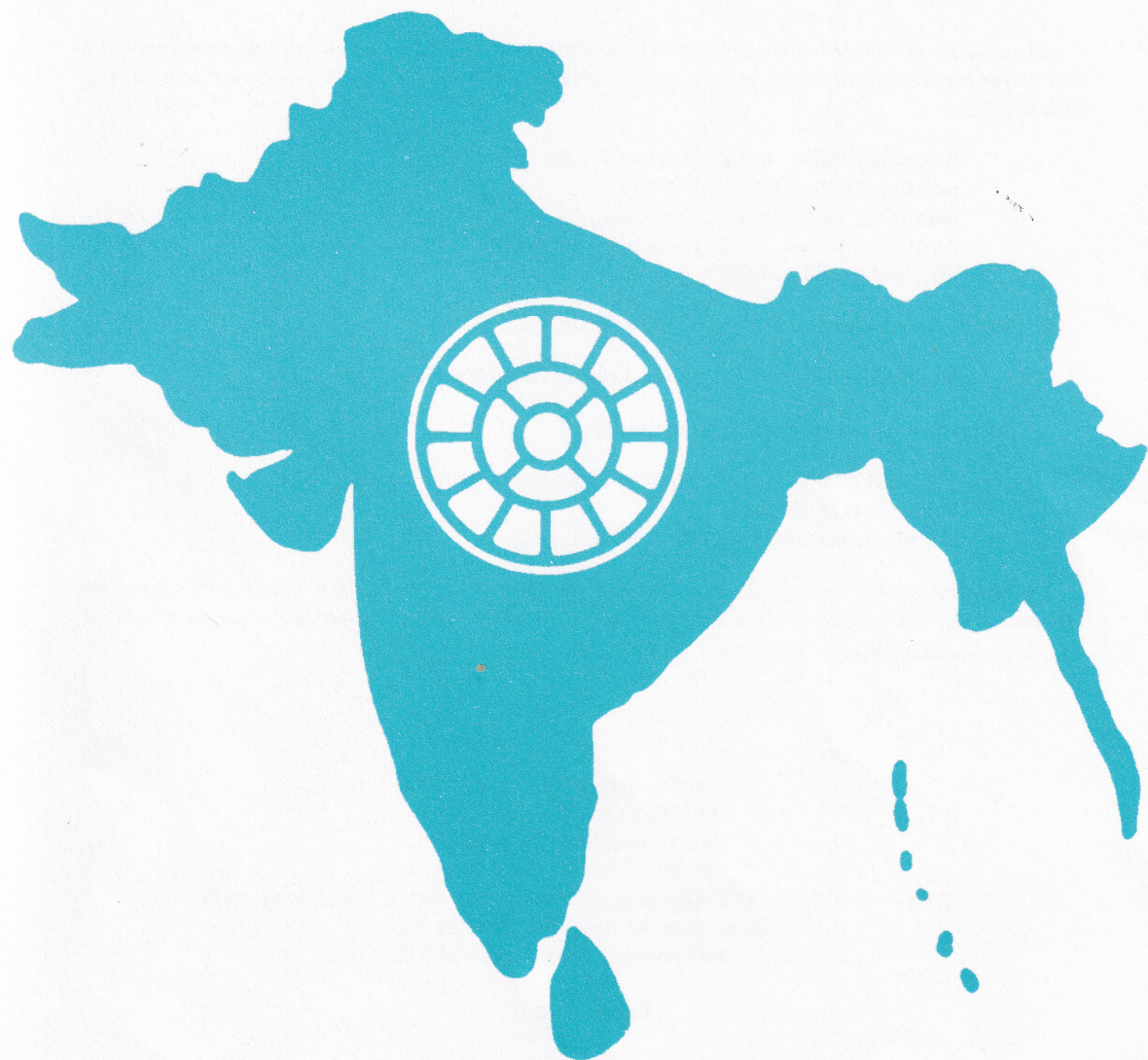


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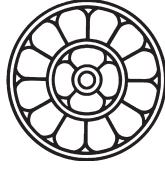
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AUGUST 2023

SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM
PONDICHERRY
INDIA



Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,
A new light breaks upon the earth,
A new world is born.
The things that were promised are fulfilled.



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Vol. LXXVI

No. 8

“Great is Truth and it shall prevail”

CONTENTS

<i>Sri Aurobindo</i>			
THE ISHAVASYOPANISHAD	with a commentary in English	...	7
<i>Sri Aurobindo</i>			
ISHA UPANISHAD	All that is world in the Universe	...	65
<i>Sri Aurobindo</i>			
ISH AND JAGAT		...	69
<i>Sri Aurobindo</i>			
THE SECRET OF THE ISHA		...	72

THE ISHAVASYOPANISHAD

with a commentary in English

This dialogue between the Guru and the Student is one of several writings of Sri Aurobindo on the Isha.

About this text, the editorial note in volume 17 of the CWSA states:

Circa 1905. The title page of this work reads in full: “Materials for Bhavani Grantha-/Mala./1. The Ishavasyopanishad/with a commentary in English.” The Sanskrit phrase “Bhavani Grantha-Mala” means “Garland of books for the goddess Bhavani”. This commentary apparently was intended to be the first of a series of works for the use of students of Bhawani Mandir, a “temple to the goddess Bhawani” where young men would be trained to do selfless work for Mother India. The idea of Bhawani Mandir was primarily that of Barindra Kumar Ghose, Sri Aurobindo’s younger brother, though Sri Aurobindo did write a manifesto setting forth its ideals around 1905 . . .

The text of the commentary ends abruptly at the bottom of the last page of the notebook. It may have been continued in another notebook that has been lost.

THE ISHAVASYOPANISHAD

with a commentary in English

1.

With God all this must be invested, even all that is world in this moving universe; abandon therefore desire and enjoy and covet no man's possession.

THE GURU

The Upanishad sets forth by pronouncing as the indispensable basis of its revelations the universal nature of God. This universal nature of Brahman the Eternal is the beginning and end of the Vedanta and if it is not accepted, nothing the Vedanta says can have any value, as all its propositions either proceed from it or at least presuppose it; deprived of this central and highest truth, the Upanishads become what Mleccha scholars & philosophers think them to be, — a mass of incoherent though often sublime speculations; with this truth in your hand as a lamp to shed light on all the obscurest sayings of the Scriptures, you soon come to realise that the Upanishads are a grand harmonious and perfectly luminous whole, expressing in its various aspects the single and universal Truth; for under the myriad contradictions of phenomena (prapancha) there is one Truth and one only. All the Smritis, the Puranas, the Darshanas, the Dharmashastras, the writings of Shaktas, Shaivas, Vaishnavas, Sauras, as well as the whole of Buddhism and its Scriptures are merely so many explanations, comments and interpretations from different sides, of these various aspects of the one and only Truth. This Truth is the sole foundation on which all religions can rest as on a sure and impregnable rock; — and more than a rock, for a rock may perish but this endures for ever. Therefore is the religion of the Aryas called the Sanatana Dharma, the Law Sempiternal. Nor are the Hindus in error when they declare the Sruti to be eternal and without beginning and the Rishis who composed the hymns to be only the witnesses who saw the truth and put it in human language; for this seeing was not mental sight, but spiritual. Therefore the Vedas are justly called Sruti or revelation. Of these the Rig, Yajur, Sama & Atharvan are the fertilising rain which gave the plant of the Truth nourishment and made it grow, the Brahmanas are the forest in which the plant is found, the Aranyakas are the soil in which it grows, the Upanishads are the plant itself, roots, stalk, leaves, calix and petals, and the

flower which manifests itself once and for ever is the great saying SO AHAM — I AM HE which is the culmination of the Upanishads. Salutation to the SO AHAM. Salutation to the Eternal who is without place, time, cause or limit, Salutation to my Self who am the Eternal.

THE STUDENT

I salute the Eternal and my Self who am the Eternal. Swaha!

THE GURU

The Upanishad therefore begins by saying that all this must be clothed or invested with the Lord. By this expression it is meant that the individual Jivatman or human soul in order to attain salvation must cover up all this universe with the Lord, as one might cover the body with a garment. By the Lord we mean obviously not the Unknowable Parabrahman, for of the Unknowable we cannot speak in terms of place, time or difference, but the Brahman knowable by Yoga, the luminous shadow of the One put forth by the Shakti of the One, which by dividing itself into the Male and Female, Purusha and Prakriti, has created this world of innumerable forms and names. Brahman is spoken of as the Lord; that is, we best think of Him as the Ruler & Sovran of the Universe. He is the still ocean of spiritual force, its mere presence sets working the creative, preservative, and destructive Shakti or Will of the Eternal Parabrahman. By her means he forms the Ocean of Prakriti, which is the substratum of all form or matter. Of these two, the Ocean of spiritual force and the Ocean of material form, the latter is contained in the other & could not be without it. It may be said to be surrounded by it or clothed by it. The Lord himself is present on the Ocean in various forms, Prajna, Hiranyagarbha & Virat, or Vishnu, Brahma and Maheshwara. This is what the Puranas represent as Vishnu on the Serpent of Time & Space in the Causal Ocean & Brahma growing out of the lotus in his navel etc. This is the Lord, the King & Ruler. We must therefore realise all things in this universe to be the creation of that ocean of Brahman or spiritual force which surrounds them as a robe surrounds its wearer.

THE STUDENT

Surely all things [are] Brahman himself; why then should he be said to surround all things as if he were different from them?

THE GURU

It is meant by this expression that the universal & undivided consciousness which we call Brahman, surrounds and includes all the limited individual consciousnesses which present themselves to us in the shape of things.

THE STUDENT

Still I do not understand. How can the one indivisible consciousness be divided, or if it is divided how can it at the same time remain one and surround its own parts? A thing cannot be at the same time one and indivisible and yet divisible and multifold.

THE GURU

On the contrary this is precisely the nature of consciousness to be eternally one & indivisible, & yet always divisible at will. A man's consciousness has often been split up into two states, each with its own history and memory, so that when he is in one state, he does not know what he has been thinking and doing in the other. Persons ignorant of the Truth imagine from this circumstance that a man's consciousness must be not single and homogeneous but a bundle of different personalities, just as the Sankhyas & others imagine that there must be an infinite number of Purushas, souls & not One, for otherwise, they say, all would have the same knowledge, the same pleasure & pain etc. (This is so in a sense, as his present personality contains also in a submerged state the personalities of his previous births, and an unwise hypnosis may throw him back into a bygone state of personality.) But this is merely Avidya, Ignorance, & when the apparently individual Purusha puts himself into the complete state of Yoga with the Eternal he discovers that all the time there was only One Purusha who was cognizant of & contained the others, in the sense that they were simply projections (सृष्टि s) from him. These states of split consciousness are only different states of one personality and not separate personalities. This will at once be clear if a skilful and careful hypnotiser put the man in the right state of sleep; for then a third state of personality will often evolve which has known all along what the other two were doing and saying & is in itself sufficient proof that all along the unity of consciousness was there, submerged indeed but constant and subliminally active. The division of this one consciousness into two separate states results from a particular & unusual action of Avidya, the same universal Nescience which in its general & normal action makes men

imagine that they are a different self from the Universal Consciousness and not merely states or conditions projected (सृष्ट) of that consciousness. We see here then an established example of the one and indivisible consciousness becoming divided and multifold, yet remaining one and indivisible all the time. This single consciousness itself, the I of the waking man, is only a division or rather a state of a still wider consciousness more independent of gross matter which gets some play in the condition of dream (and of dream hypnosis is only a particular and capricious form), but is more permanently & coherently liberated from the gross body at or after death. This wider consciousness is called the Dream Condition and the body or *upadhi* in which it works is called the Subtle Body. The Dream Consciousness may be said to surround the waking consciousness and its body as a robe surrounds its wearer, for it is wider & less trammelled in its nature & range; it is the selecting agency from which & by which a part is selected for waking purposes in the material life. The Dream Consciousness is itself [surrounded] by a still wider consciousness which we call the Sleep Condition or the Causal Body and from this & by this it is selected for life before birth & after death. This Sleep Condition is again surrounded by Brahman from whom & by whom it is selected for causal purposes, — just as a robe surrounds its wearer. Thus you will realise that Brahman is a wide eternally one & indivisible Consciousness which yet limits itself at will and yet remains illimitable surrounding like a robe all its various states or illusory limitations.

THE STUDENT

True but that which surrounds is always a separate thing from that which is surrounded, the robe is different from its wearer.

THE GURU

Let us consider a nut with the kernel in it, we see that ether in the form or *upadhi* of the nut, surrounds ether in the *upadhi* of the kernel as a robe surrounds its wearer; but the two are the same; there is one ether, not two.

THE STUDENT

Now I understand.

THE GURU

Consider next what the Upanishad goes on to indicate more definitely as the thing to be clothed or invested — whatever is *jagat* in *jagati*, or literally whatever is moving thing in her that moves. Now *jagati*, she who moves, is an old name for Earth, Prithivi, and afterwards for the whole *wide* universe, of which the Earth with which alone we human beings are at present concerned, is the type. Why then is the universe called *jagati*, she that moveth? Because it is a form of Prakriti whose essential characteristic is motion; for by motion she creates this material world, and indeed all object-matter is only a form, that is to say a visible, audible or sensible result of motion; every material object is *jagat*, full of infinite motion, — even the stone, even the clod. This material world, our senses tell us, is the only existing reality; but the Upanishad warns us against the false evidence of our senses and bids us realise in our hearts and minds Brahman the Ocean of spiritual force, drawing him in our imaginations like a robe round each sensible thing.

THE STUDENT

But the Upanishad does not say that the material world is itself Brahman.

THE GURU

It will yet say that. It tells us next by abandonment of this (all that is in the world) to enjoy and not covet any man's wealth. We are to enjoy the whole world, but not to covet the possessions of others. How is this possible? If I, Devadatta, am told to enjoy all that is in the world, but find that I have very little to enjoy while my neighbour Harischandra has untold riches, how can I fail to envy him his wealth and why should I not try to get it for my own enjoyment, if I safely can? I shall not try, because I cannot, because I have realized that there is nothing in this world but Brahman manifesting the universe by his Shakti, and that there is no Devadatta, no Harischandra, but only Brahman in various states of consciousness to which these names are given. If therefore Harischandra enjoys his riches, then it is I who am enjoying them, for Harischandra is myself, — not my body in which I am imprisoned or my desires by which my body is made miserable, but my true self, the Purusha within me who is the witness & enjoyer of all this sweet, bitter, tender, grand, beautiful, terrible, pleasant, horrible and wholly wonderful and enjoyable drama of the world which Prakriti enacts

for his delectation. Now if as the Sankhyas and other philosophies and the Christians and other religions declare, there are innumerable Purushas and not one, there would be no ground for the Christian injunction to love others as oneself or for the description by the Sruti & Smriti of the perfect sage as सर्वभूतहितरतः, busied with and delighting in the good of all creatures; for then Harischandra would be in no way connected with me and there would be no point of contact between us except the material, from which hatred & envy are far more ready to arise than love and sympathy. How then could I prefer him to myself? But from the point of view of Vedanta, such preference is natural, right and in the end inevitable.

THE STUDENT

That is a large view.

THE GURU

And a true view.

THE STUDENT

How is the preference of others to myself inevitable, natural, right?

THE GURU

It is inevitable because as I have risen from the beast to the man, so must I rise from the man to the God & of Godhead this preference is the perennial well & fountain, evolution meaning simply the wider and wider revelation of Brahman, the universal spirit, the progress from the falsehood of matter to the truth of spirit; — and this progress, however slow, is inevitable. It is natural because I am not really preferring another to myself, but my true self to my false, God who is in all to my single body and mind, myself in Devadatta and Harischandra, to myself in Devadatta alone. It is right because it is better for me to enjoy the enjoyment of Harischandra than to enjoy my own, since in this way I shall make my knowledge of Brahman a reality and not a mere intellectual conception or assent; I shall turn it into an experience — anubhav, and anubhav, the Smritis tell us, is the essence of true Jnana. For this reason perfect love, by which I do not mean the mere sensual impulse of man towards woman, is a great and ennobling thing, for by its means two separated conditions of the Universal Consciousness come together and become one. Still nobler and more ennobling is the love

of the patriot who lives & dies for his country, for in this way he becomes one with millions of divine units and still greater, nobler, more exalting the soul of the philanthropist, who without forgetting family or country lives and dies for mankind or for all creatures. He is the wisest Muni, the greatest Yogi, who not only reaches Brahman by the way of Jnana, not only soars to Him on the wings of Bhakti, but becomes He through God-devoted Karma, who gives himself up utterly for his family and friends, for his country, for all humanity, for the world, yes & when he can, the solar system & systems upon systems, — for the whole universe.

Therefore the Upanishad tells us that we must enjoy by abandonment, by *tyaga* or renunciation. This is a curious expression, तेन त्यक्तेन भुञ्जीथाः; it is a curious thing to tell a man that he must abandon & what he has abandoned enjoy by the very sacrifice. The natural man shrinks from the statement as a dangerous paradox. Yet the seer of the Upanishad is wiser than we, for his statement is literally true. Think what it means. It means that we give up our own petty personal joy and pleasure, to bathe up to the eyes in the joys of others; and the joys of one man may be as great as you please, the united joys of a hundred must needs be greater. By renunciation you can increase your enjoyments a hundredfold; if you are a true patriot, you will feel the joys, not of one man, but of three hundred millions; if you are a true philanthropist, all the joys of the countless millions of the earth will flow through your soul like an ocean of nectar. But, you say, their sorrows will flow there too? That too is an agony of sweetness which exalts the soul to Paradise, that you can turn into joy, the unparalleled joy of relieving and turning into bliss the woes of the nation for which you sacrifice yourself or of the humanity in whom you are trying to realise God. Even the mere continuous patient resolute effort to do this is a joy unspeakable; even defeat in such a cause is a stern pleasure when it strengthens the soul for new and ceaseless endeavour. And the souls worthy of the sacrifice, derive equal strength from defeat & victory. Remember that [it] is not the weak in spirit to whom the Eternal gives himself wholly; it is the strong heroic soul that reaches God. Others can only touch His shadow from afar. In this way the man who renounces the little he can call his own for the good of others, gets in return and can utterly enjoy all that is world in this moving universe.

