The background of the cover is a deep black space. In the upper right, a portion of the planet Saturn with its rings is visible. In the lower left, the blue and white horizon of the Earth is seen. A large, glowing orange-red Om symbol (ॐ) is centered in the upper half of the image. A bright light source is positioned at the center of the Om symbol, creating a lens flare effect. A thick, curved orange-red line, resembling a comet's tail or a celestial path, starts from the bottom left and curves upwards towards the center of the Om symbol.

A STUDY OF THE **MUNDAKA UPANIṢAD**

Swami Vivekananda

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

This study of the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* is a compilation from Swami Vivekananda's *Complete Works*. Swamiji quoted from this Upaniṣad and explained its ideas in several of his lectures, class-talks, and conversations. All this material, spread throughout the nine volumes of the *Complete Works*, has been brought together here for the first time.

Pravrajika Gayatriprana of the Vedanta Society of Northern California, San Francisco, USA, identified and carefully catalogued Swamiji's references to the Upaniṣads in the *Complete Works* in a pioneering project. She shared her research material with the *Vedanta Kesari* where this commentary was serialized from September through November 1997.

Some of the key features of this compilation are: 1) Swamiji's words have been arranged following the chronological order of the Upaniṣadic text. 2) To prevent the cluttering up of the material with endless reference numbers, a listing of the sources for Swamiji's commentary on every verse is given at the end of the book. 3) For a unified presentation, the compiled material has been lightly edited. 4) It is also annotated, with additional information in footnotes. 5) Finally, the Sanskrit text, and English transliteration of every verse precedes Swamiji's commentary on it. This work was nicely done by Swami Tyagananda, the then editor of *Vedanta Kesari*.

The *Mundaka Upaniṣad*, which occurs in the Atharva Veda, consists of 64 mantras divided into three chapters (*munḍakas*), each of which is subdivided into two cantos (*khaṇḍas*). Swami Vivekananda has not commented on every verse of the Upaniṣad. Nor has he given a literal and full translation of most of the verses. His priorities are clear: to go to the heart of the matter, to focus on the essentials, and to evolve practical methods from abstract principles. That is what makes this compilation a treasure trove of original ideas and masterly insights which are helpful towards spiritual practices.

‘What is that knowing which everything else is known?’—asks this Upaniṣad, and proceeds to answer the question, with the classification of knowledge into lower (*aparā*) and higher (*parā*). It provides the key to unlock the door to the knowledge that takes us from the unreal to the Real, from darkness to Light, and from death to Immortality. To get the key to freedom, all we need, in Swami Vivekananda’s words, is to ‘take up the truths of the Upaniṣads and live up to them.’

We are indebted to Pravrajika Gayatriprana and Swami Tyagananda for their valuable labour in compiling such a nice project for the benefit of those who want to study the original text of this Upaniṣad with Swami Vivekananda’s illuminating observations. We are also beholden to the President, Ramakrishna Math, Chennai, for permitting us to publish the project in the form of a book.

23 August 2000

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CHAPTER ONE

CANTO ONE

The Upaniṣads are the great mine of strength. Therein lies strength enough to invigorate the whole world. The whole world can be vivified, made strong, energized through them. They call with trumpet voice upon the weak, the miserable and the downtrodden of all races, all creeds, and all sects, to stand on their own feet and be free. Freedom—physical freedom, mental freedom, and spiritual freedom—are the watchwords of the Upaniṣads.

