

SYNTHESIS OF YOGA IN THE UPANISHADS

KIREET JOSHI

THE MOTHER'S INSTITUTE OF RESEARCH

Synthesis of Yoga in the Upanishads

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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Preface

It is remarkable that the age of the Vedas was followed by the age of the Upanishads in the history of India. For it was in the age of the Upanishads that the Rishis discovered the essential processes of the yoga contained in the Vedic Samhitas, and they reaffirmed by the Yogic methods the truths that were discovered by the Vedic Rishis. The effort of the Upanishadic Rishis may be regarded as an effort of the recovery of the Vedic knowledge as also an effort of confirmation of the Vedic knowledge. As in science, so in Yoga which is also a science, the ultimate proof of experience lies in conformation and even of modification and expansion of the knowledge gained and accumulated in the past. Thus the Vedic knowledge stands proved by the affirmations of the Upanishads.

A comparative study of the Vedas and the Upanishads will show that the Upanishads continue the Vedic effort of Yoga and the Upanishads provided to the Indian people a sure foundation of their own special genius. We find in the Upanishads the real budding of the soul of India, which has been continuously striving to bloom to its fullness during the long course of its history.

Fortunately, in the writings of Sri Aurobindo we find an authentic account of the gradual blooming of the lotus of the bud of Yoga, which was itself a part of the germination of the seed that was sown in India by the Rishis of the Veda.

One needs to study Sri Aurobindo's '*The Foundations of Indian Culture*', as also '*Essays on the Gita*' and '*Synthesis of Yoga*', to be able to grasp the real meaning of the synthesis of yoga of the Upanishads and the role that these Upanishads have played in the development of the true genius of India. One should, of course, study Sri Aurobindo's commentary on the Isha Upanishad and Kena Upanishad, in order to understand the meaning of the Upanishads in a new illuminating light.

This book aims at providing to the reader a brief introduction to the real object of the Yogic quest and how the Vedas and the Upanishads are connected with each other and how Upanishads prove the veracity of the Vedic knowledge as also how the significance of synthesis of Veda and Upanishad can be appreciated in the light of the new synthesis of yoga that has now been given to humanity by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

Kireet Joshi

Introduction

The yoga that we see in the Vedas and the principal Upanishads belongs to pre-historic times, and it is only because we have available to us the relevant texts connected with the yoga of these times that we are in a position to ascertain the knowledge related to this yoga and its development. It cannot be supposed, however, that yoga developed only in the Vedas and the Upanishads. There was, indeed, yoga and yogic knowledge in ancient Egypt,¹ ancient Greece, ancient Chaldea, ancient China and ancient Persia as also elsewhere as in ancient Mayan civilization. In ancient Greece, there was a religion of which we have glimpses through the Homeric poems² where the Olympian Gods were described, and through the earlier myths that were prevalent in those ancient times.

In Gilbert Murray's '*Five Stages of Greek Religion*',³ we have a systematic account, and there is also a good account of Greek religion in J.E. Harrison's '*Prolegomena of the Study of Greek Religion*'.⁴ The Greek religion was not connected only with the Olympians but also with Dionysius or Bacchus, who was originally a Thracian god. The worship of Dionysius in due course of time developed a spiritualized form, and this form is attributed to Orpheus. It is maintained that Orphic doctrines contained much that seems to have its first source in Egypt. The Orphics believed in the transmigration of souls; they also maintained that the soul

can achieve eternal bliss, but that it could also suffer eternal or temporary torment according to the way they lead their lives on the earth. According to them, man is partly of earth and partly of heaven, and one can increase the heavenly part by a pure life. According to the elaborate theology that is available, Bacchus with whom one can be united by increasing development of the heavenly part that was twice born, once of his mother Siemele, and once from the thigh of his father Zeus. The Bacchic rites, it was believed, were capable of making man more nearly completely divine. At Eleusis, the most important part of religion consisted of Eleusinian mysteries. It appears that the Eleusinianism was impregnated with Orphism, and when the yogic development contained in the mysteries reached their highest point of development, Orphic communities began to be formed. The original home of these was Attica but in due course, they spread in southern Italy and Sicily with extraordinary rapidity. The Orphic communities believed in revelation and regarded it as the source of religious authority. The poems which contain their theology are symbolic, and they need to be interpreted with some insight in the processes of yoga.

According to Burnet,⁵ there is a striking similarity between Orphic beliefs and those prevailed in India about the same time. Historians differ among themselves as to whether there was any contact at that time between India and the Mediterranean regions. But there is a view, which is quite plausible, that there was widespread contact among the lands of ancient civilizations, and that on account of this contact, there were striking resemblances among the religious beliefs and their mysteries, which, in fact, contained secret knowledge of what is known in India to be

the knowledge of yoga. As our scope does not permit us to deal with this extremely interesting subject of the history of yoga as it developed in different civilizations, we have concentrated here on the development of the earliest stages of the synthesis of yoga in India.

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PART ONE

Vedas and Upanishads

If the Veda gave us the first types and figures of man, Nature and God and of the powers of the universe as seen and formed by an imaged spiritual intuition and psychological and yogic experience, the Upanishads broke through the Vedic forms, symbols and images, without entirely abandoning them and revealed in unique kind of poetry the ultimate and unsurpassable truths of self and God and man and the world and its principles and powers in their most essential, their profoundest and most intimate and their most ample reality. Between the Vedas and the Upanishads was a period⁶ of development of Brahamanas and Aranyakas, which have value for the clues that they furnish to the inner truths of the Vedas; but we need not enter into them, since they fall outside our scope. As a matter of fact, Brahamanas were centered on the ritualistic aspect of the Vedas, and it is only in the Upanishads that we find a renewal of Vedic yoga, and the synthesis of the Vedic yoga became the starting-point for a high and profound synthesis of spiritual knowledge. The Upanishads draw together in great harmony all that had been seen and experienced by the inspired and liberated knowers of the Eternal throughout the earlier great and fruitful period of yogic seeking. If the Veda is world's first yet extant record of yoga, Upanishads are the first yogic interpretation, elucidation and development of the yoga contained in the Veda. In the Upanishads, the intuitive mind

and intimate psychological experiences of Vedic seers pass into a supreme culmination in which the Spirit, as is said in a phrase in Kathopanishad, discloses its very own body, reveals the very word of its self-expression. The Upanishads are estimated to be the supreme work of the Indian mind, a large flood of spiritual revelation, inspiration and intuition of a direct and profound character.

The secret of the Vedic yoga becomes manifest increasingly in the Upanishads, and if yoga developed more massively in India than elsewhere, it is because the Rishis of the Upanishads made a fresh effort, not by intellectual or philosophical thought but by the renewal of Vedic methods of yoga, and they not only confirm, by methodical verification, the truths of the Vedic yoga, but by becoming Vedanta, a book of culmination of Vedic knowledge in a higher degree than the Vedas. The Upanishadic knowledge is *Jñāna*, — not a mere thinking and considering by the intelligence, — but a seeing of truths with a soul and a total living in it with the power of inner being, a spiritual seizing by a kind of identification with the object of knowledge. It was by an integral knowing of self, it was by living in and attaining knowledge by identity that the Vedantic sages confirmed and restated the truths of a transcendent Being or Existence, Brahman; and they have left with us in the Upanishads a fresh record of their yoga and stated that the self in us is one with the universal self of all things and that this self is transcendental Brahman. The records of their yoga give us evidence that they had held, felt and lived in the inmost truths of all things in the universe and the inmost truths of man's inner and outer existence by the light of one and unified vision. The Upanishads have therefore been regarded as epic-hymns of self-knowledge and world-

knowledge and God-knowledge. The utterances of the Upanishads contain the vision of oneness and self in a universal divine being, and they are couched in expressions that have great revealing power and suggestive thought-colour.

Significance of the Age of the Upanishads

It is instructive to observe that while both, India and ancient Greece, had had in their ancient times their respective ages of mysteries during which ancient systems of yoga were developed, the historical curve of development, however, took different turns. The age of the Orphic and Eleusinian mysteries in Greece was followed by a gradual development through Pythagoras, Socrates and Plato into an age of intellectual efflorescence; in India, the age of Vedic Mysteries was followed, after considerable loss of the yogic knowledge during an intermediate period, by a fresh renewal of yogic quest that aimed at intuitive and revelatory knowledge of the ultimate reality through yogic methods, the evidence of which we find in the pages of the Upanishads. The period of intellectual efflorescence came much later in India. In the meantime, Upanishads regained the yogic wealth of Vedic knowledge and made the spiritual base of Indian culture into a firm foundation. We find in the Upanishads, in brief glimpses, the picture of that extraordinary stir and movement of spiritual enquiry and passion for the highest knowledge. We witness in this picture the scenes of the old world, — the sages sitting in the groves ready to test and teach the seeker. We notice princes and learned Brahmins and great learned nobles going about in search of knowledge; we find the king's son in his chariot, and the illegitimate son of the servant-girl, seeking any man

who might carry in himself the thought of light and a word of revelation. We meet great personalities like Janaka; we encounter Ajatashatru with his subtle mind, and Raikwa the cart-driver. We meet Yajnavalkya, calm and ironic, who takes into himself both worldly possession and spiritual riches, and who casts away at last all his wealth behind to wander forth as a homeless ascetic. We are astonished with the story of Krishna, son of Devaki, who heard a single word of Rishi Ghora and knew at once the Eternal. Visions of the ashramas are restored to us in these pages, and we see the courts of the kings who were also spiritual discoverers and thinkers, and the great sacrificial assemblies where the sages met and compared their intuitions. It is in the pages of the Upanishads that we see how the soul of India was born, and how Indian culture came to place yoga as the highest discipline of knowledge.

Principal Upanishads

The number of Upanishads has grown over a long stretch of time, and there are books which contain two hundred and fifty Upanishads. The number of principal Upanishads is, however, limited to twelve. These Upanishads are also valued the most, since they reflected more closely the yoga of the Veda. These Upanishads are Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upanishad, Chhāndogya Upanishad, Taittirīya Upanishad, Aitareya Upanishad, Kauṣītaki Upanishad, Kena Upanishad, Kaṭha Upanishad, Īśa Upanishad, Muṇḍaka Upanishad, Praśna Upanishad, Māṇḍūkya Upanishad, and Svetāśvatara Upanishad. The one common subject of all these Upanishads is brahma-vidyā, the highest object of yogic knowledge, namely, Brahman, but each Upanishad approaches this subject with a particular angle and enters into the kingdom

of brahma-vidya by its own gates, follows its own path or detour, aims at its own point of arrival. If we take, for instance, the *Isā Upanishad*, we find that it is concerned with the whole problem of the world and life and works and the human destiny in their relation to the supreme truth of the Brahman. It is a brief Upanishad and contains only eighteen verses, but the sweep of this Upanishad is vast and it scans most of the fundamental problems of Life with great swiftness, and the transitional steps between the verses are omitted with the result that one can see transitions crossed over as a giant would cross over intermediate steps to reach the other distant step. The idea of the supreme Self and its becoming, as also, the idea of the supreme Lord and His working are developed so as to answer those fundamental problems of life which look like locks that require some key for their solution. The oneness of all existences is its dominating note. The goal of the Upanishad is the same as that pursued by all the principal Upanishads; that goal is the winning of the state of Immortality, but it is more specific about the relations of the divine, all-ruling and all-possessing Brahman, to the world and to the human consciousness; it is also specifically concerned with the means of passing out of our present state of divided self, ignorance and suffering into the unity, the truth, the true knowledge, integral knowledge and divine beatitude. The Upanishad closes with the aspiration towards the supreme felicity.

The *Kena Upanishad* is also concerned with the state of Immortality, it is also concerned with Ignorance and Knowledge, with the relationship between the divine consciousness and the world and human consciousness. Like the *Isā Upanishad*, the *Kena Upanishad* also closes with the definition of Brahman as the Delight and the injunction to

adore and pursue That as the Delight. But in contrast to *Isā Upanishad*, the *Kena* focuses on a more restricted problem, and starts with a more precise and narrow enquiry. The special subject of the *Kena* is restricted to the relation of mind-consciousness to Brahman-consciousness. The question that is asked is: What are mental instruments? What is this mental life which uses the mental instruments of senses and speech and others? Is mind the last witness, the supreme and final power? And the Upanishad replies that there is a greater existence behind, just as the mind and its instruments are behind the life-force and its workings, and just as these latter are behind the material world. Just as Matter does not know Mind, but Mind knows Matter, even so, the Mind does not know That which is behind it, but That knows Mind. The supreme problem and aim for the mental being is how to rise beyond the mind and its instruments and how to attain to the Brahman. The *Kena* concentrates on this all-important problem of human existence.

Again, the *Katha Upanishad* aims at the knowledge of Immortality and enjoyment of Immortality, but it focuses on the psychological complex of man and on the cause of death and not only on what happens after the death but the entire complexity of all that is immortal which needs to be known in order that immortality is realized. It points out that the supreme reality, which is immortal is seated in the deepest cave of the heart as the *Purusha* which is not larger than the thumb of a man and that one has to know from the very close the *Jiva*, the individual Soul, who is the eater of sweetness, and it is also the self within our being that is lord of what was and what shall be. That immortal, the supreme Self is also *Aditi*,⁷ is the imperishable mother of the gods. Finally, that supreme self is the One Eternal and the transient, the

One consciousness in many conscious beings, and the seeker who is calm and strong beholds Him in his self as in a mirror, and his is eternal peace in a highest felicity which none can point to nor define it.

The Muṇḍaka Upanishad distinguishes between the lower knowledge and the higher knowledge and dwells on the problem of how one can enter into higher knowledge. It is in that context that those contents of higher knowledge are expounded in which the Supreme becomes known as the reality which is immutable and yet generator of manifold becomings. That Supreme is not only beyond life and mind but also beyond the immutable. The relationship between the mutable and the immutable is described as two birds that cling to one common tree and how the one that eats and is mobile, is bewildered but having seen the other one as the Lord becomes liberated from sorrow. It emphasizes the importance of the truths for the attainment of integral knowledge (*samyag jñāna*).

The Māṇḍukya Upanishad is extremely brief consisting of twelve verses but extremely important on account of its precise distinctions between different levels of consciousness, and the corresponding objects of these states of consciousness. The four states that it describes are the states of wakefulness, dream, sleep and that which is the highest, — the state of awareness of the Self in its single existence, in Whom all phenomena dissolve, Who is calm, who is Good, who is the One than Whom there is no other, who is the Self, and who is the object of knowledge.

The Taittirīya Upanishad enters into brahma-vidya by describing the process of teaching and learning, and through an illustration of the process of meditation and tapasya by

which the highest Self is known, successively as Matter, Life, Mind, Supermind, and Bliss which is conscious and self-existent. It also describes the different states of being in the individual corresponding to the universal principles of the One Being that is Bliss. The Upanishad defines the Brahman as the Truth, Knowledge, Infinity (*satyam, jnanam, anantam*), and it defines the result of the knowledge of the Brahman in the secrecy, in the cave of being, in the supreme ether as the enjoyment of all its highest aspirations by the soul of the individual in the attainment of its highest self-existence. To know the conditions and possess the Brahman purely and perfectly is the infinite privilege of the eternal Wisdom.

The Chhāndogya Upanishad is a work on the right and perfect way of devoting oneself to the Brahman; the spirit, the methods, the formula are given. Its subject is the Brahman, but the Brahman as symbolized in the AUM, the sacred syllable of the Veda. It therefore aims at providing the knowledge not only of the pure state of the universal existence, but of that existence in all its parts, the waking world and the dream self and the sleeping, the manifest, the half-manifest, and hidden, *Bhur loka, Bhuvar, Swar*, — the right means to win all of them, enjoy all of them, transcend all of them.

Finally, we may refer to the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upanishad which is the profoundest of the Upanishads; it is subtle and extraordinarily rich in rare philosophical suggestions and delicate psychology; its ideas are formulated in a highly figurative and symbolic language, which is for us an obscuring veil. The very first part of the Upanishad is a description of the Horse of the *ashwamedha*, and it sets the key to the Upanishad. The Horse-sacrifice, *ashwamedha*, is

the symbol of a great spiritual advance, an evolutionary movement, starting from the dominion of apparently material forces reaching out to a higher spiritual freedom. This horse is not an ordinary horse, it is the Horse of the Worlds, representing universal Life-Force, which is to be offered in surrender as a sacrifice to the highest in order that the immortality may be attained. A special point of importance in this Upanishad is not only elaborate description of all planes of existence and of the knowledge of the Self and the knowledge of sweetness of immortality (*madhu vidyā*), it also contains descriptions of the way in which the discussions were held in the assemblies of the seekers of knowledge and yogins of the time of the Upanishads. These debates show that they did not contain intellectual arguments but their questions and answers were related to the exchange of yogic knowledge that was attained by different participants by virtue of experiences of different levels of consciousness and realization.

The highest experience that we find described in the Vedas and the Upanishads culminates in the Upanishadic or Vedantic terms as the experience of '*Sadbrahman*', Existence pure, indefinable, infinite, absolute. It is the experience of the fundamental Reality discovered by experience that transcends the senses and sense-mind; it transcends the plane of the mental thought; it is the experience that transcends the forms that are seen and caught by our sense-experience; it transcends even the Ideas or universal Forms which are caught by the Pure Reason; it transcends even our intuitions of Space and Time which our Pure Reason inevitably conceives as the conditions in which our experiences of the phenomenal world are arranged and organized.