If you cannot rise so high, still the words of the Upanishad are true in other ways. You are not asked necessarily to give up the objects of your enjoyments physically; it is enough if you give them up in your heart, if you enjoy them in such spirit that you will neither be overjoyed by gain nor cast down by loss. That enjoyment is clear, deep and calm; fate cannot break

it, robbers cannot take it away, enemies cannot overwhelm it. Otherwise your enjoyment is chequered and broken with fear, sorrow, trouble & passion, the passion for its increase, the trouble of keeping it, the sorrow of diminution, the fear of its utter loss. It is far better by abandoning to enjoy. If you wish to abandon physically, that too is well, so long as you take care that you are not cherishing the thought of the enjoyment in your mind. Nay, it will often be a quicker road to enjoyment. Wealth and fame and success naturally flee from the man who pursues them; he breaks his heart or perishes without gaining them; or if he gains them, it is often after a very hell of difficulty, a very mountain of toil. But when a man turns his back on wealth & glory, then, unless his past actions forbid, they come crowding to lay themselves at his feet. And if they come, will he enjoy or reject them? He may reject them — that is a great path & the way of innumerable saintly sages — but you need not reject them, you may take & enjoy them. How will you enjoy them then? Not for your personal pleasure, certainly not for your false self; for you have already abandoned that kind of enjoyment in your heart; but you may enjoy God in them and them for God. As a king merely touching the nuzzerana, passes it on into the public treasury, so you may, merely touching the wealth that comes to you, pour it out for those around you, for the country, for humanity, seeing Brahman in these. Glory again he may conceal with humility, but use the influence it gives him in order to lead men upwards to the divine. Such a man will quickly rise above joy & sorrow, victory & defeat; for in sorrow as in joy he will feel himself to be near God, with God, like God and finally God himself. Therefore the Upanishads go on to say

कुर्वन्नेवेह कर्माणि जिजीविषेच्छतं समाः ।

*Do thy deeds in this world and wish to live thy hundred years. A hundred years is the full span of man's natural life according to the Vedas. The Sruti therefore tells us that we must not turn our backs on life, must not fling it from us untimely or even long for early release from our body but willingly fill out our term, even be most ready to prolong it to the full period of man's ordinary existence so that we may go on doing our deeds in this world. Mark the emphasis laid on the word कुर्वन् by adding to it *eva*. Verily we must *do* our deeds in the world and not avoid doing them; there is no need to flee to the mountains in order to find the Self, since He is here, in you and in all around you. And if you flee there, not to find Him, but to escape from the misery & misfortune of the world which you are too weak to face, then you lose the Self for this life and perhaps many to come. I repeat to you that it is*

not the weak and the coward who can climb up to God, but the strong and brave alone. Every individual Jivatman must become the perfect Kshatriya before he can be the Brahmin.

THE STUDENT

All this is opposed to what the wisest men have taught and those we most delight to revere, still teach and practise.

THE GURU

Are you sure that it is? What do they teach?

THE STUDENT

That *vairagya*, disgust with the world is the best way and its entry into a man's soul is his first call to the way of *mukti*, which is not by action but by knowledge.

THE GURU

Vairagya is a big word and it has come to mean many things, and it is because these are confused and jumbled together by the men of Aryavarta, that tamas and Anaryan cowardice, weakness & selfishness have spread over this holy & ancient land, covering it with a thick pall of darkness. There is one *vairagya*, the truest and noblest, of the strong man who having tasted the sweets of this world finds that there is no permanent and abiding sweetness in them, that they are not the true and immortal joy which his true and immortal self demands and turns to something in himself which is deeper, holier and imperishable. Then there is the *vairagya* of the weakling who has lusted and panted and thirsted for the world's sweets but has been pushed & hustled from the board by fate or by stronger men than himself; and would use Yoga and Vedanta as the drunkard uses his bottle and the opium-maniac his pill or his laudanum. Not for such ignoble uses were these great things meant by the Rishis who disclosed them to the world. If such a man came to me for initiation, I would send him back with the fiery rebuke of Srikrishna to the son of Pritha

कुतस्त्वा कश्मलमिदं विषमे समुपस्थितम् ।
अनार्यजुष्टमस्वर्ग्यमकीर्तिकरमर्जुन ॥
क्लैब्यं मा स्म गमः पार्थ नैतत् त्वय्युपपद्यते ।

Truly is such weakness unworthy of one who is no other than Brahma, the Eternal, the Creator and Destroyer of the worlds. Yet I would not be understood to decry the true vairagya of sorrow and disappointment; for sometimes when men have tried in ignorance for ignoble things and failed, not from weakness but because these things were beneath their true greatness and high destiny, then their eyes are opened and they seek meditation, solitude and samadhi not as a dram to drown their sorrow and still unsated longing, but to realise their divine strength and use it for divine purposes; sometimes great spirits seek the way of the Sannyasin, because in the solitude alone with God and the Guru, they can best develop Brahmatejah. Once attained they pour it in a stream over the world; such was Shankaracharya; and sometimes it is the sorrow of others or the misery of the world that finds them in ease & felicity & drives them out, as Buddha was driven out, to seek help for sufferers in the depths of their own being. True Sannyasins are the greatest of all men because they are the strongest unto work, the most mighty in God to do the works of God.

THE STUDENT

I repeat that all this is opposed to the teaching of the great Adwaitavadin Acharyas, Sri Shankara and the rest.

THE GURU

It is not opposed to the teaching of Srikrishna who is the greatest of all teachers and the best of Jagatgurus. For he tells Sanjay in the Mahabharata that between the creed of salvation by works and the creed of salvation by no works, that of salvation by works is the true creed and he condemns the other as the idle talk of a weakling; and again and again in the Bhagavadgita he lays stress on the superiority of works.

THE STUDENT

This is true, but he also says that Jnana is superior to all things and there is nothing equal to it.

THE GURU

Nor is there; for Jnana is indispensable. Jnana is first & greatest; works without Jnana will not save a man but only plunge him deeper and deeper into bondage. The works of which the Upanishad speaks are to be done after you have invested all this universe with God; after, that is to say,

you have realised that all is the one Brahman and that your actions are but the dramatic illusions unrolled by Prakriti for the delight of the Purusha. You will then do your works तेन त्यक्तेन; or as Srikrishna tells you to do, after giving up the desire for the fruits of your works and devoting all your actions to Him, — not to your lower not-self which feels pleasure & pain but to the Brahman in you which works only लोकसंग्रहार्थं that instead of the uninstructed multitudes being bewildered and led astray by your inactivity, the world may rather be helped, strengthened and maintained by the godlike nature of your works. This is what the Upanishad goes on to say “Thus to you there is no other way than this, action clingeth not to a man.” This means that desireless actions, actions performed after renunciation and devoted to God, — these & these only — do not cling to a man, do not bind him in their invisible chains but fall from him as the water from the wings of the swan. They cannot bind him, because he is freed from the woven net of causality. Causality springs from the idea of duality, the idea of sorrow & happiness, love & hate, heat & cold which arises from Avidya and he, having renounced desire and realised Unity, is above Avidya and above duality. Bondage has no meaning for him. It is not in reality he that is doing the actions, but Prakriti inspired by the presence of the Purusha in him.

THE STUDENT

Why then does Shankara say that it is necessary to give up works in order to attain absolute unity? Those who do works, in his opinion, only reach सालोक्य with Brahman, relative and not absolute unity.

THE GURU

There was a reason for what Shankara said and it was necessary in his age that Jnana should be exalted at the expense of works; for the great living force with which he had to struggle, was not the heresies of later Buddhism — Buddhism decayed and senescent, but the triumphant doctrines of the Karmakanda which made the faithful performance of Vedic rites & ceremonies the one path and heaven the only goal. In his continual anxiety to show that works — of which these rites & ceremonies were a part, — could not be the one path to heaven, he bent the bow as far as he could the other way and argued that works were not the path to the last and greatest *mukti* at all. Let us however consider what the depreciation of the Karmamarga means in the mouths of Shankara and other Jnanamargis. It may mean that Karma in the sense of Vedic rites & ceremonies are not the way to Mukti and if this is the meaning, then Shankara has done his work effectually; for I think no

one of authority will now try to maintain the opposite thesis. We all agree that Swarga, the sole final result of the Karmakanda, is not Mukti, is much below Mukti and ends as soon as its cause is exhausted. We all agree also that the only spiritual usefulness of Vedic ceremonies is to purify the mind and fit it for starting on the true path of Mukti which lies through Jnana. But if you say that works in the sense of कर्तव्य कर्म are not a path to Mukti, then I demur; for I say that Karma is not different from Jnana, but is Jnana, is the necessary fulfilment and completion of Jnana; that Bhakti, Karma and Jnana are not three but one and go inseparably together. Therefore Sri-krishna says that Sankhya (Jnanayog) and Yoga (Bhakti Karma Yoga) are not two but one and only बालाः, undeveloped minds, make a difference.

THE STUDENT

But how can Shankaracharya be called an undeveloped mind?

THE GURU

He was not an undeveloped mind, but he was dealing with undeveloped minds and had to speak their language. If he had given his sanction to Karma, however qualified, the general run of people would not have understood him and would have clung to their rites and ceremonies; it is indeed to this difficulty of language, its natural imperfection and the imperfection of the minds that employ language, to which all the confusion and sense of difference in religion & philosophy is due, for religion & philosophy are one & above difference. Nor was Shankara so entirely opposed to Karma as is ordinarily imagined from the vehemence of his argument in some places. For what do you mean when you say that Karma is no path to Mukti? Is it that Karma prompted by desire is inconsistent with *mukti*, because it necessarily leads to bondage and must therefore be abandoned? On this head there is no dispute. We all agree that works prompted by desire, lead to nothing but the fulfilment of desire followed by fresh works in another life. Is it that Karma without desire is inconsistent with Mukti, prevents *mukti* by fresh bondage and must be abandoned? This is not consistent with reason, for bondage is the result of desire & ignorance and disappears with desire & ignorance; therefore in *nishkam karma* there can be no bondage. It is inconsistent with Sruti त्रिणाचिकेतस्त्रिभिरेत्य सन्धिं त्रिकर्मकृत्तरति जन्ममृत्यु इत्यादि. It is inconsistent with facts for Srikrishna did works, Janaka and others did works, but none will say that they fell into the bondage of their works; for they were जीवन्मुक्त. Is it meant that *nishkam karma* may be done as a step towards ब्रह्मप्राप्ति by Jnan

but must be abandoned as soon as Jnan is acquired? This also will not stand because Janaka and the others did works after they had acquired Jnan as well as before. For the same reason Shankara's argument that कर्म must cease as a matter of sheer necessity as soon as one gains Brahma, because Brahma is अकर्ता, will not stand; for Janaka gained Brahma, Srikrishna was Brahma, and yet both did works; nay, Srikrishna in one place speaks of him as doing works; for indeed Brahman is both अकर्ता as Purusha and कर्ता as Prakriti; and if it be said that Parabrahman the Turiya Atma in whom all *bhed* disappears is अकर्ता, I answer that he is neither कर्ता nor अकर्ता, He is नेति नेति, the Unknowable and the Jivatma does not merge finally in Him while it is in the body; though it may do so at any time by Yoga. लय takes place आदेहनिपातात्, that is to say by the Muktatma after leaving its body, not willing to return to another; the Jivanmukta is made one with the luminous shadow of Parabrahman which we call the Sacchidananda. If it be said that this is not Mukti, I answer that there can be no greater Mukti than becoming the Sacchidananda, and that *laya* in the Parabrahman is स्वेच्छाधीन to the Jivatman when it has ceased to be Jivatman and become Sacchidananda; for Parabrahman can always & at will draw Sacchidananda into Itself and Sacchidananda can always and at will draw into Parabrahman; since the two are in no sense two but one, in no sense subject to Avidya but on the other side of Avidya. Then if it be said that निष्काम कर्म can only lead to Brahmaloaka and not mukti, I still answer that in that case we must suppose that Srikrishna after he left his body, remained separate from the Supreme and therefore was not Bhagavan at all but only a great philosopher & devotee, not wise enough to attain Mukti, and that Janak and other Jivanmuktas were falsely called muktas or only in the sense of the आपेक्षिक *mukti*. This however would contradict Scripture and the uniform teaching of Sruti and Smriti, and cannot therefore be upheld by any Hindu, still less by any Vedantin; for if there is no authority in Sruti, then there is no truth in Vedanta, and the doctrine of the Charvakas has as much force as any. Moreover it would contradict reason, since it would make mukti which is a spiritual change, dependent on a mere mechanical & material change like death, which is absurd. Shankara himself therefore admits that in these cases निष्काम कर्म was not inconsistent with मुक्ति or with being the Brahman; and he would have admitted it still more unreservedly if he had not been embarrassed by his relations of intellectual hostility to the Purvamimansa. It is proved therefore that कर्म is not inconsistent with मुक्ति but that on the contrary both the teaching and practice of the greatest Jivanmuktas and of Bhagavan himself have combined Jnana and निष्काम कर्म as one single path to *mukti*.

One argument, however, remains; it may be said that कर्म may be not inconsistent with *mukti*, may be one path to *mukti*, but in the last stage it is not necessary to *mukti*. I readily admit that particular works are not necessary to *mukti*; it is not necessary to continue being a householder in order to gain *mukti*. But no one who possesses a body, can be free of karma. This is clearly and incontrovertibly stated by Srikrishna in the Bhagavadgita.

[न हि कश्चित्क्षणमपि जातु तिष्ठत्यकर्मकृत्।
कार्यते ह्यवशः कर्म सर्वः प्रकृतिजैर्गुणैः॥]

And this statement in the Gita is perfectly consistent with reason; for the man who leaves the world behind him and sits on a mountaintop or in an asram has not therefore, it is quite clear, got rid of Karma; if nothing else, he has to maintain his body, to eat, to walk, to move his limbs or to sit in *asan* and meditate; and all this is Karma. If he is not yet mukta, this karma will moreover bind him and bear its fruits in relation to himself as well as to others; even if he is mukta, his body & mind are not free from Karma until his body is dropped off, but go on under the impulse of prarabdha until the prarabdha & its fruit are complete. Nay even the greatest Yogi by his mere bodily presence in the phenomenal world, is pouring out a stream of spiritual force on all sides, and this action though it does not bind him, has a stupendous influence on others. He is सर्वभूतहिते रतः though he wills it not; he too with regard to his body is अवशः and must let the gunas of prakriti work. Since this is so, let every man who wishes to throw his कर्तव्य कर्म behind him, see that he is not merely postponing the completion of his प्रारब्ध to a future life and thereby condemning himself to the rebirth he wishes to avoid.

THE STUDENT

But how can this be that the jivanmukta is still bound by his past deeds? Does not *mukti* burn up one's past deeds as in a fire? For how can one be at the same time free and yet bound?

THE GURU

Mukti prevents one's future deeds from creating bondage; but what of the past deeds which have already created bondage? The Jivanmukta is not indeed bound, for he is one with God and God is the Master of His *prakriti*, not its slave; but the Prakriti attached to this Jivatman has created

causes while in the illusion of bondage and must be allowed to work out its effects, otherwise the chain of causation is snapped and the whole economy of nature is disturbed and thrown into chaos. उत्सीदेयुरिमे लोकाः etc. In order to maintain the worlds therefore, the Jivanmukta remains working like a prisoner on parole, not bound indeed by others, but detained by himself until the period previously appointed for his captivity shall have elapsed.

THE STUDENT

This is indeed a new light on the subject.

THE GURU

It is no new light but as old as the sun; for it is clearly laid down in the Gita and of the teaching of the Gita, Srikrishna says that it was told by him to Vivasvan, the Vishnu of the solar system and by him to Manou, the original Thinker in man, and by Manou handed down to the great king-sages, his descendants. Nay, it plainly arises from the nature of things. The whole confusion in this matter proceeds from an imperfect understanding of *mukti*; for why do men fly from action and shun their कर्तव्य कर्म in the pursuit of *mukti*? It is because they dread to be cast again into bondage, to lose their chance of मुक्ति. Yet what is *mukti*? It is release, — from what? From Avidya, from the great Nescience, from the belief that you are limited & bound, who are illimitable Brahman and cannot be bound. The moment you have realised that Avidya is an illusion, that there is nothing but Brahman and never was nor will be anything but Brahman, realised it, I say, had अनुभव of it, not merely intellectually grasped the idea, from that moment you are free and always have been free. Avidya consists precisely in this that the Jivatman thinks there is something beside himself, he himself being other than Brahman, something which binds him; but in reality He, being Brahman, is not bound, never was bound nor could be bound and never will be bound. Once this is realised, the Jivatman can have no farther fear of *karma*; for he knows that there is no such thing as bondage. He will be quite ready to do his deeds in this world; nay, he will even be ready to be reborn, as Srikrishna himself has promised to be reborn again and again; for of rebirth also he has no farther fear, since he knows he cannot again fall under the dominion of Avidya, unless he himself deliberately wills it; once free, always free. Even if he is reborn, he will be reborn with full knowledge of what he really is, of his past lives and of the whole future and will act as a Jivanmukta.