ॐ ब्रह्मा देवानां प्रथमः सम्बभूव
विश्वस्य कर्ता भुवनस्य गोप्ता ।
स ब्रह्मविद्यां सर्वविद्याप्रतिष्ठा-
मथर्वाय ज्येष्ठपुत्राय प्राह ॥१.१.१॥

*Om! Brāhmā devānām prathamah sambabhūva
viśvasya kartā bhuvanasya goptā;
Sa brahmavidyām sarvavidyāpratiṣṭhām
atharvāya jyeṣṭhaputrāya prāha.*

अथर्वणे यां प्रवदेत ब्रह्माऽ-
थर्वा तां पुरोवाचाङ्गिरे ब्रह्मविद्याम् ।
स भारद्वाजाय सत्यवहाय प्राह
भारद्वाजोऽङ्गिरसे परावराम् ॥१.१.२॥

*Atharvaṇe yām pravadeta brahmā'-
 tharvā tām purovācāṅgīre brahmavidyām;
 Sa bhāradvājāya satyavahāya prāha
 bhāradvājo'ṅgirase parāvarām.*

Brahmā was the first of the *devas*,¹ the Lord of this cycle and its protector. He gave this knowledge of Brahman, which is the essence of all knowledge, to his [eldest] son Atharvān. The latter handed it over to his son Ṇgir, he to his son Bharadvāja, and he to Ṇgiras, and so on.

Brahmā is the name of a high position among the *devas*, to which every person can aspire by virtue of meritorious deeds.

शौनको ह वै महाशालोऽङ्गिरसं
 विधिवदुपसन्नः पप्रच्छ ।
 कस्मिन्नु भगवो विज्ञाते
 सर्वमिदं विज्ञातं भवतीति ॥१.१.३॥

*Śaunako ha vai mahāśālo'ṅgirasam
 vidhivadupasannaḥ papraccha;
 Kasminnu bhagavo vijñāte
 sarvamidam vijñātam bhavatīti.*

There was a man called Śaunaka, a very rich man, who went to this Ṇgiras as a learner. He approached the teacher and asked him a question. "Tell me, sir, what is that, which being known, everything else is known?"

¹ *Devas* (lit. 'shining ones'—*dyotanāt devāḥ*) are positions held in the celestial worlds by people performing meritorious karma with the desire to enjoy its results. Once the karma that makes a person a *deva* is exhausted—as it must sooner or later—the person has to take a human birth again.

In modern language, the theme of the Upaniṣads is to find an ultimate unity of things. Knowledge is nothing but finding unity in the midst of diversity. Every science is based upon this. All human knowledge is based upon the finding of unity in the midst of diversity; and if it is the task of small fragments of knowledge (which we call our 'sciences') to find unity in the midst of a few different phenomena, the task becomes stupendous when the theme before us is to find unity in the midst of this marvellously diversified universe, where prevail unnumbered differences in name and form, in matter and spirit—each thought differing from every other thought, each form differing from every other form. Yet, to harmonize these many planes and unending cosmic worlds, in the midst of this infinite variety to find unity, is the theme of the Upaniṣads.

One peculiarity of the Hindu mind is that it always inquires into the last possible generalization, leaving the details to be worked out afterwards. The Hindu mind does not care for the particular; it is always after the general, nay, the universal. Hence the question: "What is that, knowing which we shall know everything?" Thus all books and all philosophies have been written only to prove "that" by knowing which everything is known. If a person wants to know this universe bit by bit, he or she must know every individual grain of sand, which means infinite time. No one can know all of them. Then how can knowledge be? How is it possible for a person to be all-knowing through particulars? The *yogīs* say that behind this particular manifestation there is a generalization. Behind all particular ideas stands a generalized, abstract principle. Grasp it, and you have grasped everything.

It is knowledge that opens the door to regions of wonder, knowledge that makes a god of an animal. The knowledge which brings us that "knowing which every-

thing else is known," is certainly the highest, as it alone can make a person live a complete and perfect life in thought. This is the heart of all knowledge—whose pulsation brings life to all sciences—the science of religion. Blessed be the land which has styled it 'supreme science' (*parā-vidyā*)!

There is nothing wonderful in this universe. Ignorance constitutes the only darkness, which covers all things and makes them look mysterious. When everything is lighted by knowledge, the sense of mystery vanishes from the face of things. Even such an inscrutable thing as *māyā*, which brings the most impossible things to pass, disappears. Know Him, think of Him, by knowing whom everything else is known.