But that experience, verified again and again by the Rishis of the Vedas and the Upanishads over a long stretch of time, separated from each other — both in space and time — can also be glimpsed often in the beginning in the phenomenon of self-awareness or behind it, where something immovable and immutable can be vaguely perceived or imagined in regard to what we are, beyond all life and death, beyond all change and formation and action. There is something in our self-awareness in which a door swings open suddenly or can be opened by practice of the methods of yoga described in the Vedas and the Upanishads, and which have been further developed and confirmed over millennia, and the splendour of the truth beyond is caught; and if we have the strength and firmness in the practice of yogic methods, it is affirmed, we can make a starting-point for another play on consciousness than that of the sense-mind and intellectual reasoning, for the play of Intuition.

Intuition and Reason

Intuition⁸ is not a process of getting truth by happy conjecture; it is a spark of a deeper layer of our consciousness which can be perceived as the incorrigible ground of those concepts which operate in and behind mental operations. It is intuition that impels the Pure Reason to formulate concepts of infinity and eternity, even though in our ordinary experience we do not find anything corresponding to them. In the history of philosophy, we see the conceptual formulations of intuitions in terms of God, Immortality and Heaven. The rationalistic tradition has, through ontological argument, underlined the necessity of utilizing the concepts of eternity and infinity although, when analyzed, they have been declared to be odd. The empiricists

feel justified in denying any real meaning to these concepts, since they are declared to be unverifiable in experience; nonetheless their appeal to experience is limited and only sense-experience and concepts which are tied up with sense experience are admitted, and there is a refusal to consider the possibility of any experience which goes beyond sense-experience and sense-bound Reason. But what the empiricists deny and what the rationalists are obliged to recognize as incorrigible and therefore true, can be found verifiable in the experiences which begin to develop through the play of Intuition. These experiences can be verified by systematic application of the methods of yoga. But even when the play of intuition is not recognized, it is always latent, according to the yogic view of consciousness, and secretly it is at work, and it is found that Intuition is as strong as Nature herself from whose very soul it has sprung and the concepts it has generated are constantly perceived or used inevitably, even though they may be contradicted by the analysis of reason or by the experiences that we have in our normal boundaries of consciousness.

The synthesis of yoga that we can notice in the Vedas and Upanishads is not arrived at by intellectual speculation where integrality and synthesis are distant goals and achievable at a higher level of consciousness where unity-consciousness is more natural and spontaneous. Moreover, we notice that the yogic experiences described in the Vedas and the Upanishads seem to speak of gradation even in supra-intellectual consciousness, and thus we begin to appreciate the symbol of the sun that is used to indicate the highest possible grade of consciousness where even the spotlights of intuitions are united (*raśmīn samūha*), so as to constitute an integral supramental state in which the Object

of Knowledge is seen in all its integrality.

The Veda has presented this integral vision through a beautiful metaphor, where Vishnu's eye is described as extended over the whole sky. The Veda makes a distinction between higher light (*jyotir uttaram*) and the highest light (*jyotir uttamam*),⁹ and we can see how integrality is spontaneous and natural in the highest light, just as in the sun all the rays of light get combined and synthesized. In terms of yogic achievement, the Rishis of the Vedas and the Upanishads can be regarded as those who had succeeded in attaining the highest integral consciousness, and it is in recognition of this yoga-siddhi that the Indian tradition has looked upon the Vedas and the Upanishads as most authoritative texts of reference. The authority of the Vedas and the Upanishads is not the authority of theological dogma but the authority of knowledge that is always verifiable by fresh yogic experiment and confirmation. It is in this sense that the Vedas and the Upanishads have been ranked as *shruti*, — as a record of authoritative experiences of yogic sight and yogic hearing, *dṛṣṭi* and *śruti*, which have been regarded as special faculties of consciousness that characterize the highest supramental knowledge.

Indian Yoga and Spirit of Synthesis

As we examine the history of yoga in India, we are struck by this lofty and integral vision that we find described in the Vedas and the Upanishads, the most ancient texts on Yogic Knowledge which are available to humanity. In the subsequent development of the Indian yoga this integrality and unity-consciousness which we find gradually broken down, and the yogic systems in the subsequent periods become more and more specialized. These specializations

have the merit in terms of increasing subtlety and intensity in their methods and in their specialized achievements, but the original integrality is greatly missed. In fact, we find that during the period intervening between the Vedas and the Upanishads, the tendency towards specialization had already set in, and it was that tendency which was responsible for the division between *karmakāṇḍa*, which came to be described in great detail in the Brāhamaṇas, and *jñānakāṇḍa*, which came to be developed in its beginnings in *Āryaṇakas* and which culminated in the Upanishads. Fortunately, in the early Upanishads, the Vedic integral system of yoga was recaptured, and the synthesis of yoga of the Upanishads based itself on integral yoga of the Veda, even though the Upanishads, rightly called Vedānta, brought out clearly the Vedic emphasis and integration of the paths of knowledge, action and devotion; and they also added as a kind of culmination of the Vedic luminous clarities in sharper and clearer terms, and clarified with particular emphasis, the different paths of knowledge and also the synthesis of these paths.

Nevertheless, there is an emphasis in the Upanishads increasing steadily as time goes on into an overemphasis on the liberation of the individual, eclipsing the ideal of the attainment of collective harmony. As a result, there came about increasing overemphasis on the individual's rejection of the lower cosmic life. This note increases, and it swells in due course of time into the rejection of all cosmic life whatever, and that becomes finally in India almost the one dominant and all-challenging cry.

In the earlier Vedic synthesis, the liberation of the individual is regarded as a means towards a great cosmic victory, — *swarājya* as an indispensable step towards

sāmrājya.¹⁰ The Vedic yoga also declares that there has to come about the eventual conquest of heaven and earth by the superconscious Truth and Bliss, and when we study the accounts of the victories such as those of Angirasa Rishis and Ribhus, we find that those who had achieved the victory in the past are the conscious helpers of their yet battling posterity. The Upanishads have provided to humanity with great clarity, plenitude and noble catholicity the integral vision of the Brahman, and therefore, we find in the Upanishads the door of escape from any overemphasis in its own statement of the truth. As the Kena Upanishad points out, the man who knows and possesses the supreme Brahman as the transcendent Beatitude becomes a centre of that delight to which all his fellows shall come as to a well from which they can draw the divine waters.¹¹ This is the clue that is needed for preserving the connection with the universe. The one reason which supremely justifies that the connection is not the desire of personal earthly joy but the compassion that impels help to all creatures, who are still bound. Again, as in the Kena Upanishad, the highest good is not restricted to the lesser victories of the Gods, of Agni, Vayu and Indra, but extends to go beyond towards the discovery of the supreme victory of the Brahman, who is not merely immobile, but who is also beyond immobility, and who stands always behind the struggle and victory of the gods, the cosmic forces and beings; Indra must discover that Brahman that stands behind all victories, lesser or supreme. And the greatest helpfulness that one can render for the supreme victory of the Brahman is to be a human centre of the Light, the Glory, the Bliss, the Strength and the Knowledge of the Divine Existence through whom it shall communicate itself lavishly to other men and attract by its

magnet of delight their souls to that which is the Highest. Such is the message that one can read in all the principal Upanishads, even though that message began to break down, with the rise of specialized systems of yoga in due course of time. But the spirit of the Upanishads, the spirit of its synthesis has never been lost, even though eclipsed. In all the subsequent Vedantic systems of yoga, we find the spirit of synthesis, even though increasing specialization and some kind of exclusivism are evidently witnessed.

Upanishads confirm Vedic Yoga

As we study the yoga of the Veda and enter into the yoga of the Upanishads, we feel struck by the rigour of the spirit of yoga that was manifest in the quest of the Rishis of the Veda as also of the Rishis of the Upanishads. The yogic knowledge of the Veda was expressed in symbols and figures which were taken largely from the rituals of sacrifice, and yet the yogic quest was not allowed to be limited or constrained by the limitations of religion. The Vedic Rishis were close observers of the psychology of the subconscious, the conscient and the superconscient, and their quest was not allowed to be thwarted by the forces and powers of the inconscient, subconscious and the human-conscient which is the upward wave of ignorance which gropes for knowledge and which normally remains confined to the operations of senses, nervous mentality, feelings, emotions and intellectual understanding and discrimination, *dhi*. Their quest was not limited by beliefs and practices handed over to them by their forefathers, *pūrvebhiḥ*, but they were keen to examine and confirm and arrive at new discoveries and new knowledge. Discovery of the new was so much underlined that the Veda was not allowed to be a closed book, but Vedic tradition

maintained that the Vedas are endless, *anantāḥ vedāḥ*. In a Vedic hymn a Rishi prays to Agni:

“Found for those who from age to age speak the word that is new, the word that is a discovery of knowledge, O Fire, their glorious treasure....” *yugeyuge vidathyam grṇadbhyaḥ agne rayim yaśasam dhehi navyasim*.¹²

The Vedic yoga affirms, and this is confirmed and reiterated by the yoga of the Upanishads, that the truths of the physical and supraphysical realities can be best grasped, known and possessed by us through faculties which lie above the ranges of physical senses and rational intelligence. Again, it is affirmed by the Vedic Rishis and confirmed by the Rishis of the Upanishads that these faculties can be developed by pursuit of assured methods resulting from the principles, powers and processes that govern the experiences and realizations of the highest possible objects of knowledge. We also see that the Rishis were able to make such an impact upon the Indian culture that in its later periods the seekers and practitioners of science, philosophy, poetry, religion and other disciplines came to accept that they could meet or fulfill their goals only when they could open up to higher supra-intellectual faculties, powers and realizations.

The Rishis of the Upanishads could not accept the view that the Vedas were ceremonial and ritualistic in their essential character, and even though the Brahmanas had underlined that the Vedas were *karmakānda*, body of rituals of sacrificial works, the Rishis of the Upanishads revisited the Vedas with fresh and bold enquiry, and by the development of illumined experiences through the cultivation and development of the intuitive and revelatory faculties of knowledge by identity, they confirmed the Vedic

methods of yoga and even developed them further so as to bring out the deeper subtleties of the knowledge of the world of the individual in the universe and the individual's fulfillment in the Transcendental Reality and Immortality.

PART TWO

Taittiriya Upanishad: Illustration of the Method of Yogic Quest

As an illustration of the Vedic and Upanishadic seeking and the method followed in the yogic quest, it is instructive to turn to the Taittiriya Upanishad, which in Bhriguvalli, presents the quest of Bhrigu. Bhrigu, Varuna's son, came up to his father Varuna and said, "Lord, teach me the Eternal." The teacher set out the path of enquiry. He said, "Food and Prana and Eye and Ear and Mind — even these." He added: "Seek thou to know that from which these creatures are born, whereby being born they live and to which they go hence and enter again; for that is the Eternal."¹³

And Bhrigu followed the method of concentration, and he concentrated himself, and in thought and by the askesis of his brooding, he knew Food for the Eternal, since from food alone, it appeared to him, are these creatures born and being born they live by food, and into food they depart and enter again. He reported the result of his meditation to his teacher, who directed him to continue meditation further. Bhrigu concentrated himself in thought and by the energy of his brooding, he knew Prana (Life-Force) for the Eternal. When he reported the result of his meditation, the teacher asked him to meditate again. Bhrigu meditated and knew that Mind is the Eternal. When he reported this to his teacher, he was asked to meditate again. By further meditation,

Bhrigu knew Vijnana, the fourth faculty of comprehensive knowledge of the Truth and the Vast, to be the Eternal. But the teacher asked him to meditate further, and after meditation, Bhrigu knew Bliss for the Eternal. And the teacher confirmed that one who knows that food is the Eternal, and one who has passed to the Self or Eternal which is of Prana, and one who has passed to the Self which is Mind, and one who has passed to the Self which is of Vijnana, and one who has passed to the Self which is of Bliss, Lo, he ranges above the worlds and he attains all powers and partakes of the law of harmony of the universe; he attains the knowledge of all powers of the cosmic beings, since he reaches the origins of the gods, and lives in the very heart of immortality. He conquers the whole world, possesses it, and his light is as the sun in its glory. The teacher concludes: "This, verily, is the Upanishad, the secret of the Veda."¹⁴

We get here a glimpse of the method of the yogic quest which was followed in the Veda and in some of the Upanishads like the Taittiriya Upanishad. The method was the method of self-development, where one evolves oneself from plane to plane of one's own being and embraces on each successively one's own oneness with the world and arrives at ananda or bliss which is at once self-existent and conscious, and one takes into oneself the action of the lower grades of being as one ascends. One may thus work out a comprehensive process of self-development by a sort of inclusive process of self-enlargement and transformation. The evolution of the material man into the vital man, from the vital man into the mental man, from the mental man into the supramental man and from that stage into the divine man, *daivyam janam*, to use the Vedic term.

Illustration of other Methods of Yogic Quest: Kena Upanishad

The Kena Upanishad speaks of two methods, when it states, "That of It which is thou, that of It which is in the gods, this thou hast to think out. Ī think It known".¹⁵

The means of knowledge are, we are told in effect, to get back behind the forms of the universe to that which is essential in the cosmos, and that which is essential is two-fold: (i) the gods in Nature, the cosmic functionings through which the gods act, namely, mind, life, speech, senses, body, and (ii) the self in the individual. This means, according to the first method, 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 quiet, silent and passive to the power, light and joy of something which is cosmic and beyond themselves. What happens then is that the Ultimate Reality, the divine unnamable reflects Himself openly in the cosmic powers or in the gods. As the Kena Upanishad states, "When It is known by perception that reflects It, then one has the thought of It, for one finds immortality"¹⁶

The light of the Supreme 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 that is imaged of the Brahman falls upon the world-nature and changes it into divine nature. All this is not done by any 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 higher functionings of cosmic powers from time to time. The repetition of these

touches and visitations 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 be more and more fixed in the memory, in the understanding, in the joy of the touch and vision of that transcendent glory. The silence which has fallen on them forms their foundation and status, and it will be realized as the knowledge of the Eternal silence, which is Brahman; at the same time responses of their functionings to superconscient light, power, joy will manifest the eternal activity, which is also Brahman. As the Kena Upanishad points out, "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."¹⁷

There is also another method. This method is that of the entry into the Self, which is within us and which supports the actions of the mind, life and body and the gods. Through the individualized mind, one concentrates on That, and one is led to transcend mind by continuous remembrance of the Self, by continuous dwelling into the Self into which one enters. By this continuous dwelling, the mind is transcended; and one transcends mental individualisation of being, with which one is at present identified. One 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 transcendental immortality, this is the spiritual existence which the Upanishads declare to be the goal of man, and one passes out of the mortal state into the spirit. As the Kena Upanishad states while summarizing this method:

"Then in that which is of the Self, *adhyātmam*, — as the motion of this mind seems to attain to That and by it

afterwards the will in the thought continually remembers It.”¹⁸

Let us reiterate these two methods of processes in different terms:

1. In the first process, there is an emphasis on the functionings of our faculties, symbolized as gods; we develop them to a high point of maturity; these functionings then become aware of their source, and we perceive the intervention of the Divine Intelligence, which is figuratively described as Uma Haimavati in Kena Upanishad and as Aditi in the Veda, who is known as the Mother of the Gods. As a result, there are flashes from higher cosmic operations. To use the Vedic imagery, there are workings and descents of the powers of revelation, inspiration, intuition, discrimination, the powers of Ila, Saraswati, Sarama, Daksha. And by constant repetition, we come to know the Universal and Transcendental. As a consequence, the mind will know the Brahman, it will think nothing but the Brahman, the Life will move to embrace, enjoy nothing but the Brahman; the eye will see, the ear will hear, the other senses will sense nothing but the Brahman. To use the words of Kena Upanishad:

“That which is hearing of our hearing, mind above mind, speech above 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.” (I.2)

To use the terms of the Taittiriya Upanishad, the first process is to perfect the faculties and activities of the annamayakosha, pranamayakosha and manomayakosha, — of the physical being, vital being and mental being, —

and proceed to develop and perfect the faculties of *Vijñāna* Purusha and the *Ānandamaya* Purusha; this will lead us to the knowledge of the law of the universe of the Truth; and the next step would be the realization of the Bliss, the Ananda Brahman. This is the realization that the 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.”¹⁹

2. In the second process, the individual self, which always subsists behind our desire self or egoistic self asserts itself; it arrives at or takes advantage of that state of the mind where it can strive towards That; the mind attempts to lift itself to That, and although it falls back, still the will of knowledge in the mental thought continually and 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 *Parātpara*, higher than the Highest. As Kena declares: “As ‘That Delight’ one should follow after it.”²⁰

It will be seen that the combination of these two methods and processes would constitute a synthesis of yoga, with various elements combining works, knowledge and joy, — karma, jnana, bhakti, — a synthesis that is the continuation and development of the synthesis of the yoga of the Veda.

Intensity of Quest: Essential Prerequisite of Yogic Method

No yoga is possible unless there is an enquiry and unless

there is a pupil who is seized by enthusiasm to enquire and to persist in the enquiry till the goal is reached, the goal of realization through knowledge by identity where the subject and the object are so identical that the objective truth of knowledge becomes undeniable and indisputable in the subjective consciousness of the inquirer. Such a pupil and such intensity of enquiry are illustrated in the story of Nachiketas that is presented in the Kathopanishad. The story runs from the physical plane of consciousness to higher and higher domains of supraphysical consciousness, and this journey is aided, not only by the acuteness and enthusiasm of Nachiketas but also by the teacher, Yama, the knower and the ordainer of the Law who possesses the secrets of life and death and also of immortality. It is rare to find a teacher of this greatness. It was a boon for Nachiketas to find Yama, and he came to acquire this boon because of his straightforwardness and his sincere aspiration that only the right thing should be done, whatever may be the consequences.