THE STUDENT

But if this statement once free, always free hold, what of the statements about great Rishis & Yogis falling again under the dominion of Avidya?

THE GURU

A man may be a great Rishi or Yogi without being Jivanmukta. Yog and spiritual learning are means to Mukti, not Mukti itself. For the Sruti says नायमात्मा प्रवचनेन लभ्यो न मेधया न बहुना श्रुतेन।

THE STUDENT

Will then the Jivanmukta actually wish to live a hundred years, as the Sruti says? Can one who is मुक्त have a desire?

THE GURU

The Jivanmukta will be perfectly ready to live a hundred years or more if needs be; but this recommendation is given not to the Jivanmukta or to any particular class of person but generally. You should desire to live your allotted term of life, because you in the body are the Brahman who by the force of His own Shakti is playing for Himself by Himself this *lila* of creation, preservation and destruction; in this view Brahman is Isha, the Lord, Creator & Destroyer; and you also are Isha, Creator & Destroyer; only for your own amusement, to use a violent metaphor, you have imagined yourself limited by a particular body for the purposes of the play, just as an actor imagines himself to be Dushyanta or Rama or Ravana; and often the actor loses himself in the part and really feels himself to be what he is playing, forgetting that he is really not Dushyanta or Rama, but that Devadatta who plays a hundred parts besides. Still when he shakes off this illusion & remembers that he is Devadatta, he does not therefore walk off from the stage and by refusing to act, break up the play but goes on playing his best till the proper time for the curtain to fall. And so we should all do, whether as householder or Sannyasi, as Jivanmukta or as mumukshu, remembering always that the object of this *sansara* is creation and that it is our business so long as we are in this body to create. The only difference is this, that so long as we forget our Self, we create like servants under the compulsion of our Prakriti or Nature, and are, as it were, slaves & bound by her actions which we imagine to be ours; but when we know the Self and experience our true

Self, then we are masters of our Prakriti and not bound by her creations; our soul becomes the Sakshi, the silent spectator, of the actions of our Nature; thus are we both spectator & actor, and yet because we know the whole to be merely the illusion of an action and not action itself, because we know that Rama is not really killing Ravana nor Ravana being killed, for indeed Ravana lives as much after the supposed death as before; so are we neither actor nor spectator but the Self only and all we see only visions of the Self — as indeed the Sruti frequently uses the word ऐक्षद्, saw, in preference to any other for those conceptions with which the Brahman peoples with Himself the Universe of Himself. The mumukshu therefore will not try or wish to leave his life before the time, just as he will not try or wish to leave actions in this life, but only the desire for their fruit. For if he breaks impatiently the thread of his life before it is spun out, he will be no Jivanmukta but a mere suicide and attain the very opposite result of what he desires. The Upanishad says

असुर्या नाम ते लोका अन्धेन तमसावृताः ।
तांस्ते प्रेत्याभिगच्छन्ति ये के चात्महनो जनाः ॥

Shankara takes this verse in a very peculiar way. He interprets आत्महनो as slayers of the Self, and since this is obviously an absurdity, for the Self is eternal and unslayable, he says that it is a metaphor for casting the Self under the delusion of ignorance which leads to birth. Now this is a very startling and violent metaphor and quite uncalled for, since the idea might easily have been expressed in any other natural way. Still the Sruti is full of metaphor and we shall therefore not be justified in rejecting Shankara's interpretation on that ground only. We must see whether the rest of the verse is in harmony with the interpretation. Now we find that in order to support his view Shankara is obliged to strain astonishingly the plain meaning of other words in the sentence also; for he takes लोका as meaning various kinds of birth, so that असुर्या लोका means the various births as man, animal etc, called असुरा because Rajas predominates in them and they are accompanied with Asuric dispositions.¹ All this is a curious and unparalleled meaning for Asuric worlds. The expression लोका is never applied to the various kinds of

1. Another version which duplicates some of the last part of this sentence reads as follows, beginning after "other words in the sentence also;" – for he says that असुर्या लोका means the various kinds of birth; even the Devas being considered Asuric births as opposed to the Paratman; but this is a misuse of words because the Devas cannot be Asura births as opposed to the Daiva birth of Paratman, Paratman is above birth & above Devahood. Asurya can only mean Asuric as opposed to Devic.

forms the Jivatman assumes, but to the various surroundings of the different conditions through which it passes, of which life in this world is one; we say इहलोक or मर्त्यलोक, परलोक or स्वर्गलोक, ब्रह्मलोक, गोलोक etc, but we do not say पशुलोक, पक्षिलोक, कीटलोक. If we say आसुर लोक we can mean nothing but the regions of Asuric gloom as opposed to the divine लोकs, Brahmalo, Golok, Swarga. This is the ordinary meaning when we speak of going to a world after death, and we must not take it in any other sense here just to suit our own argument. Moreover the expression ये के loses its peculiar force if we apply it to all living beings except the few who obtain mukti partial or complete; it obviously means some out of many. We must therefore refuse to follow even Shankara, when his interpretation involves so many violences to the language of Sruti and so wide a departure from the recognized meaning of words.

The ordinary sense of the words gives a perfectly clear and consistent meaning. The Sruti tells us that it is no use taking refuge in suicide or the shortening of your life, because those who kill themselves instead of finding freedom, plunge by death into a worse prison of darkness — the Asuric worlds enveloped in blind gloom.

THE STUDENT

Are then worlds of Patala beneath the earth a reality and do the souls go down there after death? But we know now that there is no beneath to the earth, which is round & encircled by nothing worse than air.

THE GURU

Do not be misled by words. The Asuric worlds are a reality, the worlds of gloom in the nether depths of your own being. A world is not a place with hills & trees & stones, but a condition of the Jivatman, all the rest being only circumstances & details of a dream; this is clear from the language of the Sruti when it speaks of the spirit's *lok* in the next world, अमुष्मिन् लोके, as being good or otherwise. Obviously लोक means state or condition. मर्त्यलोक is not essentially this Earth we see, for there may & must be other abodes of mortal beings but the condition of mortality in the gross body, Swargalok is the condition of bliss in the subtle body, Narak the condition of misery in the subtle body, Brahmalo the condition of being near to Hiranyagarbha in the causal body. Just as the Jivatman like a dreamer sees the Earth & all its features when it is in the condition of mortality, and regards itself as in a particular place, so when it is in a condition of complete *tamas* in the subtle body, it believes itself to be in a place surrounded by thick darkness, a place

of misery unspeakable. This world of darkness is imagined as being beneath the earth, beneath the condition of mortality, because the side of the earth turned away from the Sun is regarded as the nether side, while Swarga is above the Earth, because the side of earth turned to the Sun is considered the upper side, the place of light & pleasure. So the worlds of utter bliss begin from the Sun and rise above the Sun to Brahmaloak. But these are all words & dreams, since Hell & Patal & Earth & Paradise & Heaven are all in the Jivatma itself and not outside it. Nevertheless while we are still dreamers, we must speak in the language & terms of the dream.

THE STUDENT

What then are these worlds of nether gloom?

THE GURU

When a man dies in great pain, or in great grief or in great agitation of mind and his last thoughts are full of fear, rage, pain or horror, then the Jivatman in the Sukshmasharir is unable to shake off these impressions from his mind for years, sometimes for centuries. The reason of this is the law of death; death is a moment of great concentration when the departing spirit gathers up the impressions of its mortal life, as a host gathers provender for its journey, and whatever impressions are predominant at that moment, govern its condition afterwards. Hence the importance, even apart from Mukti, of living a clean and noble life and dying a calm & strong death. For if the ideas & impressions then uppermost are such as associate the self with this gross body and the vital functions, ie to say, with the lower upadhi, then the soul remains long in a tamasic condition of darkness & suffering, which we call Patal or in its worst forms Hell. If the ideas & impressions uppermost are such as associate the self with the mind and the higher desires then the soul passes quickly through a short period of blindness to a rajaso-sattwic condition of light & pleasure and wider knowledge, which we call Paradise, Swarga or Behesta, from which it will return to birth in this world; if the ideas & impressions are such as to associate the self with the higher understanding & the bliss of the Self, the soul passes quickly to a sattwic condition of highest bliss which we call Heaven or Brahmaloak and thence it does not return. But if we have learned to identify for ever the self with the Self, then before death we become God and after death we shall not be other. For there are three states of Maya, tamasic illusion, rajasic illusion, & sattwic illusion; and each in succession we must shake off to reach that which is no illusion, but the one and only truth.

The Sruti says then that those who slay themselves go down into the nether world of gloom, for they have associated the Self with body and fancied that by getting rid of this body, they will be free, but they have died full of impressions of grief, impatience, disgust and pain. In that state of gloom they are continually repeating the last scene of their life, its impressions and its violent disquiet, and until they have worn off these, there is no possibility of *shanti* for their minds. Let no man in his folly or impatience court such a doom.

THE STUDENT

I understand then that these three verses form a clear & connected exposition. But in the next verse the Upanishad goes on suddenly to something quite disconnected.

THE GURU

No. It says

अनेजदेकं मनसो जीवयो नैनद्देवा आप्नुवन् पूर्वमर्षत् ।
तद्भावतोऽन्यानत्येति तिष्ठत्तस्मिन्नपो मातरिश्वा दधाति ॥

The Sruti has said that you must invest all things with the Lord. But of course that really means, you must realise how all things are already invested with Him. It now proceeds to show how this is and to indicate that the Lord is the Brahman, the One who, regarded in his creative activity through Purusha & Prakriti, is called the Lord. Therefore it now uses the neuter form of the pronoun, speaking of Him as That and This; because Brahman is above sex & distinction. He is One, yet he is at once unmoving & swifter than mind. He is both Purusha & Prakriti, and yet at the same time He is neither, but One and indivisible; Purusha & Prakriti being merely conceptions in His mind deliberately raised for the sake of creating multiplicity. As Prakriti, He is swifter than the mind; for Prakriti is His creative force making matter & its forms through motion. All creation is motion, all activity is motion. All this apparently stable universe is really in a state of multifold motion, everything is whirling with inconceivable rapidity through motion, and even thought which is the swiftest thing we know, cannot keep pace with the velocity of the cosmic stir. And all this motion, all this ever evolving Cosmos & Universe is Brahman. The Gods in their swiftest movements,

the lords of the senses, cannot reach him, for He rushes far in front. The eye, the ear, the mind, nothing material can reach or conceive the inconceivable creative activity of the Brahman. We try to follow Him pouring as light through the solar system and lo! while we are striving He is whirling universes into being far beyond the reach of eye or telescope, far beyond the farthest flights of thought itself. Material senses quail before the thought of the wondrous stir and stupendous unimaginable activity that the existence of the Universe implies. And yet all the time He who outstrips all others, is not running, but standing. While we are toiling after Him, He is all the time here, at our side, before, behind us, with us, *in us*. Really He does not move at all; all this motion is the result of our own Avidya which by persuading us to imagine ourselves as limited, subjects our thoughts to the conditions of Time & Space. Brahman in all his creative activity is really in one place; He is at the same time in the Sun & here; but we in order to realise Him have to follow Him from the Sun to the Earth; and this motion of our thoughts, this sensory impression of a space covered & a time spent we attribute not to our thought, but to Brahman, just as a man in a railway-train has a sensory impression that everything is rushing past, but that the train is still. Vidya, Knowledge tells him that this is not so. So that the stir of the Cosmos is really the stir of our own minds — and yet even our own mind does not really stir. What we call mind is simply the play of conception sporting with the idea of multiplicity which is in form the idea of motion. The Purusha is really unmoving; he is the motionless & silent spectator of a drama of which He himself is the stage, the theatre, the scenery, the actors and the acting. He is the poet Shakespeare watching Desdemona & Othello, Hamlet & the murderous Uncle, Rosalind & Jacques & Viola and all the other hundred multiplicities of himself acting & talking & rejoicing & suffering, all Himself & yet not himself, who sits there a silent witness, their Creator who has no part in their actions and yet without Him not one of them could exist. This is the mystery of the world and its paradox, yet its one plain, simple & easy truth.

THE STUDENT

Now I see. But what is this suddenly thrown in about Matariswun & the waters? Shankara interprets अपः as actions. Will not this bring it more into harmony with the rest of the verse?

THE GURU

Perhaps; waters is the proper sense of अणुः but let us see first whether by taking it in its proper sense we cannot arrive at a clear meaning. The Sruti says that this infinitely motionless yet infinitely moving Brahman is that in which Matariswun setteth the waters. Now we know the conception which the Scripture gives us of this Universe. Everything that we call creation, putting forth & Science calls evolution is in reality a limitation, a *srishti*, as we say, that is a letting loose of a part from the whole, or a selection, as the Scientists say, a natural selection they call it or, as we should put it, selection by the action of Prakriti, of a small portion from a larger stock, of the particular from the general. Thus we have seen that the Sleep Condition or Prajna is a letting loose or let us say selection of one part of consciousness from the wider Universal Consciousness; the Dream Consciousness or Hiranyagarbha is a selection from the wider Sleep Consciousness, and the Waking Consciousness Virat or Vaisvanor is a selection from the wider Dream Consciousness; similarly each individual consciousness is only a selection from the wider Universal Waking Consciousness, each step involving a narrower & ever narrowing consciousness until we come to that extremely narrow bit of consciousness which is only conscious of a bit out of the material & outward world of phenomena. It is the same with the process of material creation. Out of the unformed Prakriti which the Sankhya calls Pradhana or primary idea, substance, plasm or what you will, of matter, one aspect or force is selected which is called Akash and of which ether is the visible manifestation; this *akash* or ether is the substratum of all form & material being. Out of ether a narrower force is selected or let loose which is called Vaiou or Matariswun, the Sleeper in the Mother, because he sleeps or rests directly in the mother-principle, Ether. This is the great God who in the Brahman setteth the waters in their place.

THE STUDENT

You speak of it as a God, I think, metaphorically. Science has done away with the Gods of the old crude mythology.

THE GURU

The Gods are; — they are the Immortals and cannot be done away with by Science however vehemently she denies them; only the knowledge of the One Brahman can do away with them. For behind every great & *elemental* natural phenomenon there is a vast living force which is a manifes-

tation, an aspect of Brahman and can therefore be called nothing less than a God. Of these Matariswun is one of the mightiest.

THE STUDENT

Is Air then a God or Wind a God? But it is only a conglomeration of gases.

THE GURU

That and nothing more in the terms of material analysis, but look beyond to the synthesis; matter is not everything and analysis is not everything. By material analysis you can prove that man is nothing but a conglomeration of animalcules, and so materialism with an obstinate and learned silliness persists in asseverating; but man will never consent to regard himself as a conglomeration of animalcules, because he knows that he is more. He looks beyond the analysis to the synthesis, beyond the house to the dweller in the house, beyond the parts to the force that holds the parts together. So with the Air, which is only one of the manifestations of Matariswun proper to this earth, one of the houses in which he dwells; but Matariswun is in all the worlds and built all the worlds; he has numberless houses for his dwelling. The principle of his being is *motion* materially manifested, and we know that it is by motion creation becomes possible. Matariswun therefore is the Principle of Life, the universal and all pervading ocean of Prana, of which the most important manifestation in man is the force which presides over that distribution of gases in the body to which we give the name of Breath.

THE STUDENT

Still, most people would call this a natural force, not a God.

THE GURU

Call him what you like, only realise that Matariswun is a force of Brahman, nay, Brahman Himself, who in himself setteth the waters to their places. Now just as Matariswun was a selection from Akasha or ether, so is Agni, Fire, a selection from Matariswun and the Waters a selection from fire. Now notice that it is the plural word अपः which is used; just as often you find the Sruti instead of the name Agni of the presiding principle, using the plural *jyotinshi*, lights, splendours, shining things, of the various manifestations of Agni, so it uses आपः, all fluidities, of the various manifestations

of Varouna, the presiding force behind them. You must not think that the waters of the ocean or of the rain are the only manifestations of this principle, just as you must not suppose that the fire in yonder brazier or the sun in heaven is the only manifestation of the fiery principle. All the phenomena of light and everything from which heat proceeds have their immediate basis or substratum in Agni. So with the waters which are selected out of Agni by the operations of heat etc. So again all *earth*, all forms of solidity have their basis or substratum in Prithivi, the earth-force, which is again a selection out of Jala or Varouna, the fluid principle. Now life proceeds in this way; it arises on the substratum of ether with Matariswun or the Air Force as its principle & essential condition, by the operation of the fiery or light principle through heat, out of the fluid to solidity which is its body. The material world is therefore often said in the Sruti to be produced out of the waters, because so long as it does not emerge from the fluid state, there is as yet no Cosmos. When Science instead of following the course of Nature upstream by analysis, resolving the solid into fluid, the fluid into the fiery, and the fiery into the aerial, shall begin to follow it downstream, imitating the processes of Prakriti, and especially studying & utilising critical stages of transition, then the secret of material creation will be solved, and Science will be able to create material *life* and not as now merely destroy it. We can now understand what the Sruti means when it says that Matariswun in Brahman setteth the waters to their places. Brahman is the reality behind all material life, and the operations of creation are only a limited part of His universal consciousness and cannot go on without that consciousness as its basis. Shankara is not perhaps wrong when he reads the meaning “actions” into अपः; for the purposes of mankind, actions are the most important of all the various vital operations over which Matariswun presides. Remember therefore that all you do, create, destroy you are doing, creating & destroying in Brahman, that He is the condition of all your deeds; the more you realise & intensify in yourself Brahman as an ocean of spiritual force, the mightier will be your creation & your destruction, you will approach nearer and nearer to Godhead. For the Spirit is all & not the body, of which you should only be careful as a vehicle of the Spirit, for without the presence of Spirit, which gives Prakriti the force to act, Prakriti would be inert, nay could not exist. For what is Prakriti itself but the creation of the mighty Shakti, who is without end & without beginning, the Shakti of the Eternal? Without some Jnana, some knowledge & feeling of the Spirit within you, your work cannot be great; and the deeper your Jnana the greater your work. All the great creators have been men who felt powerfully God within them, whether they

were Daivic, of the Olympian type like Shankara, or Asuric, of the Titanic type like Napoleon; only the Asura, his Jnana being limited and muddled, is always confusing the Eternal with the grosser & temporary manifestations of Prakriti such as his own vital passions of lust & ambition; the Deva, being sattvic & a child of light, sees clearer. When Napoleon cried out, "What is the French Revolution? I am the French Revolution," he gave utterance to that sense of his being more than a mere man, of his being the very force & power of God in action, which gave him such a stupendous energy & personality; but his mind being muddled by rajas, passion & desire, he could not see that the very fact of his being the French Revolution should have pointed him to higher & grander ideals than the mere satisfaction of his vital part in empire & splendour, that it should have spurred him to be the leader of insurgent humanity, not the trampler down of the immortal spirit of nationality, which was a yet greater and more energetic manifestation of the Eternal Shakti than himself. Therefore he fell; therefore the Adyashakti, the mighty Devi Chandi Ranarangini Nrimundamalani, withdrew from him her varabhaya and fought against him till she had crushed and torn him with the claws of her lion. Had he fallen as the leader of humanity, — he could not have fallen then, but yet if he had fallen, — his spirit would have conquered after his death and ruled & guided the nations for centuries to come. Get therefore Jnana, the pure knowledge of Brahman within you and show it forth in nishkam karma, in selfless work for your people, for your country, for humanity, for the world, then will you surely become Brahman even in this mortal body and by death take upon yourself eternity.