The Upaniṣads distinguish between a higher knowledge and a lower knowledge. To a devotee there is really no difference between higher knowledge (*parā-vidyā*) and higher love (*parā-bhakti*):

तस्मै स होवाच । द्वे विद्ये वेदितव्ये इति ह
स्म यद् ब्रह्मविदो वदन्ति, परा चैवापरा च ॥१.१.४॥

तत्रापरा, ऋग्वेदो यजुर्वेदः सामवेदोऽथर्ववेदः
शिक्षा कल्पो व्याकरणं
निरुक्तं छन्दो ज्योतिषमिति ।
अथ परा, यया तदक्षरमधिगम्यते ॥१.१.५॥

*Tasmai sa hovāca. Dve vidye veditavye iti ha
sma yad brahmavido vadanti parā caivāparā ca.*

*Tatrāparā, ṛgvedo yajurvedaḥ sāmavedo'tharvavedaḥ
śikṣā kalpo vyākaranam
niruktam chando jyotiṣamiti;
Atha parā, yayā tadakṣaramadhigamyate.*

"The knowers of Brahman declare that there are two kinds of knowledge worthy to be known, namely, the higher (*parā*) and the lower (*aparā*). Of these, the lower knowledge consists of the Ṛg-Veda, the Yajur-Veda, the Sāma-Veda, the Atharva-Veda, the Śikṣā (or the science dealing with pronunciation and accent), the Kalpaḥ (or the sacrificial liturgy), grammar, the Nirukta (or the science dealing with etymology and the meaning of words), prosody, and astronomy; and the higher knowledge is that by which that Unchangeable (*akṣara*) is known."

The higher knowledge is thus clearly shown to be the knowledge of Brahman. Of the two kinds of knowledge, the unessential is that part of the Vedas dealing with worship and ceremonial, also all secular knowledge. The essential is that by which we reach the Absolute.

You must open your heart. Religion does not mean going to church, or putting marks on the forehead, or dressing in a peculiar fashion. You may paint yourselves in all the colours of the rainbow, but if the heart has not been opened, if you have not realized God, it is all vain. If one has the colour of the heart, one does not need any external colour. That is true realization.

We must not forget that colours and all these things are good so far as they help; so far they are all welcome. But they are apt to degenerate and instead of helping they retard, and people identify religion with externalities. Going to the temple becomes tantamount to spiritual life. Giving something to a priest becomes tantamount to religious life. These are dangerous and pernicious, and should be at once checked. Our scriptures declare again and again that even the knowledge of the external senses is not religion. That is religion which makes us realize the Unchangeable One, and that is the religion for everyone.

What is the nature of this Unchangeable One?

यत्तद्रेष्यमग्राह्यमगोत्रमवर्ण-
 मचक्षुःश्रोत्रं तदपाणिपादम् ।
 नित्यं विभुं सर्वगतं सुसूक्ष्मं
 तदव्ययं यद् भूतयोनिं परिपश्यन्ति धीराः ॥१.१.६॥

Yattadadreśyamagrāhyamagotramavarṇa-
macakṣuḥśrotram tadapāṇipādam;
Nityam vibhum sarvagatam susūkṣmam
tadavyayam yadbhūtayonim paripaśyanti dhīrāḥ.

He cannot be seen, cannot be sensed, cannot be specified. Without colour, without eyes, without ears, without nose, without feet—the Eternal, the Omnipresent, the “Omnipenetrating,” the Absolute—He from whom everything comes. The sages see Him, and that is the supreme knowledge.

यथोर्णनाभिः सृजते गृह्णते च
 यथा पृथिव्यामोषधयः सम्भवन्ति ।
 यथा सतः पुरुषात् केशलोमानि
 तथाऽक्षरात् सम्भवतीह विश्वम् ॥१.१.७॥

Yathorṇanābhiḥ sṛjate grhṇate ca
yathā pṛthivyāmoṣadhayaḥ sambhavanti;
Yathā sataḥ puruṣāt keśalomāni
tathā'kṣarāt sambhavatīha viśvam.

