup> These six chakras are: mulādhāra, svādhishthāna, nābbi or manipura, hrit or anāhata, vishuddha, and ājnā. Brahmarandhra or sahasrārā is at the top of the skull.
- <sup>81</sup> We may remember that the Isha Upanishad had already declared its dictum, *tena tyaktena bhūnjithāḥ*, “by that renounced, thou shouldst enjoy.”
- <sup>82</sup> Sri Aurobindo: *The Synthesis of Yoga*, SABCL, 1971, Pondicherry, Vol.20, p.2.
- <sup>83</sup> Ibid. *Letters on Yoga*, Vol.22, pp.100-01.
- <sup>84</sup> Ibid. *The Synthesis of Yoga*, Vol.20, p.36.
- <sup>85</sup> Ibid. *The Synthesis of Yoga*, Vol.21, p.583.
- <sup>86</sup> Ibid. p.586.
- <sup>87</sup> Ibid. p.587.
- <sup>88</sup> Ibid. *The Life Divine*, Vol.18, p.148.
- <sup>89</sup> Ibid. p.149.
- <sup>90</sup> Ibid. p.320.
- <sup>91</sup> Ibid. *The Supramental Manifestation Upon Earth*, Vol.16, p.41-2.
- <sup>92</sup> Ibid. *The Life Divine*, Vol.19, p.891.
- <sup>93</sup> The Mother was born in Paris on 21st February, 1878. She had spiritual experiences from childhood, but she received the first explanation of her experiences from Max Theon, a powerful personality of extraordinary occult capacities. She also learnt occultism from him at Tlemcen in Algeria. In 1914, she came from Paris and met Sri Aurobindo. In 1920, she came to Pondicherry once again and remained there for good. She worked with Sri Aurobindo for the accomplishment of the supramental yoga. After the passing of Sri Aurobindo in 1950, she established International University Centre in the name of Sri Aurobindo, and in 1968, she founded Auroville. From 1958 to 1973, she discovered the Great Path to a new species and to a new world in the life of Matter. Her works, numbering more than 30 volumes, include 13 volumes of “*Mother’s Agenda*.”

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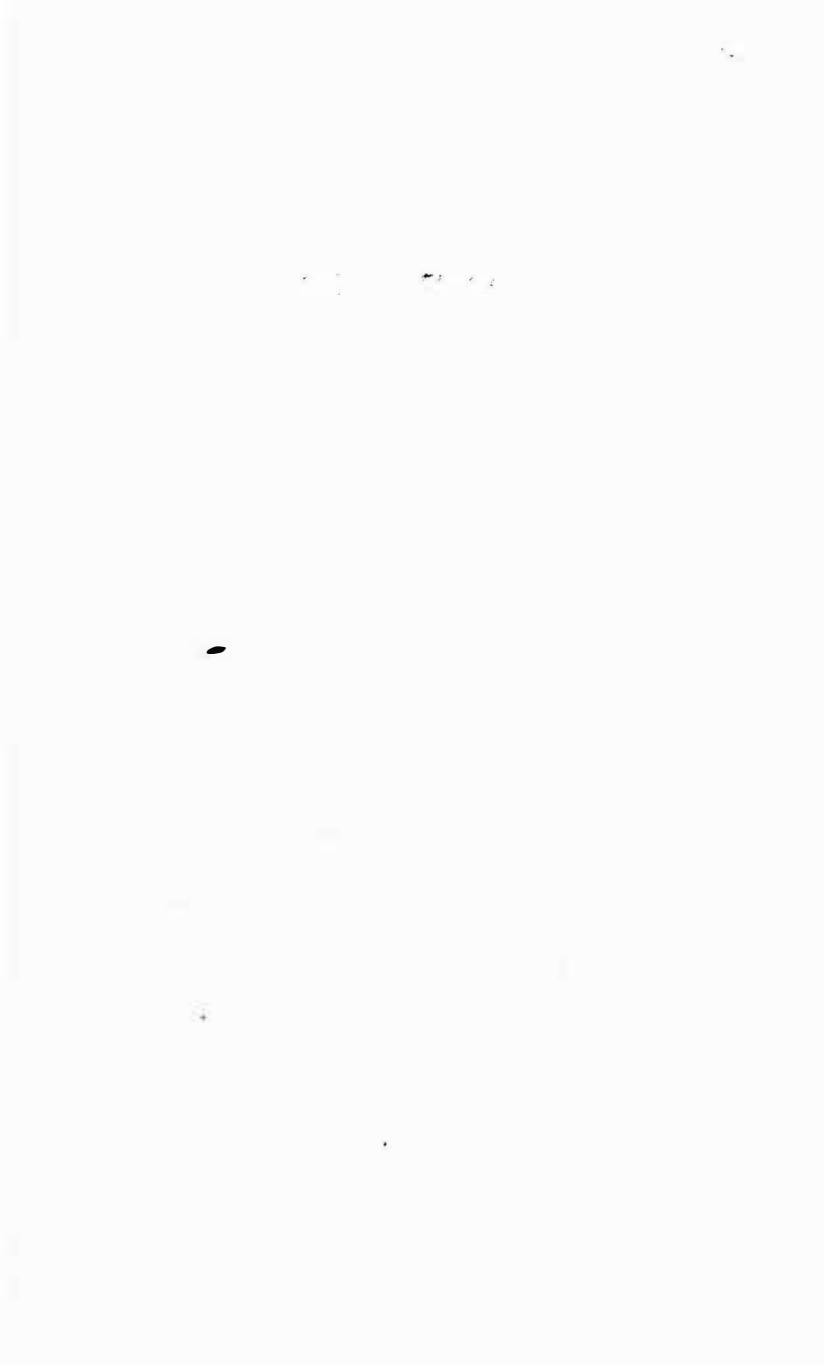
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# Appendix





## Significance of The Veda in The Context of Indian Religion And Spirituality

### I

The four Vedas (Rig Veda, Yajur Veda, Sāma Veda and Atharva Veda) are *samhitas*, collections or compilations of selections made by Veda Vyāsa. There was evidently at that time a larger body of compositions, and since they spoke of the old and new Rishis<sup>1</sup> and of 'fathers' (*pitarah*), it may safely be inferred that there was at that time a tradition of generations of Rishis. Presumably there was a pre-Vedic tradition too, since the Vedic compositions included in the four Vedas indicate a high level of development of poetic quality and spiritual experience, which can come about only through a long period of growth. It is difficult, however, to arrive at any conclusive determination of the dates of the Vedic or the pre-Vedic age, since there are varying opinions, and even conservative estimates vary between 5000 B.C. and 1500 B.C.<sup>2</sup>