The Sruti then having set forth the nature of the Lord & identified Him with the Brahman, proceeds to sum up the apparent paradoxes attending his twofold aspect as the Unknowable Parabrahman and the Master of the Universe, as the Self within the Universe and the Self within your body. That moveth and That moveth not, — as has already been explained; That is far and the same That is quite near, That is within all this and the same That is without all this.

THE STUDENT

There is no difficulty in this statement.

THE GURU

No, there is no difficulty, once you have the key. But try to realise what it means. Lift your eyes towards the Sun; He is there in that wonderful

heart of life & light and splendour. Watch at night the innumerable constellations glittering like so many solemn watchfires of the Eternal in the limitless silence which is no void but throbs with the presence of a single calm and tremendous existence; see there Orion with his sword and belt shining as he shone to the Aryan fathers ten thousand years ago at the beginning of the Aryan era, Sirius in his splendour, Lyra sailing billions of miles away in the ocean of space. Remember that these innumerable worlds, most of them mightier than our own, are whirling with indescribable speed at the beck of that Ancient of Days whither none but He knoweth, and yet that they are a million times more ancient than your Himalaya, more steady than the roots of your hills and shall so remain until He at his will shakes them off like withered leaves from the eternal tree of the Universe. Imagine the endlessness of Time, realise the boundlessness of Space; and then remember that when these worlds were not, He was, the Same as now, and when these are not, He shall be, still the Same; perceive that beyond Lyra He is and far away in Space where the stars of the Southern Cross cannot be seen, still He is there. And then come back to the Earth & realise who this He is. He is quite near to you. See yonder old man who passes near you crouching & bent, with his stick. Do you realise that it is God who is passing? There a child runs laughing in the sunlight. Can you hear Him in that laughter? Nay, He is nearer still to you. He is in you, He is you. It is yourself that burns yonder millions of miles away in the infinite reaches of Space, that walks with confident steps on the tumbling billows of the ethereal sea; it is you who have set the stars in their places and woven the necklace of the suns not with hands but by that Yoga, that silent actionless impersonal Will which has set you here today listening to yourself in me. Look up, O child of the ancient Yoga, and be no longer a trembler and a doubter; fear not, doubt not, grieve not; for in your apparent body is One who can create & destroy worlds with a breath.

Yes, He is within all this as a limitless ocean of spiritual force; for if He were not, neither this outer you nor this outer I nor this Sun nor all these worlds could last for even a millionth part of the time that is taken by a falling eyelid. But He is outside it too. Even in His manifestation, He is outside it in the sense of exceeding it, अत्यतिष्ठद्दशांगुलं, in His unmanifestation, He is utterly apart from it. This truth is more difficult to grasp than the other, but it is necessary to grasp it. There is a kind of Pantheism which sees the Universe as God and not God as the Universe; but if the Universe is God, then is God material, divisible, changeable, the mere flux & reflux of things; but all these are not God in Himself, but God in His shadows & appearances; they

are, to repeat our figure, the shadows and figments of Shakespeare's mind, Shakespeare is not only vaster than all his drama-world put together, he is not only both in it and outside it, but apart from it and other than it.

THE STUDENT

Do you mean that these are emanations from His Mind?

THE GURU

I do not. Emanation is a silly word and a silly idea. God is not a body emitting vapours. If they have emanated from Him, where, pray, have they emanated to? Which is their locality and where is their habitation? You cannot go anywhere where you will be outside God; you cannot go out of your Self. For though you flee to the uttermost parts of space, He is there. Are Hamlet & the rest of them emanations from Shakespeare's mind? Will you tell me then where they have emanated to? Is it on to those pages, those corruptions of pulp which are made today and destroyed tomorrow? Is it into those combinations of those letters of the English alphabet with which the pages are covered? Put them into combinations of any other alphabet, or relate them in any language to a man who knows not what letters are, and still Hamlet will live for him. Is it in the sounds that the letters represent? sounds that are heard this moment and forgotten the next? But Hamlet is not forgotten — he lives on in your mind for ever. Is it in the impressions made on the material brain by the forgotten sounds? Nay the Sleep Self within you, even if you have never heard or read the play of Hamlet, will, if it is liberated by any adequate process of Yoga or powerful hypnosis, tell you about Hamlet. Shakespeare's drama-world never emanated from Shakespeare's mind, because it was in his mind and is in his mind; and you can know of Hamlet because your mind is part of the same universal mind as Shakespeare's — part, I say, in appearance, but in reality that mind is one and indivisible. All knowledge belongs to it by its nature perpetually and from perpetuity, and the knowledge that we get in the waking condition through such vehicles as speech & writing are mere fragments created (let loose) from it & yet within it, just as the worlds are mere fragments created (let loose) from the Brahman, in the sense of being consciousness selected & set apart from the Universal Consciousness, but always within the Brahman. Emanation is a metaphor, like the metaphor in the Sruti about the spider & his web, — convenient for certain purposes, but not the truth, very poor ground therefore on which to build a philosophy.

To realise God in the Universe & in yourself, is true Pantheism and it is the necessary step for approaching the Unknowable, but to mistake the Universe for God, is a mistaken & inverted Pantheism. This inverted Pantheism is the outer aspect of the Rigveda, and it is therefore that the Rigveda unlike the Upanishad may lead either to the continuation of bondage or to Brahmaloaka, while the Upanishad can lead only to Brahmaloaka or to the Brahman Himself.

THE STUDENT

But the new scholarship tells us that the Rigveda is either henotheistic or polytheistic, not real Pantheism.

THE GURU

Nay, if you seek the interpretation of your religion from Christians, atheists and agnostics, you will hear more wonderful things than that. What do you think of Charvak's interpretation of Vedic religion as neither pantheistic nor polytheistic but a plutotheistic invention of the Brahmins? An European or his disciple in scholarship can no more enter into the spirit of the Veda than the wind can blow freely in a closed room. And pedants especially can never go beyond the manipulation of words. Men like Max Muller presume to lecture us on our Veda & Vedanta because they know something of Sanscrit grammar; but when we come to them for light, we find them playing marbles on the doorsteps of the outer court of the temple. They had not the adhikar to enter, because they came in a spirit of arrogance with preconceived ideas to teach & not to learn; and their learning was therefore not helpful towards truth, but only towards grammar. Others ignorant of the very rudiments of Sanscrit, have seen more deeply than they, — even if some *have* seen more than there was to see. What for instance is this *henotheism*, this new word, the ill begotten of pedantry upon error? If it is meant that various sections of the Aryas consider different Gods as *the* God above all & the others false or comparatively false Gods, there would have been inevitably violent conflicts between the various sects and perpetual wars of religion but such there were not. If on the other hand, it is meant that different worshippers preferred to worship the Lord of the Universe in different particular forms, then are we still henotheist; for there is hardly one of us who has not his ishta-devata, Vishnou, Siva, Ganapati, Maruti, Rama, Krishna or Shakti; yet we all recognize but one Lord of the Universe behind the form we worship. If on the other hand the same man worshipped different nature-forces, but each in its turn as the Lord of the Universe, then

is this Pantheism, pure and simple. And this was indeed the outer aspect of the Vedic religion; but when the seers of the Veda left their altars to sit in meditation, they perceived that Brahman was neither the Visvadevas nor the synthesis of the Visvadevas but something other than they; then was the revelation made that is given us in the Upanishads. ते ध्यानयोगानुगता अपश्यन् देवात्मशक्तिं स्वगुणैर्निगूढाम्। This is what is meant by saying that Brahman is outside all this; he is neither the synthesis of Nature nor anything that the Universe contains, but himself contains the Universe which is only a shadow of His own Mind in His own Mind.

THE STUDENT

I understand.

THE GURU

If you really understand, then are you ready for the next step which the Sruti takes when it draws from the unity of the Brahman, the sublimest moral principle to be found in any religion.

यस्तु सर्वाणि भूतान्यात्मन्येवानुपश्यति ।
सर्वभूतेषु चात्मानं ततो न विजुगुप्सते ॥

To man finding himself in the midst of the paradoxes created by the twofold nature of the Self, of himself, the Shakti that knows & the Shakti that plays at not knowing, the Sruti gives an unfailing guide, a sure staff and a perfect ideal. See all creatures in thy Self.² Yes, all; wife, children, friends, enemies, joy, sorrow, victory, defeat, beauty and ugliness, animation and inanimation — all these are but moods of One Consciousness and that Consciousness is our own. If you come to think of it, you have no friends or enemies, no joys or sorrows but of your own making. Scientists tell you that it is by the will to adapt itself in a particular way to its surroundings, one species differentiates itself from another. That is but one application of an universal principle. The Will is the root of all things; you will to have wife & children, friends & enemies and they arise. You will to be sick & sorry and sickness &

2. Here the following sentences which occur again in a rewritten form twelve pages later are found in the manuscript, enclosed within parentheses but not cancelled:

If thy mind fails thee, if the anguish of thy coverings still conceals the immortal Spirit within, dash away tears, ay be they very tears of blood, wipe them from thy eye and look out on the Universe. There is thy Self, that is Brahman, and all these things, thy self, thy joy, thy sorrow, thy friends & enemies are in Him. तत्र को मोहः कः शोक एकत्वमनुपश्यतः.

sorrow seize you; you will to be strong & beautiful and happy, and the world becomes brighter with your radiance. This whole Universe is but the result of One universal Will which having resolved to create multitude in itself has made itself into all the forms you see within it.

THE STUDENT

The idea is difficult to grasp, too vast & yet too subtle.

THE GURU

Because Avidya, the sense of difference is your natural condition in the body. Think a little. This body is built by the protoplasm multiplying itself; it does not *divide* itself, for by division it could not grow. It produces another itself out of itself, the same in appearance, in size, in nature and so it builds up the body which is only itself multiplied in itself. Take that as an imperfect example, which may yet help you to understand.

THE STUDENT

But it multiplies not in itself, but out of itself, as a man & woman create a son out of themselves.

THE GURU

So it appears to you because it is working in Time & Space, — for the same reason that there seem to you [to] be many Jivatmans outside each other, while deeper knowledge shows you one only, or that you imagine two separate consciousnesses in one man, while more skilful hypnosis shows you that they are one consciousness working variously within itself. In one sense the One seems to us to multiply himself like the protoplasm, because the One Jivatman is the same in all, hence the fundamental similarity of consciousness in all beings; in one sense He seems to divide himself like the human consciousness because He is the unit & all seem to be partial expressions of the comprehensive unit; again he seems to add pieces of Himself together, because you the consciousness who are He add yourself to your wife the consciousness who is again He and become one, and so the process goes on till of the vyashti, analysis in parts, you get the samashti or synthesis of all; finally He seems to subtract Himself from Himself, because as I have told you, each step in creation is a letting loose or separating of part from a wider entity. All these are however figures and appearances and whatever He does, it must be in Himself, because He has nowhere else to do it in, since

He is all Space & all Time. Realise therefore that all these around you, wife, children, friends, enemies, men, animals, animate things & inanimate are in you, the Universal Mind, like actors on a stage, and seem to be outside you only for appearance' sake, for the convenience of the play. If you realise this, you will be angry with none, therefore you will hate none & therefore you will try to injure none. For how can you be angry with any; if your enemies injure you, it is yourself who are injuring yourself; whatever they are, you have made them that; whatever they do, you are the root of their action. Nor will you injure them, because you will be injuring none but yourself. Why indeed should you hate them & try to injure them anymore than Shakespeare hated Iago for injuring Othello; do you think that Shakespeare shared the feelings of [Lodovico] when he condemned the successful villain to death & torture? If Shakespeare did hate Iago, you would at once say that it was illusion, Avidya, on the part of Shakespeare — since it is Shakespeare himself who set Iago there to injure Othello, since indeed there is no Othello or Iago, but only Shakespeare creating himself in himself. Why then should you consider your hatred of yourself made enemy more reasonable than Shakespeare's hatred of his own creation? No, all things being in yourself, are your own creation, are yourself, and you cannot hate your own creation, you cannot loathe yourself. Loathing and hatred are the children of illusion, of ignorance. This is the negative side of morality; but there is a positive for which the Sruti next proceeds to lay down the basis. You must for the purpose of withdrawing yourself from unrealities see all creatures in the Self; but if you did that only, you would soon arrive at the Nirvana of all action and ring down the curtain on an unfinished play. For the purpose of continuing the play till the proper time for your final exit, you must also see yourself in all creatures. The nature of the Self in a state of Vidya is bliss; now the state of Vidya is a state of self-realisation, the realisation of oneness & universality. The nature of the Self in the state of Avidya, the false sense of diversity and limitation is a state not of pure bliss but of pleasure & pain, for pleasure is different from bliss, as it is limited & involves pain, while the nature of bliss is illimitable and above duality; it is when pain itself becomes pleasure, is swallowed up in pleasure, that bliss is born. Every thing therefore which removes even partially the sense of difference and helps towards the final unity, brings with it a touch of bliss by a partial oblivion of pain. But that which brings you bliss, you cannot help but delight in ecstatically, you cannot help but love. If therefore you see yourself in another, you spontaneously love that other; for in yourself you must delight. If you see yourself in all creatures, you cannot but love all creatures. Universal love is

the inevitable consequence of the realisation of the One in Many, and with Universal Love how shall any shred of hate, disgust, dislike, loathing coexist? They dissolve in it like the night mists in the blaze of the risen sun. Take it in another way and we get a new facet of the one truth. All hatred & repulsion arises from the one cause, Avidya, which begot Will, called Desire, which begot Ahankar, which begot desire called Hunger. From Desire-Hunger are born liking & dislike, liking for whatever satisfies or helps us to our desire, dislike for whatever obstructs or diminishes the satisfaction of desire. This liking in this way created is the liking of the protoplasmic sheath for whatever gives it sensual gratification, the liking of the vital sheath for whatever gives it emotional gratification, the liking of the mind sheath for whatever gives it aesthetic gratification, the liking of the knowledge sheath for whatever gives it intellectual gratification. But beyond these there is something else not so intelligible, beyond my liking for the beautiful body of a woman or for a fine picture or a pleasant companion or an exciting play or a clever speaker or a good poem or an illuminative and well-reasoned argument there is my liking for somebody which has no justification or apparent reason. If sensual gratification were all, then it is obvious that I should have no reason to prefer one woman over another and after the brute gratification liking would cease; I have seen this brute impulse given the name of love; perhaps I myself used to give it that name when the protoplasmic animal predominated in me. If emotional gratification were all, then I might indeed cling for a time to the woman who had pleased my body, but only so long as she gave me emotional pleasure, by her obedience, her sympathy with my likes & dislikes, her pleasant speech, her admiration or her answering love. But the moment these cease, my liking also will begin to fade away. This sort of liking too is persistently given the great name and celebrated in poetry & romance. Then if aesthetic gratification were all, my liking for a woman of great beauty or great charm might well outlast the loss of all emotional gratification, but when the wrinkles began to trace the writing of age on her face or when accident marred her beauty, my liking would fade or vanish since the effect would lose the nutrition of a present cause. Intellectual gratification seldom enters into the love of a man for a woman; even if it did so, more frequently the intellectual gratification to be derived from a single mind is soon exhausted in daylong and nightlong companionship. Whence then comes that love which is greater than life and stronger than death, which survives the loss of beauty and the loss of charm, which defies the utmost pain & scorn the object of love can deal out to it, which often pours out from a great & high intellect on one infinitely below it? What again is

that love of woman which nothing can surpass, which lives on neglect and thrives on scorn & cruelty, whose flames rise higher than the red tongues of the funeral pyre, which follows you into heaven or draws you out of hell? Say not that this love does not exist and that all here is based on appetite, vanity, interest or selfish pleasure, that Rama & Sita, Ruru & Savitri are but dreams & imaginations. Human nature conscious of its divinity throws back the libel in scorn, and poetry blesses & history confirms its verdict. That Love is nothing but the Self recognizing the Self dimly or clearly and therefore seeking to realise oneness & the bliss of oneness. What again is a friend? Certainly I do not seek from my friend the pleasure of the body or choose him for his good looks; nor for that similarity of tastes & pursuits I would ask in a mere comrade; nor do I love him because he loves me or admires me, as I would perhaps love a disciple; nor do I necessarily demand of him a clever brain, as if he were only an intellectual helper or teacher. All these feelings exist, but they are not the soul of friendship. No, I love my friend for the woman's reason, because I love him, because in the old imperishable phrase, he is my *other self*. There by intuition the old Roman hit on the utter secret of Love. Love is the turning of the Self from its false self in the mind or body to its true Self in another; I love him because I have discovered the very Self of me in him, not my body or mind or tastes or feelings, but my very Self of love & bliss, of the outer aspect of whom the Sruti has beautifully said "Love is his right side" etc. So is it with the patriot; he has seen himSelf in his nation & seeks to lose his lower self in that higher national Self; because he can do so, we have a Mazzini, a Garibaldi, a Joan of Arc, a Washington, a Pratap Singh or a Sivaji; the lower material self could not have given us these; you do not manufacture such men in the workshop of utility, on the forge of Charvaka or grow them in the garden of Epicurus. So is it with the lover of humanity, who loses or seeks to lose his lower self in mankind; no enlightened selfishness could have given us Father Damien or Jesus or Florence Nightingale. So is it finally with the lover of the whole world, of whom the mighty type is Buddha, the one unapproachable ideal of Divine Love in man, he who turned from perfect divine bliss as he had turned from perfect human bliss that not he alone but all creatures might be saved.