Just as the *Ūrṇanābhi*, a species of spider, creates a thread out of its own body and takes it back, just as the plants grow from the earth by their own nature, just as hairs grow on a human body—and all these things are yet separate and apparently different (the hairs are, as it were, different from the other parts of the body; the plants are different from the earth; the thread is different from the

spider)—so from this Unchangeable One has come this universe.

तपसा चीयते ब्रह्म ततोऽन्नमभिजायते ।
अन्नात् प्राणो मनः सत्यं लोकाः कर्मसु चामृतम् ॥१.१.८॥

*Tapasā cīyate brahma tato'nnamabhijāyate;
Annātprāṇo manaḥ satyam lokāḥ
karmasu cāmṛtam.*

First, out of Brahman comes the knowledge of desire and from that comes the manifestation of Creator, or the Golden Womb. From that comes intelligence, from that, matter and all these different worlds.

CANTO TWO

तदेतत् सत्यं
मन्त्रेषु कर्माणि कवयो यान्यपश्यं-
स्तानि त्रेतायां बहुधा सन्ततानि ।
तान्याचरथ नियतं सत्यकामा
एष वः पन्थाः सुकृतस्य लोके ॥१.२.१॥

Tadetat satyam
Mantreṣu karmāṇi kavayo yānyapaśyan-
stāni tretāyām bahudhā santatāni;
Tānyācaratha niyatam satyakāmā
eṣa vaḥ panthāḥ sukr̥tasya loke.

This is the truth—that for those who want to come to salvation or attain to other enjoyments, various ways are told in the Vedas.

एतेषु यश्चरते भ्राजमानेषु
यथाकालं चाहुतयो ह्याददायन् ।
तं नयन्त्येताः सूर्यस्य रश्मयो
यत्र देवानां पतिरेकोऽधिवासः ॥१.२.५॥

एह्येहीति तमाहुतयः सुवर्चसः
सूर्यस्य रश्मिभिर्यजमानं वहन्ति ।
प्रियां वाचमभिवदन्त्योऽर्चयन्त्य
एष वः पुण्यः सुकृतो ब्रह्मलोकः ॥१.२.६॥

प्लवा ह्येते अद्वा यज्ञरूपा
 अष्टादशोक्तमवरं येषु कर्म ।
 एतच्छ्रेयो येऽभिनन्दन्ति मूढा
 जरामृत्युं ते पुनरेवापि यन्ति ॥१.२.७॥

*Eteṣu yaścarate bhrājamāneṣu
 yathākālam cāhutayo hyādadāyan;
 Tam nayantyetāḥ sūryasya rāsmayo
 yatra devānām patireko'dhivāsaḥ.*

*Ehyehiti tamāhutayaḥ suvarcasah
 sūryasya rāsmibhīryajamānam vahanti;
 Priyām vācamabhivadantyo'rcayantya
 eṣa vaḥ puṇyaḥ sukrto brahmalokaḥ.*

*Plavā hyete adṛḍhā yajñarūpā
 aṣṭādaśoktamavaram yeṣu karma;
 Etacchreyo ye'bhinandanti mūḍhā
 jarāmṛtyum te punarevāpi yanti.*

Now the Upaniṣad goes on to say how the people who seek celestial enjoyments reach these blessings. When they die they go through the sun's rays to heavens—places which are very beautiful—and live for some time. There they acquire fine bodies, the bodies of gods. They become gods and enjoy the blessings of heaven for a long period. But after that period is finished, the old karma is again upon them, and so they fall back again to the earth. They come down through the spheres of air and clouds and all these various regions, and at last reach the earth through raindrops. There on the earth they attach themselves to some cereal which is eventually eaten by some man who is fit to supply them with material to make a new body. Thus these people get another

chance to perfect themselves. This earth is called the *karma-bhūmi*, the sphere of karma.