The name that was found by the Vedic Rishis for their expressive words and hymns was *Mantra*. According to the Vedic theory, the spirit of creation framed all the movements of the world by *chhandas*, fixed rhythms of the formative word. The metrical movements of the Vedic mantras reflect these cosmic rhythms as powers of balanced harmonies maintained by a system of subtle recurrences. *Mantra* is poetic speech which combines three highest intensities, a highest intensity of rhythmic movement, a highest intensity of

interwoven verbal form and thought-substance, and a highest intensity of the soul's vision of truth. *Mantra* is that rhythmic speech, which as the Veda puts it, rises at once from the heart of the seer and from the distant home of the Truth. The Vedic poet is conscious of his poetic activity; he is consciously engaged in the process of the Yoga of Works and the Yoga of Knowledge, and, in this process, he goes beyond mere intellectual illuminativeness and discovers that more intense illumination of speech, that inspired word and supreme inevitable utterance, in which there meets the unity of a divine rhythmic movement with a depth of sense and a power of infinite suggestion welling up directly from the fountainheads of the spirit. The resultant Vedic poetry is seen as an epic chant of the spirit, its struggle and delight of ascent and victory, the secret of which is contained in self-consecration and surrender of the finite to the infinite, Yajna, where knowledge, action and love meet and become one.

The Vedic poetry is mystic and symbolic, and since the poets of the Veda had another mentality than ours, their use of their images is of a peculiar kind and an antique cast of vision gives a strange outline to their substance. In their method, a fixed system of outward images is used as the body of the poetry, while freedom is often taken to pass their first limits, to treat them only as initial suggestions and transmute subtly or even cast them aside or subdue into a secondary strain or carry them out of themselves so that the translucent veil they offer to our minds lifts from or passes into the open revelation.

In the eyes of the Rishis, the physical and the psychical worlds were a manifestation and a two-fold and diverse and yet connected and similar figure of cosmic godheads, the inner and outer life of man a divine commerce with the gods, and

behind was the one Spirit or Being of which the gods were names and personalities and powers, *ekam sat viprā bahudhā vadanti*.<sup>3</sup> These godheads were not only masters of physical Nature but they were at the same time inward divine powers. Simultaneously, they were also states and energies born in our psychic being. Godheads, *devas*, are declared to be the guardians of truth and immortality, the children of the Infinite, and each of them to be in his origin and his last reality the supreme Spirit putting in front one of his aspects. In the Vedic vision, the life of man was a thing of mixed truth and falsehood, a movement from mortality to immortality, from mixed light and darkness to the splendour of a divine Truth whose home is above in the Infinite but which can be built up here in man's soul and life. This building up the home of Truth here implies a journey and a battle between the children of Light and the sons of Night, a getting of treasure, of the wealth, the booty given by the gods to the human warrior, and a journey and a sacrifice. The Vedic poets spoke of these things in a fixed system of images taken from Nature and from the surrounding life of the war-like, pastoral and agricultural Aryan peoples. And these images centred round the cult of Fire and the worship of the powers of living Nature and the institution of sacrifice. The Vedic poets used for their expression a fixed and yet variable body of other images and a glowing web of myth and parable which expressed to the initiates a certain order of psychic experience and actual realities.

## II

Yaska has spoken of several schools of interpretation of the Vedas. He has declared that there is a triple knowledge and therefore a triple meaning of the Vedic hymns, a sacrificial

or ritualistic knowledge, knowledge of the gods and finally a spiritual knowledge. He has also said that the last is the true sense and when one gets it the others drop or are cut away. According to him, “the Rishis saw the Truth, the true law of things, directly by an inner vision”. He also said that “the true sense of the Vedas can be recovered directly by meditation and tapasyā”. We also find that the Vedic Rishis themselves believe that their mantras contain a secret knowledge and that the words of the Veda could only be known in their true meaning by one who was himself a seer or mystic; from others the verses withhold their knowledge. For example, in Rig Veda IV.3.16, the Rishi describes himself as one illumined expressing through his thought and speech words of guidance, “secret words”—*ninyā vachāmsi* — “seer wisdoms that utter their inner meaning to the seer” — *kāvyāni kavaye nivacanā*.<sup>4</sup>

The tradition of mystic elements in the Vedas has remained alive throughout the ages, and it is this tradition which is seen as a source of Indian civilization, its religion, its philosophy, its culture.

It is, however, true that there was an external aspect of the Vedic religion and this aspect took its foundation on the mind of the physical man and provided means, symbols, rites, figures which were drawn from the most external things, such as heaven and earth, sun and moon and stars, dawn and day and night and rain, and wind and storm, oceans and rivers and forests, and of the circumstances of the force of the vast and mysterious surrounding life. But even in the external side, the Vedic religion spoke of a highest Truth, Right, Law of which the gods were the guardians, of the necessity of a true knowledge and the larger inner living according to this Truth and Right, and of home of immortality to which the soul of

man could ascend by the power of truth and of right being. In addition, the Vedic religion provided sufficient ground to draw even the common people in their ethical nature and to turn them towards some initial developments of their psychic being, and to conceive the idea of a knowledge and truth other than that of the physical life and to admit even a first conception of some greater spiritual Reality.

But the deeper and esoteric meaning of the Veda was reserved for the initiates, for those who were ready to understand and practise the inner sense. It was the inner meaning, it was the highest psychic and spiritual truth concealed by the outer sense that gave to the Vedic hymns the name by which they are still known, the Veda, the Book of Knowledge. Only in the light of this esoteric sense can we understand the full flowering of the Vedic religion in the Upanishads and in the long later development of Indian spiritual seeking and experience.

The inner Vedic religion attributes psychic significance to the godheads in the cosmos. It conceives of a hierarchical order of worlds, and an ascending stair of planes of being in the universe, *bhur*; *bhuvah*, *swar*. Truth and Right (*satyam* and *ritam*), which have their home in the highest world of *swar*, sustain and govern all the levels of Nature. They are one in essence but they take different forms in different levels of existence. For instance, there is in the Veda the series of the outer physical light, another higher and inner light which is a vehicle of the mental, vital and psychic consciousness, and a highest inmost light of spiritual illumination. Surya, the Sun-god, was the lord of the physical Sun, but he is at the same time the giver of the rays of Knowledge which illumines the mind, and he is also the soul of energy and body of the

spiritual illumination.

All the Vedic godheads have an outer but also an inner and inmost foundation, their known and their secret Names. All of them have various powers of some one highest reality, *ekam sat, tat satyam, tad ekam*. Each of these gods is in himself a complete and separate cosmic personality of the one Existence. And in their combination of powers they form the complete universal power, the cosmic whole. Each again, apart from his special function, is one godhead with the others. Each holds in himself the universal divinity; each god is all the other gods. This complex aspect of the Vedic teaching and worship has been given by the European scholar the title of henotheism. Beyond, there is, according to the Vedas, triple Infinite, and in this Infinite, the godheads put on their highest nature and are Names of the one nameless Ineffable.