To see your Self in all creatures and all creatures in your Self — that is the unshakeable foundation of all religion, love, patriotism, philanthropy, humanity, of everything which rises above selfishness and gross utility. For what is selfishness? it is mistaking the body & the vital impulses for your true self and seeking their gratification, a gross, narrow and transient pleasure, instead of the stainless bliss of your true self which is the whole

Universe & more than the Universe. Selfishness arises from Avidya, from the great fundamental ignorance which creates Ahankara, the sense of your individual existence, the preoccupation with your own individual existence, which at once leads to Desire, to Hunger which is Death, death to yourself and death to others. The sense that this is I and that is you, and that I must take this or that, or else you will take it, that is the basis of all selfishness; the sense that this I must eat that you, in order to live & avoid being eaten, that is the principle of material existence from which arises strife and hatred. And so long as the difference between I and you exists, hatred cannot cease, covetousness cannot cease, war cannot cease, evil & sin cannot cease, and because sin cannot cease, sorrow & misery cannot cease. This is the eternal Maya that makes a mock of all materialistic schemes for a materialistic Paradise upon earth. Paradise cannot be made upon the basis of food and drink, upon the equal division of goods or even upon the common possession of goods, for always the *mine* & *thine*, the greed, the hate, will return again if not between this man & that man, yet between this community and that community. Christianity hopes to make men live together like brothers — a happy family, loving and helping each other; perhaps it still hopes, though there is little in the state of the modern world to flatter its dreams. But that millennium too will not come, not though Christ should descend with all his angels and cut the knot, after banishing the vast majority of mankind to the outer darkness where there is wailing and gnashing of teeth, by setting up this united family of mankind with the meagre remnants of the pure and faithful. What a mad dream of diseased imaginations that men could be really and everlastingly happy while mankind was everlastingly suffering! How would the everlasting hatred breathing out from the innumerable-peopled furnaces of pain blast & mar with unconquerable smoke of Hell the light & peace of the saints! And how strangely was the slight, but sweet and gracious shadow of Buddhism distorted in the sombre & cruel minds of those fierce Mediterranean races, when they pictured the saints as drawing added bliss from the contemplation of the eternal tortures in which those they had lived with and perhaps loved, were agonizing. Divine love, divine pity, the nature of the Buddha, that was the message which India sent to Europe through the lips of Jesus, and this is how the European mind interpreted divine love & divine pity! The fires of Hell aptly and piously anticipated on earth by the fires of Smithfield, the glowing splendours of the Auto-da-fé, the unspeakable reek of agony that steams up thro' history from the dungeons of the Holy Office — nay, there are wise men who find an apology for these pious torturers; it was divine love after all seeking to save

the soul at the cost of the perishable body! But the Aryan spirit of the East, the spirit of Buddha struggles for ever with European barbarism and surely in the end it shall conquer. Already Europe does homage to humanity with her lips and in the gateways of her mind; perhaps some day she will do so with her heart also. At any rate the millennium of Tertullian is out of date. But still it is the Christian ideal, the Syrian interpretation of the truth and not the truth itself, which dominates the best European thought and the Christian ideal is the ideal of the *united family*.

THE STUDENT

Surely it is a noble ideal.

THE GURU

Very noble and we have it among ourselves in a noble couplet वसुधैव कुटुम्बकं; but everything which implies difference is based upon Avidya and the inevitable fruits of Avidya. Have you ever watched a big united family, a joint-family in Bengal especially in days when the Aryan discipline is lost? Behind its outward show of strength and unity, what jarring, what dissensions, what petty malice & hatred, what envy & covetousness! And then finally one day a crash, a war, a case in the law-courts, a separation for ever. What the joint-family is on a small scale, that on a big scale is an united nation, Russia or Austria or Germany or the *United Kingdom*. Mankind as an united family would mean in practice mankind as an united nation. How much would you gain by it? You would get rid of war, — for a time — of the mangling of men's bodies by men, but the body though to be respected as the chosen vehicle or the favourite dress of Brahman, is not of the first importance. You would not get rid of the much more cruel mangling of the human Self by hatred, greed and strife. The Europeans attach too much importance to the body, shrink too much from physical sin and are far too much at their ease with mental sin. It is enough for them if a woman abstain from carrying out her desire in action, if a man abstain from physical violence, then is the one chaste, the other self-controlled. This if not sheer unAryanism or Mlecchahood is at best the half baked virtue of the semi-Aryanised. Be you who are born in the Aryan discipline, however maimed by long bondage, an Aryan indeed, chaste in mind & spirit, & not merely careful in speech & body, gentle in heart & thought and not merely decent in words & actions. That is true self-control and real morality. No Paradise therefore can exist, no Paradise even if it existed, can last, until that which

makes sin and hell is conquered. We may never have a Paradise on earth, but if it is ever to come, it will come not when all mankind are as brothers, for brothers jar and hate as much & often more than mere friends or strangers, but when all mankind has realised that it is one Self. Nor can that be until mankind has realised that all existence is oneself, for if an united humanity tyrannise over bird & beast & insect, the atmosphere of pain, hatred & fear breathing up from the lower creation will infect & soil the purity of the upper. The law of Karma is inexorable, and whatever you deal out to others, even such shall be the effect on yourself, in this life or in another. Do you think then that this strange thing will ever come about that mankind in general, will ever come to see in the dog and the vulture, nay, in the snake that bites and the scorpion that stings, their own Self, that they will say unto Death my brother & to Destruction my sister, nay that they will know these things as themselves? सर्वभूतेषु चात्मानं, the Sruti will not spare you the meanest insect that crawls or the foulest worm that writhes.

THE STUDENT

It does not seem possible.

THE GURU

It does not; and yet the impossible repeatedly happens. At any rate, if you must have an ideal, of the far-off event to which humanity moves, cherish this. Distrust all Utopias that seek to destroy sin or scrape away part of the soil in which it grows while preserving intact the very roots of sin, Ahankar born of Ignorance & Desire. For once Ahankar is there, likes and dislikes are born, रागद्वेषौ the primal couple of dualities, liking for what fartherers the satisfaction of desire, dislike for what hinders it, the sense of possession, the sense of loss, attraction, repulsion, charm, repugnance, love, hatred, pity, cruelty, kindness, wrath, — the infinite and eternal procession of the dualities. Admit but one pair, and all the others come tumbling in in its wake. But the man who sees himself in all creatures, cannot hate; he shrinks from none, he has neither repulsion nor fear. ततो न विजुगुप्सते. Yonder leper whom all men shun — but shall I shun him, who know that from this strange disguise the Brahman looks out with smiling eyes? This foeman who comes with a sword to pierce me through the heart, — I look beyond the sharp threatening sword, beyond the scowling brow and the eyes of hate, and I recognize the mask of my Self; thereafter I shall neither fear the sword nor hate the bearer. O myself who foolishly callest thyself mine enemy, how canst thou

be my enemy unless I choose; friend & enemy are but creations of the Mind that myriad-working magician, that great dreamer & artist; and if I will not to regard thee as my enemy, thou canst no more be such than a dream or shadow can, as indeed thy flashing sword is but a dream and thy scowling brow but a shadow. But thou wilt divide me with thy sword, thou wilt slay me, pierce me with bullets, torture me with fire, blow me from the mouth of thy cannon? Me thou canst not pierce, for I am unslayable, unpierceable, indivisible, unburnable, immovable. Thou canst but tear this dress of me, this food sheath or multiplied protoplasm which I wear — *I* am what I was before. I will not be angry with thee even, for who would trouble himself to be angry with a child because in its play or little childish wrath it has torn his dress? Perhaps I valued the dress and would not so soon have parted with it; I will try then to save it, if I may, and even punish thee without anger so that thou mayst not tear more dresses; but if I cannot — well, it was but a cloth and another can soon be had from the merchant; nay, have I not already paid the purchase-money? O my judge, thou who sittest pronouncing that I be hanged by the neck till I be dead, because I have broken *thy* laws perchance to give bread to starving thousands, perchance to help the men of my country whom thou wouldst keep as slaves for thy pleasure — Me wilt thou hang? When thou canst shake the sun from heaven or wrap up the skies like a garment, then shall power be given thee to hang me. Who or what is this thou deemest will die by hanging? A bundle of animalculae, no more. This outward thou & I are but stage masks; behind them is One who neither slayeth nor is slain. Mask called a judge, play thou thy part; I have played mine. O son of the ancient Yoga, realise thy Self in all things; fear nothing, loathe nothing; dread none, hate none, but do thy part with strength and courage; so shalt thou be what thou truly art, God in thy victory, God in thy defeat, God in thy very death & torture, — God who will not be defeated & who cannot die. Shall God fear any? shall He despair? shall He tremble & shake? Nay 'tis the insects that form thy body & brain which shake & tremble; Thou within them sittest looking with calm eyes at their pain & terror; for they are but shadows that dream of themselves as a reality. Realise the Self in all creatures, realise all creatures in the Self; then in the end terror shall flee from thee in terror, pain shall not touch thee, lest itself be tortured by thy touch; death shall not dare to come near to thee lest he be slain.

यस्मिन् सर्वाणि भूतान्यात्मैवाभूद्विजानतः ।

तत्र को मोहः कः शोक एकत्वमनुपश्यतः ॥

He who discerneth, in whom all creatures have become himSelf, how shall he be deluded, whence shall he have sorrow, in whose eyes all things are One. That is the realisation of the mighty ideal, the moral and practical result of perfected Vedanta, that in us all things will become ourself. There, says the Sruti, in the man whose Self has become all creatures, what delusion can there be or what sorrow, for wherever he looks (अनुपश्यतः), he sees nothing but the great Oneness, nothing but God, nothing but his own Self of love and bliss. Delusion (मोह) is the mistaking of the appearance for the reality, bewilderment by the force of Maya. "This house that my fathers had was mine and alas, I have lost it." "This was my wife whom I loved, and she is lost to me for ever." "Alas, how has my son disappointed me from whom I hoped so much." "This office for which I hoped and schemed, my rival, the man I hated has got it." All these are the utterances of delusion and the result of delusion is शोक, sorrow. But to one whose Self has become all creatures, there can be no delusion and therefore no sorrow. He does not say "I, Devadatta, have lost this house. What a calamity!" He says "I, Devadatta, have lost this house, but it has gone to me, Harischandra. That is fortunate." *I* can lose nothing except to myself. Nor shall I weep because my wife is dead & lost, who is not lost at all, but as near to me as ever, since she is still my Self, in my Self, with my Self, as much after death as when her body was underneath my hands. *I* cannot lose my Self. My son has disappointed me? He has taken his own way & not mine, but he has not disappointed him Self who is my Self, he has only disappointed the sheath, the case, the mental cell in which I was imprisoned. The vision of the One Self dispels all differences; an infinite calm, an infinite love, an infinite charity, an infinite tolerance, is the very nature of the strong soul that has seen God. The sin, the stain, the disease, the foulness of the world cannot pollute his mind nor repel his sympathy; as he stoops to lift the sinner from the dung heap in which he wallows, he does not shrink from the ordure that stains his own hands; his eyes are not bedimmed by tears, when he lifts up the shrieking sufferer out of his pit of pain; he lifts him as a father lifts his child who has tumbled in the mire and is crying; the child chooses to think he is hurt & cries; the father knows he is not really hurt, therefore he does not grieve, but neither does he chide him, rather he lifts him up & soothes the wilful imaginary pain. Such a soul has become God, mighty & loving to help and save, not weak to weep and increase the ocean of human tears with his own. Buddha did not weep when he saw the suffering of the world; he went forth to save. And surely such a soul will not grieve over the buffets the outward world seems to give to his outward self; for how can He grieve who is all this Universe? The pain

of his petty personal Self is no more to his consciousness than the pain of a crushed ant to a king as he walks musing in his garden bearing on his shoulders the destiny of nations. He cannot feel sorrow for himself even if he would, for he has the sorrow of a whole world to relieve; his own joy is nothing to him, for he has the joy of the whole Universe at his command.

There are two ways of attaining to Jnana, to the Vision. One is the way of Insight, the other the way of World-Sight. There are two ways of Bhakti, one by devotion to the Self as Lord of all concentrated within you, the other by devotion to the Self as Lord of all extended in the Universe. There are two ways of Karma, one by Yoga, quiescence of the sheaths & the ineffable unacting, yet all-enveloping omnipotence of the Self within; the other by quiescence of desire and selfless activity of the sheaths for the wider Self in the Universe. For the first you must turn your eyes within instead of without, put from you the pleasures of contact & sense, hush the mind & its organs and rising above the dualities become One in yourself, आत्मतुष्टिरात्मारामः. Is this too difficult for thee? Does thy mind fail thee, the anguish of thy coverings still conceal the immortal Spirit within? Dash the tears from thine eyes; though they be tears of blood, still persist in wiping them away as they ooze out and look *out* on the Universe. That is thy self, that is Brahman. Realise all this Cosmic Stir, this rolling of the suns, this light, this life, this ceaseless activity. It is thou thyself that art stirring through all this Universe, thou art this Sun and this moon and these Constellations. The Ocean rolls in thee, the storm blows in thee, the hills stand firm in thee. If thou wert not, these things would not be. Canst thou grieve over the miseries of this little speck in the Brahman, this little insect-sheath, of whose miseries thou art the maker and thou canst be the ender? Is the vision too great for thee? Look round thee then, limit the vision there. These men & women and living things that are round thee, their numberless joys & sorrows, amongst which what are thine? they are all thy Self and they are all in Thee. Thou art their Creator, Disposer & Destroyer. Thou canst break them if thou wilt and thou canst rescue them from their griefs and miseries if thou wilt, for power infinite is within thee. Thou wilt not be the Asura to injure thyself in others? Be then the Deva to help thy Self in others. Learn the sorrows of those who live near thee and remove them; thou wilt soon feel what a joy has been so long lost to thee, a joy in which thy own sorrows grow like an unsubstantial mist. Wrestle with mighty wrongdoers, succour the oppressed, free the slave and the bound and thou shalt soon know something of the joy that is more than any pleasure, thou shalt soon be initiated into the bliss of the One who is in all. Even in death thou shalt know that ecstasy and rejoice in the blood as it flows from thee.

THE STUDENT

These ideals are too high. Where is the strength to follow them and the way to find that strength?

THE GURU

The strength is in yourself and the way to find that strength has been laid down from the times of old. But accept that ideal first or you will have no spur to help you over the obstacles in the way.

THE STUDENT

But how many will accept the ideal, when there are so many easier ideals to give them strength & comfort?

THE GURU

But are those ideals true? Delusions may give you strength & comfort for a while, but after all they break down & leave you tumbling through Chaos. Truth alone is a sure & everlasting rock of rest, an unfailing spear of strength. The whole universe rests upon Truth, on the Is, not on the Is Not. To be comfortable in delusion is the nature of man in his tamasic covering of gross matter-stuff; it is the business of philosophy & religion to dispel his delusion & force him to face the truth.

THE STUDENT

But many wise men are of the opinions that these smaller ideals are the truth, not religion and philosophy which are a delusion.

THE GURU

Tell me one of these newborn truths that profess to dispel the knowledge that is without end & without beginning; for you know more of the science of the West than I.

THE STUDENT

There is the doctrine of the greatest good of the greatest number, which has something finite, certain and attainable about it — nothing metaphysical, nothing abstract.

THE GURU

We have heard something about it in this country, a system of morality by arithmetic called utilitarianism which would have man pass his life with a pair of scales in his hand weighing good & evil. It did good in its time, but it was not true, and could not last.

THE STUDENT

In what is it not true?