His father was performing a sacrifice, and according to the requirements of the rites, the gifts have to be given, which must have intrinsic value. But the father was gifting away cows which were old, worn out; Nachiketas, therefore, offered that he himself should be sacrificed. And he asked his father: "To whom do you give me in sacrifice?" Thrice he asked this question, displeased and angry with the demand of his son, the father said that it was to Yama, the Lord of Death, to whom he was offered. Even at the home of Yama, he had the patience to wait for three nights, since Yama was away and absent. On arrival, Yama, pleased with the patience of Nachiketas, bestowed on him three boons. As a first boon, Nachiketas, keen to ensure tranquility and pleasure of his

father, asked that his father should be happy when he returned from the home of Death. The boon was gladly granted, and Nachiketas was to select a second boon. In reply, he chose the knowledge of the mystic fire, the knowledge which was regarded to be indispensable for the Vedic yoga. When the secret knowledge of the Mystic Flame was imparted to Nachiketas, and when Nachiketas could repeat the knowledge imparted to him, the Great Teacher was gratified and gave him a gift of a necklace, and he even declared that thence forward the mystic flame would be known as the flame of Nachiketas.

But when he chose the third boon, and asked an intriguing question; Yama refused to answer it and asked him to choose something else. But Nachiketas persisted with his original question with such intensity that Yama, pleased with the intensity of the inquiry, answered the question and imparted to him the most precious knowledge, knowing which nothing further remains to be known.²¹

The question that was asked by Nachiketas was as follows:

“This debate that there is over the man who has passed and some say ‘This he is not’ and some say that ‘he is’, that, taught by thee, I would know; this is the third boon of the boons of my choosing.”²²

In answer to this question, Yama said: “Even by the gods was this debated of old; for it is not easy of knowledge, since very subtle is the law of it. Another boon choose, O Nachiketas; importune me not, nor urge me; this, this abandon.”

Nachiketas persisted. Knowing that he had met the

teacher who is the knower and keeper of the cosmic Law through which the soul has to rise by death and life to the freedom of Immortality, and knowing that never will he find another like that Teacher to tell of it, he could not choose any other, since no other boon could equal what he had asked for.

Yama, however, offered to grant what ordinary people desire most in their search of pleasure and happiness. He said : "Choose sons and grandsons who shall live each a hundred years, choose much cattle and elephants and gold and horses; choose a mighty reach of earth and thyself live for as many years as thou listest."

Yama went farther and added that he would grant him all desires that are hard to win in the world of mortals, and even "These delectable women with their chariots and their bugles, whose like are not be won by men, these I will give thee, live with them for thy handmaidens." Yama once again asked Nachiketas not to question him of death.

Nachiketas answered: "Until the morrow mortal man has these things, O Yama who ends life, and they wear away all this keenness and glory of the senses; nay, all life is even for a little. Thine are these chariots and thine the dancing of these women and their singing. Man is not to be satisfied by riches and riches we shall have if we have beheld thee and shall live as long as thou shalt be lord of us... Who that is a mortal man and grows old and dwells down upon the unhappy earth, when he has come into the presence of the ageless Immortals and knows, Yea, who when he looks very close as beauty and enjoyment and pleasure, can take delight in overlong living? This of which their debate, or death, declare to me, even that which is in the great passage; than

this boon which enters in into the secret that is hidden from us, no other chooses Nachiketas.”

The singleness of the purpose, unequalled intensity of the enquiry, and unrelenting persistence, — all this illustrated by Nachiketas may be regarded as an indispensable condition for the pursuit of the yoga and yogic knowledge that we find in the Upanishads.

Other Prerequisites:

(i) Distinction between the Good and the Pleasant

(ii) Distinction between Knowledge and Ignorance

Yama himself, pleased with the sincerity of Nachiketas, and while responding to the quest of Nachiketas, laid down all that is required to enter into the realms of knowledge. Yama makes a distinction between the good and the pleasant and points out that one who chooses the pleasant falls from the aim of life. It is the wise, he says, who chooses the good, and since Nachiketas had looked close at the objects of desire, at pleasant things and beautiful, and he had cast them from him, therefore, he had not entered into the net of riches in which many men sink into perdition.²³

Yama proceeds to make a distinction between Ignorance and Knowledge²⁴ and points out that those who dwell in the ignorance consider themselves to be very learned and wise in their own wit, but they are bewildered and wander about stumbling round and round helplessly like blind men led by the blind. Those who dwell in the ignorance, Yama elucidates, think that only the physical world exists and there is no other, and they come again and again to fall into the net of Death. The Knowledge, on the other hand, — Yama points out, — has for its object that One who cannot be found unless

one is told of Him by another who can only be seen as a miracle because he is so rare. He who is the object of Knowledge is subtler than subtlety, and he cannot be taught by logic. He ended his response by saying:

“This wisdom is not to be had by reasoning, O beloved Nachiketas; only when told thee by another, it brings real knowledge.Truly thou art steadfast in the Truth! Even such questioners as thou art may I meet with always.”²⁵

The Real object of Yogic Quest: Immortality

What Yama had agreed to expound was the answer to the question, not merely as to what happens to the man after his death, whether there is survival after death. For the dialogue between Nachiketas and Yama took place after Nachiketas was offered to Death and in the abode of the knower and keeper of the cosmic Law to whom the soul rises after the death, and to whom he had, with persistence, put the question. His question was, therefore, profounder, the answer of which was debated even by the gods. The question was about the one who exists, if that exists at all, since there was a debate in which according to some “he is not”, and according to some “he is”. Is there or is there not a Reality or Realities that exist indestructibly? In other words, while it is known that man dies, it is not known indisputably that there is any immortal reality, — reality that does not pass away and that which remains without any decomposition. The knowledge of immortality was the real theme of the question of Nachiketas, *parāye mahati brūhi nastat*, “declare to me” such was the explicit demand of Nachiketas, “even that which is in the great passage.” It is well known that the Veda had spoken of the great passage of the Great Path, *mahas panthāḥ*, the path that leads to immortality

(*amṛtatvāya gātum*). Nachiketas has evidently heard of the ageless Immortals of whom the Veda has spoken, — *ajīryātām amṛtānām*. It is to these ageless immortals to whom he refers.²⁶ His question is not regarding the survival of man after death, for that which survives after death, the supraphysical composition of the subtle body, life and mind, dissolves in due course of time. Nachiketas is keen to learn of those who have been declared to be ageless Immortals, as to how they had become ageless, how they had become immortal, and what is that reality which is truly immortal? It is to the exposition to this theme that Yama now turns decisively and provides an answer, which speaks both of the method of the yoga of immortality and the knowledge and the firm foundation of the immortal reality to which these methods lead.

Yama speaks explicitly of *adhyātma yoga*.²⁷ Yama states:

“Realizing the Supreme through *adhyātma yoga*, the yoga that leads to the realization of that Supreme, even the Ancient of Days who hath entered deep into that which is hidden and is hard to see, for he is established in our secret being and lodged in the cavern heart of things, the wise and steadfast man casts away from him pleasure and sorrow. When a mortal man has heard, when he has grasped, when he has forcefully separated the Righteous One from his body and one that subtle Being then he has delight, for he has got that one in which one can indeed delight.”

In these two verses (I.2.12,13), we find the brief statement of *jñāna yoga*, which consists of the hearing, *śravaṇa*, of grasping, *manana* and of the separation of the body from the real truth. “I am not the body, I am not the life, I am not the mind, but I am That One”, — one dwells in the

truth of That One, separated from the body, life and mind. This dwelling of the mind in this truth is *nididhyāsana*, which leads to the realization, *sākṣātkāra*, of the ultimate reality, of the subtle Being, of the delight or rather of Sachchidananda, — the Existent who is Conscious and who is Bliss.

In an earlier statement,²⁸ Yama had spoken of the preparation Nachiketas had made for entering into the path of yoga by casting away wisely and persistently all that had come in his grasp consisting of possessions of desire, firm foundation of the world and an infinity of power and the other shore of security and great praise and wide moving foundation. In other words, he had cast away desire and rightly entered into the path of yoga that requires renunciation of desire as a prerequisite.

Next, in a brief word, Yama expounds the goal that all the Vedas glorify, “AUM is that goal, O Nachiketas”.²⁹

As is known, AUM is a Sound, the Syllable; it is a secret sound which was discovered by the Vedic Rishis, and which issues from the Supreme, and which constitutes all that is expressed in the seven-fold world; therefore the knowledge of that syllable gives the key to all that is to be realized. Hence Yama states:

“For this Syllable is Brahman, this Syllable, if one knows, whatsoever one shall desire, it is his.” This secret knowledge of the Veda is the knowledge of the Brahman, of the Supreme and of this (Brahmavidya) Yama describes as knowledge of the One as immortal. Having described the One as one who slays not, and one who is never slain, and as the great Omnipresent self, Yama elucidates a farther

condition required for that path. "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 tranquilized, can by wisdom attain to Him." (I.2.16–24) Yama, however, continues. He expounds in a few words, the human psychology and of yoga that applies that psychological knowledge. He compares the body to a chariot, the bodily senses to the steeds, the object of senses as the path in which the steeds move; the mind is compared to reins, Reason is compared to charioteer, and the soul is described as the master of the chariot. He points out that one who is without knowledge and one whose mind remains always unapplied, his senses are to him as wild horses and will not obey the driver of the chariot. Indeed, such a one will not meet the goal, but wanders in the cycle of phenomena. On the other hand, he who has knowledge with his mind ever applied, his senses are to him as noble steeds and they obey the driver. He reaches that goal of knowledge, whence he is not born again.

There are some other indications also in this Upanishad which are central to the methods and processes; these are presented towards the end of the dialogue with Nachiketas. Yama says:

"When the five senses cease and are at rest and the mind rests with them and the higher mind ceases from its workings, that is the highest state, say thinkers. The state unperturbed when the senses are imprisoned in the mind, of this they say "It is Yoga". Then man becomes very vigilant, for yoga is the birth of things and their ending. Not with the mind has man the power to get God, no, nor through speech, nor by the eye. Unless one says "He is", how can one become sensible of Him? One must apprehend God in the concept

“He is” and also in His essential: But when he has grasped him as the “Is”, then the essential of God dawns upon a man. When every desire that finds lodging in the heart of man, has been loosened from its moorings, then this mortal puts on immortality; even here he tastes God, in this human body. Yea, when all the strings of the heart are rent asunder, even here, in this human birth, then the mortal becomes immortal. This is the whole teaching of the Veda and the Upanishad. A hundred and one are the nerves of the heart, and of all these only one issues out through the head of a man: by this his soul mounts up to its immortal home, but the rest lead him to all sorts and conditions of works in his passing.”³⁰

This insistence on attainment of immortality “even here”, *atra iha*, is also underlined in the Kena Upanishad, where the Rishi declares: “When It is known by reflection that reflects It, then one has the thought of It, for one finds immortality; by the Self one finds the force to attain and by the knowledge one wins immortality. If the one comes to that knowledge here, then one truly is, if here one comes not to the knowledge, then great is the perdition”.³¹

Knowledge of Immortality

But what is that secret knowledge, what is that Object that is attained when knowledge is attained? What was it that Nachiketas wanted to know in regard to the debate on the theme of immortality?

The answer is: That being known is known as immortal, and That being known, one becomes immortal. That is the Purusha than whom there is none higher. Yama says: “He is the culmination, he is the highest goal of the journey. He is the secret Self in all existences and does not manifest

Himself to the vision: Yet is He seen by the seers of the subtle by a subtle and perfect understanding.”³²

One begins the journey with the senses; but higher than the senses are the objects of sense, and higher than the objects of sense is the Mind; and higher than the Mind is the faculty of knowledge, and higher than that faculty is the Great Self. But still higher than the Great Self is the Unmanifest, and higher than the Unmanifest is the Purusha, and there is none higher than the Purusha.³³

In order to know this Purusha, one should turn one's eyes inwards and not childishly follow after desire and pleasure and walk into the snare of Death. Deep in the heart of the creature one sees Him, for there He stands by the mingling of the elements. Deep in the heart of things one finds Aditi who is immortal and who is the mother of the Gods, and one comes to know of Aditi as one who is manifested through the movement of Life, Prana, and by the mingling of the elements. And in the deep heart of things and lodged in the tinders of the body and the mind, one discovers Agni, the Master of Knowledge. The Purusha who is seated in the heart of things is also found to be no larger than the thumb of a man, who is the Lord of what was and what shall be. The Purusha that is within us is no larger than the thumb of a man; he is like a blazing fire that is without smoke, he is Lord of His past and His future. He alone is today and He alone shall be tomorrow. He is also the eater of sweetness, the Jiva, who is immortal, and the self within that is the Lord of what was and what shall be. Purusha takes up its abode in a city with eleven gates (the human body); when it takes up its abode in it, he grieves not but when he is set free from it that is his deliverance. The Purusha is a Swan whose dwelling is in the purity, he is the Vasu (indestructible

substance to be found in the inter-regions), and he is the Sacrificer at the altar of the sacrifice, which is the upward journey, and is also the Guest in the vessel of the drinking of the elixir of immortality: He is in man and in the Great Ones who are the cosmic gods, and His Home is in the law that ordains and unites all in unity, and His dwelling is in the supreme power of manifestation: he is omnipresent, and he is all that is born of water and all that is born of earth and all that is born on the mountains. He manifests as the truth and He is the Mighty one.³⁴

This Purusha, who is no larger than the thumb of a man, is a Dwarf that sits in the centre, and to that Dwarf all the cosmic gods serve and provide nourishment for his growth. He is that by which we live, not by the breath, nor by the lower breath. He is the soul, and when one dies, some enter a womb to the embodying of the Spirit, and some others follow after the Immovable and Imperishable Purusha. According to the deeds is their goal and after the measure of the revealed knowledge. That imperishable immovable Purusha wakes in the sleepers who feed on desire upon desire. That Purusha is the Bright One. He is the Brahman, and he is immortality; from Him and in Him are all worlds manifested and established. There is none higher than that Purusha.³⁵

The Purusha is the one Spirit and it is that Spirit which shapes itself into forms after forms. He is the one calm and controlling Spirit within all creatures who makes one form into many fashions; only the calm and strong see Him in their self as in a mirror; theirs is eternal felicity, but it is not for others. He is the one eternal in the transient, the One consciousness in many conscious beings, who being one orders the desires of many: He that Nachiketas was keen to

know, is the Bright One and Brahman, and Immortality, and he is an eternal Ashwattha-Tree that manifests from above and whose root is therefore above, and whose branches are downward. He is the Purusha than whom none is greater, for he is greater than the unmanifest which is greater than the mighty spirit which is greater than the supermind, which in turn is higher than the mind and which is higher than the objects of the senses and the senses. He is Aditi, the mother of Gods, and he is the Jiva, the eater of sweetness, and he is Agni that has been the knower of all things that grow in the world and whose light becomes manifest, and the body and the mind like tinders interact with each other, and it is He who grows with the power of Agni and becomes the Dwarf, not larger than the thumb of the man, who is the knower and shaper of the past and the future and who travels in the journey of works and movements of upward life at the altar of the sacrifice. He is immortal, even when man dies, he remains, he travels and remains immortal and in his own self one sees Him as in a mirror.³⁶

The central subject, not only the Kathopanishad but of all the great Upanishads, is the knowledge of That than which nothing is greater or higher or deeper. It is Brahma-vidya, the knowledge of the Brahman, the knowledge that is secret and difficult of discovery, and it is subtle which is seizable only in the light of the Brahman, but the light which can be kindled in our mental consciousness by the process of yoga. But even the beginning of this process is difficult unless one wakes up and takes up the staff for the upward journey. Hence Yama tells Nachiketas:

“Arise, awake, find out the great ones and learn of them: for sharp as a razor’s edge, hard to traverse, difficult of going is that path, say the sages.”³⁷

Yogic Knowledge of the Ultimate Reality: A Comparative study of Vedic and Upanishadic Statements

The concept of ultimate reality and of the world and of the individual that emerges from the teachings of Yama in the Kathopanishad is not arrived at by any philosophical reasoning or argument; it arises out of the data of yogic experiences and realizations that result from the pursuit of yogic methods, which can be employed for repetition and verification and for possibilities of modification and enlargement. These experiences and realizations can also be compared with the experiences and realizations which have been recorded in the other Upanishads, as also which have been recorded in the Veda as well as those recorded in those religions and other books where data of yogic experiences can be discerned. Such a comparative study of yogic experiences and realizations is necessary, particularly because these experiences and realizations claim to have discovered the essence and nature of reality or realities of both subjective and objective existence. A great difficulty that confronts the seeker is that these experiences and realizations do not always appear to harmonize among themselves, and the terms in which they are expressed, when judged by normal reason and logic, present in some cases self-contradictions. This difficulty has to be confronted squarely, and we need to collect the relevant data and study them, apply in our study appropriate criteria of judgment, and determine with great precision as to in what respects yogic experiences and realizations show agreement among themselves, in what way there are wide divergences among them, and whether these divergences can be bridged.

In our study of the Vedic yoga, we have seen that the

Veda is a record of numerous yogic experiences and realizations, that these experiences and realizations do not pertain to any single seeker alone, but they pertain to various seekers, both old and new (*poorvebhiḥ nūtanaiḥ*). On account of their large agreement, they have been expressed in symbolisms, the descriptions of which have been so similar and even identical that the language of these symbolisms was shared by all the seekers whose experiences have been recorded in the Vedic texts.