This teaching was applied to the inner life of man, and this application may be regarded as its greatest power. Power of the godheads can be built, according to the Vedic teaching, within man, and affirmation of these powers leads to the conversion of human nature into universality of divine nature. The gods are the guardians and increasers of the Truth, the powers of the Immortal, the sons of the Infinite Mother, Aditi. Man arrives at immortality by calling of the gods into himself by means of a connecting sacrifice, by surrender. This leads to the breaking of the limitations not only of his physical self but also of his mental and his ordinary psychic nature. The Veda describes various experiences which indicate a profound psychological and psychic discipline leading to highest spiritual realisation of divine status. This discipline contains the nucleus of the later Indian Yoga, the fundamental idea of which was that of the journey from the unreal to the real,

from darkness to light, from death to immortality. This, Vedic Rishis speak of as *ritasya panthā*, the path of the Truth. In one of the vivid descriptions of the spiritual realisation, Vāmadeva records: “Vanished the darkness, shaken in its foundation; heaven shone out; upward rose the light of the divine Dawn; the sun entered the vast fields beholding the straight things and the crooked in mortals. Thereafter indeed they awoke and saw utterly; then indeed they held in them a bliss that is enjoyed in heaven, *ratnam dhārayanta dyubhaktam*. Let all the gods be in all our humans, let there be the truth of our thought, O Mitra, O Varuna”.<sup>5</sup>

This is similar to another experience described by Parashara Shaktya, who declares: “Our fathers broke open the firm and strong places by their words, yea, the Angirasas broke open the hill by their cry; they made in us the path to the great heaven; they found the Day and Swar and vision and the luminous Cows”, *chkarur divo brihato gātum asme, ahaḥ svar vividuḥ ketum usrāḥ*.<sup>6</sup> He declares again: “They who enter into all things that bear right fruit formed a path towards the immortality; earth stood wide for them by the greatness by the Great Ones, the Mother Aditi, with her sons came for the upholding”.<sup>7</sup>

These and other statements give us the clue of what the Vedic Rishis meant by immortality. When the physical being is visited by the greatness of the infinite planes above and by the power of the great godheads who reign on those planes breaks its limits, opens out to the Light and is upheld in its new wideness by the infinite Consciousness, Mother Aditi, and her sons, the divine powers of the supreme Deva, — then one realises immortality.

Veda makes a distinction between the state of Knowledge

and the state of Ignorance, (*chittim achittim chinavad vi vidvān*), and discovers the means by which ignorance can be overcome. Upholding of the thought of the truth in all the principles of our being, the diffusion of Truth in all parts of our being, and the birth of activity of all the godheads, — this is the quintessence of the means of attaining Knowledge, which results in immortality.<sup>8</sup>

We find in the Veda the most characteristic ideas of Indian spirituality in their seed, though not in their full expansion. There is, first, the idea of the one Existence<sup>9</sup>, supra-cosmic, beyond the individual and universe. There is also the idea of one god who presents to us various forms, names, powers, personalities of his godhead. There is, thirdly, the distinction between the Knowledge and Ignorance, the greater truth of an immortal life opposed to the much falsehood and mortal existence. Fourthly, there is the conception of the discipline of an inward growth of man from the physical through the psychic to the spiritual existence. Finally, there is the idea and experience of the conquest of death, the secret of immortality. These ideas have remained constant in the Vedic tradition throughout its long and uninterrupted history up to the present day.

### III

The Vedic beginning was a high beginning, and it was secured in its results by a larger sublime efflorescence. This is what we find in Upanishads, which have always been recognised in India as the crown and end of the Veda, Vedānta. While the Brāhmanas<sup>10</sup> concentrated on the Vedic rituals, the Upanishads<sup>11</sup> 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 experience. Indeed, this language was not the thing 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 the Truth.

Upanishads are records of deepest spiritual experience, and documents of revelatory and intuitive philosophy of an inexhaustible light, power and largeness. Whether written in verse or cadenced prose, they are spiritual poems of unfailing inspiration, inevitable in phrase and wonderful in rhythm and expression. They are epic hymns of self-knowledge, and world-knowledge and God-knowledge. The imagery of the Upanishads is in large part developed from the type of imagery of the Veda. Ordinarily it prefers unveiled clarity of directly illuminative image, but it frequently uses the same symbols in a way that is closely akin to the spirit of the older symbolism. The Upanishads are not a revolutionary departure from the Vedic mind but a continuation and development and to a certain extent an enlarging transformation. They bring out into an open expression what was held covered in the symbolic Vedic speech as a mystery and a secret. Ajatashatru's explanation of sleep and dream, passages of the Prashna Upanishad on the vital being and its motion are some of the examples of Upanishadic symbolism.<sup>12</sup>

Along with the Veda, Upanishads rank as Shruti, since they embody revelations and intuitions of spiritual experience. The Upanishads have been acknowledged to be the source of numerous profound philosophies and religions that flowed from them in India. They fertilised the mind and life of the people and kept India's soul alive through the centuries. Like

a fountain of inexhaustible life-giving water, they have never failed to give fresh illumination. It is even being said that Buddhism was only a restatement of one side of the Upanishadic experience, although it represented a new standpoint and provided fresh terms of intellectual definition and reasoning. Even in the thought of Pythagoras and Plato, one could rediscover the ideas of the Upanishads. Sufism has been seen to be repeating the teaching of the Upanishads in another religious language. Even some of the modern thinkers of the East and the West seem to be absorbing the ideas of the Upanishads with living and intense receptiveness. And it may not be an exaggeration to say that there is hardly a main philosophical idea which cannot find an authority or a seed or indication in those ancient and antique writings. It has also been claimed that the larger generalisations of Science are found to apply to the truth of the physical Nature; formulas which were discovered by the Upanishadic sages.

The Upanishads are Vedanta, a book of knowledge, but knowledge understood not as a mere thinking but as a seeing with the soul and total living in it with the power of inner being, a spiritual seizing by a kind of identification with the object of knowledge. Through this process of knowledge by identity or intuition the seers of Upanishads 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.