THE GURU

It is not true, because it is not in human nature; no human being ever made or ever will make an arithmetical calculation of the pain & pleasure to result from an action and the numbers of the people diversely affected by them, before doing the action. This sort of ethical algebra, this system of moral accounts needs a different planet for its development; a qualified accountant has yet to be born on the human plane. You cannot assess pleasure & pain, good and evil in so many ounces & pounds; human feelings, abstract emotions are elusive and variable from moment to moment. Utilitarianism with all its appearance of extreme practicality and definiteness, is really empty of any definite truth and impotent to give any sound and helpful guidance; it is in itself as barren of light as of inspiration, a creed arid, dry and lifeless, and what is worse, *false*. Whatever it has of value, it has copied or rather caricatured from altruism. It gives us standards of weight & measure which are utterly impossible to fix; and it fails to provide any philosophical justification for self-sacrifice nor any ardent inspiration towards it. Utilitarian hedonism — is not that the phrase — suggests, I think, that by doing good to others, we really provide a rarer and deeper pleasure for ourselves than any purely self-limited gratification can give us. Most true — and a truth we needed not to learn from either hedonist or utilitarian. The Buddhists knew it 2000 years ago and the Aryans of India practised it before that; the whole life of Srikrishna was a busy working for the good of others, of his friends, his country and the world, and Srikrishna never knew grief or pain. But there are three kinds of pleasure to be had from charity and beneficence; there is the satisfaction of vanity, the vanity of hearing oneself praised, the vanity of feeling “How very good I am.” This, I think, is at the bottom of much charity in India and more in Europe, and it is here that hedonism comes most into play, but it is a poor spring and will break down under any strain; it may lead to charity but never to self-

sacrifice. Then there is the joy of having done a good work and brought oneself nearer to heaven which used to be and perhaps still is the most common incentive to beneficence in Aryalands. That is a more powerful spring, but it is narrow and does not reach the true self; its best value is that it is helpful towards purification. Then there are the natures born for love & unselfishness who in the mere joy of helping others, of suffering for others, of seeing the joy return to tear-worn faces & pain-dimmed eyes, feel the bliss that comes from the upsurging of God within. To these hedonism is as vanity and the babbling of children. The hedonistic element in utilitarianism is an imperfect & blundering effort to grope for a great truth which it has neither been able to grasp itself nor set forth with scientific accuracy. That truth is found only in the clear & luminous teaching of the Vedanta; it is this, that the compound result we call man is a compound result and not the single simple homogeneous being our senses would believe; he is composed of several elements, corporeal, vital, mental, intellectual and essential; and his true self is none of these heterogeneous factors of the element the Self lives in, but something beyond & transcendent. Pain & pleasure, good & evil are therefore not permanent and definite entities; the former are a heterogeneous conglomeration, sometimes a warring agglomeration of the feelings & impulses belonging to the various husks in which the true Self is wrapped. Good & evil are relative & depend on the standpoint we take with reference to the true locality of Self in this little cosmos of man; if we locate that Self low down our "good" will be a poor thing, of the earth, earthy, little distinguishable from evil; if we locate it in its true place, our good will be as high, vast & pure as the heavens. All pain & pleasure, all good & evil have their birth, their existence and their end in the Self. It follows therefore that even the highest love & altruism are bounded by the Self. Altruism is not the sacrifice of self to others, but the sacrifice of our false self to our true Self, which unless we are Yogins we can best see in others. True love is not the love of others but the love of our Self; for we cannot possibly love what is not ourself. If we love what is not ourself, it must be as a result of contact; but we cannot love by स्पर्श, by mere contact; because contact is temporary in its nature and in its results, and cannot give rise to a permanent feeling such as love. Yajñavalkya well said, "We desire the wife, not for the sake of the wife but for the sake of the Self." Only if we mistake things for the Self which are not the true Self, we shall, as a result, mistake things for love which are not real love. If we mistake the food-husk for Self, we shall desire the wife for corporeal gratification; if we mistake the vital emotion-husk for Self we shall desire the wife for emotional gratification; if we mistake the mind husk for

the self we shall desire the wife for aesthetic gratification & the pleasurable sense of her presence, her voice, looks etc about the house; if we mistake the intellect husk for the self, we shall desire the wife for her qualities & virtues, her capacities & mental gifts, for the gratification of the understanding. If we see the Self, in the bliss Sheath, where the element of error reaches the vanishing point, we shall then desire the wife for the gratification of the true Self, the bliss of the sense of Union, of becoming One. And if we have seen & understood our true Self without husk or covering, we shall not desire her at all, because we shall possess her, we shall know that she is already our Self and therefore not to be desired in her sheaths, since *She* is already possessed. It follows that the more inward the sheath with which we confuse the Self, the purer the pleasure, the more exalted the conception of Good, until in the real naked Self we rise beyond good & evil because we have no longer any need of good or any temptation to evil. Emotional pleasure is higher than corporeal, aesthetic than emotional, intellectual than aesthetic, ethical than intellectual, spiritual than ethical. This is the whole truth and the whole philosophy of ethics; all else is practical arrangement and balancing of forces, economising of energies for the purposes of social stability or some other important but impermanent end.

Utilitarianism gets a partial & confused view of the truth and being unable properly to correlate it, groping about for some law, some standard and principle of order, thinks it has found it in utility. But what utility? I, this perfected animal, with desires, thoughts, sensations and a pressing need for their gratification, can very well understand what is personal utility; utility for this vital, sensational, conceptual me. My utility is to get as much sensual, emotional & intellectual gratification as I may out of life consistent with my own ease & safety; if utility is to be my standard of ethics, that is my ethics. But when you ask me in the name of utility & rationalism to sacrifice these things for some higher or wider utility, for others, for the greater number, for society, I no longer follow you. So much as is necessary to keep up government, law & order and a good police, I can understand, for these things are necessary to my safety & comfort; society has given me these & I must see to & pay for their maintenance by myself & others. That is businesslike, both utilitarian & rational. But beyond this society has not any claim on me; society exists for me, not I for society. If then I have to sacrifice what I perhaps most deeply cherish for society, my life, my goods, my domestic peace, my use for society ceases; I regard society then as a fraudulent depositor who wishes to draw from my ethical bank more than he has deposited. So might argue the average man who is neither immoral

nor deeply moral but only respectable; and utilitarianism can give him no satisfactory answer.

Moreover, if I have other instincts than those of the respectable citizen, and ability to carry them out, why should I refrain? What holds me? If I can earn a huge fortune rapidly by some safe form of swindling, by gambling, by speculation or by the merciless methods of the American capitalist, why should I refrain? The charge of anti-social conduct; but that has no terrors for an egotist of strong character; he knows well that he can hush the disapproval of society under a shower of gold coin. Morality with the vital sensational man becomes in an utilitarian age merely the *fear* of social or legal punishment, and strong men do not fear; nor unless their acts shake the social framework will an utilitarian society care to condemn them, for they are breaking no powerful sanctions, outraging no deep-rooted sentiments — utilitarianism deliberately parts company with sentiment and except force & fear it has no sanctions to replace those of religion & ancient prejudice which it has destroyed. It is useless to tell these people that they will find a deeper & truer bliss in good moral conduct and altruism than in their present selfish and anti-social career. Where is the proof or even the philosophic justification of what these philosophers allege? Their own experience? That is not valid for the average sensational man; *his* deepest pleasure is necessarily vital and sensational; it is only valid for the men who make the statement, they being the intellectual self with an ethical training that has survived from a dead Christianity. In order for it to be true of the sensational man, he must cease to be sensational, he must undergo a process of spiritual regeneration to which utilitarian philosophy cannot give him either the key or even the motive impulse. For in the mouth of the utilitarian, this statement of the deeper & truer bliss, is a piece of second-hand knowledge; not his own earning, but part of that store of ethical coin rifled by rationalism from the coffers of Christianity on which European civilisation is precariously living at the present day. One trembles to think of the day when that coin shall be exhausted — already we see some signs of growing moral vulgarity, coarseness, almost savagery in the European mind, which, if it increases, if the open worship of brutal force & unscrupulous strength which is rampant in politics & in commerce taint, as it must eventually do, the deeper heart of society, may lead to an orgy of the vital & sensational impulses such as has not been since the worst days of the Roman Empire.

THE STUDENT

But Lecky has proved that the moral improvement of Europe was due entirely to the rise of rationalism.

THE GURU

My son, there is one great capacity of the learned & cultured mind both in Europe & Asia which one should admire without imitating — it is the capacity of dextrous juggling with words. If you choose to give an extension of meaning to a particular word, a meaning it cannot & ought not to have, you can easily build on it a very glittering edifice of theory, which will charm the eye until someone comes by with a more effective word more effectively extended in meaning and knocks down the old house to build a newer & more glittering mansion. Thus the old eternal truths are overlaid by trashy superstructures until some day some salutary earthquake swallows up the building & builders & reveals the old truth which no change or chance can injure. Amid the giddy round of ever shifting theories Europe gives us, there are only two fundamental truths, often misapplied, but nevertheless true in the sphere of phenomena, — Evolution, which is taught in different ways by our Sankhya & Vedanta, and the Law of Invariable Causality, which is implied in our theories of Kal & Karma. These receive & hold fast to, — for it is by working them out not always well, but always suggestively that Europe has made her real contribution to the eternal store of knowledge. But in their isms and schisms trust not — they contain scant grain of truth hidden in a very bushelful of error.

THE STUDENT

Still it seems to me that Lecky is not altogether wrong.

THE GURU

On the contrary he is entirely right, — if we consent to lump together all enlightenment without regard to its nature & source, as rationalism; that the moral improvement of Europe was due to increasing enlightenment is entirely true, for Knowledge, by which I mean not the schoolmaster's satchelful of information or even the learning of the Universities, but Jnana, the perception & realisation of truth, is the eternal enemy and slayer of sin; for sin is descended of ignorance through her child, egoism. It is true that the so-called Christian ages in Europe were times of sin and darkness;

Europe had accepted Christ only to crucify him afresh; she had entombed him alive with his pure & gracious teaching and over that living tomb she had built a thing called the Church. What we know as Christendom was a strange mixture of Roman corruption, German barbarism and fragments of ancient culture all bathed in the pale light that flowed upward from the enhaloed brows of the entombed and crucified Christ. The great spiritual hoard he had opened to the West was kept locked up and unavailable except to individuals whose souls were too bright to be swallowed up in the general darkness. All knowledge was under taboo, not because there was any natural conflict between Religion & Science, but because there was natural & irreconcilable antipathy between the obscurantism of political ecclesiastics & resurgent knowledge. Again Asia came to the rescue of Europe and from the liberal civilisation of the Arabs, Science was reborn into her mediaeval night, and the light of Science, persecuted & tortured, struggled up until the darkness was overpowered & wounded to death. The intellectual history of Europe has outwardly been a struggle between Science & the Church, with which has been confounded the Christian religion which the Church professed with its lips & attempted to strangle with its hands; inwardly it was the ancient struggle between Deva and Asura, sattwa & tamas. Now Religion is sattwic with a natural impulse towards light, it cannot be tamasic, it can have no dealings with the enemies of the Devas; and if something calling itself religion, attempts to suppress light, you may be sure it is not religion but an impostor masquerading in her name. Consider what were the ideas under which as under a banner, the modern spirit overthrew the mediaeval Titan; the final uprush of those ideas we see in the French revolution. The motto of the Revolution we know, liberty, equality & fraternity; the spirit it professed but could not attain we know, humanity. In liberty the union of the individual moral liberty of Christianity with the civic liberty of Greece; in equality, the democratic spiritual equality of Christianity applied to society; fraternity, the aspiration to universal brotherhood, which is the peculiar and distinguishing idea of Christianity; in humanity, the Buddhist spirit of mercy, pity, love, of which Europe knew nothing till Christianity breathed it forth over the Mediterranean and with greater purity over Ireland, mingled with the sense of the divinity in man, borrowed from India through the old Gnostics & Platonists, these are the ideas which still profoundly influence Europe, many of which Scientific materialism has been obliged to borrow or tolerate, none of which it has as yet availed entirely to root out. Rationalism did not create these ideas, but found and adopted them. Rationalism is the spirit which subjects all beliefs & opinions to the

test of logic from observed facts, it is indeed the intellectual sheath, mostly the lower or merely logical half of the intellectual sheath attempting to establish itself as the Self. This is what we call Science and the scientific spirit. Wherever it has been able to work in the light of pure dry intellect, not distorted by irruptions of the lower selves in the shape of interest, vanity, passions, prejudices, it has produced invaluable results; in the sphere therefore of the passionless observation, classification and correlation of facts we may follow Science without distrust or fear of stumbling; but whenever it tries to theorize from what it has observed about human nature, human affairs & spiritual development, Science is always tumbling into the pits of the lower selves; in attempting to range things above the material level under the law of the material self, it is trying to walk upon water, to float upon air; it is doing something essentially unscientific. Still more is this the case when it deals with the higher things of the spirit in the same terms; its theories then become so amazingly paradoxical, one stands astonished at the wilful blindness to facts to which prejudice & prepossession can lead the trained observers of facts. Follow them not there, there are the blind leading the blind who go round and round battering themselves like a blind bird at night against the same eternal walls and never seeing the window open to it for its escape.

THE STUDENT

But you have said that Evolution is an eternal truth. On the basis of Evolution the scientists have discovered a moral sanction, which does replace the old religious sanctions, the paramount claim of the race upon the individual.

THE GURU

What race? The English or German or Russian or the great Anglo-Saxon race, which it appears is to inherit the world, God's Englishmen and, we must now add, God's Americans — or is it the whole white race? To whom must the individual bow his head as the head & front of Evolution?

THE STUDENT

I mean the whole human race. The individual is ephemeral, the species endures, the genus lasts almost for ever. On this basis your duty to yourself, your duty to society, your duty to your country, your duty to mankind, all fall into a beautifully ranged, orderly & symmetrical arrangement. All

morality is shown to be a historical inevitable evolution, and you have only to recognise it and farther that evolution by falling into its track instead of going backward on the track.

THE GURU

And getting called atavistic and degenerate and other terrible names? Still I should like to be better satisfied as to the basis of this symmetrical and inevitable arrangement; for if I were convinced that I am an ephemeral animal, I should like to enjoy myself during my day like other ephemeral animals and cannot see why I should trouble myself about the eternal future; & even tho' science should hurl the most formidable polysyllables in its vocabulary at me, I do not know that I should greatly care, and I think Mess^{rs} Rockefeller & Jay Gould & millions more were or are in hearty agreement with me. You say the genus is eternal? But I believe this is not the teaching of Science. As I understand it, man is only an animal, a particular sort of monkey which developed suddenly for some inexplicable reason & shot forward 10,000 miles ahead of every animal yet born upon earth. If this is so, there is no reason why some other animal, say, some particular kind of ant, should not suddenly for some inexplicable reason develop & shoot forward 100,000 miles ahead and make as short work of man as man made of the mammoth. Or in some other way the human race will certainly be replaced. Now what good is it to the mammoth whose bones science has recently disinterred, that a race has developed which can disinter him and dissertate in numerous polysyllables upon his remains? And if a scientific mammoth in his days had placed before him this prospect and bid him give up in the interest of the mammoth race, his unsocial & selfish ways, would that have seemed even to the most reasonable tusker a sufficient motive for his self-sacrifice? Where would his *benefit* in the affair come in?

THE STUDENT

It is not precisely a question of personal benefit; it is a question of inevitable law. You would be setting yourself against the inevitable law.

THE GURU

Verily? and what do I care, if my opposition to the inevitable brings me no harm, but rather content & prosperity in my day? After my death nothing can injure me, if I am but clay.

THE STUDENT

The individual may be immoral, but morality progresses inevitably.

THE GURU

Truly? I do not think the present state of Europe favourable to that conception. Why, we had thought that Science would make the cultured nations dominate & people the earth. And we find them stationary or absolutely retrograding in population, degenerating in nerve & hardiness, losing in the true imperial qualities. We had thought that sacking of cities, massacre, torture & foul rape were blotted by civilisation from the methods of war. The enlightened peoples of Europe march into China and there takes place an orgy of filth & blood & cold delight in agony which all but the most loathsome savages would shrink from in disgust. Is that the inevitable moral advance or Red Indian savagery improved upon? We had thought that with increasing education & intellectuality must come increasing chastity or at least refinement. In a great American city the police sweeps the brothels and gathers in its net hundreds of educated, cultured, gracious & stately women who had carried their education, beauty and culture *there*. Is that the inevitable moral advance, or rather the days of Messalina returned? These are not isolated phenomena but could be multiplied infinitely. Europe is following in the footsteps of ancient Rome.

THE STUDENT

There are these periods of retrogression. Evolution advances in a curve, not in a straight line.