The Kathopanishad speaks of the Purusha that is greater than the Unmanifest. The unmanifest is immobile and it moves not. The unmanifest is higher than the genius, *sattwam*, buddhi, enlightened by the vijanana, the faculty of the superconscience or the world of the Mighty Spirit, *prajna*, the Lord of Wisdom. Purusha is higher than both the mighty spirit that moves and the unmanifest that moves not. It speaks of Aditi, the mother of the gods, and it speaks of jīva, and it speaks of Him who is no bigger than the thumb. The following descriptions in the Kathopanishad bring out quite clearly allusions to the experiences that we find in Veda:

“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 eye inward, desiring immortality, and looks on the self face to face.... The wise man comes to know the great Law 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 Jīva, 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, Aditi, 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 born 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 in this World, is also in the other: and what is in the other, that again is in this: who thinks he sees difference here, from death to death he goes. ... The Purusha who is seated in the midst of oneself is no larger than the thumb is the Lord of what was and what shall be. Him having seen one shrinks not from aught, nor abhors any. The Purusha no bigger than 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.”³⁸

We notice here the substance of the experiences of Agni described in the Rigveda, particularly those by Vishwamitra³⁹ and Vrishajana,⁴⁰ the experiences of the “Boy suppressed in the secret cavern”, of Kumara (the individual soul), of the immortal in the mortals, *martyeṣu amṛtaḥ*. Immortality of the inmost soul is derived from the immortality of Aditi, the Supreme Mother who is one with the eternal and immortal Purusha. What is described in the Rig Veda is described here in the Kathopanishad, in a less veiled 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 individual mind, life and body.

Yama's Answer (in simple terms)

The answer that Yama gives to the question of Nachiketas is not easy to understand, and it will be useful to state this answer in simpler terms. According to Yama, every human being has in him a soul. This soul is *jiva*, the individual formation or manifestation brought forth by Aditi, the eternal imperishable power of the Purusha. This individual soul is described in the Bhagavad Gita as an eternal portion of the Purushottama, the highest Purusha than whom nothing is greater. The individual *jiva* is described in the Bhagavad Gita in two different ways, from the point of view of the Purushottama and from the point of view of Aditi. From the point of view of Purushottama, the individual soul is described as *mama eva amśaḥ sanātanaḥ*, My own eternal portion. From the point of view of Aditi, the Bhagavad Gita describes it as a manifestation of *parāprakriti*, who is the same as Aditi of the Veda. The Bhagavad Gita describes it in the following words: *parā prakritir jīva bhūtā*, Para Prakriti that constitutes *jiva* or the individual soul. According to the Kathopanishad, this soul can be discovered in the deepest cave of the heart. If one concentrates on the heart and succeeds in reaching the profoundest depths, one will find the soul as a flame burning constantly and inexhaustibly. But, in the beginning, this flame will be seen as no larger than the thumb of a man. One can describe that flame as a Dwarf that sits in the center. It will also be found that this Dwarf is adored even by the Great Cosmic gods like Agni, Vayu, Indra and others, since it is the function of these gods to aid that growing flame in its fuller and fuller growth. This flame, according to Kathopanishad, is immortal and it always is. This flame grows bigger and bigger, but its growth takes a very long time. In due course of time, it leaves one body

when that body becomes dead or cannot breathe anymore. But that flame, after coming out of the dead body travels. What is the trajectory of that travel? According to Yama in the Kathopanishad, each individual flame follows a different path. The path may be smooth or difficult, and it may be slow moving or it can be rapid. It all depends upon one important consideration — what were the thoughts of the man when the flame was in the body? What were its goals? What was the nature of its actions? The travel after death would depend upon the aspirations and deeds and gods which were pursued when the flame was in the body when it was alive. As Yama points out: “Some enter a womb to the embodiment of the Spirit and others follow after the Immovable: according to their deeds is their goal and after the measure of their revealed knowledge.”⁴¹ The inner flame in the body remembers its past, it understands the present and it has a sense of destiny, and it shapes the process of growth, even though the presence of the inner flame and the knowledge that the inner flame possesses of the past, present and the future, is not available to the outer consciousness of the mind, life and body, which are normally turned outwards; but if one turns inwards, it is found that the inner flame is the leader, and it opens out to our central being, which is called the jiva. This jiva is in its nature extremely sweet, and the Kathopanishad describes it as the “eater of sweetness”, (*madhvadah*).⁴² This is because the jiva is manifested out of the nature of Aditi or Para Prakriti, the very nature of which is imperishable delight. This jiva is described by Yama as the Lord of what was and what shall be. The inner flame represents the jiva, and it is also the Lord of what was and what shall be, even though that flame is no bigger than the thumb and even though it is expressed as the Dwarf.

At a much later stage, we shall begin to learn that the jiva is the eternal portion of the Supreme Lord, the Purusha than whom there is no higher, and that the jiva is the child of Aditi, who is his Mother as she is also the Mother of all that exists in the world, of all the creatures and even the cosmic beings or the gods. Finally, we find that everything in the world, all things, our inner flame and inner flames of all, the jivas and gods have all issued from Aditi and that Aditi Herself is the Eternal Power and Will of the Purusha. That Purusha is also called Brahman, He is the inner essence, transcendental of everything and yet equally present in all. That Brahman is called Purusha, He originates everything and dwells in all that is originated. But he is also called the Supreme Lord, the Purusha than whom none is higher; He is not only the essence, not only the originator, but is also the Controller and Ruler and Master of all that is in the Universe.

In brief, Yama explained to Nachiketas that one who practices Yoga and controls his mind, and when one becomes noble and truthful and good to everyone, one will come to know the Supreme Lord who is Immortal.⁴³

Object of Yogic Knowledge: Mandukya Upanishad and other Upanishads

Mandukya Upanishad speaks of the four-fold Self and describes the process of rising from state to state in terms of psychological symbolism, which can be understood more clearly in the light of the process of meditation and of higher experiences of contemplation and concentration. The lowest state of the Self is what is experienced by us in our ordinary wakefulness, *jāgarta*; the next higher state of the Self is what is experienced in the dream state, *swapna*; this state occurs when we withdraw from the outer, *bahirmukha*, conscious-

ness; it is a state of deeper awareness, but it appears dreamy to our ordinary wakeful state; the objects of that deeper awareness are subtle. The third state is much profounder and so dense that it resembles sleep, *suṣupti*, 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 and communicability; it is unthinkable and the unnameable. Here are the descriptions of the Self that is four-fold, *catuṣpāt*:

“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, *vaiśwānara*, 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 has become Oneness, who is wisdom gathered into itself, who is made of mere delight, who enjoys delight unrelated, to whom conscious mind is the door, *Prajñā*, 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, unseizable, featureless, unthinkable, and unnameable, 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.”⁴⁴

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.⁴⁵

The Isha Upanishad indicates wonder and mystery of the Supreme by declaring: “That moves and That moves not; That is far and the same is near; That is within all this and That is also outside all this.”⁴⁶

The statement of this wonder and mystery was also described in the Rig Veda : “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.”⁴⁷

Both the Veda and the Upanishad describe that Supreme Reality as ‘It’ *tat, sat, tad ékam, ékam eva advitīyam* as also as He, *saḥ, Puruṣa, Swayambhūḥ*.

Isha Upanishad speaks of Him that has extended Himself in the relative consciousness whose totality of finite and changeable circumstances are dependent on an equal immutable and eternal Infinity. That extension is what we call the universe (*saḥ paryāgat*). In that extension, there are two aspects, one of pure infinite relationless immutability, another of a totality of objects in Time and Space working out their relations through causality. Both are different and

yet complementary expressions of the same unknowable “He”.

To express the infinite Immutability, the Isha Upanishad uses a series of neuter adjectives, “bright, bodiless, without scar, without sinews, pure, unpierced by evil.” But to express the same as cause, continent and governing Inhabitant of the totality of objects and of each object in the totality (*jagatyām jagat*), it uses four masculine epithets, “the Seer, the Thinker, the one who becomes everywhere, the Self-existent” or “The Self-Becoming” (*kaviḥ, manīṣī, paribhūḥ Swayambhū*).⁴⁸

That reality is described as “one unmoving that is swifter than Mind, That the Gods reach not, for It progresses ever in front. That, standing, passes beyond others as they run. In That the Master of Life establishes the Waters.”⁴⁹

Integral vision of Ultimate Reality

There have been various interpretations in the philosophies which have developed out of the Upanishads, which themselves are not philosophical but are records of yogic methods and yogic experiences and realizations. There are three principal philosophical schools of the Upanishads or of the ancient Vedānta, — Monism, Qualified Monism, and Dualism. According to Monism, the individual, by yogic discipline, can go back entirely in his consciousness to the pure Identity; according to Qualified Monism, the individual can arrive at a realization of being eternally one with and inherent in the Ultimate Reality, and yet different; according to Dualism, the individual realizes himself as eternally different from the One and yet cannot regard himself as independent of some kind of Unity. According to the integral philosophy of Vedānta, these three attitudes correspond to

three truths of the Brahman which are simultaneously valid and none of them entirely true without the others as its complements. By the process of the synthesis of yoga, their co-existence can be experienced by identity in consciousness with the Brahman. It is pointed out that all the principal Upanishads present the Integral vision of the ultimate Reality, but this is greatly illustrated in the Isha Upanishad. For one finds here not only a great synthesis of the supreme realizations but also a synthesis of the methods of yoga. The object of knowledge which is to be pursued, according to the Isha Upanishad, is at once the Brahman, Purusha and Ishwara. The ultimate reality is Brahman, the transcendental Essence, the One without the second, and the essential stuff of all that is seen and experienced in the universe, — all names and forms (*nāma rūpa*) and the infinite multiplicity of things and beings; that reality, the essence remains always identical with itself, since the concepts of Space and Time do not apply to it; it is the one unmoving, it is That which moves not. But this is not the full description of the ultimate reality. That Brahman, although inactive, is not impotent; all the energy that is seen in the universe at work is the power of That, which is one without the second. But that power can remain self-absorbed in the Inactive Brahman, or it can go abroad from that Brahman. But since that inactive Brahman is bright (*śukram*) and therefore conscious, the power cannot go abroad from it without conscious impulsion. The conscious impulsion is what is called Will; the conscious inactive Brahman from which all energies flow is also a conscious will and also the conscious Originator. As the originator of the flow of energy, that inactive Brahman is Purusha, the Unmoved Mover. The immobile reality and the mobile reality are not two different realities; they are

identical, it is that which moves, and it is that which moves not, (*tad ejati tad na ejati*); it is the One that is the source of Many; but that is not all. The one who has conscious-will originates the universe and manifests the eternal essence, and it is that essence, which by the power of its energy, constitutes the universe. But that reality, having originated the universe, continues to develop it, continues to control it and continues to enjoy it. Thus the Brahman is Purusha and is also Ishwara, the Lord. All that is in the universe, whatsoever is individual universe of movement in the universal motion is for habitation by the Lord (*īśā vāsyam idam sarvam yat kiñca jagatyām jagat*).⁵⁰

In the following two verses, the Isha Upanishad formulates the highest realization of the ultimate reality, which can be seen to be synthetic or integral:

*Yastu sarvāṇi bhūtāni ātmani eva anupaśyati,
Sarva bhūteṣu ca ātmānam tato na vijugupsate.
Yasmin sarvāṇi bhūtāni ātma eva abhūd vijānataḥ,
Tatra ko mohaḥ kaḥ śokaḥ ekatvam anupaśyataḥ.*⁵¹

“But he who sees everywhere the Self in all existences and all existences in the Self, shrinks not thereafter from aught.”

“He in whom it is a Self-Being that has become all existences, for he has the perfect knowledge, how shall he be deluded, whence shall he be have grief who sees everywhere oneness?”

In the Upanishad, Brahman is subjectively — atman, the Self or immutable existence of all that is in the universe; all that is mutable is seen in the state of self-realization as

becoming of the Self in the movement, *jagati*. One sees and has the sense of the self everywhere and one has a sense of unity with other existences in the universe. At the early stage of the development of this sense, there is the attempt to understand or sympathize with others, the tendency of a widening love or compassion or fellow-feeling for others, the impulsion of work for the sake of others. At this stage, multiplicity is still predominant. This multiplicity is seen as all, — the totality of particulars, ever expanding particulars or names and forms. Apart from this perception of all this, all can be conceived in a vast universality of things without beginning or end; there is also the perception of a number of individuals, — many centers of consciousness, each occupying a conglomeration or a group of particular names and forms. At this stage, what is realized is a pluralistic unity, the drawing together of similar units resulting in a collectivity or solidarity rather than in real oneness. The Many remain to the consciousness as the real existences as plurality; the One is only their result.

At a higher stage, the perception of essential oneness begins to emerge:

One Matter, one Life, one Mind, one Soul plays in many forms. One perceives one's Self in all bodies multiplying itself in individual consciousness. One sees also all minds, all forms of life, all bodies to be active formations of the same existence in the extended being of the Self.

This is the vision of all existences in the Self and of the Self in all existences which is the foundation of perfect internal liberty and perfect joy and peace. When this vision increases in intensity and completeness, *jugupsā* begins to disappear, that is to say, there is disappearance of shrinking,

repulsion, dislike, fear, hatred and other perversions. In the highest intensity, perfect equality (*samatva*) is established.

Not only the Self in all and all in the Self but one perceives that it is the same Self that has become all existences which are seen as Becomings. One realizes the eternal act by which the One manifests itself in the multiple forms of the universal motion. One begins to become what inwardly one sees. The whole inner life undergoes a radical change so that life begins to represent perfectly in all parts of the being what is understood by the intellect and seen by the inner perception. The limits of the individual mentality and the limits in which the individual soul had experienced bondage begin to extend to the All by the vision of unity; one begins to see everywhere oneness. One's thoughts, emotions and sensations begin to be arranged according to the perfect knowledge (*vijānataḥ*, having the perfect knowledge),⁵² having the right relation of things which comes by the realization of the Truth, and there is repetition of the vision and experience of the divine act of consciousness by which the one Being eternally self-existent, manifests in itself the multiplicity of the world.

This vision and experience begin to replace the human or egoistic view of a world of innumerable separate creatures each appearing self-existent and different from the others, each trying to get its utmost possible profit out of the others and the world. The divine view emerges which reflects God's eye-view where there is one sole Being, living in innumerable existences that are Himself supporting all, helping all impartially, working out to a divine fulfillment in a progressive harmony of Becoming. The individual soul changes the human or egoistic standpoint, and there arises the divine, supreme and universal view and realization.

In a subsequent verse, in verse eight, the Upanishad expounds the nature of the ultimate reality, and describes how that reality remains immobile, impersonal and inactive, even when that Reality has gone abroad and is thus mobile, is the One that relates to the movement as the Person whose various poises express the order, rhythm and harmony of becoming. The immobile, the inactive and the impersonal is described as It in the neuter, and the mobile, the active and the Person is described as He. The verse reads as follows:

*“saḥ paryagāt śukram akāyam avṛṇam asnāvīram
śuddham apāpavidham,*

*Kavir manīṣṭ paribhūḥ swayambhūr yāthātathyataḥ
arthān vyadadhāt śaśvatībhyaḥ samābhyaḥ.”*

“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, the Self-existent has ordered objects perfectly according to their nature from years sempiternal.”

The immutable and the impersonal reality is described as bright because it is concentrated Self-awareness; it is bodiless, as it is without form, indivisible and without appearance of division; it is not divided by the division of Space and Time, — a pure self-conscious Absolute. It is without scar because it is without defect or break and it is untouched by the mutabilities. It is without sinews, since it does not dispense forth in multiple channels, and so it is without nerves of force. It is pure and unpierced by evil; it retains its eternal purity and eternal freedom; it supports action and yet it is free from action, and therefore, the soul which is identified with this impersonal immutable remains untouched by action (*na karma lipyate nare*), even though it

supports action and manifests inexhaustible action. The inactive Brahman is not incapable of action, and action does not change the nature of the Self, but only the nature of the diverse forms. The Self exceeds all things, even though all things issue from that self, since that self is one without the second, *ekam eva 'advitīyam*.

The Isha Upanishad describes the self who has become all existences at three stages or in three poises of the One who manifests the Purusha who originates all things out of the essence, which is the Brahman, and controls, organizes and determines the actualities, as the Lord. In the first poise, the Lord is Kavi, the Wise, the Seer; this is the Vedic idea of *kavi* who is the seer of the truth, truth in its becoming, in its essence, possibilities, actuality. This vision of the truth of all is self-conscious, and that consciousness is comprehensive. It is not merely a state of *jñāna*, the knowledge of the essence but the state of *Vijñāna*, the knowledge of all derived from the knowledge of the essence (*yasmin sarvāṇi bhūtāni atma eva abhūt vijānataḥ*). *Vijñāna* is *chit-ghana* or *prajñā-ghana*, one whose wisdom is gathered into oneself, who is prajna, the Lord of Wisdom.⁵³ The *Vijñāna* is described in Taittiriya Upanishad as the Knowledge from where creatures are born (*vijñād hi eva khalu imāni bhūtāni jāyante*).⁵⁴

In the second poise, the Lord is Manishi, who receives all the forces and the totality, *br̥hat*, and becomes subordinate action of *Vijñāna* (supermind) and weaves them into finite forms of determinations in accordance with the vision that the *kavi* or *vijñāna* visualizes. The determinations of Manishi are manifested as events, eventualities.

Paribhūḥ works out determinations as objective events. This *paribhūḥ* is *svayambhūḥ*, the self-existent Lord,

because He is only the third poise of the Supreme Self-existent, Who is *Kavi* in the first poise and *Maniṣī* in the second poise. When Reality is known both as bright, bodiless, without scar of imperfections, without sinews, pure, unpierced by evil, as also the Seer, (*kavi*), the Thinker (*maniṣī*) and as One who becomes everywhere (*paribhūḥ*), — then one is in the state of full or comprehensive knowledge.

Knowledge and Ignorance in Isha Upanishad

But the Upanishad speaks also of the exclusive pursuit of Knowledge and its consequences. In verses 9, 10 and 11, there are statements regarding Knowledge (*vidyā*) and Ignorance (*avidyā*), and these statements, by virtue of their hidden meanings of the terms Knowledge and Ignorance, require a deeper understanding. It is to these statements that we need to turn, since they are extremely important for the determination of the methods of yoga which are to be employed for arriving at the synthetic or integral realization described in verses 6, 7 and 8:

“Into a blind darkness they enter who follow after the Ignorance; they as if into a greater darkness who devote themselves to the Knowledge alone.”