The human being therefore, according to the Vedānta philosophy, is the greatest being in the universe, and this world is the best place in it, because only here is the greatest and the best chance to become perfect. Angels or gods, whatever you may call them, have all to become human beings if they want to become perfect. This is the great centre, the wonderful poise, and the wonderful opportunity—this human life.

अविद्यायामन्तरे वर्तमानाः
स्वयं धीराः पण्डितं मन्यमानाः ।
जङ्घन्त्यमानाः परियन्ति मूढा
अन्धेनैव नीयमाना यथाऽन्धाः ॥१.२.८॥

Avidyāyāmantare vartamānāḥ
svayam dhīrāḥ paṇḍitam manyamānāḥ;
Jaṅghanyamānāḥ pariyanti mūḍhā
andhenaiva nīyamānā yathā'ndhāḥ.

We often mistake mere prattle for religious truth, mere intellectual perorations for great spiritual realization, and then comes sectarianism, then comes fight. If we once understand that 'realization' is the only religion, we shall look into our own hearts and find how far we are from realizing the truths of religion. Then we shall understand that we ourselves are groping in darkness, and are leading others to grope in the same darkness, then we shall cease from sectarianism, quarrel and fight. Ask the person who wants to start a sectarian fight, "Have you seen God? Have you seen the Ātman? If you have not, what right have you to preach His name—you walking in darkness trying to lead me into the same

darkness—the blind leading the blind, and both falling into the ditch?”

Therefore, take more thought before you go and find fault with others. Let them follow their own path to realization so long as they struggle to see truth in their own hearts. When the broad, naked truth will be seen, then they will find that wonderful bliss which has been testified to by every one who has realized the truth. Then words of love alone will come out of that heart, for it has already been touched by Him who is the essence of Love.

इष्टापूरुतं मन्यमाना वरिष्ठं
नान्यच्छ्रेयो वेदयन्ते प्रमूढाः ।
नाकस्य पृष्ठे ते सुकृतेऽनुभूत्वा-
इमं लोकं हीनतरं वा विशन्ति ॥१.२.१०॥

Iṣṭāpūrtam manyamānā varīṣṭham
nānyacchreyo vedayante pramūḍhāḥ;
Nākasya pṛṣṭhe te sukr̥te'nubhūtvā
imam lokam hinataram vā viśanti.

Here are two words—*Iṣṭam* and *Pūrtam*. Sacrificial and other rituals are called *Iṣṭam*, and *Pūrtam* is making roads, building hospitals, and so on. “Fools are they who think that rituals and doing good work are high and that there is nothing higher.” They get what they desire and go to heaven, but every enjoyment and every sorrow must have an end. And so that ends, and they fall back and become human beings again, or still lower.

तपःश्रद्धे ये ह्युपवसन्त्यरण्ये
शान्ता विद्वांसो भैक्ष्यचर्या चरन्तः ।
सूर्यद्वारेण ते विरजाः प्रयान्ति
यत्रामृतः स पुरुषो ह्यव्ययात्मा ॥१.२.११॥

*Tapahśraddhe ye hyupavasantyarāṇe
 śāntā vidvāṃso bhaikṣyacaryām carantaḥ;
 Sūryadvāreṇa te virajāḥ prayānti
 yatrāmṛtaḥ sa puruṣo hyavyayātmā.*

Those that give up the world and learn to control the senses live in a forest. Through the rays of the sun they reach that immortality where lives He who is the Absolute.