THE GURU

And mark that these retrogressions are most inevitable when the world, abandoning religion, plunges into philosophic materialism. Not immediately do they come; while the spirit of the old religion still survives the death of its body, the nations seem perhaps to gain in strength & power; but very soon the posthumous force is exhausted. All the old nations perished because in the pride of intellect they abandoned their *dharma*, their religion. India, China still live. What was the force that enabled India beaten down & trampled by mailed fist & iron hoof ever to survive immortally, ever to resist, ever to crush down the conqueror of the hour at last beneath her gigantic foot, ever to raise her mighty head again to the stars? It is because

she never lost hold of religion, never gave up her faith in the spirit. Therefore the promise of Srikrishna ever holds good; therefore the Adyashakti, the mighty Chandi, ever descends when the people turn to her and tramples the Asura to pieces. Times change and a new kind of outer power rules over India in place of the Asuras of the East. But woe to India if she cast from her her eternal *dharmā*. The fate of the old nations shall then overtake her, her name shall be cast out from the list of nations and her peoples become a memory and a legend upon the earth. Let her keep true to her Self, and the *Atmashakti*, the eternal Force of the Self shall again strengthen & raise her. Modern Science has engaged itself deeply in two cardinal errors; it has built out of the Law of Causation a new and more inexorable fate than Greek or Hindu or Arab ever imagined. Engrossed with this predestination, Science has come to believe that the human will is a mere servant, nay, a mere creation of eternal inanimate forces. Science is mistaken & unless it widen its view it may easily be convinced of its mistake in a very ugly fashion before long. The Will is mightier than any law, fate or force. The Will is eternal, omnipotent, it has created the law of causation and governs it; it has made the laws of matter and it can override them; it is itself all the forces which seem to govern and bind it. There is no compulsion on the human will to evolve towards progression; if it chooses to regress, back it will go and all the world reeling and shrieking with it into barbarism and chaos; if it chooses to go forward, no force can stop it. The other mistake Science has made, it borrows from Christianity; it is that action and emotion can be directed towards beings distinct from oneself; all action and emotion are for the self, in the self. But if Science teaches men to regard themselves as distinct and purely corporeal beings, with no connection with others except such as may be created by physical contact and the communication of the senses, it is obvious that the human Will under the obsession of this belief, will inevitably shape its action & thought in accordance passing over the more shadowy moral generalities of evolutionary theorists or play with them only as intellectual marbles. And that spells in the end a colossal selfishness, an increasing sensuality, lust of power, riches, comfort & dominion, a monstrous & egoistic brutality like that of a hundred-armed Titan wielding all the arms of the Gods in those hundred hands. If man believes himself to be an animal he will act like an animal & exalt the animal impulse into his guide. That Europe does not approach more swiftly to this condition is due to the obstinate refusal of Jnana, Religion, true enlightenment, maimed & wounded tho' it be, to perish and make an end; it will not allow the human Will to believe that it is no more than nerve & flesh & body, animal

& transitory. It persists & takes a hundred forms to elude the pursuit of materialistic Science, calling upon the Eternal Mother to come down and save; and surely before long she shall come. All bases of morality which do not go back to the original divine and sempiternal nature of man, must be erroneous and fleeting. Not from the instincts & customs of the ape & savage did the glories of religion & virtue arise, — they are the perennial light of the concealed godhead revealing themselves ever with clearer lines, with floods of more beautiful rainbow lustre, to culminate at last in the pure white light of the supreme realisation, when all creatures have become our Self and our Self realises its own Unity.

यस्मिन् सर्वाणि भूतान्यात्मैवाभूद्विजानतः ।
तत्र को मोहः कः शोक एकत्वमनुपश्यतः ॥

The Upanishad having posited this Unity which is at once the justification of all religion & morality and the culmination in which religion & morality disappear into something higher than either, proceeds again to sum up and describe the Eternal under this new light. In the fourth verse He has been described only as the mighty Force which creates & surrounds all this universe; He is now to be described as the mighty Unity which in its unmanifestation is the source of all existence and in its manifestation governs these innumerable worlds.

स पर्यगाच्छुक्रमकायमव्रणमस्नाविरं शुद्धमपापविद्धम् ।
कविर्मनीषी परिभूः स्वयंभूर्याथातथ्यतोऽर्थान्व्यदधाच्छाश्वतीभ्यः समाभ्यः ॥

This is He that went round, the brightness, unbodied, unscarred, without sinews, pure, untouched by sin; He is the Seer, the Thinker, the Selfborn that pervadeth; He from years sempiternal hath ordered perfectly all things.

The verse begins by repeating a position already taken, of the Lord surrounding all things as a robe surrounds its wearer, creating all things by the appearance of motion, which is however an appearance, a phenomenon and not a reality of the Eternal. "This is He that went round." In other words the whirl of motion which the manifested Eternal set at work created the worlds; he poured forth from himself as Prajna the Eternal Wisdom and entered & encompassed each thing as he created it. But who is this He? In answering this question the Sruti immediately reverts to the neuter gender, because it has to go back to the luminous Parabrahman who is beyond the

idea of sex or characteristic. He the Creator of the Worlds is in reality That Brightness, the luminous shadow of the Unknowable of which we can only speak in negatives. That has not a body or form, form being created by Him and therefore this side of Him; He has no scars or imperfections, but is one faultless & perfect light; He has no sinews or muscles; ie He is that side of matter and creation is produced from him not by physical means or physical strength & skill, but by the mere flowing forth of his Shakti or Will. Finally He is not only that side of Matter, but He is that side of Mind also, for He is pure and untouched by evil. It is mind that creates impurity & evil, by desire which produces duality; but the Eternal is not subject to desire. What is evil or Sin? It is merely the preference of the more gross to the more subtle, of *tamas* to *rajas* and of *rajas* to *sattwa*; it operates therefore in the sphere of the *gunas* and the Eternal being above the *gunas* cannot be touched by Sin. Having established the identity of the Lord who creates & rules, with the pure luminous Parabrahman, who is neither lord nor subject, the Sruti describes the Lord in his capacity of the All-wise Governor; he is the Seer & Poet, who by his illumined inspirations creates as Hiranyagarbha the whole world in His own infinite Mind, He is the Thinker, Prajna, the Wise One, from whose essential mass of equipoised consciousness all existence and its laws draw their perennial strength and being and flow forth to their works, and He is also that which flows forth, Virat, the pervading spirit which enters into all things and encompasses. In all these capacities He is selfborn; for He is Prajna who came forth by His own strength from the luminous Parabrahman & is Parabrahman, He is Hiranyagarbha who comes forth by His own strength from Prajna & is Prajna; He is Virat who comes forth by His own strength from Hiranyagarbha & is Hiranyagarbha. He is the Self born out of the Self by the Self. In other words all these are merely names of the One Spirit in different aspects or states of universal & infinite consciousness. Why then is the Lord spoken of, unlike Parabrahman, in the masculine gender? Because he is now considered in His capacity as the great ruler & ordainer, not in His capacity as the source from which all things flow. As the source, substratum & container of things He is the Trinity, Prajna-Hiranyagarbha-Virat, in whom the Male & Female, Spirit & Matter, the Soul & its Shakti are still one & undivided. He is therefore best spoken of in the neuter. But when we see Him as the Ruler & Ordainer, the Manifested Brahman dealing with a world of phenomena already created, then division has taken place, the Shakti has gone forth to its works, and the great male Trinity, Brahma-Vishnu-Maheshwara, filled with the force of that Shakti are creating, preserving & destroying the countless worlds and the innumerable

myriads of their inhabiting forms. Both these Trinities are in reality one Trinity, it is only the point of view that makes the difference. From this standpoint the Sruti goes on then to describe the Lord. He is *kavi*, the great seer & poet in the true sense of the word poet; the *kavi* is he who divines things luminously & distinctly by sheer intuition and whose divinations become, by their own overflow, creations. Paramatman as Sat-Brahma-Hiranyagarbha has this divine quality of poethood, — which men call the power of creation and it is therefore that his Shakti is described as Saraswati. Then the Lord is described as *manishi*, the Thinker. It is the thought of the Lord that is the basis or substratum of all this creation; it is therefore that the inanimate object forms faultlessly, that the tree grows unerringly, that the animal acts with infallible instinct towards his dominant needs, that the star moves in its course & the mountain holds to its base. All the creations of the great Kavi would be inconstant in their relations and clash & collide till they destroyed each other if there were not this imperative Wisdom, with stability & equipoise as its characteristic, underlying all things & keeping them to their places, actions & nature. This Wisdom, be it noted, is the very nature of things; it is no deliberate invention, no thing of after-thoughts, adjustments & alterations, but unchangeable & the essential basis of existence from the beginning. Whatever form it take, of gravitation, or of attraction and repulsion, or of evolution, it is an eternal presence & the very nature of the world, प्रज्ञानं ब्रह्म. This power of divine instinctive thought is one capacity of Paramatman as Chit-Mahadev-Prajna (Tamas, Sthanu). His other capacity is that of destruction, for He is the Spirit of immobility to whom the deep sleep of perfect unconditioned thought is the culmination (Chit) and if it were not for the activity of the Kavi in the Eternal, if the Thinker in Him were to blot out the Poet, all this pulsating world of phenomena would be stilled & resolve by inaction into the womb of undetermined condensed existence. Then again He is *paribhu*, He who exists all round, the great pervading Bliss of existence (Ananda). For the works of the Poet even though upheld by the Thinker, could not last, if it were not that the bliss of existence [is] poured through all created things like a stream of heavenly nectar & makes life, being, their first imperative need. This is that Will to Live of the German philosopher, which because like all Europeans, he could see Truth only in one of her limbs and not as a divine whole, gave so pessimistic a note to his thought. All things are supported & eternalized by this Bliss, for it is the unchanging & eternal Paramatman. Manifesting as the will to live finitely, it must be broadened into the will to live infinitely in order to fulfil itself & recover its own deepest & essential

nature. We will first to live as individuals, then to live in the family, then to live in the tribe or clan, then to live in the race or nation, then to live in mankind, then to live in the Universe, then to live in God, the one Eternal; this is the natural evolution of humanity & its course is determined by the very nature of the Self. Science the Apra Vidya traces for us the course & byelaws of evolution, but it is only the Para Vidya that bases it for us, gives us its reason, source, law & culmination. This Bliss is the capacity of Vishnu-Virat who is Ananda. By his very existence in all beings the Lord preserves & saves. Remember that, though you cry out to the Heavens for help in your misery, it is not the blue sky that hears, it is nothing outside you that comes to save, but He within you alone can protect. Art thou oppressed, O man, by ogre & giant, by fiend & foeman? Seek His mighty Shakti, Bhavani Mahishamardini, in yourself and She will externalize armed with sword & trident to crush the triumphing Asura. This is the law & the gospel. The Poet, the Thinker, the Pervading Presence, these three are the Swayambhu, the eternal Selfborn who is born by HimSelf out of HimSelf into HimSelf. The Gods are not different from each other, for they are all one God, & there is no other. This is He who has ordered from eternal years perfectly all things. याथातथ्यतः, each duly as it should be & must be because of its own nature, for the nature of a thing is its origin, its law, its destiny, its end; and harmony with its nature is its perfection. All this mighty universe where various things acting according to their various natures harmonise & melt into a perfect unity, all this wonderful Kingdom of a single Law in its manifold aspects He has ordered, व्यदधात्, he has arranged diversely; he has set each thing in its own place, working in its own orbit & according to its own overmastering & inexorable nature. All this He has done from years eternal, not in time, not at a particular date & season, but eternally, before Time was. The Law did not spring into being, but was, is & for ever shall be. The forms of objects, it is true, vary in Time, but the law of their nature is of eternal origin. In the act you do today, you are obeying a Law which has existed during the whole of eternity. Try to realise it, and you will see Time & Space vanishing into Infinity, you will hear the boom of the eternal waters & the great voice crying for ever on the waters "Tapas, tapas", and feel yourself in the presence of the One unchangeable & eternal God. Maya & her works have no ending, because they had no beginning, but the soul of Man can rise above Maya and her works & stand over her & free from her watching her as her master for whose joy she labours unto all eternity. For verily Man is God and as by his own Will he has cast himself into the illusory bonds of the Enchantress, so by His own will He can shake off the bonds & rule her. The play of the Soul with the

Maya is the play of the lover & his beloved, one feigning to be the slave of the other, rejoicing in her favour or weeping at her feet in her anger, and now resuming his rightful rôle of lord & master, yea, turning away from her at will to a fairer & more wonderful face; and now Krishna wears the blue dress & shining jewels, and now Radha the yellow cloth & fragrant garlands of the green wood and the brilliant feather of the peacock; for He is She, and She is He; they are only playing at difference, for in real truth they have been and are one to all Eternity.

THE STUDENT

Here then the first part of the Upanishad seems to be ended and some very obscure & disconnected utterances follow.

THE GURU

The utterances of the Upanishad are never disconnected, but the connection is usually beneath the surface, not openly declared by explicit statement or grammatical construction. The Upanishad has said that the Eternal has arranged all objects of the Universe perfectly from years eternal. Maya therefore is eternal, Avidya is eternal. The question will at once be put, what then of Vidya & Avidya? the Eternal and the Transient? the Is & the Seems to Be? If Avidya is eternal, let us rejoice in her wonders & glories & never strive to escape from her bonds. But if Vidya alone be eternal, then is Avidya a curse and a bondage, what have we to do with it, but shake it off with disgust as soon as possible? These are the extremes of the Materialist and Nihilist, the Charvak & the Sunyavadin; but the Vedanta gives its sanction to neither. The Unconditioned Brahman is, but of the Conditioned also we cannot say that He is not and the Conditioned Brahman is what we call Maya. Brahman is eternal & Maya therefore is eternal; but the Conditioned Brahman obviously rests on the Unconditioned and cannot be except in Him. As are the reverse & obverse of a coin, so are the Conditioned and Unconditioned, and the aspirant to Knowledge must know both and not one only or he will know but little indeed of the true nature of the Eternal.

THE STUDENT

The followers of Adwaita will call this rank heresy. Maya is illusion, unreality and is slain by knowledge, it cannot therefore be eternal.

THE GURU

You cannot slay Maya; you can only slay Moha, the illusion of Maya; her you can only conquer and put her under your feet. You remember that Shankara after conquering Ubhayabharati, made her living body his *asan* of meditation; that is the symbol of the Yogi and the wonderful twofold Maya of the Eternal. He has conquered her & put her beneath him, but it is still upon her that his *asan* is based even when he is unconscious of Her and in union with the Eternal. If this were not so, then the whole of phenomena would cease the moment a man becomes a Buddha and enters into Nirvana; for He & the Eternal are One. If Parabrahman therefore were limited either to Vidya or Avidya, obviously Avidya would cease the moment Vidya began and the salvation of one Jivatma would bring about the end of the world for all; just as the Christians say that the crucifixion of Christ saved the world. But this is not so. The power of Shakti of Brahman is twofold & simultaneous; He is able to exercise Vidya & Avidya at the same moment; he eternally realises His own transcendental nature; and at the very same time He realises this wonderful universe of His imagination. He is like a great poet who shadows forth a world of his own creation made in himself and of himself and yet knows that He is different from it & independent of it. It is for this reason only that the salvation of a particular Jivatman does not bring the world to an end. Nor does Shankara really say anything different; for he does not assert that Maya is unreal; he says it is a mysterious something of which you cannot say that it is and yet you cannot say that it is not. This indeed is the only description that the finite mind can make of this mysterious Shakti of the Illimitable, Unconditioned, Unknowable Brahman. Maya in its forms may be unreal & transitory but Maya in its essence as a Shakti of the Eternal, must itself be eternal, from of old & for ever.

SRI AUROBINDO

(*Isha Upanishad*, CWSA, Vol. 17, pp. 101-167)

ISHA UPANISHAD¹

All that is world in the Universe

The Sanscrit word जगत् is in origin a reduplicated & therefore frequentative participle from the root गम् to go. It signifies “that which is in perpetual motion”, and implies in its neuter form the world, universe, and in its feminine form the earth. World therefore is that which eternally vibrates, and the Hindu idea of the cosmos reduces itself to a harmony of eternal vibrations; form as we see it is simply the varying combination of different vibrations as they affect us through our perceptions & establish themselves to the concept. So far then Hinduism has reached by analysis to the last & simplest material expression of this complex universe. The question then arises, “Does anything lie beyond? If matter is all, then this is the last & there is no beyond. But is matter all?”

Our first verse is the answer of the Upanishad to this question. “All that is world in the Universe by the Lord must be pervaded.” The very object of our existence is to pierce beyond this last & thinnest veil of matter to Spirit, the Lord who is behind every manifestation of matter, even the simplest & therefore is he the Lord, he is the Self of all things, matter being merely the body. When we have realised that all this universe of vibration is full of the Spirit, we have set our feet on the right road that will lead us to the goal of existence. This is what we “must” do, in other words to realise God in the universe is the object of our existence. But why does the Upanishad say “must be pervaded”; why does it not say simply “is pervaded”? Is this pervasion then not a fact, but a possibility which each individual soul has to turn into a fact for itself? In what sense is it said that the object of the individual soul is to pervade the Universe with the Lord? We must remember that according to the Upanishad there are only two entities in existence which are not phenomena or manifestations, but eternal facts, and these two are in reality not two but one, the illimitable & infinite Self behind phenomena, and the finite self which perceives phenomena. The Advaita or Monistic Vedanta affirms the entire unity of these two & explains their apparent separation by Maya, Illusion or Ignorance, in other words by the theory that the Indivisible Eternal has deliberately imagined himself as divisible (I speak in metaphors, the only way of approaching such subtle

1. Circa 1902.

inquiries) & hence created an illusion of multiplicity where the only real fact is Unity. We may take the metaphor of a sea & its waves; if each wave were to imagine itself separate from all other waves & from the sea of which it is a part, that would be an illusion similar to that of the finite self when it imagines itself as different from other finite selves and from the Infinite. The wave is not really different from the sea but is sea (not *the* sea) and the next moment will be indistinguishable from sea; in fact the word “wave” merely expresses a momentary perception, an idea of change or modification which the next moment we perceive not to exist, and not a real object; the only real object is the sea.