Hence, the three great declarations of the ancient Vedanta are: "I am he",<sup>13</sup> "Thou art That, O Swetaketu",<sup>14</sup> "All this is

the Brahman; this Self is the Brahman".<sup>15</sup>

The main conceptions of the Upanishads remained in parts in the various philosophical systems and efforts were made from time to time to recombine them. Nyāya, Vaisheshika, Sāmkhya, Yoga, Poorva Mimāṃsā and Uttara Mimāṃsā bear the imprint of the Upanishadic thought, and the last one, particularly has as its basic text, Brahmasūtra, which was composed by Bādarāyan, and in which the quintessence of the Upanishads was expounded aphoristically. Brahmasūtra came to be commented upon by various Āchāryas. This gave rise to at least five schools of Vedantic interpretation, viz., Advaita of Shankarāchārya, Vishishtādvaita of Rāmānujāchārya, Vishuddhādvaita of Vallabhāchārya, Dvaitādvaita of Nimbārkāchārya, and Dvaita of Madhwāchārya. Bhagawad Gitā is also considered to be an exposition of the essence of the Upanishadic teaching. The commentary literature on the Upanishads, a Brahmasutra and Bhagawad Gita is continuing to develop even in our own times.

It is true that the Upanishads are mainly concerned with the inner vision and not directly with outward human action; yet, all the highest ethics of Buddhism and later Hinduism are emergences of the very life and significance of the truths to which they give expressive form and force, and they even present the supreme ideal of a spiritual action founded on oneness with God and all living beings. It is for this reason that 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 inspire the persistent Indian idea of the Dharma.

By the time we come to the Upanishads, the original Vedic symbols had begun to lose their significance and to pass into

an obscurity. The earlier stage of culture represented an old poise between two extremes. On one side, there was the crude or half-trained naturalness of the outer physical man; on the other side, there was an inner and secret psychic and spiritual life for the initiates. But this poise was disturbed because of the necessity of a large-lined advance. In its developing cycle of civilisation, India called for a more and more generalised intellectual, ethical and aesthetic evolution. This called for a new poise and new balance. At this juncture, the Upanishads saved the ancient spiritual knowledge by an immense effort, and the spiritual edifice created by the Upanishads guided, uplifted and more and more penetrated into the wide and complex intellectual, aesthetic, ethical and social culture that came to be developed during the age that followed the age of the Vedas and the Upanishads.

## IV

During this post-Vedic age, which extended right up to the decline of Buddhism, we see the rise of the great philosophies, many-sided epic literature, beginnings of arts and science, evolution of vigorous and complex societies, formation of large kingdoms and empires, manifold formative activities of all kinds and great systems of living and thinking. It was a birth time and youth of the seeking intellect, and a number of scientific or systematic bodies of intellectual knowledge came up at an early stage. Actually, Vedāngas had begun to develop even before the Upanishads. Māndukya Upanishad mentions six Vedāngas; Shikshā (Phonetics); Kalpa (Ritualogy); Vyākaraṇa (Grammar); Nirukta (Etymology); Chhanda (Metrics); and Jyotiṣh (Astronomy and Astrology). Each Vedāṅga takes up one aspect of the Veda

and an attempt is made to explain it.

In due course, there developed a vast literature on these Vedāngas, expounding various systems of phonetics, rituals of sacrifices and rules of conduct of various kinds such as those described in Shrauta sūtra, Grihya sūtra and Dharma sūtras, principles and details of Vedic etymology, grammatical subtleties, various forms, meters and styles of poetry, and several systems of astronomical and astrological knowledge. There developed also considerable literature of Pratishākhya, which dealt with the subtleties of grammar, meters and pronunciation pertaining to the Shākhās<sup>16</sup> of the Vedas. Apart from the Vedangas, there developed four sciences, known as Upavedas, viz., Ayurveda, Dhanurveda, Gāndharvaveda and Arthaveda. Here again, in due course, there developed a vast literature of expositions, commentaries and treatises.

Strong intellectuality of this period was inspired by the wide variety of spiritual experience and the synthetic turn so visible in the Vedas and the Upanishads. There was a conscious perception that spiritual experience is higher than religion and that what religion seeks can really be attained by the inner psychological discipline, which in due course came to be developed into a Shāstra, the Shāstra of Yoga. This allowed intellectuality to become free from the crippling effects of religious dogma, and we find that the intellectual development became multi-sided. Materialistic atheism, agnosticism, scepticism, too developed. Indeed, this intellectuality was austere and rich, robust and minute, powerful and delicate, massive in principle and curious in detail. The mere mass of the intellectual production during the period from Ashoka well into the Mohammadan epoch is something truly prodigious. This can be seen from the account which recent scholarship gives of it. And while evaluating this account it

must be noted that what has been dealt with so far of this ancient treasure is a fraction of what is still lying extant and what is extant is only a small percentage of what was once written and known. And we have also to note that what was accomplished had for its aid the power of memory and the perishable palm-leaf. The colossal literature extended to various domains, — philosophy and theology, religion and yoga, logic and rhetoric, grammar and linguistics, poetry and drama, medicine and astronomy and the sciences. It dealt also with politics and society, music and dancing, architecture and painting, all the sixty-four accomplishments, and various crafts and skills. It may be said that even such subjects as the breeding and training of horses and elephants had their own Shāstras. Each domain of thought and life had a systematic body of knowledge, its art, its apparatus of technical terms, its copious literature.

During this period, India stood in the first rank in mathematics, astronomy, chemistry, medicine, surgery and all the branches of physical knowledge which were practised in ancient times. In many directions, India had a priority of discovery. It is true that the harmony that was established between philosophical truth and truth of psychology and religion was not extended in the same degree to the truth of physical Nature. But from the beginning, starting from the thought of the Veda, the Indian mind had recognised that the same general laws and powers hold in the spiritual, the psychological and the physical existence. Omnipresence of life was discovered, and there was the affirmation of the evolution of the soul in Nature from the vegetable and the animal to the human form.

The philosophic mind started from the data of the spiritual experience, and it went back always in one form or another

to the profound truth of the Veda and the Upanishad which kept their place as the highest authority in these matters. There was a constant admission that spiritual experience is a greater thing and its light a truer if more incalculable guide than the clarities of the reasoning intelligence. In the epic literature of the Mahābhārata and the Rāmāyana, we find a strong and free intellectual and ethical thinking; there is an incessant criticism of life by the intelligence and ethical reason. We find in it multi-sided curiosity and desire to fix the norms of truth in all fields. But in the background there is a constant religious and spiritual sense and an implicit or explicit assent to the spiritual truth. In the field of art, there was insistence upon life and its creativity, but still its highest achievement was always in the field of the interpretation of the religio-philosophical mind. The whole tone of art during that period was coloured by a suggestion of the spiritual and the infinite.

The master ideas of the Vedas and the Upanishads governed the developing turn of imagination, its creative temperament and the kind of significant forms in which it persistently interpreted its perception of self and things and life and universe. The sense of the infinite and the cosmic generated by the Vedic hymns is seen in a great part of the literature of the subsequent ages even as we see it in architecture, painting and sculpture. As in the Veda, even so here, there is a tendency to see and render spiritual experience in images taken from the inner psychic plane or in physical images transmitted by the stress of a psychic significance and impression. The tendency to image the terrestrial life often magnified, as in the Mahābhārata and in the Rāmāyana, reflects the Vedic influence.