“Other verily, it is said, is that which comes by the Knowledge, other that which comes by the Ignorance; this is the lore we have received from the wise who reveal That to our understanding.”

“He who knows That as both in one, the Knowledge and the Ignorance, by the Ignorance crosses beyond death and by the Knowledge enjoys Immortality.”(9, 10, 11)

The concept of Ignorance has been one of the central concepts in yoga. In the first place, it is said that one who is ignorant does not even suspect that he is ignorant; Ignorance is not suspected; even to recognize that one is ignorant requires some inner development, and one acknowledges one's ignorance only through shocks of experiences or inner growth that brings about a journey from darkness to light and from ignorance to knowledge. Even then one does not recognize the true nature of ignorance. A rough and popular idea is that if one continues to be ignorant and pursues the path of Ignorance, one deepens oneself into blind darkness, but if one follows the path of Knowledge one attains to knowledge. Why is it, then, that the Upanishad declares that by pursuit of the path of knowledge, one enters into greater darkness?

The next verse, however, points out that, according to the wisdom possessed by the ancients, who had realized and possessed the highest Reality, have a different view. According to them, the Knowledge and the Ignorance are to be known as both in one, and that by the Ignorance one grows right up to the point where one crosses beyond death, and one then becomes capable of gaining that Knowledge by which one enjoys immortality.

These enigmatic statements presuppose a tradition in regard to the experience of death or mortality, experience of crossing beyond the death, and experience and enjoyment of Immortality. Despite this tradition of Wisdom, where ignorance and knowledge are seen together and combined together, there must have developed a line of growth in which a complete opposition was made between the path of Ignorance and the path of Knowledge, and they were seen to be exclusive paths. What was, then, the exclusive path of

Ignorance and the exclusive path of Knowledge?

What is the nature of the object of avidya (Ignorance)? Ignorance is evidently not inconscience, which is a state of complete insensibility that we find in Matter. Ignorance, on the other hand, has sensibility and the capacity of ideation. There is, at the human level, growth of sensitivity and ideation, and human consciousness is marked by the growth of cognition, affection, and volition. And the ordinary experience of human growth appears to be circumscribed between sense-experience and highest flights of reason. But within this circumscription, all that is felt, sensed and willed is marked by plurality and multiplicity. The realm of multiplicity is thus the field of all that is known within the spectrum of human consciousness. It is true that some sense of unity and even of oneness does emerge in the higher or highest ranges of the powers of reasoning in human consciousness. But even if the certainty of unity and oneness is sometimes glimpsed or seized by the human intellect, one does not have that concrete experience of unity and oneness of that kind, which one has in regard to division, plurality and multiplicity.

In ordinary experience, pursuit of various faculties of human consciousness, which can be regarded as spectrum of Ignorance, one does not ever go beyond division and multiplicity, and the experience of division predominates. One remains confined to the realm of Ignorance, and one therefore degenerates into blind darkness. And in that blindness, one succumbs to mortality, and one can never have the experience of immortality.

This is the reason why it is said that those, who follow the path of the ignorance, fall into darkness.

Vidya has always meant the knowledge, the knowledge of that which transcends the mind and all that is perceived, conceived, felt and willed at the level of the Mind. As stated in verses six and seven, the highest realization is described as that of *ekatvam*, Oneness. Vidya is therefore the knowledge of Unity and Oneness. Now it is possible to pursue a path which is centered exclusively on unity and oneness. It is in connection with those who follow this exclusive path, those who are absorbed exclusively in vidya, in the knowledge of the One (*vidyāyām ratāḥ*) that it is mentioned that they enter into greater darkness. In the psychology of development, those who pursue multiplicity can always return to the path that leads to oneness. But when oneness is pursued exclusively, it is more difficult to return to the synthetic path, in which oneness and multiplicity are both harmonized. That is the reason why the exclusive path of vidya is considered to be a path that leads to a greater darkness. In verses six and seven, where the highest realization has been described, the state of self-realization consists of the vision of the Self in all existences and all existences in the Self and of the Self-Being that has become all existences. It is a state where oneness is seen everywhere. The real meaning of vidya should refer to the realization of the oneness with which multiplicity is synthesized; and the real meaning of avidya should refer to the state in which experience of multiplicity ignores the underlying unity and oneness. It is these real meanings that are referred to in verses ten and eleven. It is stated that according to the records of the highest realization, the result that comes from the ignorance, *avidyā*, and the result that comes from the knowledge, *vidyā*, are quite different when a synthetic path is followed. One who knows That as both in one, the

Knowledge and the Ignorance (*vidyām ca avidyām ca ubhayam saha*), follows the synthetic path, where neither multiplicity nor oneness is exclusively pursued. In that path, a point is reached in the pursuit of the multiplicity, where one crosses beyond death; once one reaches this point, one begins the pursuit of unity and oneness; but one does not ignore multiplicity. In the realization of unity and oneness, multiplicity is seen as rooted in unity and oneness; as a consequence, the imperfections of the ignorance are healed, and in that state of integral knowledge, one enjoys Immortality.

The One is to be known by combining both, avidya and vidya. There is, in the integral vision of the Ultimate Reality, a true synthesis of the One and multiplicity. In that vision, the gains that can be obtained by the pursuit of avidya are to be secured; these gains include not only a sort of fullness of power, joy, world-knowledge, largeness of being, but also experiences of the supraphysical worlds; one gains even the capacities of crossing the limits of physical birth and physical death on account of the experiences of the supraphysical worlds. According to the records of yogic experiences, it is seen that super-normal powers can be attained even within the limits the realm of Ignorance, which is the realm of multiplicity. One crosses the borders of the ordinary human limits; one may even cross the limitations of the conditions of human mortality. One can even enjoy the joys of the abode in superior supraphysical worlds. But none of these experiences and realizations are those of real freedom from grief and of true immortality. Without transcendence of bondage to multiplicity and without the realization of unity and oneness in which multiplicity is rooted, one may cross death, but one cannot yet gain the true

Immortality. In the integral path, which the Upanishad lays down, one has to pursue the path of the Ignorance, the path of the realm of multiplicity. In that pursuit, one attains to higher realms of consciousness; in these realms one can live even after the death of the body; thus death is crossed. But then, one has to pursue Unity and Oneness. Only when unity and oneness are realized, one gets settled permanently in the state of Immortality. For then only one sees everywhere the Self in all existences and all existences in the Self; one does not shrink thereafter from anything, and one realizes the Self-being that has become all existences and realizes everywhere oneness. It is there that delusion and grief disappear. That is the state of Immortality, — the state of Transcendence, where one realizes the One, who has gone abroad — that which is bright, bodiless, without scar of imperfection, without sinews, pure, unpierced by the evil, and who is at the same time the Seer, the Thinker, the One who becomes everywhere, the Self-existent who has ordered objects perfectly according to their nature.

That state of integral realization is restated in verses fifteen and sixteen, which reaffirm the integral vision of reality:

“The face of Truth is covered with a brilliant golden lid; that do thou remove, O Fosterer, 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, marshall 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.” (15, 16)

We find that these verses paraphrase or translate a Vedic

verse of the Atris:

“Hidden by your truth is the Truth that is constant for ever where they unyoke the horses of the Sun; there the ten thousands stand together; That is the One: I have seen the supreme godhead of the embodied gods.”⁵⁵

The knowledge of multiplicity that is gained at higher and higher levels of avidya is a brilliant golden lid that covers the face of Truth — Truth which transcends the multiplicity, the Truth which reveals the Unity and Oneness. But when Oneness is manifested in multiplicity, one has the vision of the law of the multiple manifestation of the Truth, the Truth which is described as the Fosterer, Seer, Ordainer, Illumining Sun, the rays of which, when united together, reveals the Lustre of the most blessed form of all and of that One Purusha who is the real I.

This is the vision of unity and Oneness in which multiplicity is united, and in that unity the integral Purusha is beheld.

It is the vision of that Purusha, the self-conscious Being, the Lord, the Self-Existent, the Immortal, that is the state of the enjoyment of Immortality, where there is no shrinking, no delusion, no sorrow. This vision also throws light on the methods of yoga, which are synthetic, and which synthesize various pairs of opposites in which the Object of yoga is often described, namely:

1. The Conscious Lord and phenomenal nature (*Iśa and jagat*);
2. Renunciation and Enjoyment (*tena tyaktena bhuñjithāḥ*);
3. Action in Nature and Freedom in the Soul (*na karma lipyate nare*);

4. The one stable Brahman and the multiple movement (*tad ejati tad na ejati*);
5. Being and Becoming (*sarvāṇi bhūtāni ātma eva abhūd*);
6. The Active Lord and the Indifferent Akshara Brahman (*sa paryagāt shukram akāyam avranam*)
7. Knowledge and Ignorance (*Vidyā and Avidyā*)
8. Birth and Non-Birth (*sambhūti, asambhūti*);
9. Works and Knowledge (*karma, dṛśtī*).

The integrality of the Upanishadic knowledge is confirmed in all the Principal Upanishads, although one can see an increasing emphasis in due course of time on the rejection of the lower cosmic life. In the Vedic system of Yoga, individual liberation or salvation was regarded as a means towards a great cosmic victory, the eventual conquest of heaven and earth by the super conscient Truth and Bliss, and Angirasa Rishis, Ribhus and others who had achieved the victory in the past have been seen in the Vedic yoga as conscious helpers of their yet battling posterity. The Principal Upanishads give us without veil the plenitude and noble catholicity of the Truth of the Brahman that synthesizes the immutable and the mutable, the impersonal and the personal, the unity of the Lord and his original power of manifestation — Aditi, as also the unity of the Lord, Aditi and the jiva who is in the evolving human being described as *anguşṭa mātram*, one not bigger than the thumb. This integrality is once again to be found in the synthesis of yoga of the Bhagavad Gita, where the mutable and the immutable (*akshara purusha* and *kshara purusha*) are transcended in the Supreme Purusha (Purushottama). Again, here, *parā prakriti*, corresponding to Vedic and Upanishadic Aditi, is

described as the higher nature of Purushottama, and jīva is described as eternal portion of the Supreme and as that which in the becoming is manifested from Para Prakriti (*mama eva amsaḥ sanātanaḥ, parā prakṛtir jīva bhūtā*).

It is true that the yoga of the Upanishads is not a closed book, but, it is to be admitted that, despite the synthesis of divine knowledge, divine works and divine love, there was in the Upanishads a greater emphasis on divine knowledge, and we do not find that high emphasis of the Veda upon divine works. Similarly, the ardent emphasis that we find in the later developments of yoga in India upon divine love is not prominent in the Upanishads. Nonetheless, we see in the closing verses of the Isha Upanishad a clear synthesis of the divine knowledge, divine works and divine love (16, 17, 18).

The path of divine knowledge is not merely that of the pursuit of the Immutable, but of the Purusha, the Supreme He and the real I, who is beheld in the Lustre which is his most blessed form of all, and which is attained when all the rays of light are drawn together integrally (*raśmīn samūha*). And the closing prayer to Agni synthesizes knowledge and action, the sun of knowledge which is invoked in verse sixteen and Agni who is invoked in verse eighteen who is described in the Veda as *kavikratu* (RV,I.1.5), the Will in Action that issues from the Light of Knowledge. And the last phrase in verse eighteen, (*nama uktim vidhema*), — completest speech of submission that we in our entirety would dispose systematically — provides the method of the yoga of divine love that is inherent in the Upanishadic synthesis of yoga. Verse eighteenth is as follows:

“O God Agni, knowing all things that are manifested, lead us by the good path to the felicity; remove from us the

devious attractions of sin. To thee completest speech of submission we would dispose.”

It is significant that the closing invocation of Agni in verse eighteenth follows the invocation to surya in verse seventeenth. In the Vedic and the Upanishadic yoga, knowledge of light, which is represented by surya, is logically anterior and supporter of shakti, the power of will for action, which is represented by Agni. In the path of yoga that aims at the attainment of light and force of action is by its very nature synthetic. The method of the attainment of the light consists of the removal of the golden lid. This golden lid consists of the highest degree of mental growth, which is the summit of avidya, and it is the thick border that separates it from the knowledge that consists of unity that synthesizes the multiplicity of the rays of the light, vidya. The prayer to Agni is an exposition of the path or method of karma yoga. It addresses Agni, the divine will, to lead the seeker by the good path to the felicity (*supathā rāye*); this good path consists of the removal of the devious attraction of sin. Sin is that which excites and hurries the faculties into deviation from the good path. The straight road is that of increasing light and truth; it is the road described in the Veda as *ṛjuḥ panthāḥ* (straight road), *ṛtasya panthāḥ* (path of truth), the path that leads towards infinite vistas (*vītā prsthā*), by which the law of the seeker's nature is led towards fulfillment. The path of the sin compels the seeker to travel with stumblings amidst uneven and limited tracks along crooked windings (*duritāni, vṛjināni*). There is in and behind all our errors, sins and stumblings a secret Will which is hidden. Even when highest degrees of the mind are developed, since mental knowledge and mental will works by stress on division and multiplicity that is divorced from

unity, errors and sins are committed. The secret of karma yoga is to discover the Divine Will and to allow that Will to manifest through the instrumentality of the seeker. Right action results from complete submission of the individual to the Divine Will, which the illumination of Surya reveals in him. Perfection of right action necessitates perfection of the knowledge of the Lord as the One who manifests in and controls multiplicity. When Knowledge is combined with the Divine Will, and when this combination is perfected by the submission of the individual in the state of illumined devotion, then the seeker has possessed the three keys (of knowledge, action and devotion) that open up fully the divine gates, the gates of Immortality.

In this brief analysis of the synthesis of yoga of the Upanishads, it is impossible to give more than a glimpse of the richness of the records of the yogic experiences that we find in the pages of the Upanishads. There are, however, a few passages in the Chhandogya Upanishad, Shwetashwata Upanishad, Mundaka Upanishad, and Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, which need to be underlined even within our limited scope.

Here are a few extracts from Chhandogya Upanishad, which contain the famous Upanishadic affirmation, “*tat tvam asi* (That art Thou), O Svetaketu”, and “*ekam eva advitīyam*” (one without the second).

[i]

“Now, there was Svetaketu Aruni; to him his father said: “Live the life of a student of sacred knowledge...”. He then, having become a pupil at the age of twelve, having studied all the Vedas, returned at the age of twenty four, conceited,

thinking himself learned, proud. Then his father said to him: "Svetaketu, my dear, did you also ask for that teaching whereby what has not been heard of becomes heard of, what has not been thought of becomes thought of, what has not been understood becomes understood?"

Svetaketu asked: "How, pray, sir, is that teaching?"

Aruni replied: "Just as, my dear, by the knowledge of one piece of clay, everything made of clay may be known — the modification is merely a verbal distinction, a name; the reality is just "clay" —

"Just as, my dear, by the knowledge of one copper ornament, everything made of copper may be known — the modification is merely a verbal distinction, a name; the reality is just "copper" —

"Just as, my dear, by the knowledge of one nail-scissors, everything made of iron may be known, — the modification is merely a verbal distinction, a name; the reality is just "iron" — so, my dear, is that teaching."

Svetaketu said: "Verily, those honored men did not know this; for, if they had known it why would they have not told me? But you, sir, tell me it."

Aruni consented, and he said: "So be it, my dear."

Aruni continues: "In the beginning, my dear, this world was just Being (*Sat*), one only, without second, — *ekam eva advitīyam*. To be sure some people say: "In the beginning this world was just Non-being (*asat*), one only without a second; from that Non-Being that Being was produced. But verily, my dear, whence could this be? How from Non-being could Being be produced? On the contrary, my dear, in the

beginning this world was just Being, one only, without second. It bethought itself: “Would that I were many! Let me manifest myself!” It emitted *tapas*, the concentrated fire of heat.”

Aruni explained the long process by which multiplicity was manifested. Thereafter, he gave many examples to show how oneness is spread in all and how oneness is also to be found in one’s deepest and inmost self. One of them may be cited here:

“Place this salt in the water; in the morning come up to me.” Then he (Svetaketu) did so.....Aruni said: “Please take a sip of it from this end, how is it?”

“Salt”. “Take a sip from the middle. How is it?”

“Salt.”

“Set it aside. Then come unto me.”

Svetaketu did so, saying, “It is always the same.”

He (Aruni) said to him: “Verily, indeed, my dear, you do not perceive Being here. Verily, indeed, it is here. That is the finest essence — this whole world has that as its soul. That is Reality. That is atman. That art Thou, O Svetaketu.”⁵⁶

[ii]

We may also cite the story of Ghora and Krishna, the son of Devaki: “When one fasts and does not drink water and restrains himself from pleasure — that is a Preparatory exercise for Consecration (*dīkṣā*).”

When thereafter one eats and drinks water and does not avoid pleasure — then he joins in the upasana exercises (where Light is adored)..... “When Ghora Angirasa

explained this to Krishna, the son of Devaki, he also explained — for he had become free from desire — “In the final hour one should take refuge in these three affirmations: “You are Indestructible; you are the Unshaken; you are the very essence of Life (*prāṇa*).” On this point, there are these two verses:

“Proceeding from primeval seed,
They see the light of the Mind,
And have light which glimmereth higher than the light
of the Mind.”⁵⁷

“From out of darkness all around
We, gazing on the higher light –
Yea, gazing on the higher light –
To Surya, god worshiped by the gods,
We have attained – the highest light!
Yea, the highest light!”⁵⁸

We see here the confirmation of the Vedic experience in which one rises from darkness to a light that belongs to Swar, the light of the highest plane of the Mind; and a farthest ascent to the highest light that is symbolized by the Sun, the Supramental Light, the light in which all the diverse rays of light are united or integrated.