The Visishta Advaita or modified-Monistic Vedanta on the other hand recognises that the infinite Self & the finite Self are eventually One, but still there is a distinction, a certain limitation of the Oneness. The finite Self is of & in the infinite Self & therefore one with it but it does not coincide with it or disappear into it; the goal of its existence is the delight of feeling its oneness with the Eternal, but still the very feeling of delight implies a limitation, a difference, & this limitation is not temporary but eternal. An image may be taken from the phenomenon of Light & its vibrations; it is all light, there is no real difference, & yet each of the vibrations is in a sense separate & continues its own existence on its own line for ever through infinity. Lastly the Dwaita or Dualistic Vedanta affirms, on the contrary, that the finite selves & the Infinite are for ever different & the whole riddle of the world lies in their difference & in their attraction to each other. To become one with the Eternal is here also the goal of the finite but the oneness is emotional & not essential; it is Union & not fusion. It is difficult to find a close image here, but for want of a better we may take that of a river & the sea to which it is hasting. It is water hasting to water & the whole aim of the river is to fling itself into the sea & towards that it strives with all its might & with all its soul; & finally it reaches the sea & mixes with it. And yet there it is still, a river & not the sea. So the two live in a perpetual embrace, ever united & yet ever different & feeling their separate existence. Now these three philosophies really image three different states of soul & three different roads to the realisation of God. There is the intellectual state of soul which reaches God through knowledge; this naturally attaches itself to Monism, for it seeks only the knowledge of its identity with God & its tendency is to discourage all action & emotion which interfere with this aim. Then there is the actional state of soul which reaches God through action leading to knowledge & inspired by emotion; this aims at the knowledge of its identity with God, but its actional state requires a certain sense of difference from

God without which action becomes meaningless; its tendency therefore, if the knowledge-impulse predominates over the emotional, is to rest for a time in modified Monism, though it recognises pure Monism as a far goal beyond; but if the emotional impulse predominates over the intellectual, its tendency is to adopt modified Monism as a final solution. Lastly there is the emotional state of soul which reaches God through divine love; this naturally attaches itself to Dualism; for the only desire of love is to attain the loved one & go on loving for ever; an impossibility unless the feeling of difference in Union goes on for ever. The three philosophies are therefore simply three different standpoints from which we envisage one single truth, that nothing eventually matters in the world except God & the goal of existence is to attain Him. And I may add my own conviction that all three are necessary soul-stages. By pausing too long in Dualism or even in modified Monism, we debar ourselves too long from our final emancipation; but by leaping too quickly to Monism we fall into a dangerous tendency towards the premature dissolution of phenomena which if largely followed upsets the fine balance of the world. The right progress of the soul is first to realise its difference from God, so that we may feel attracted towards Him, then to realise that that difference is a temporary or at least not an entire difference, that there is unity beyond, so that we may advance towards Him by the right road & under the laws of that phenomenal existence through which he reveals himself to us, and finally to perceive that we and God are One & all phenomena temporary & illusory, so that escaping from name & form we may lose ourselves in Him and attain our soul's salvation. Well then, here are three standpoints; which is the standpoint of the Upanishads? They do not, in fact, confine themselves to any, but regarding them as three necessary stages, speak now from one, now from another, now from a third. Here it is speaking in a spirit of very slightly modified Monism. There are two nonphenomenal existences, the Infinite Self & the Finite Self; from the point of view of the Infinite, Eternal Self, the universe is already pervaded with God; but we must also consider the point of view of the Finite Self, — which is really Infinite but considers itself to be Finite. To this Finite Self the Universe is only the mass of its own perceptions. If it perceives the Universe as mere matter, then for its purposes the Universe is Matter & not pervaded by the Lord; if I consider yonder tree as so much wood & pith & sap & leaves, such it is & no more so far as I am concerned; if I look within & perceive God there then it is I who have put him there; for the moment before He was not there for me & now He is. In more Monistic language the Self at first imagines itself to be confined within its own body, but as it grows in thought

it looks into object after object & perceives itself there & so it goes on putting itself into everything until it has pervaded all that is in the world with itself; it then realises that there is no self or non-self but all is God. We see that it is merely a difference of language, of outlook, of perception; but these are the things through which human thought proceeds & they must be given their due place. To recognize the differences they involve & yet to perceive the unity into which they merge, is the law & goal of all Hindu thought.

But whatever the standpoint we take, for dualist, monist or semi-monist the Vedanta lays this down as the great essential step to realise that when we have resolved this universe of forms & names into a great harmony of vibrations, we must still go beyond & perceive that the whole is but the material expression of one pervading Spirit. And when we have realised this, what is the practical result; for it must be remembered that the Vedanta is always profoundly practical[.]

SRI AUROBINDO

(*Isha Upanishad*, CWSA, Vol. 17, pp. 95-99)



ISH AND JAGAT¹

The Isha Upanishad in its very inception goes straight to the root of the problem the Seer has set out to resolve; he starts at once with the two supreme terms of which our existence seems to be composed and in a monumental phrase, cast into the bronze of eight brief but sufficient words, he confronts them and sets them in their right & eternal relation. Ishá vásyam idam sarvam yat kincha jagatyám jagat. Ish and Jagat, God and Nature, Spirit and World, are the two poles of being between which our consciousness revolves. This double or biune reality is existence, is life, is man. The Eternal seated sole in all His creations occupies the ever-shifting Universe and its innumerable whorls and knots of motion, each called by us an object, in all of which one Lord is multitudinously the Inhabitant. From the brilliant suns to the rose and the grain of dust, from the God and the Titan in their dark or their luminous worlds to man and the insect that he crushes thoughtlessly under his feet, everything is His temple and mansion. He is the veiled deity in the temple, the open householder in the mansion; for Him and His enjoyment of the multiplicity & the unity of His being, all were created and they have no other reason for their existence. For habitation by the Lord is all this, everything whatsoever that is moving thing in her that moves.

The problem of a perfect life upon earth, a life free from those ills of which humanity seems to be the eternal and irredeemable prisoner & victim, can only be solved, in the belief of the Vedantins, if we go back to the fundamental nature of existence; for there alone can we find the root of the evil and the hint of the remedy. They are here in the two words Ish & Jagat. The Inhabitant is the Lord; in this truth, in the knowledge of it by our minds, in the realisation of it by our whole nature and being is the key of escape for the victim of evil, the prisoner of limitation and death. On the other hand, Nature is a fleeting & inconstant motion preserved by the harmonious fixity of the laws which govern its particular motions. This subjection and inconstancy of Nature is the secret of our bondage, death, limitation and suffering. We who entangle ourselves in the modalities of Nature, must, if we would escape from her confounding illusions, realise the other pole of our existence, unqualified Spirit or God. By rising to the God within us, we become free, liberated from the bondage of the world and the snare of death. For God is freedom, God is immortality. Mrityum tirtwá

1. Circa 1912. Editorial title.

amritam asnute. Crossing over death, we enjoy immortality.

This relation of Nature & Spirit, World & God, on which the Seer fixes, Nature the mansion, God the occupant, is their practical, not their essential relation. Conscious existence is Brahman, single & indivisible; Spirit & Nature, World and God are one; anejad ekam manaso javíyas, — they are One unmoving swifter than mind. But for life, whether bound or free, and for the movement from bondage to freedom, this One must always be conceived as a double or biune term in which God is the reverse side of Nature, Nature the obverse side of God. The distinction has been made by Spirit itself in its own being for the object which the Seer expresses in the single word vásyam. God has thrown out His own being in the spatial & temporal movement of the Universe, building up forms in His mobile extended self-consciousness which He conceives as different from His still & eternal, regarding, occupying & enjoying self-consciousness, so that He as soul, the subject, may have an objective existence which it can regard, occupy & enjoy, the householder of its self-mansion, the god of its self-temple, the king of its self-empire. In this cosmic relation of Spirit to Nature the word Ishá expresses the perfect and absolute freedom, eternally unfringed, with which the Spirit envisages its objects and occupies its kingdom. World is not a material shell in which Spirit is bound, nor is Spirit a roving breath of things ensnared to which the object it inspires is a prison-house. The indwelling God is the lord of His creations and not their servant or prisoner; as a householder is lord of his dwelling-places to enter them and go forth from them at his will and to pull down what he has built up whenever it ceases to please him or be serviceable to his needs, so the Spirit is free to enter or go forth from its bodies and has power to build, destroy and rebuild whatever it pleases in this universe. The very universe itself It is free at any moment to destroy and recreate. God is not bound; He is the free and unopposed master of His creations.

This word Ishá, the Lord, is placed designedly at the opening of this great strain of Vedantic thought to rule as with a master-tone all its rhythms. It is the key to everything that follows in the eighteen verses of the Upanishad. Not only does it contradict all mechanical theories of the Universe and assert the preexistence, omnipotence, majesty and freedom of the transcendent Soul of things within, but by identifying the Lord of the universe with the Spirit in all bodies it asserts the greatness, freedom and secret omnipotence of the soul of man that seems here to wander thus painfully entangled and bewildered. Behind all the veils of his nature, the soul in man also is master, not slave, not bound, but free. Grief, death and limitation are instruments

of some activity it is here to fulfil for its own delight, and the user is not bound to his instruments; he can modify them, he can reject, he can change. If, then, we appear as though bound, by the fixed nature of our minds and bodies, by the nature of the visible universe, by the dualities of grief & joy, pleasure and pain, by the chain of cause and effect or by any other chain, shackle or tie whatsoever, the bondage is a semblance and can be nothing more. It is Maya, a willed illusion of bondage, or it is Lila, a self-chosen play at bondage. Like a child pretending to be this or that and identifying itself with its role the Purusha, this divine inhabitant within, may seem to forget his freedom, but even when he forgets, the freedom is still there, self-existent, therefore inalienable. Never lost except in appearance, it is recoverable even in appearance. The game of the world-existence is not a game of bondage alone, but equally of freedom & the liberation from bondage.

SRI AUROBINDO

(*Isha Upanishad*, CWSA, Vol. 17, pp. 303-305)



THE SECRET OF THE ISHA¹

It is now several thousands of years since men ceased to study Veda and Upanishad for the sake of Veda or Upanishad. Ever since the human mind in India, more & more intellectualised, always increasingly addicted to the secondary process of knowledge by logic & intellectual ratiocination, increasingly drawn away from the true & primary processes of knowledge by experience and direct perception, began to dislocate & dismember the manysided harmony of ancient Vedic truth & parcel it out into schools of thought & systems of metaphysics, its preoccupation has been rather with the later opinions of Sutras & Bhashyas than with the early truth of Scripture. Veda & Vedanta ceased to be guides to knowledge & became merely mines & quarries from which convenient texts might be extracted, regardless of context, to serve as weapons in the polemic disputes of metaphysicians. The inconvenient texts were ignored or explained away by distortion of their sense or by depreciation of their value. Those that neither helped nor hindered the polemical purpose of the exegete were briefly paraphrased or often left in a twilit obscurity. For the language of the Vedantic writers ceased to be understood; their figures, symbols of thought, shades of expression became antique & unintelligible. Hence passages which, when once fathomed, reveal a depth of knowledge & delicacy of subtle thought almost miraculous in its wealth & quality, strike the casual reader today as a mass of childish, obscure & ignorant fancies characteristic of an unformed and immature thinking. Rubbish & babblings of humanity's nonage an eminent Western scholar has termed them not knowing that it was not the text but his understanding of it that was rubbish & the babblings of ignorance. Worst of all, the spiritual & psychological experiences of the Vedic seekers were largely lost to India as the obscurations of the Iron Age grew upon her, as her knowledge contracted, her virtue dwindled & her old spiritual valiancy lost its daring & its nerve. Not altogether lost indeed for its sides of knowledge & practice still lived in cave & hermitage, its sides of feeling & emotion, narrowed by a more exclusive & self-abandoned fervour, remained, quickened even in the throbbing intensity of the Bhakti Marga and the violent inner joys of countless devotees. But even here it remained dim & obscure, shorn of its fullness, dimmed in its ancient and radiant purity. Yet we think, however it may be with the Vedas we have understood & possess the Upanishads!

1. Circa 1912.

We have understood a few principal texts & even those imperfectly; but of the mass of the Upanishads we understand less than we do of the Egyptian hieroglyphics and of the knowledge these great writings hold enshrined we possess less than we do of the wisdom of the ancient Egyptians. Dabhram evapi twam vettha Brahmano rupam!

I have said that the increasing intellectualisation of the Indian mind has been responsible for this great national loss. Our forefathers who discovered or received Vedic truth, did not arrive at it either by intellectual speculation or by logical reasoning. They attained it by actual & tangible experience in the spirit, — by spiritual & psychological observation, as we may say, & what they thus experienced, they understood by the instrumentality of the intuitive reason. But a time came when men felt an imperative need to give an account to themselves & to others of this supreme & immemorial Vedic truth in the terms of logic, in the language of intellectual ratiocination. For the maintenance of the intuitive reason as the ordinary instrument of knowledge demands as its basis an iron moral & intellectual discipline, a colossal disinterestedness of thinking, — otherwise the imagination and the wishes pollute the purity of its action, replace, dethrone it and wear flamboyantly its name & mask; Vedic knowledge begins to be lost & the practice of life & symbol based upon it are soon replaced by formalised action & unintelligent rite & ceremony. Without tapasya there can be no Veda. This was the course that the stream of thought followed among us, according to the sense of our Indian tradition. The capacity for tapasya belongs to the Golden Age of man's fresh virility; it fades as humanity ages & the cycle takes its way towards the years that are of Iron, and with tapasya, the basis, divine knowledge, the superstructure, also collapses or dwindles. The place of truth is then taken by superstition, irrational error that takes its stand upon the place where truth lies buried builds its tawdry & fantastic palace of pleasure upon those concealed & consecrated foundations, & even uses the ruins of old truth as stones for its irregular building. But such an usurpation can never endure. For, since the need of man's being is truth & light, the divine law, whose chief article it is that no just demand of the soul shall remain always unsatisfied, raises up Reason to clear away Superstition. Reason arrives as the Angel of the Lord, armed with her sword of doubt & denial (for it is the nature of intellectual Reason that beyond truth of objective appearance she cannot confidently & powerfully affirm anything, but must always remain with regard to fundamental truth agnostic and doubtful, her highest word of affirmation "probably", her lowest "perhaps"), — comes & cuts away whatever she can, often losing herself in a fury of

negation, denying superstition indeed, but doubting & denying also even Truth because it has been a foundation for superstition or formed with some of its stones part of the building. But at any rate she clears the field for sounder work; she makes tabula rasa for a more correct writing. The ancient Indian mind felt instinctively — I do not say it realised or argued consciously — the necessity, as the one way to avoid such a reign of negation, of stating to the intellectual reason so much of Vedic truth as could still be grasped and justifying it logically. The Six Darshanas were the result of this mighty labour. Buddhism, the inevitable rush of negation, came indeed but it was prevented from destroying spirituality as European negation destroyed it for a time in the eighteenth & nineteenth centuries by the immense & unshakeable hold the work of the philosophers had taken upon the Indian temperament. So firm was this grasp that even the great Masters of negation — for Brihaspati who affirmed matter was a child & weakling in denial compared with the Buddhists, — could not wholly divest themselves of this characteristic Indian realisation that subjective experience is the basis of existence & the objective only an outward term of that existence.

But admirable & necessary as was this vast work of intellectual systemisation, subtle, self-grasped & successful beyond parallel, supreme glory as it is now held and highest attainment of Indian mentality, it had from the standpoint of Vedantic truth three capital disadvantages.

SRI AUROBINDO

(*Isha Upanishad*, CWSA, Vol. 17, pp. 307-310)



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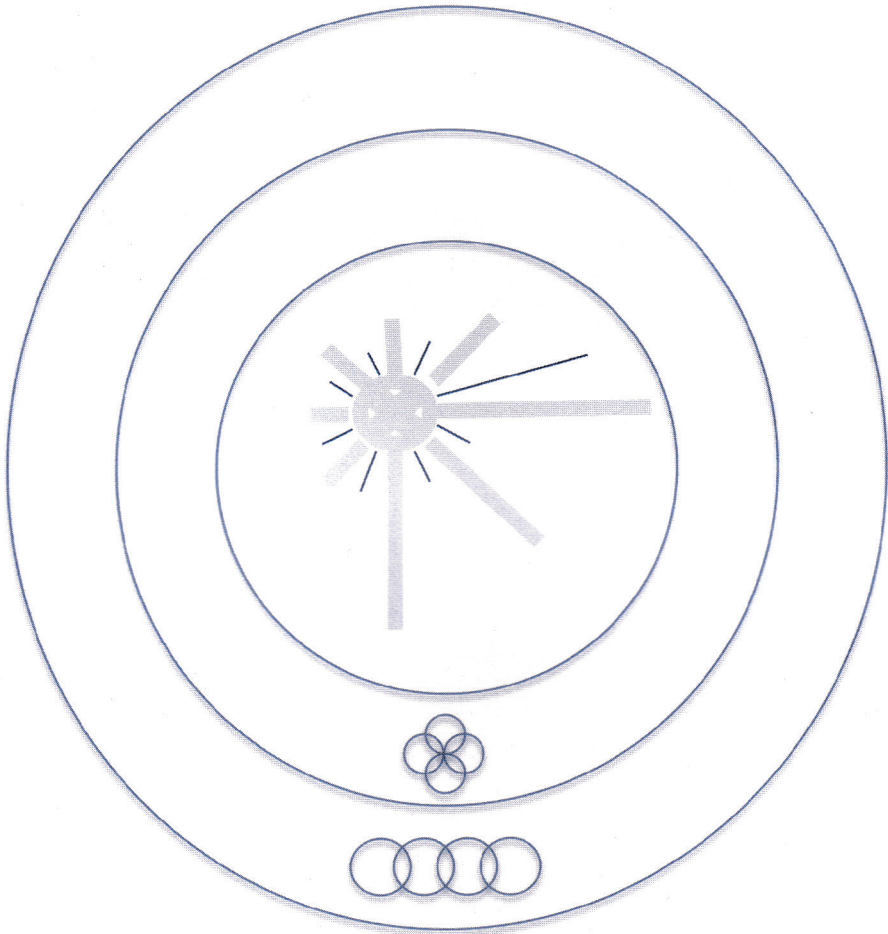
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