In the field of collective life, Indian society developed its

communal coordination of the mundane life of interest and desire, *kāma* and *artha*. But it governed always its action by a reference at every point to the moral and religious law, the *dharma*, and it never lost sight of spiritual liberation, *moksha*, as the highest motive and ultimate aim of the effort of life. At a still later stage, when there came about an immense development of the mundane intelligence and an emphatic stress of aesthetic, sensuous and hedonistic experience, there was a corresponding deepening of the intensities of psycho-religious experience. It may be said that every excess of emphasis on the splendour and richness and power and pleasures of life had its recoil and was balanced by a corresponding stress on spiritual asceticism. And throughout this development one can see the inner continuity with the Vedic and Vedantic origins.

It is true that at one time it seemed as if a discontinuity would take place. Buddhism seemed to reject all spiritual continuity with the Vedic religion. Buddhism seemed also to be a sharp new beginning. But the ideal of nirvana came to be perceived as a negative and exclusive statement of the highest Vedantic spiritual experience. The eightfold path also came to be perceived as an austere sublimation of the Vedic notion of the Right, Truth, and Law, which was followed as the way to immortality. The strongest note of Mahāyāna Buddhism which laid a stress on universal compassion and fellow-feeling was seen as an ethical application of the spiritual unity which is an essential idea of Vedānta. The Buddhistic theory of karma could have been supported from the utterances of the Brāhmanas and the Upanishads. Actually, the Vedic tradition absorbed all that it could be of Buddhism, but rejected its exclusive positions.

But there was a gradual fading out of the prominent Vedic



forms and substitution of others. Symbol, ritual and ceremony were transformed; the lofty heights of the Vedic spiritual experience did not reappear as a predominant tendency, although there was a farther widening and fathoming of psychic and spiritual experience. The Vedic pantheon gradually faded out altogether under the weight of the increasing importance of the great Trinity, Brahmā - Vishnu - Shiva. A new pantheon appeared; its outward symbolic aspect expressed a deeper truth and larger range of experience, feeling and idea. The tradition of the Vedic sacrifice began to break down; the house of Fire was replaced by the temple. The devotional temple ritual came to replace to a great extent the karmic ritual of sacrifice. More precise conceptual forms of the two great deities, Vishnu and Shiva, came to replace the vague and shifting mental images of the Vedic gods. The shaktis of Vishnu and Shiva also came to dominate the religious scene. These new concepts became stabilised in physical images, and these images were made the basis both for internal adoration and for the external worship.

The esoteric teachings of the Vedic hymns which centred on the psychic and spiritual discipline disappeared, although some of its truths reappeared in various new forms. These forms as we see them in the Purāṇic and Tāntric religion and yoga were less luminous than the Vedic nucleus of spiritual experience, but they were more wide and rich and complex and more suitable to the psycho-spiritual inner life.

The Purāṇo-Tāntric<sup>17</sup> stage was marked by an effort to awaken the inner mind even in the common man, to lay hold on his inner vital and emotional nature, to support all by an awakening of the soul and to lead him through these things towards a highest spiritual truth. This effort required new

instruments, new atmosphere and new fields of religious and spiritual experience. While the Vedic godheads were to the mass of their worshippers divine powers who presided over the workings of the outward life of the physical cosmos, the Purāṇic Trinity had even for the multitude a predominant psycho-religious and spiritual significance. But the central spiritual truth remained the same in both the Vedic and Purāṇo-Tāntric systems, the truth of the One in many aspects. As the Vedic godheads were forms of the Supreme, even so the Purāṇic Trinity was a triple form of the one supreme Godhead and Brahman; even the Shaktis were energies of the One Energy of the highest divine Being. But this truth was no longer reserved for the initiated few; it was now more and more brought powerfully, widely and intensely home to the general mind and feeling of the people.

The system of the hierarchy of the worlds that we find in the Veda was more intricate than the system that we find in the Purāṇas. In the Veda, the highest worlds constitute the triple divine principle; infinity is their scope, bliss is their foundation. These three worlds are supported by the vast region of the Truth whence a divine Light radiates out towards our mentality in the three heavenly luminous worlds of Swar, the domain of Indra. Below is the triple system in which we live. This triple system consists of three earths, three heavens, *dyaus*, and the connecting mid-region (*antariksha*). In simpler terms, the triple lower world in which we live is the world of matter, life-force and pure mind. According to the Vedic idea, each principle can be modified by the subordinate manifestation of the others within it, and each world is divisible into several provinces. Into this framework the Vedic Rishis placed all the complexities of the subtle vision and fertile imagery. The Purāṇic system is a continuation of the Vedic

system, but it is simpler. The Purāṇa recognises seven principles of existence and the seven Purāṇic worlds correspond to them with sufficient precision, thus:

<i>Principle</i>	<i>World</i>
1 Pure Existence - Sat	World of the highest truth of being (Satyaloka)
2. Pure Consciousness - Chit	World of infinite Will or conscious force (Tapoloka)
3. Pure Bliss - Ananda	World of creative delight of existence (Janaloka)
4. Knowledge or Truth - Vijnana	World of the Vastness (Maharloka)
5. Mind	World of light (Swar)
6. Life (nervous being)	World of various becoming (Bhuvar)
7. Matter	The material world (Bhur)

The Vedic interpretation of life as a movement of sacrifice and a battle continued in the Purāṇo-Tāntric tradition also. According to the Veda, the struggle of life is a warring of Gods and Titans, Gods and Giants, Indra and Python, Aryan and the Dasyu. In the Purāṇas and Tantras also life is conceived as a struggle and battle between Devas and Asuras, Devas and Rākshasas, between the armies of Gods and Goddesses and the armies of Āsuric, Rākshasic and Paishāchik adversaries. The Vedic goal of achieving immortality recurs also in the Purāṇas and Tantras, where we have symbolic story of the search after the nectar.

The Vedic idea of the divinity in man was popularised

during the Purāno-Tāntric stage to an extraordinary extent: there was a development of the concept of the Avatars, of the occasional manifestations of the divine in humanity; there was also the development of the idea of the Divine Presence, discoverable in the heart of every creature. New systems of yoga also developed, but the basis was the same, namely, secret of the power of concentration, of the method of concentration, and of the object of concentration. There was, however, a many-sided endeavour which opened the gates of Yoga on various levels and planes of consciousness. Many kinds of psycho-physical, inner vital, inner mental and psycho-spiritual methods came to be developed; but all of them had the common aim of the realisation of a greater consciousness and a more or less complete union with the One and Divine, or else an immergence of the individual soul in the Absolute. The Purāno-Tāntric system provided a basis of generalised psycho-religious experience from which man could rise through knowledge, works or love or through any other fundamental power of his nature to some supreme experience and highest or absolute status.