[iii]

Here are brief statements of Shwetashwatara Upanishad, which affirm the reality of the One and yet the originator of multiplicity, and himself as the multiplicity:

“The One was without form and hue; and He, by Yoga

of His own might, became manifold; He weareth many forms and hues but hath no object nor interest therein; God into Whom all the universe breaketh up and departeth at the end of all and He alone was in the beginning. May He yoke us with a bright and gracious understanding.

“God is fire that burneth and the Sun in heaven and the Wind that bloweth: He too is the Moon. His is the seed and Brahma and the waters and He is Prajapati, the Father of his peoples.

“Thou art woman and Thou art man also; Thou art the boy, or else Thou art the young virgin, and Thou art yonder worn and aged man that walkest bending upon a staff. Lo, Thou comest born and the universe groweth full of Thy faces.”⁵⁹

“There is one Unborn Mother; she is white, she is black, she is blood-red of hue; having taken shape, Lo, how she giveth birth to many kinds of creatures; for One of the two Unborn taketh delight in her and lyeth with her, but the Other hath exhausted all her sweets and casteth her from him.”

“They are two birds that cling to one common tree; beautiful of plumage, yoke-fellows are they, eternal companions; and one of them eateth the delicious fruit of the tree and the Other eateth not, but watcheth His fellow.”

“Man is the bird that dwelleth on one common tree with God, but he is lost in its sweetness and the slave of its sweetness and looseth hold of God; therefore he hath grief, therefore he is bewildered. But when he seeth that other bird who is God, then he knoweth that nothing is but God’s greatness, and his grief passeth away from him.”⁶⁰

“Know Nature (*Prakṛti*) for the Illusion (*Māyā*) and Maheshwara, the almighty, for the Lord of the Illusion: this whole moving world is filled with created things as with His members.”⁶¹

“Both of these in the Transcendent, the Knowledge and the Ignorance, yea, both have their hidden being in the Eternal and Infinite and are set in it forever. But of these, Ignorance dieth and Knowledge liveth forever and he who is master of both is other than they.”⁶²

“His size is as the size of a man’s thumb, but His aspect as the Sun in its glory; and He hath Volition and He hath Personality. But there is another whom we see by virtue of the Understanding and by virtue of the Spirit, for the point of a cobbler’s awl is not finer to vision.”⁶³

“Forms gross and forms subtle, forms many, — the Spirit in the body evolveth them all by his own nature in its working; by the law of action of His works and the law of action of the Spirit in man, by these He evolveth them. But there is Another in whom we behold Cause whereby all these meet together.”⁶⁴

“As the spider fashioneth his web and its threads are from his own body, so the One God than whom nought else existeth wrapped Himself from sight in the web born of eternal matter. May He ordain to us departure into the Eternal.”⁶⁵

“By the might of his devotion and the grace of God, by the energy of his being Shwetashwatara hereafter knew the Eternal and he came to the renouncers of the worldly life and truly declared unto them the Most High and Pure God to

whom the companies of seers resort forever.”⁶⁶

“Whosoever hath the supreme love and adoration (*parābhakti*) for the Lord and as for the Lord, likewise for the Master, to him these great masters, when they are told become clear of themselves, Yea, to the Great Soul of him they are manifest.”⁶⁷

It will be seen that the Shwetashwatara Upanishad confirms the affirmations made in other Upanishads in regard to the ultimate reality of the One, without the second and of his manifestation through his inherent power, “Unborn Mother”.

It will again be seen that a distinction is made between the Knowledge and the Ignorance both of which have the hidden being in the Eternal and Infinite. This reiterates the distinction made between Knowledge and Ignorance in the Isha Upanishad.

As in Katha Upanishad, so here, a distinction is made between the Supreme in the highest status and the Supreme as the individual, described in terms of the size of a man’s thumb but whose aspect comprehends all the rays of the Sun in his glory and finally, the Rishi Shwetashwatara declares the method of yoga, which is not only that of knowledge and of works but also of *parabhakti* (supreme love and adoration for the Lord as also for the Master) through which the Grace of God intervenes, which bestows the knowledge of the Eternal and which inspires works involving teaching of others.

[iv]

Comparable affirmations of the object of yogic knowledge and methods of yoga are to be found in the

Mundaka Upanishad, which is also one of the Principal Upanishads. We may refer to the following:

“Shaunaka, the great house-lord, came to Angiras in the due way of the disciple and asked of him, “Lord, by knowing what does all this that is become known?”

“To him thus spoke Angiras: Twofold is the knowledge that must be known of which the knowers of the Brahman tell, the higher and the lower knowledge.”

“Of which the lower, the Rigveda and the Yajurveda, and the Samaveda, and the Atharva veda, chanting, ritual, grammar, etymological interpretation, and prosody, and astronomy. And then the higher by which is known the Immutable.”

“That the invisible, that the unseizable, without connections, without hue, without eye or ear, that which is without hands or feet, eternal, pervading, which is in all things and unpalpable, that which is Imperishable, that which is the womb of creatures sages behold everywhere.”

“As the spider puts out and gathers in, as herbs spring up upon the earth, as hair of head and body grow from a living man, so here all is born from the Immutable.”

“Brahman grows by his energy at work, and then from Him is Matter born, and out of Matter life and mind and truth and the worlds, and in works immortality.”

“He who is the Omniscient, the all-wise, He whose energy is made of knowledge, from Him is born this that is Brahman here, this Name and Form and Matter.”⁶⁸

“This is That, the Truth of things: as from one high-

kindled fire thousands of different sparks are born and all have the same form of fire, so, O fair son, from the immutable manifold becomings are born and even into that they depart.”

“He, the divine, the formless Spirit, even He is the outward and the inward and he the Unborn; He is beyond life, beyond mind, luminous, ‘Supreme beyond the immutable.’”⁶⁹

“The Spirit is all this universe; he is works and askesis and the Brahman, supreme and immortal. O fair son, he who knows this hidden in the secret heart, scatters even here in this world the knot of the Ignorance.”⁷⁰

“Two birds, beautiful of wing, close companions, cling to one common tree: of the two one eats the sweet fruit of the tree, the other eats not but watches his fellow.”

“The soul is the bird that sits immersed on the one common tree; but because he is not lord he is bewildered and has sorrow. But when he sees that other who is the Lord and beloved, he knows that all is His greatness and his sorrow passes away from him.”

“When, a seer, he sees the Golden-hued, the maker, the Lord, the Spirit who is the source of Brahman, then he becomes the knower and shakes from his wings sin and virtue; pure of all stain he reaches the supreme identity.”⁷¹

“The Self can always be won by truth, by self-discipline, by integral knowledge, by a life of purity, — this Self that is in the inner body, radiant, made all of light whom, by the perishing of their blemishes, the doers of askesis behold.”

“It is Truth that conquers (*satyam eva jayate*) and not

falsehood; by Truth was stretched out the path of the journey of the gods, by which the sages winning their desire ascend there where Truth has its Supreme abode.”

“Vast is That, divine, its form unthinkable; it shines out subtler than the subtle, very far and farther than farness, it is here close to us, for those who have vision it is even here in this world; it is here, hidden in the secret heart.”⁷²

[v]

Finally, we may take a few passages from the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad which is considered to be the profoundest of the Upanishads. The language of this Upanishad is so remote that the ideas expressed in that language appear to be highly obscure. The language is highly figurative and symbolic, and its symbolism can be interpreted in its esoteric sense only in the light of the esoteric sense that the symbols of the Vedic yoga contain.

The Upanishad begins with the description of the Horse of the Ashwamedha (horse-sacrifice). The figure is impetuous and there is in it a grandiose abruptness. Ashwamedha is one of the most royal sacrifices, and in its religious and ritual aspect, the sacrifice of the Horse was symbolic of the royal battle, the end of which was the establishment of a king in the status of an Emperor, *chakravartin*, whose responsibility was to ensure *lokasangraha*, solidarity of people under his empire. In the esoteric sense, ashwamedha is a process of yoga, in which the yogin has to expand himself and become the Cosmic Horse, the cosmic Life-Force, and offer the integrality of life, including all cognitive, volitional and affective faculties and powers, to the Highest, so that all that is offered is touched and transformed by the

Highest, and one attains to that status of Yogic chakravartin, which is really the status of the royal master of Yoga, who lives in the Supreme Lord in regard to the cosmos. The Supreme Lord is Isha for whose habitation and delight is all this world and all worlds of movement in that world (*iśā vāsyam idam sarvam yat kiñca jagatyām jagat*).⁷³ It will be evident from the description of the Horse that the Upanishad uses the figure of the Horse that describes the entire cosmos and the organization of the cosmos. The cosmos has its birth place in the ocean, — the ocean of the inconscient, the ocean of darkness shrouded in darkness, as described in the Nāsadiya Sūkta of the Rigveda. This ocean, it is said, has a brother, — the ocean of the superconscient, the ocean of sweetness and ananda, towards which the universal horse of the cosmos was galloping, when it was released from the slumber of the night. He awakes at the dawn, strives across the earth and the quarters and the intermediate world of Life and heaven of Mind, — the horse who was a mere horse for the human beings, but Arvan for the Titans, Vajin for the Gandharvas, and Haya for the Gods, whose home is that supramental Truth, Right and Vast, which constantly and imperishably manifests Supreme Bliss, Madhu.

Let us read that description: “Dawn is the head of the horse sacrificial. The sun is his eye, his breath is the wind, his wide open mouth is Fire, the universal energy, Time is the self of the horse sacrificial. Heaven is his back and the mid-region is his belly, Earth is his footing, the quarters are his flanks and these intermediate regions are his ribs; the seasons are his members, the months and the half-months are that on which he stands, the stars are his bones and the sky is the flesh of his body. The strands are the food in his belly, the rivers are his veins, the mountains are his liver and

lungs, herbs and plants are the hairs of his body; the rising day is his front portion, and the setting day is his hinder portion. When he stretches himself, then it lightens; when he shakes himself, then it thunders; when he urines, then it rains. Speech verily is the voice of him. Day was the grandeur that was born before the horse as he galloped, the Eastern Ocean gave it birth. Night was the grandeur that was born in his rear and its birth was in the Western waters. These were the grandeurs that arose into being on either side of the horse. He became Haya and carried the Gods, Vajin and bore the Gandharvas, — Arvan and bore the Titans, — Ashwa and carried mankind. The sea was his brother and the sea his birth place.”⁷⁴

[vi]

We shall next refer to a dialogue between Gargi, a woman-mystic and Yajnavalkya, one of the most reputed, and one of the rare mystics who had attained the realization of the integral Brahman, and who was also radical and even militant in the sharpness of behaviour. In the third chapter of the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad and in the first Brahmana, it is narrated that when Janaka, the king of Videha, in an assembly of seekers and mystics had gathered at a sacrifice, a question was asked by him as to who among those assembled had attained the highest knowledge.

Janaka enclosed a thousand cows. To the horns of each ten pādas of gold were bound. He said to them: “Venerable seekers and possessors of knowledge (Brahmans), let him of you who is the best knower drive away these cows.”

Those seekers and possessors of knowledge durst not.

Then Yājñavalkya: “Sāmaśravas, my dear, drive them away.”

He drove them away.

The brahmans were angry.

“How can he declare himself to be the best brahmana among us?”⁷⁵

Thereafter a long dialogue ensued. Many reputed Brahmins raised questions one after the other. Among them (Gārgī) was one, and she too was daring and courageous. She also raised many questions. The dialogue between her and Yājñavalkya ran as follows:

“Yājñavalkya, said she, ‘since all this world is woven, warp and woof, on water, on what, pray, is the water woven, warp and woof?’

‘On wind, O Gārgī’. ‘On what then, pray, is the wind woven, warp and woof?’

‘On the atmosphere-worlds, O Gārgī.’

‘On what then, pray, are the atmosphere-worlds woven, warp and woof?’

‘On the worlds of the Gandharvas, O Gārgī.’

‘On what then, pray, are the worlds of the Gandharvas woven, warp and woof?’

‘On the worlds of the sun, O Gārgī.’

‘On what then, pray, are the worlds of the sun woven, warp and woof?’

‘On the worlds of the moon, O Gārgī.’

‘On what then, pray, are the worlds of the moon woven, warp and woof?’

‘On the worlds of stars, O Gārgī.’

‘On what then, pray, are the worlds of stars woven, warp

and woof?’

‘On the worlds of the gods, O Gārgî.’

‘On what then, pray, are the worlds of the gods woven, warp and woof?’

‘On the worlds of Indra, O Gārgî.’

‘On what then, pray, are the worlds of Indra woven, warp and woof?’

‘On the worlds of Prajāpati, O Gārgî.’

‘On what then, pray, are the worlds of Prajāpati woven, warp and woof?’

‘On the worlds of Brahma, O Gārgî.’

‘On what then, pray, are the worlds of Brahma woven, warp and woof?’

Yājñavalkya said: ‘Gārgî, do not question too much, lest your head fall off. In truth, you are questioning too much about divinity about which further questions cannot be asked. Gārgî, do not over-question.’

Thereupon Gārgî Vācaknavî held her peace.”⁷⁶

In a subsequent dialogue, Gārgî raised several questions concerning space and that which is above space.

She had asked: ‘Across, what then, pray, is space woven, warp and woof?’

Yājñavalkya replied: ‘That, O Gārgî, seekers and possessors of knowledge call the Imperishable (*Akṣara*); it is not coarse, not fine, not short, not long, not glowing, not adhesive, without shadow and without darkness, without air and without space, without stickiness, odourless, tasteless,

without eye, without ear, without voice, without wind, without energy, without breath, without mouth, without measure, without inside, without outside.'

It consumes nothing soever.

No one soever consumes it.

'Verily, O Gārgî, at the command of the Imperishable the sun and the moon stand apart.....Verily, O Gārgî, that Imperishable is the unseen Seer, the unheard Hearer, the unthought Thinker, the ununderstood Understander.

Other than It there is naught that sees.

Other than It there is naught that hears.

Other than It there is naught that thinks.

Other than It there is naught that understands.

Across this Imperishable, O Gārgî, is space woven, warp and woof.'

Gārgî said: 'Venerable seekers and possessors of knowledge, you may think it a great thing if you escape from this man with making a bow. Not one of you will surpass him in dialogue about Brahman.'

Thereupon Gārgî Vācaknavî held her peace.

Towards the end of the dialogue, Yājñavalkya said, 'Venerable seekers and possessors of knowledge, letting of you that desires question me. Or do you all question me? Or I will question him of you that desires (to be questioned); or I will question all of you.'

Those seekers and possessors of knowledge, however, dared not; then he (Yājñavalkya) questioned them with these verses: —

As a tree of the forest,
Just so, surely, is man.

His hairs are leaves,
His skin the outer bark.

From his skin blood,
Sap from the bark flows forth.

From him when pierced there comes forth
A stream, as from the tree when struck.

His pieces of flesh are under-layers of wood.
The fibre is muscle-like, strong.

The bones are the wood within.

The marrow is made resembling pith.

A tree, when it is felled, grows up
From the root, more new again;
A mortal, when cut down by death –
From what root does he grow up?

Say not 'from the semen',
For that is produced from the living,
As the tree, forsooth, springing from seed,
Clearly arises without having died.

If with its roots they should pull up
The tree, it would not come into being again.
A mortal, when cut down by death –
From what root does he grow up?

When born, indeed, he is not born.

Who would again beget him?

Brahma is knowledge, is bliss,

The final goal of the giver of offerings,

Of him, too, who stands still and knows It.'

The entire series of dialogues, nine in all in the third chapter, ended, and there was no further dispute. Yājñavalkya had won.

[vii]

We may also add here the conversation of Yājñavalkya and Maitreyī, which is narrated in the fourth Brahmana of the second chapter.

'Maitreyī!' said Yājñavalkya, 'lo, verily, I am about to go forth from this place. Behold! let me make a final settlement for you and that Kātyāyanī.'

Then said Maitreyī: 'If now, sir, this whole earth filled with wealth were mine, would I be immortal thereby?'

'No', said Yājñavalkya. 'As the life of the rich, even so would your life be. Of immortality, however, there is no hope through wealth.'

Then said Maitreyī: 'What should I do with that through which I may be immortal? What you know, sir — that, indeed, tell me!'

Then said Yājñavalkya: 'Ah! Lo, dear as you are to us, dear is what you say! Come, sit down. I will explain to you. But while I am expounding, do you seek to ponder there on.'

Then said he: 'Lo, verily, not for love of husband is the husband dear, but for love of the ātman (Self) a husband is dear.'

'Lo, verily, not for love of the wife is a wife dear, but for love of the ātman a wife is dear...'

'Lo, verily, not for love of the beings are beings dear, but for love of the ātman are beings dear.'

'Lo, verily, not for love for all is all dear, but for the love of the ātman all is dear.'

'Lo, verily, it is the ātman that should be seen that should be harkened to, that should be thought on, that should be pondered on, O Maitreyī.'

'Lo, verily, with the seeing of, with the harkening to, with the thinking of, and with the understanding of the ātman, this world — all is known.'

'It is — as a lump of salt cast in water would dissolve right into the water; there would not be any of it to seize forth, as it were, but wherever one may take, it is salty indeed — so, lo, verily, this great Being, infinite, limitless, is just a mass of knowledge (*viññāna-ghana*).'

Arising out of these elements, into them also one vanishes away. After death there is no consciousness. Thus, lo, say I.' Thus spoke Yājñavalkya.

Then spoke Maitreyī: 'Herein, indeed, you have bewildered me, sir — in saying : 'After death there is no consciousness!'

Then spoke Yājñavalkya: 'Lo, verily, I speak not bewildered. Sufficient, lo, verily, is this for understanding.'