## V

After the Purāno-Tāntric stage, there came the third stage of the development of religion and spirituality in India. The first stage consisted of the Vedic training of the physically minded man;<sup>18</sup> the second stage took up man's outward life as also a deeper mental and psychical life, and it brought man more directly into contact with the spirit and divinity within him. But now in the third stage, there was an attempt to take up man's whole mental, psychical, physical living so as to arrive at a first beginning at least of a generalised spiritual

life. This is what we see after the decline of Buddhism in the emergence of great spiritual movement of the saints and bhaktas and an increasing resort to various paths of yoga. During this stage, there was also a great problem of receiving Islam, and two great attempts were made to arrive at a new synthesis; one from the side of the Muslims, and the other from the side of the Hindus. The former was exemplified in the attempt of Akbar to create a new religion called Din-e-Illahi, and the latter was exemplified by the life and work of Guru Nanak. The work of Gum Nanak gave rise to the subsequent Sikh Khalsa movement which was astonishingly original and novel. During this period, there was a tremendous churning of the spirit of India, and a great attempt was made to explore all aspects of human being and to develop them in such a way that they could all open up to the spiritual light and force. This attempt had not only an individual aspect but also a collective aspect. This was a remarkable attempt which could have revolutionised the collective life of India. But this was interrupted on account of several factors.

Among these factors was the fact of the exhaustion of the vital force as a result of a long march and effort from the earliest times of Indian history. This exhaustion was also due to the fact that since the 6th century B.C. there entered a current of culture which negated the meaning and the significance of cosmic life. This created confusion and disbalancement resulting in excessive asceticism. This impoverished life and led to the neglect of social, economic and political conditions of the country. High ideals began to be exiled from active life, and rigidities of various kinds came to imprison the forms of individuals and collectivities. The exhaustion of vital force in the country coincided also with the political instability and the coming of the settlers from

the West. Finally, the establishment of the British supremacy in India resulted in the extreme impoverishment of the Spirit of India.

## VI

The third stage of religious and spiritual development of India could not bear its natural fruit, although it has done much to prepare a great possibility for the future. The message of the third stage is that the spiritualisation of the collective life cannot be achieved if only the physical mind of man is trained or even if a greater effort is made to train the psychic-emotional part of man's nature. What is needed is to turn the entirety of mental, psychical and physical living of the individual and the collectivity to divinise the whole of human life and nature. It is significant, therefore, that there arose from the middle of the 19th century a reassertion of the Indian spirit, and this reassertion is marked by three tendencies, namely, reaffirmation of the spiritual ideal, emphasis on dynamism and creative action, and insistence on collective domains and forms of life. At the beginning of this period there arose a galaxy of great personalities, like Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Dayanand Saraswari, Sri Rama Krishna and Swami Vivekananda, who filled India with a new breath and sowed the seeds not only of a spiritual awakening but also of social and political awakening. The new nationalist spirit was at once spiritual and social in character, and it symbolised a new vibration.

It is significant also that in this new awakening, the Veda was rediscovered, the Upanishads were rediscovered. The esoteric teaching of the Vedas which was confined only to initiates during the Vedic period seems in the new light to be

a store from which we can even now draw illumination and power of regeneration. The new light does not advocate a mere revival or a prolongation of the Purāṇic system but points to something which the Vedic seers saw as the aim of human life and which the Vedantic sages cast into the clear and immortal forms of the luminous revelation. And yet it is not to the Vedic forms that we are called upon to return. The great message of modern India, coming through its accomplished Rishi, Sri Aurobindo, calls for the discovery of newer light and development of newer forms. Not to trace or retrace the old, but taking into account the treasures of the past and by liberating or developing new knowledge, even by hewing new paths we are called upon to find original solutions to build up a new centre of spiritual consciousness which can manifest that consciousness potently in all fields of activity, scientific, philosophical, cultural, social, economic, political.

## VII

Significance of the Veda is not confined merely to the fact that it is the world's first yet extant Scripture, but that it is its earliest interpretation of Man and Divine and the Universe as also that it is a sublime and powerful poetic creation. The utterances of the greatest seers, Vishwāmitra, Vāmadeva, Dirghatamas and many others touch the most extraordinary heights of māntric poetry. At the early stages of the Vedic tradition the substance of Indian religion and spirituality came to be determined by the varieties of deepest psychic and spiritual experiences shared and expressed by hundreds of the Vedic seers. It can be seen that the post-Vedic and later spirituality of Indian people was contained in the

Veda in seed or in first expression.

A great force of intuition and inner experience, so evident in the Veda and the Upanishad, gave to the Indian mind the sense and reality of cosmic consciousness and cosmic vision. Perception of the One underlying reality, recognition of the perception of unity, as Vidyā, and the necessity of the individual to lift himself from Avidyā to Vidyā — these are the connecting threads of Indian religion and spirituality, and these we see repeatedly emphasised in the Vedic teaching. At the same time, we have to note that even while admitting the One without a second, *ekam eva advitiyam*, there was no paralysing exclusion in the Veda and the Upanishad, and there was a clear admission of the duality of the One and the distinction of the Spirit and Nature; and there was room also for various trinities and million aspects of that One, *tad ekam*. This has created in the Indian mind aversion to intolerant and mental exclusions, and even when it concentrates sometimes on single limiting aspect of the Divinity — and seems to see nothing but that, — it still keeps instinctively at the back of its consciousness the sense of the All and the idea of the One. Even when it distributes its worship among many objects, it looks at the same time through the object of worship and sees beyond the multitude of Godheads the Unity of the Supreme. What is of special significance is that this synthetic turn is not limited to the mystics or to philosophic thinkers, but it extends even to the popular mind, which has been permeated by the force of the thoughts, images, traditions and cultural symbols not only of the Veda and Vedānta but also by the Purāṇa and Tantra. There is in the Indian mind a pervasive synthetic monism, many-sided Unitarianism, and large cosmic universalism.

This is not to deny the fact that there have emerged in the



long course of Indian history tendencies, thoughts and even religious movements characterised by exclusivism. There have been exclusive claims and counter-claims and even quarrels and intolerance. But the efforts at synthesis have tended to prevail. Even in the field of philosophy, while trenchant positions are not absent, synthetic turn eventually predominates. In the field of yoga, too, there have been specialisations and exclusive claims and counter-claims; claims of the path of knowledge have opposed the claims of the path of action and devotion and vice-versa; but there have been powerful systems of the synthesis, such as those of the esoteric Veda, Upanishads, Gita and Tantra. Even in later times, in the movements of saints and bhaktas there is a marked turn towards synthesis, and even in our own times, in the yogic life of Sri Aurobindo's integral yoga we have the latest effort and statement of the synthesis of yogic disciplines.

Catholicity of the Veda and the Upanishads has remarkable changes in the forms of Indian religion and spiritual culture, even while maintaining the persistence of their spirit. And if we examine the changes that have occurred we shall find in them a meaningful process of evolution and a certain kind of logic. Right from the Vedic times, there was a tendency in the Indian religion to provide means for the individual and collective life to develop by graded steps and reach and experience truths of higher and spiritual existence. It was recognised that at the beginning not many could safely and successfully reach the heights, but the pioneering leaders did not accept the theory that many must necessarily remain for ever on the lower ranges of life and only a few climb into the free air and the light, but they were moved by the spirit to regenerate the totality of physical life on the earth. It is true that this spirit was not at all times and in all its parts

consciously aware of its own total significance. But the total drift of the manifold sides and rich variations of the forms, teachings and disciplines of Indian religion and spirituality indicate that the aim pursued was not only to raise to inaccessible heights the few elect, but to draw all men and all life and the whole human being upward, to spiritualise life and in the end to divinise human nature.

Indian spirituality, as seen in the Veda recognised both the spiritual and physical poles of existence, and sought the experiences and realisation of higher planes of the Spirit even in physical consciousness (*prithvi*). The legend of the Angirasa Rishis indicates the effort to discover the lost sun and herds of light in the caves of darkness, symbolising physical inconscience. It may even be said that the yoga of the Veda seems to suggest that the discovery of the light in Surya Savitri is followed and completed by the discovery and uncovering of the light in the very depths of darkness of the Inconscient, *tamas*. Not the rejection of Matter and material life but realisation that the Matter too is Spirit and that material life too can bear and manifest the spiritual light and bliss — this seems to be the inner basis of the Vedic teaching.

It is this unitive perception that could explain the drift of Indian religion and spirituality towards a wide and many-sided culture. It is true that on its more solitary summits, at least in its later periods, Indian spirituality tended to a spiritual exclusiveness, which was, whatever its loftiness, quite impressive and excessive. Actually this exclusiveness imposed on Indian culture a certain impotence to deal effectively with the problems of human existence; consequently, there came about a general decline in science, in philosophy, and in all other domains of life. On the other hand, the previous training

provided by the Vedic religion to the physically-minded early common man and by the post-Vedic and Purāṇo-Tāntric religion to the common man of the later periods who developed increasingly his intellectual, ethical, aesthetic, imaginative, emotional and vital faculties had created favourable conditions for the growth and development of multi-sided religious and spiritual movement that attempted to synthesise conflicting tendencies and to invite larger and larger sections of the society to the possibilities of the multi-sided spiritual training and development. Even though there was a general arrest of these new developments, the Indian Renaissance has now provided fresh conditions, and the most conscious and potent expression of the new spirituality has declared the aim of not individual salvation but of collective salvation. It has rejected the exclusive solution of the problems of human life in the attainment of world-negating spirit; it has rather affirmed the possibility of the highest spiritualising of life on the earth.

The earliest preoccupation of India, as expressed in the Veda, was the exploration of the Spirit in Matter and of Matter in Spirit; the intermediate preoccupation was with the seeking and experiment in a thousand ways of the soul's outermost and innermost experience marked by various conflicts and even exclusive affirmations and denials under an overarching tendency towards multi-sided development of the spiritual, ethical, intellectual, aesthetic, vital and physical parts of the being and some kind of synthesis. The latest trend takes up the burden and treasure of the gains of the past and looks towards the future with some kind of basis of effective realisation where tasks of establishment of the divine life on the earth for full participation by the entire human race could be undertaken.

While outlining these tasks, particularly, of the renascent India, Sri Aurobindo states:

”The recovery of the old spiritual knowledge and experience in all its splendour, depth and fullness is its first, most essential work; the flowing of this spirituality into new forms of philosophy, literature, art, science and critical knowledge is the second; an original dealing with modern problems in the light of Indian spirit and the endeavour to formulate a greater synthesis of a spiritualised society is the third and most difficult. Its success on these three lines will be the measure of its help to the future of humanity.”<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, *Rig Veda (RV)*, I.1.2.

<sup>2</sup> According to Shri A.C. Das, Vedas could have been composed any time between 250th and 750th Century B.C. According to Lokamanya Tilak, the estimated period would be any time between 45th and 30th Century B.C. This coincides with the view of Professor Haug, Professor Ludwig and Professor Jacobi Professor Whitney places the period any time between 15th and 20th Century B.C. Professor Max Muller believes that the Veda was composed during the 13th Century B.C.

<sup>3</sup> *RV.*, I.164.46.

- <sup>4</sup> See also *RV.*, I.164.39,46; X.71.
- <sup>5</sup> *RV.*, IV.1.17,18.
- <sup>6</sup> *RV.*, I.71.2
- <sup>7</sup> *RV.*, I.72.9.
- <sup>8</sup> See also *RV.*, I.68.1-3.
- <sup>9</sup> Triple Infinite of the Veda, which was formulated as Sachchidānanda in the Upanishad.
- <sup>10</sup> Brāhmanas contain detailed analysis of various categories of sacrifices, their rituals and procedures. They include also collections of history, legends, anecdotes and narrations of stories connected with individuals. The important Brāhmanas are: Aitareya Brāhmana, Shatapatha Brāhmana, Taittiriya Brāhmana, Kathaka Brāhmana, Jaiminiya Brāhmana and Gopatha Brāhmana. A large number of Brāhmanas have been lost.
- <sup>11</sup> In the Muktopanishad it is mentioned that the total number of Upanishads are 108, and they are derived from the four Vedas. The Upanishads laid down the process of realisation of the Brahman, the ultimate Reality, which begins with the Brahmajijñāsā, aspiration to know the Brahman and it continues through the hearing of the Upanishads, reflection on the Upanishads and dwelling on the Upanishads. Important Upanishads are: Aitareya, Māndukya and Kaushitaki, which are related to Rig Veda; Taittiriya, Katha and Shweteshwatara which are related to Krishna Yajurveda; Brihadāranyaka and Isha, which are related to Shukla Yajurveda; Kena and Chhāndogya, which are related to Sāma Veda; and Prashna and Mundaka, which are related to Atharva Veda.
- <sup>12</sup> We may also refer to the passage of the Taittiriya in which Indra appears as a power of the divine mind. The passage of the Prashna Upanishad may also be referred to where the power and the significance of the mystic syllable AUM are described.
- As an example of greater clarity of statements, which are nearer to our intellectual apprehension, we may refer to the passages of the Katha Upanishad where the knowledge of the Purusha, no bigger than a thumb, as man's central self is given.
- <sup>13</sup> *Chhāndogya Upanishad* 4.1.1.1.
- <sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.8.7.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 3.14.1; also *Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upanishad* 2.5.19.