‘For where there is a duality (*dwaita*), as it were, there one sees another; there one smells another; there one hears another; there one speaks to another; there one thinks of another; there one understands another. Where, verily, everything has become just one’s own self, then whereby and whom would one smell? Then whereby and whom would one see? Then whereby and whom would one hear? Then whereby and to whom would one speak? Then whereby and on whom would one think? Then whereby and whom would one understand? Whereby would one understand him by whom one understands this All? Lo, whereby would one understand the understander?’⁷⁷

PART THREE

General Remarks

There is profuse richness in the records of yoga that we find in the Vedic Samhitās and Upanishads, and also in the Brāhmanas and Āranyakas to some extent. The exposition that is presented is somewhat detailed, and it is likely to appear much too repetitive. But considering the immense richness of the original material, what has been presented, may appear to some, too scanty and too selective. Our object is to present sufficient material that might bring out not only the richness of the yogic experiences that we find in humanity's earliest records of yoga but also to show the patterns and systems of yogic methods which had come to be developed.

There have been many philosophical treatises that aim at commenting and explaining the contents of the Vedas and Upanishads. The related philosophical treatises present controversies that reflect rival philosophical systems. In our presentation, we have avoided philosophical interpretations, since our aim is to present significant passages that relate to yogic methods and yogic realizations, leaving the task of philosophical discussions to researchers who may be interested in such discussions.

In brief, our aim is to show that the methods of yoga are psychological in character and that they relate to detailed cultivation of the psychological powers of cognition,

conation and affection to such higher degrees of subtlety and complexity that our ordinary limits of consciousness are radically exceeded and revolutionized and new faculties are brought out from the womb of our ordinary functioning of consciousness. As a result, all that lies behind the phenomena which are ordinarily experienced by us comes within the realm of experiences which, in turn, by means of constant repetition, modification, and enlargement and subtilisation are stabilized in those states of realizations where objective knowledge of the noumenal reality or realities is possessed indubitably. In such an exposition, repetitions of the affirmations of yogic experiences and realizations are indispensable, and it is a part of the demonstration that yogic experiences are not matters of sporadic or accidental occurrence, but, as in any other science, so in the science of yoga, the same experiences can be produced by the employment of the same methods, and therefore, by repetition and by verification, limitations of the experiences and the limitations of the methods can be constantly tested, modified and brought to higher and higher levels of sublation and greater and greater integrality and synthesis.

Conclusions

From the data that are presented in regard to the Vedas and the Upanishads, the following conclusions can be arrived at:

1. A great store of psychological knowledge was possessed by the Rishis of the Vedas and Upanishads. This knowledge included the knowledge of the unconscious, subconscious, superficial conscious and its faculties of sense-perception, and of various states of mind indicated

by words such as *medhā*, *mati*, *dhī*, *buddhi* and others, as also of the powers of will (*samkalpa*, *kratu*, etc.), as also of feelings of various intensities. This psychological knowledge was expanded by the cultivation of inner or subliminal states of consciousness, resulting in the knowledge which is evident in the descriptions of Vāyu and Maruts etc. and of the workings of Indra and other gods such as Agni. It can also be seen that this vast store of psychological knowledge included not only awareness but mastery over superconscious states of consciousness which can, illustratively, be seen copiously in references to *śruti* and *dr̥ṣṭi* (supernormal audition and sight), as also to *Ilā*, *Saraswati*, *Saramā* and *Dakṣinā* (revelation, inspiration, intuition and discrimination). The knowledge of the superconscious states also included that of universal consciousness, transcendental consciousness, and comprehensive consciousness. This vast fund of psychological knowledge was strikingly classified, and two broad divisions were made: (i) that which pertains to states of duality and division (*avidyā*, Ignorance); and (ii) that which pertains to the realm of unity, universality and oneness (*vidyā*, Knowledge). In fact, the cornerstone of the yogic processes described in the Vedas and the Upanishads is underlined by the capital importance of the distinction that was drawn between Ignorance and Knowledge. Yoga has aimed at the development of all possible processes by which Ignorance can decisively be transcended and Knowledge is attained and possessed permanently so as to lead to stabilization in the state of Immortality and enjoyment of Immortality (*amṛtam aśnute*).

2. This vast fund of psychological knowledge was

cultivated by hundreds and thousands of seekers, and they succeeded in developing a language and terms with fixed meanings, which were shared commonly. This knowledge was so subtilised that it was often expressed in symbolic language, and this symbolism was shared by numerous initiates and practitioners of yoga. This symbolic language was also used in assemblies of seekers of yogic knowledge, and many could benefit from the exchange of the funds of yogic knowledge that seekers were developing through dialogues in which the symbolic language was commonly used.

3. The Rishis of the Vedic Samhitas belonged to different generations, and both in space and time they were greatly spread out. And yet, the yogic knowledge developed in a more ancient time was revisited and reconfirmed in subsequent periods. Thus, the yogic knowledge was not limited to subjective experiences of a few mystics, but it was being subjected to processes of exchange and tests, and affirmations of the objectivity of knowledge were sought to be established again and again by pursuit of the confirmed methods of yoga or by developing new methods of yoga. Again, the Rishis of the Upanishads were far removed by more than a thousand years from the Rishis of the Vedas, and yet, the knowledge contained in the Vedas came to be confirmed afresh by the Rishis of the Upanishads. The Vedic knowledge came to be subtilised further by the Rishis of the Upanishads by the pursuit of the old and new methods of yoga. Confirmations and repeated affirmations that we find in the Vedas and Upanishads constitute an extremely sound basis for the development of yoga-shastra, science of yoga, distinct from the development of religions, the

distinguishing features of which have been rituals, ceremonies and dogmatic beliefs and prescribed modes of conduct and worship.

4. For the development of any science or shastra, one single experience or experiment is not enough. There should be multiplicity of experiments, multiplicity of repetitions, multiplicity of variations, not only with respect of time and space but also in respect of constituents and modes. It was the varied and repeated experimentation stretched over long periods of time that provided a sound ground for some kind of systemization of the science of Yoga as also for the development of that science. The richness of the data that we find in the Vedas and Upanishads as also repeated confirmations of the same or variety of yogic experiences and realizations provide us the required justifiable basis for a systematic evaluation for determining the veracity, objectivity and certainty of knowledge which the Vedas and the Upanishads affirm with repeated insistence and assurance. For any inquirer who wants to verify once again the sustainability of these affirmations is encouraged to inquire, and he is free to verify by means of the methods of yoga which are also provided. Moreover, any seeker who wishes to examine if the results of the past need to be or can be exceeded, he is encouraged to do so, and he is free also to develop new methods for expansion of the realm of the yogic knowledge. In fact, the history of Indian yoga is a history of a tradition of fresh enquiry and enrichment by confirmation, modification, by subtilisation, and even by revolutionary departures from the past. We find not only the development of specializations in regard to methods and results but also the development of new systems of

synthesis. It is by development of this kind that we can see that yoga is not a system of creed or dogma or a system of practices tied up by any creed and dogma, and that it is an ever-developing field of inquiry, rigorous quest and cumulative body of knowledge. In the course of the history of the development of yoga, it has been discovered that each of the major religions is based upon yogic experience, and even in recent times the yogic quest undertaken by Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda, as also by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, has verified the yogic truths of religions like Buddhism and Jainism as also Christianity and Islam and others, and they have been discovered and reconfirmed in their veracity and in their place in the ever-enlarging domain of yogic knowledge. This has opened up a new possibility of heightened understanding of the richness of the treasure of yogic knowledge and also fresh avenues for a synthesis of religions and even a greater synthesis of vaster realms of varieties of yogic experiences and realisations.

5. Both the Vedas and the Upanishads have discovered a Supreme Object of Knowledge, and all the yogins, sages and rishis, whose experiences and realizations have been recorded in the Vedas and the Upanishads have repeatedly confirmed the nature and the status of the knowledge of that Supreme Object. That Object has been described as the One, which can be expressed in various ways. This One is; it is affirmed, wonderful (*adbhutam*) and It cannot be known by mere intellectual thought or contemplation but can be known only by transcending the limits of mental knowledge and by the development of psychological powers of intuition, revelation,

inspiration and supra-intellectual discrimination, — by development of supra-intellectual vision and experiences of direct rays of light and their synthesis (*raśmīn samūha*). That object of knowledge has been described as indescribable and ineffable, since words do not reach It, and yet it cannot be said that one cannot know It and cannot be expressed in any manner whatsoever. It is described variously, both as *neti neti* (not this, not this) but also as *iti iti* (this, and this), and as the one, spaceless and timeless, and immobile and yet as the Other that is also mobile, and as the All (*sarvam*) and Many (*bahu*). That reality is One but triple, — Truth, Knowledge and Infinity; it is One, which is triple, — Sat, Chit, Ananda (existence, consciousness, delight). It is One which has four heads and three feet, it is One that is also septuple, *Bhur* (matter) *Bhuvah* (life), *Swar* (mind and light in the mind), *Mahas* (or *vijañana* or supermind), *Janah* (creative bliss), *Tapas* (concentrated force of action), and *Satyam* (existent). It is He, the Bull, and it is She as the cow; it is He, the supreme existence, (Parabrahman, Purushottama and Parameshwara), and it is She, (Aditi, Para Prakriti and Parameshwari), it is He (Indra), and it is She (Maya of Indra). It is He with his companion, who sits on the same tree, and eats the fruit and is bewildered but who becomes free from bewilderment when he sees the One who eats not. It is the Transcendental Being (*parātpara*), and yet All (*sarvam khalu idam Brahma*), and it is He who sits in the deepest cave of the human heart, having the size not bigger than the thumb (*angusṭha mātra*). It is Unmanifest (*avyakta*) and it is Manifest (*vyakta*) and even beyond both the Manifest and the Unmanifest. It is He who is Mobile (*kṣara*) and yet

Immobile (*akṣara*), and yet the Transcendent (*uttama*). It is the Essence of all that is spread out (Brahman) and it is He who wills and originates all that is spread out (Purusha), and He is the Ruler of all that is spread out and it is for his habitation that all that is spread out (Īśa). It is Nameless and yet it has thousand names and numberless names (*Nirguṇa* that is also *Saguṇa* and *Anantaguṇa*).

That supreme reality is simple-complex, not seizable by the intellect which has erected logic of the Finite and logic of the relation of finite things, and yet seizable by the intellect (*buddhigrāhyam*), which is capable of seizing the concepts and experiences of the Infinite, which is describable as That which is Perfect, as This which is Perfect, as That from where the Perfect is manifested, and That which remains Perfect, even when Perfect is subtracted (*pūrṇamadah pūrṇamidam, pūrṇāt pūrṇamudacyate, pūrṇasya pūrṇam ādāya pūrṇameva viśiṣyate*).

These are the major data of the knowledge of the Supreme Object as repeatedly seen, experienced and realized as imperishable and ultimate, and there is nothing beyond It. If we do not comprehend That Reality, how can it be helped? Is it understandable when Plato says in '*The Republic*' that the highest reality, the Good 'far exceeds essence both in power and dignity'? In what way this highest reality can be known and known justifiably as indescribable and yet describable in many ways, is provided by the Vedas and the Upanishads. That there are difficulties in understanding That Reality for the mind that is accustomed to finite things and to multiplicity that veils Unity and Oneness, has led to a

number of philosophical speculations and even opposing systems of philosophy, but it is not in our scope to deal with this difficulty at the present stage, where our aim is to expound the data of yogic experiences and not to enter into the realm of philosophical debate.

6. The Vedas and the Upanishads provide descriptions of the cosmic yoga that is constantly being practised by the cosmic life that can be seen pulsating in this vast universe. The Upanishadic metaphor of that pulsation is the galloping horse that rises from the inconscient ocean and whose limbs symbolize movements in the vast Movement (*jagatyām jagat*) and an organized constitution of the elements of the material world, intermediate worlds, mental world and still the higher worlds of the superconsciousness to which are all directed by constant gallops of the cosmic horse. Indeed, the whole universe is a vast pulsation, it is a constant process of splitting and fusion, even at atomic levels of existence, and constant inhalation and exhalation that we can visibly see in all living organisms, and a constant drive of search for direction, and knowingly or unknowingly, but visibly in all operations of consciousness, — instinctive, mental and intuitive awareness. This vast pulsation is a constant exchange by self-giving that becomes at higher and higher levels of pulsations eager and passionate and irresistible surrender of all that one is and that one has (*yat kiñca sarvam*) with adoration (*namo bharanta*) and joy and delight. The Super-conscious Ocean is the brother of the self-giving pulsation which oozes with delight to receive from the Lord of the ocean of immortal delight.

Yoga is a constant vibration of the universe; it is the

constant yajna, a constant sacrifice of the universal pulsation and life-force (*aśwamedha*) in order that the whole universe receives the rivers of honey and imperishable nectar of immortality from above. None can live by oneself; none can perform the sacrifice by oneself. There is, according to the Vedic concept of *ṛta*, the governing law of unity and harmony (Varuna and Mitra) which maintains an underlying unity which is sustained by mutuality of each and the other, each and all, and all and each.

In the evolving world in which we live and act, there is crookedness and clash of forces and disorder. Even on the clash of forces and disorder, the law of unity imposes itself, and each clashing force and each element of disorder is obliged to contribute to the maintenance of all and each for eventual evolution and growth towards the ideal unity and harmony of Varuna and Mitra. This obligation of each to the other and to all, whether felt and seen consciously or unconsciously, requires each and all to pour into each other in an unconscious or conscious action of sacrifice. In that sense, the whole universe and all that moves in it is a sacrifice (*aśwamedha*). But when this sacrifice and the law of sacrifice is grasped and acted upon consciously, the tardiness of the movement is reduced, the energies are expanded more and more irresistibly and the evolutionary force moves rapidly towards a goal of the superconscient ocean of sweetness and delight which is the elixir of immortality. It is for each seeker to learn of this law of sacrifice, to energise the life-force, symbolized by *aśwa*, universalize oneself with that life-force which vibrates and pulsates universally, and to consciously apply the law of sacrifice. This

is the essential secret of the Vedic system of yoga, and it is same search that we find implicitly in all the principal Upanishads and even explicitly as in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad.

7. Life-force that pulsates in the whole universe is inherently synthetic and all-integrating. Even at the level of instinct, triple force acts in a combination, and there is not only drive of action but also sure but blind knowledge of the object towards which the drive is directed for its satisfaction, and there is in its core intensity of feeling which achieves its fulfillment when the drive attains its object and the result of the drive is achieved. It is true that these three elements of action, knowledge and feeling get separated from each other as the evolution moves forward and witnessing Reason is generated. Reason stands distinguishable as colorless light that can separate itself from all that is instinctive and can even arrive at the control of instinctive life. But even reason is triangular in character, since it aims at truth, beauty and goodness; reason recognizes its discerning flow that struggles towards (i) knowledge and the highest that the cognitive faculty can attain, (ii) effective will and action and the highest that the dynamic push of our nature can attain, and (iii) that sense of beauty and delight which all sensations and feelings can at their highest attain. The most critical problem of the Reason is to recognize the conflicting demands of this triangularity and to attain whatever harmony it can provide to these three conflicting forces. In fact, it is in the experience of this conflict and in the experience of constant struggle to harmonize these three elements that reason is motivated to discover and possess that power

of state of being in which this conflict can truly be resolved. That process is the sustained and systematic and methodical effort and constantly cumulative endeavour that constitutes the tapasya of yoga. This effort is normally synthetic, even though it may tend to be one-sided during the process of experimentation. But the yoga that we see in the Vedas and the Upanishads is synthetic, — it is the yoga in which all the energies of life-force, — cognitive, conative, and affective, — are sought to be developed and sacrificed at the altar of the Fire of tapasya which consumes all, and fed by all that is sacrificed, that Fire rises upward leading the seeker, the totality of the seeker, to its own home (*sve dame*), where all unity and harmony which are being sought insistently by instinct and by reason but never attained, are at last discovered and possessed, and not only enjoyed but permanently enjoyed.

8. What are the methods of this path of yoga, which we find repeatedly stated and underlined in the Vedas and the Upanishads? The path, we are told, is difficult like a razor's edge (*kśurasya dhārā*), and it is best to arise, awake, find out the great ones and learn of them. Katha Upanishad speaks on behalf of the Rishis of both the Vedas and the Upanishads and declares the severity of the difficulty of the path. In general, the methods of yoga worked out in the Vedas are reconfirmed in the Upanishads. And yet, as we move more and more towards the Upanishads, we find the crowning experiences of the Veda as the starting point for a high and profound synthesis of spiritual knowledge. The Vedic yoga synthesizes the psychological workings of man, which have been named symbolically and

significantly as various cosmic gods, each having his specialized functioning and yet all working together with subtle links of unifying powers of the One, who is declared to be expressed variously by the Rishis. In brief, the unifying method is that of Tapas, power of concentration and meditation and contemplation and of progressive sacrifice of energies and increasing self-surrender to the highest Object of knowledge. That object is described as at once simple and complex, at once One and Many, and at once the universal and the individual and the transcendental. The methods of the Vedic yoga were progressively synthesized by the unifying method of tapas applied to the pursuit of the highest flights and widest rangings of divine knowledge, power, joy, life and glory with the aid of the cosmic gods, who are invoked and invited behind the symbols of the material universe culminating into those superior planes which are hidden from the physical sense and the material mentality.

A synthetic method of yoga of the Veda, which is repeated in the Upanishads, is well described in the Taittiriya Upanishad where the process of the yoga of Bhrigu is described to have been guided and conducted by Varuna. Under successive instructions, Bhrigu concentrates himself successively in thought and by the askesis (*tapas*) of his brooding, on universal matter (*anna*), on universal life-force (*prāna*), on universal Mind (*manas*), on universal principle of Knowledge (*vijnāna*), and on universal Bliss (*ānanda*). The entire process ends in the realization of the Brahman, the eternal, who synthesizes matter, life, mind, supermind and bliss. And the highest achievement of yoga-siddhi is described as possession of the Self which is of Bliss. And

this victory is described as the conquest of the whole world and its possession. The seeker is described as having achieved the light which is compared to the sun in its glory. At the end of the description, it is stated:

“This, verily, is Upanishad, the secret of the Veda.”