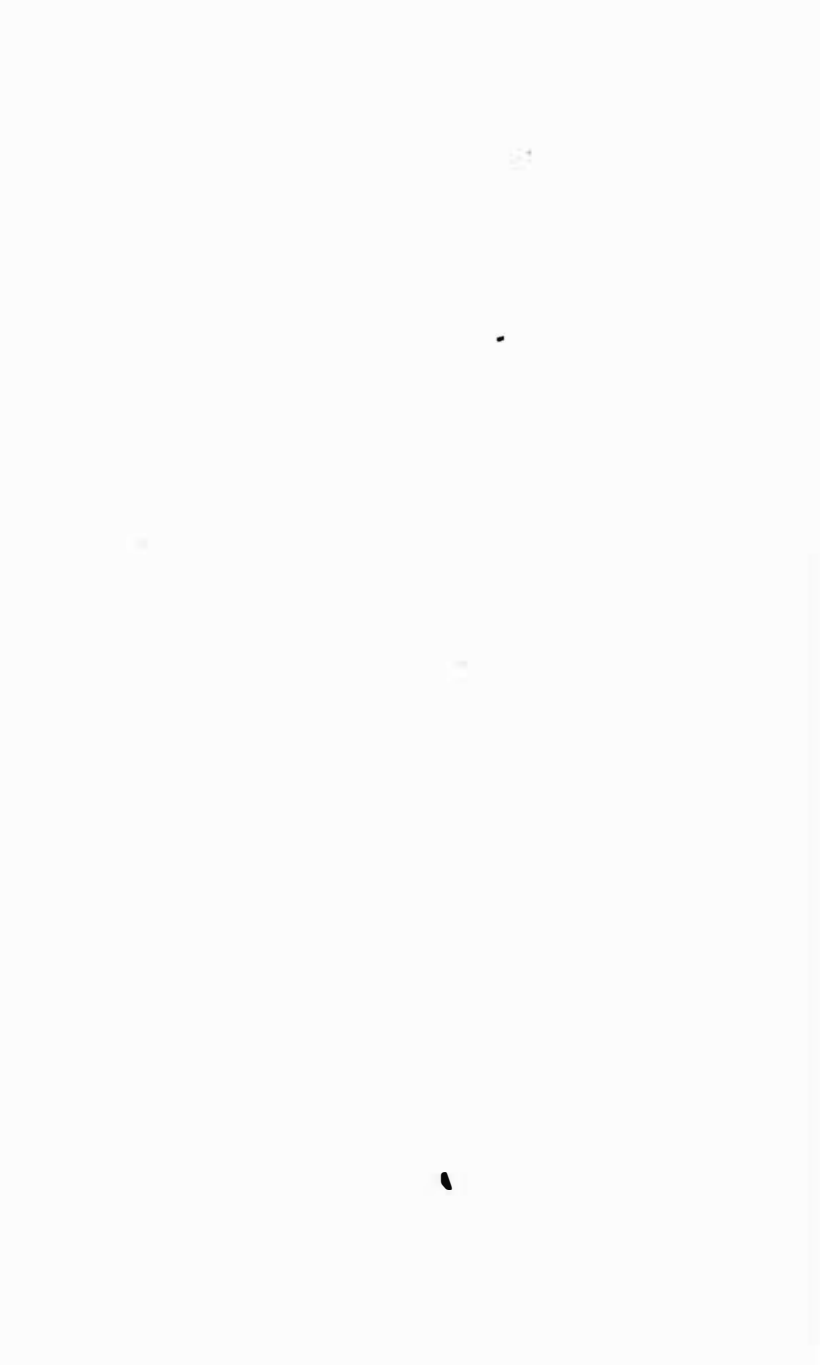
<sup>16</sup> The tradition of transmission of the recitation of the Samhitās gave rise to various recensions or Shākhās. The total number of Shākhās in the ancient period was 1131 but at present only 10 Shākhās is alive.

<sup>17</sup> According to the tradition, the word Purāṇa is so-called because it is supposed to refer to the most ancient knowledge. It is said that Brahmā had received the knowledge containing the Purāṇas from the Supreme Divine; Brahmā transmitted it to his four mind-born sons, one of whom Sanat Kumāra transmitted it to Nārada, who, in turn, transmitted it to Krishna Dwaipayana, Veda Vyāsa. Veda Vyāsa composed that knowledge in 18 books; each one of them is called Purāṇa. There are also a number of Upapurāṇas. Purāṇas describe the creation of the universe, development of the universe, and the dissolution of the universe. Apart from many legends, Purāṇas contain ideas relating to birth, death and the condition of the soul after the death of body. They also deal with the question relating to philosophic and yogic matters. Most importantly, Purāṇas are related to great deities, particularly of Brahmā, Vishnu and Shiva. An important contribution of the Purāṇa is related to the concept of divine incarnation, avatāra.

The texts connected with Tantra are numerous, probably sixty-four or even more. The tāntrik treatise is generally in the form of a dialogue between Shiva and his consort and it teaches mystical formulae for the worship of the deities or the attainment of superhuman powers. The Tāntric Yoga is a kind of synthesis of yogic practices contained not only in Karma Yoga, Jñāna Yoga, and Bhakti Yoga but also in Mantra Yoga, Hatha Yoga and Rāja Yoga. The tāntrik synthesis attempts to emphasise the notion of the divine perfectibility of man, which was also in the Vedic teaching, but which was overshadowed in the intermediate ages.

<sup>18</sup> We are not considering here the esoteric teaching of the Veda, which was limited only to the initiates, and which addresses itself to intellectual, vital and physical aspects of training also.

<sup>19</sup> Sri Aurobindo, *The Foundations of Indian Culture*, Vol.14, Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library, Pondicherry, 1971, p.409.







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**Y**oga has been looked upon as practical psychology, and yogic methods have something of the same relation to the customary psychological workings of man as has the scientific handling of the natural force of electricity or of steam to the normal operations of steam and of electricity. And they, too, are formed upon a knowledge developed and confirmed by regular experiment, practical analysis and constant result. Yoga depends upon the perception and experience that our inner elements, combinations, functions, forces can be separated or dissolved, can be new-combined and set to novel and formerly impossible workings or can be transformed and resolved into a new general synthesis by fixed internal processes. Yoga is an attempt to realise psychological and physical perfection of our being by devising self-conscious means and willed arrangements of activity and by ever-increasing expression of inner potentialities in a persistent and guided effort to unite being with the divine reality and divine nature.