In the Kena Upanishad, we have a more elaborate statement of the methods of yoga where the direction is given to think out: “That of it (Brahman) which is thou, that of It which is in the gods.” The method is that of a synthesis of the development of faculties in their universality, symbolically described as the gods, and the discovery of the inner being, that which is deepest in the individual self. In this Upanishad also, the yoga-siddhi is described as follows:

“The name of That is ‘That Delight’; as that Delight one should follow after It. He who so knows That, towards him verily all existences yearn.”

That state of delight is the state of beatitude and immortality, a large enjoyment of the divine and infinite existence reposing, as described in the Veda, on a perfect union between the Soul and Nature, where the soul becomes King of itself (*swarājya*) and its environment (*sāmrājya*), conscious on all planes, master of them with Nature for its bride delivered from divisions and discords into an infinite and luminous harmony.⁷⁸

The last two verses of the Kena Upanishad summarize in a few words the method and goal of the yoga of the Vedas and the Upanishads as follows:

“Of this knowledge, austerity and self-conquest and works are the foundations, the Vedas are all 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.”⁷⁹

Commenting on these brief words, Sri Aurobindo states:

“.... This Upanishad or gospel of the inmost Truth of things has for its foundation, it is said, the practice of self-mastery, action and the subdual of the sense-life to the power of the Spirit. In other words, life and works are to be used as a means of arriving out of the state of subjection proper to the soul in the ignorance into a state of mastery which brings it nearer to the absolute self-mastery and all-mastery of the supreme Soul seated in the knowledge. The Vedas, that is to say, the utterances of the inspired seers and the truths they hold, are described as all the limbs of the Upanishads; in other words, all the convergent lines and aspects, all the necessary elements of this great practice, this profound psychological self-training and spiritual aspiration are set forth in these great Scriptures, channels of supreme knowledge and indicators of a supreme discipline. Truth is its home; and this Truth is not merely intellectual verity, — for that is not the sense of the word in the Vedic writings, — but man’s ultimate human state of true being, true consciousness, right knowledge, right works, right joy of existence, all indeed that is contrary to the falsehood of egoism and ignorance. It is by these means, by using works and self-discipline for mastery of oneself and for the generation of spiritual energy, by fathoming in all its parts the knowledge and repeating the high example of the great Vedic seers and by living in the Truth that one becomes capable of the great ascent which the Upanishad opens to us.

“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 the 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 too 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.”⁸⁰

Notes and References

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- ⁴ Harrison, G. E., *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion*, Cambridge, 1922.
- ⁵ Vide., Bertrand Russell, *History of Western Philosophy*, Rutledge, London, 1996, p. 43.
- ⁶ There appears to be a long period intervening between the Vedic Samhitas and the Upanishads. Numerous branches of the Vedic Samhitas developed in this period. Each of the recensions of the Vedas had a separate Brahmana. These Brahmana contained detailed analysis of various categories of sacrifices, their rituals and procedures. We also find in these Brahmanas, legends, anecdotes and narration of stories. They are looked upon as expositions of various aspects of the Vedas. The Brahmana literature seems to have been very vast, but a number of Brahmanas have been lost. According to many ancient scholars, the Vedic Samhitas and Brahmanas together constitute the Veda, although the Vedic Samhitas have ultimate authority of validity. In Nineteenth century, Dayananda Saraswati, expressed the view that the Brahmanas cannot be regarded as a part of the Veda. There is, however, no dispute about the fact that Brahmana are looked upon as elucidation or interpretation of the Veda, and this itself implies the superiority of the Vedic Samhitas as

far as the question of authenticity is concerned. The Brahmanas aimed at conservation of the forms and they laboured to fix and preserve the minutiae of the Vedic ceremony, the conditions of their material effectuality, the symbolic sense and purpose of their different parts, movements, implements, the significance of texts important in the ritual, the drift of obscure illusions, the memory of ancient myths and traditions. According to Sri Aurobindo, Brahmanas provide interesting hints, but it cannot be said that they are a safe guide to the meaning of separate texts when they attempt an exact verbal interpretation. It is true that the Brahmanas do contain philosophical passages, the method which they followed was connected with the conservation of forms; this method was quite different from the method followed by the Rishis of the Upanishads, who sought to recover the knowledge contained in the Veda by means of mediation and spiritual experience. Between the Brahmanas and the Upanishads there is a vast literature of Aryanakas. The main subject dealt with in the Aryanakas is the esoteric meaning of sacrifices, their rituals as also their inner meaning of the conduct related to the system of the four *varṇas* or four types of human beings constituting the society and four *ashramas* or four stages of human life. The most important Aryanaka is the Aitareya Aryanaka of the Rigveda. As a matter of fact each Veda has and each recension of Veda has an Aryanaka. The tendency in the Aryanaka to discover inner meanings seems to be responsible for the development of a vaster tendency that is found in the Upanishads to bring out the secret knowledge contained in the Veda, and this tendency gave rise to the development of a new synthesis of yoga that we find in the Upanishads. Among the important Upanishads are Isha, Kena, Katha, Prashna, Mundaka, Māndukya, Taittiriya, Chhāndogya, Aitareya and Brihadāranyaka Upanishad. Shankarācharya has given prominence to five other Upanishads also in his Commentaries, namely, Swetāśvatara, Mahānārāyana, Maitrāyāni, Kaushitakī and Nrisimhatāpinī. In the Muktopanishad, it is mentioned that the total number of Upanishads are one hundred and eight.

In spite of the fact that the Upanishads are not as remote as the Veda in respect of language and symbolism, they are extremely difficult to understand and interpret. It has been suggested that Upanishad should be looked upon as vehicles of illumination and not of instruction, since they were composed for seekers who already had a general

familiarity with the ideas of the Vedic and Vedantic seers and even some personal experience of the truths on which they were founded. This is why they dispense in their style with expressed transitions of thought and the development of implied or subordinate notions. Very often one single word or sentence reposes on a number of ideas implicit in the text but nowhere set forth explicitly. The reasoning that supports conclusions is often suggested by words but not expressly conveyed to the intelligence. As a result, Upanishads demand a good deal of patience, quietude and concentration, if we are to understand them properly. Even then it is difficult to penetrate into the inner meaning of the Upanishads. As a result, there have been sharp differences of opinion among numerous commentators, who during the middle ages of Indian history, interpreted in different ways. There are at least five major schools of Upanishadic interpretation. These are: Advaitavāda or Monism of Shankarācharya, Vishishtādvaitavada, or Qualified Monism of Rāmānujācharya, Vishuddhādvaitavada or Pure Monism of Vallabhācharya, Dvaitādvaitavāda or Dualism-non-dualism of Nimbārkaacharya, and Dvaitavāda or Dualism of Madhawacharya. The commentaries of the Acharyas have been further commented upon by their disciples, and there have been commentaries on commentaries. Bhagavad Gita is also considered to be an organized exposition of the essence of the Upanishadic teaching; but Bhagavad Gita has also been interpreted differently by different Acharyas, and there have been a number of commentaries on the Bhagavad Gita. The commentary literature on the Upanishads, Brahmasutra, and Bhagavad Gita is continuing to develop even in our own times.

The Upanishadic literature tended to subordinate more and more completely the outward ritual, the material utility of the mantra and the sacrifice to a more purely spiritual aim and intention. Upanishads, as a result, came to develop a new synthesis of yoga, which was different in many respects from the synthesis of yoga of the Veda in which there was a balance and synthesis between the external and the internal, between the material and the spiritual life. In due course of time, the Upanishads and thereafter Buddhism which grew in later time, the sacrifice and symbolic ritual became more and more a useless survival and even an encumbrance. A sharp practical division came into being, effective though never entirely recognized in theory, between Veda and Vedanta, so that the Veda came to belong to the priests and the Vedanta came to be meant for the sages. It may also be

mentioned that with the growth of the Upanishads, rendered obsolete the utility not only of the Vedic ritual but also of the Vedic text. Upanishads were increasingly clear and direct in their language, and they came to be regarded as the fountainhead of the highest Indian thought, although the Vedic texts are even now recognized as authorities. As a whole, however, there grew a belief that Upanishads constitute the Book of Knowledge, *jnanakanda*, and the Veda came to be regarded rather as the Book of Works, *karmakanda*.

- ⁷ Aditi is considered, in the Veda, the original creatrix of the Universe, since she is the creative power of the supreme Divine who is the ultimate source and originator of the universe. In the Vedic yoga, Aditi has been regarded as the Divine Mother, and throughout the history of Indian culture, Aditi has retained that original character. In the Gita, we do not find the reference to the word Aditi but we have equivalent term, namely, Para Prakriti. In later developments, Aditi has also come to be known as Shakti, Mahashakti, Parashakti and as Parameshwari. In Sri Aurobindo's book, *The Mother*, four aspects of Aditi have been described, namely, those of Maheshwari, Mahakali, Mahalakshmi and Mahasaraswati.
- ⁸ The word intuition is often used in religions and philosophical literature so as to include in its connotation all the levels of consciousness that transcend mental consciousness. In a more precise connotation, it can be limited to immediate grasp of the truth by a spark that flashes out when the subject and the object of knowledge happen to get identified with each other. But apart from this essential character, which suggests a luminosity of experience in which the object is felt to be possessed and therefore grasped and understood intimately, there are three other powers of intuition, namely, revelation, inspiration and automatic discrimination. Revelation may be regarded as intuition that is accompanied by a significant image that is inwardly seen as an inevitable symbol of the object with which the subject is identified. Inspiration is accompanied by a spontaneous possession of a word that describes accurately and inevitably the object with which the subject is identified. Revelation is, therefore, also described as truth-sight, *dṛṣṭi*, and inspiration is described as truth-hearing or *śruti*. The other power of intuition consists of spontaneous and immediate discrimination between an idea and an idea, between a truth and another truth, between truth and error. This discrimination

is not ratiocinative, — not even quick ratiocinative. Intuitive discrimination is immediate in its character, — it directly and spontaneously recognises the relationship between ideas and the distinction between truth and error or falsehood. But apart from these powers of intuition, there are higher levels of knowledge. Sri Aurobindo points out that between the intuition, the highest faculty of knowledge there is an intermediate power of knowledge, which Sri Aurobindo calls overmind. The main distinction between intuition and overmind is that the field of intuition can be limited, and it can be compared to torchlight so that the field of knowledge is focused on the limited field on which the torch is focused, but the field of the overmind is cosmic, so that massive fields of the object are intimately, directly and immediately cognized, as in a search light. Intuitive light is often described as holistic light, in the sense that all that is cognized in the intuitive grasp comes to be known in its fullness, but this fullness is related to a rather limited field on which the torch light of the intuition is focused. In the case of the overmind, on the contrary, the field itself is universal, and cosmic consciousness is automatic in the overmental cognition. But while describing the overmind, Sri Aurobindo uses the word, 'global', so as to distinguish it from a still higher level of consciousness, which Sri Aurobindo describes as comprehensive and integral. Just as an individual sees in a dark night, while seated on the top of a globe darkness all over, but he is not able to see the totality of the globe in its integrality and thus does not perceive that the lower half of the globe is at the same time flooded with sunlight, similarly in the overmental consciousness one does not have integral and comprehensive cognition, which is native to what Sri Aurobindo calls the supermind. According to Sri Aurobindo, supermind is comprehensive and integral; it is whole-consciousness in which totality of the universal object is seen in its entire comprehensiveness also in its total details. The distinction between intuition, overmind and supermind are important, because even though all the three cognize the truth and although in all the three cases, cognition carries with it the sense of fullness, the scope and therefore the nature of the cognition is different. Since the scope of intuition is limited, different intuitions may not be found to be harmonious with each other; hence, there has been in the history of knowledge, conflicts of intuitions, even though these conflicts can be more easily harmonized, and they need not be as rigid as the conflict among mental

opinion or as rigid as mental cognitions of intuitions can be. In the overmind, on account of its cosmicity, the sweep of knowledge is cosmic and global, but since it is still not integral, even overmental views may provide a field of divergence, and even when divergences can be more easily reconciled, final reconciliation can come about only when one ascends to supramental cognition. In the Upanishads, intuition is the main instrument of knowledge, but there is also recognition and affirmation, of the reconciliation by means of supramental consciousness. In the Isha Upanishad, for example, which is a great document of synthesis; presents some riddles on account of intuitions in regard to the distinction between knowledge and ignorance and in regard to birth and non-birth, a higher reconciling supramental cognition is also described. Finally, this Upanishad describes the supramental cognition of the truth, in the verses fifteen and sixteen, where a distinction is made between the face of the Truth and the brilliant golden lid which covers the face of truth. That brilliant golden lid can be considered to be a light of the overmind, which needs to be transcended for beholding the face of Truth in its integrality, and this integrality is indicated by the word 'samooaha', which means drawing together all the rays of the light. While reading the Upanishads, if some statements do not appear to be harmonious with other statements, an effort is needed to reach up to the supramental cognition in the light of which the total harmony of knowledge can be found.

⁹ *Udavyam tamasaspari jyotiḥ paśyanta uttaram
devam devatrā sūryam agaṇma jyotir uttamam* RV., I.50.10.

¹⁰ Vide, for instance, RV, V.66.6, Sri Aurobindo comments on this verse as follows:

“*Svarājya* and *sāmrājya*, perfect empire within and without, rule of our inner being and mastery of our environment and circumstances, was the ideal of the Vedic sages, attainable only by ascending beyond our mortal mentality to the luminous Truth of our being, the supramental infinities on the spiritual plane of our existence.” (Sri Aurobindo, *Secret of the Veda*, SABCL, Vol. 10, 1971, p.480).

¹¹ Vide., Kena Upanishad, IV.6.

¹² RV., VI.8.5.

¹³ *Taittiriya Upanishad*, Bhriguvalli, Ch. I.

- ¹⁴ Vide., *Ibid.*, Ch. I.10.
- ¹⁵ *Kena Upanishad*, II.1.
- ¹⁶ *Ibid.*, II.4.
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.*, IV.4.
- ¹⁸ *Ibid.*, IV.5.
- ¹⁹ *Taittiriya Upanishad*, Brahmanandavallī, Ch. IX.
- ²⁰ *Kena Upanishad*, IV.6.
- ²¹ Vide., *Katha Upanishad*, I.1.1-29.
- ²² *Ibid.*, I.1.20.
- ²³ *Ibid.*, I.2.1-3.
- ²⁴ *Ibid.*, I.2.4-8.
- ²⁵ *Ibid.*, I.2.9.
- ²⁶ *Ibid.*, I.1.28.
- ²⁷ *Ibid.*, I.2.12.
- ²⁸ *Ibid.*, I.2.11.
- ²⁹ *Ibid.*, I.2.15.
- ³⁰ *Ibid.*, II.3.10-16.
- ³¹ *Kena Upanishad*, II.4, 5.
- ³² *Katha Upanishad*, I.3.11,12.
- ³³ *Ibid.*, I.3.10, 11.
- ³⁴ Vide., *Ibid.*, II.2.1-2.
- ³⁵ *Ibid.*, II.2.3-8.
- ³⁶ Vide., *Ibid.*, II.1, II.2, II.3.
- ³⁷ *Ibid.*, I.3.14.
- ³⁸ *Ibid.*, II.1.1-13.
- ³⁹ *RV.*, III.1.
- ⁴⁰ *RV.*, V.2.
- ⁴¹ *Katha Upanishad*, II.2.7.
- ⁴² *Ibid.*, II.1.5.
- ⁴³ Vide., *Ibid.*, II.1.3-9, II.2.8.
- ⁴⁴ *Mandukya Upanishad*, 3-7.
- ⁴⁵ *Kaivalya Upanishad*, I.
- ⁴⁶ *Isha Upanishad*, 5.
- ⁴⁷ *RV.*, I.170.1.
- ⁴⁸ *Isha Upanishad*, 8.

- 49 Ibid., 4.
- 50 Ibid., 1.
- 51 Ibid., 6-7.
- 52 Ibid., 7.
- 53 *Mandukya Upanishad*, 5.
- 54 *Taittiriya Upanishad*, Bhriguvali, Ch. V.
- 55 *RV.*, V.62.1
- 56 *Vide.*, *Chhandogya Upanishad*, VI.1, 2, 13.
- 57 *RV.*, VIII.6.30
- 58 *RV.*, I.50.10 ; *Vide.* Also, *Chhandogya Upanishad*, III.17.
- 59 *Svetasvatara Upanishad*, IV.1, 2, 3.
- 60 Ibid., IV.5, 6, 7.
- 61 Ibid., IV.10.
- 62 Ibid., V.1.
- 63 Ibid., V.8.
- 64 Ibid., V.12.
- 65 Ibid., VI.10.
- 66 Ibid., VI.21.
- 67 Ibid., VI.23.
- 68 *Mundaka Upanishad*, I.1.3-9.
- 69 Ibid., II.1.1, 2.
- 70 Ibid., II.1.10.
- 71 Ibid., III.1.1-3.
- 72 Ibid., III.1.5-7.
- 73 *Isha Upanishad*, 1.
- 74 *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, I.1.1, 2.
- 75 Ibid., III.1.1, 2.
- 76 Ibid., III.6.
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- 78 *Vide.*, *RV.*, V.2, 3.
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- 80 Sri Aurobindo, *The Upanishads*, Vol.12, SABCL, Pondicherry, 1971, pp. 226-7.

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