परीक्ष्य लोकान् कर्मचितान् ब्राह्मणो
 निर्वेदमायान्नास्त्यकृतः कृतेन ।
 तद्विज्ञानार्थं स गुरुमेवाभिगच्छेत्
 समित्पाणिः श्रोत्रियं ब्रह्मनिष्ठम् ॥१.२.१२॥

*Parikṣya lokān karmacitān brāhmaṇo
 nirvedamāyānnāstyakṛtaḥ kṛtena;
 Tadvijñānārtham sa gurumevābhigacchet
 samitpāṇiḥ śrotriyaṁ brahmaṇiṣṭham.*

Thus the student, examining all desires of good or evil works, throws away all duties and wants to know that, getting which there is no more return, no more change. And to know that, the student goes to the guru, the teacher, with fuel in hand.

There is a myth in our country about going to the guru with fuel in one's hands as a sign of helping him in making sacrifices, as he will not take presents. Who is a teacher? One who knows the secrets of the scriptures, one whose soul has gone unto Brahman, one who does not care for works or going to heaven or all these things.

तस्मै स विद्वानुपसन्नाय सम्यक्
 प्रशान्तचित्ताय शमान्विताय ।
 येनाक्षरं पुरुषं वेद सत्यं
 प्रोवाच तां तत्त्वतो ब्रह्मविद्याम् ॥१.२.१३॥

*Tasmai sa vidvānupasannāya samyak
 praśāntacittāya śamānvitāya;
 Yenākṣaram puruṣam veda satyam
 provāca tām tattvato brahmavidyām.*

Unto such a disciple, whose mind is controlled, who has become peaceful and calm, who has given up all this tremendous wave that rises in the mind by desire ("I will do this and that" and all those desires which are at best only disturbing, such as name and fame, which impel us to do all sorts of things)—to that disciple in whom all these vexatious desires have been calmed down, the guru teaches the way which is the science of Brahman, by which the disciple can know the One who never changes and who is the Truth.

CHAPTER TWO

CANTO ONE

Now comes what Āṅgiras taught Śaunaka:

तदेतत् सत्यं
यथा सुदीप्तात् पावकाद् विस्फुलिङ्गाः
सहस्रशः प्रभवन्ते सरूपाः ।
तथाऽक्षराद् विविधाः सोम्य भावाः
प्रजायन्ते तत्र चैवापि यन्ति ॥२.१.१॥

Tadetat satyam

*Yathā sudiptāt pāvakād visphulingāḥ
sahasraśaḥ prabhavante sarūpāḥ;
Tathā'kṣarād vividhāḥ somya bhāvāḥ
prajāyante tatra caivāpi yanti.*

This is the truth, O gentle one: as from a mass of burning flame myriads of sparks come out being of the same nature as the fire, even so from this Unchangeable One all this creation, all these forms, all these ideas, come out; and unto Him the whole creation goes back.

Brahman, or the Unchangeable, has become this universe. He is not only the instrumental cause of this universe but also the material cause. Cause is never different from effect; the effect is but the cause reproduced

in another form. We see that everyday. Glass is produced out of certain materials and certain forces used by the manufacturer. In the glass there are those forces plus the materials. The forces used have become the force of adhesion, and if that force goes, the glass will fall to pieces; the materials also are undoubtedly in the glass. Only their form is changed. The cause has become the effect. Wherever you see an effect you can always analyse it into a cause. The cause manifests itself as the effect.

It follows that if God is the cause of the universe, and the universe is the effect, then God has become the universe. All the forms and phases of Vedānta—either dualistic, or qualified monistic, or monistic—first take this position that God is not only the instrumental but also the material cause of the universe, that everything which exists is He.

The second step in Vedānta is that every soul is a part of God, one spark of that Infinite Fire. What is meant by a *part* of the Infinite? The infinite is indivisible. There cannot be parts of the infinite. The Absolute cannot be divided. What is meant therefore by saying that all these souls are sparks from Him? The nondualistic Vedāntins solve the problem by maintaining that there is really no part; that each soul is really not a part of the infinite, but actually *is* the infinite Brahman.

Then how can there be so many? The sun reflected from millions of globules of water appears to be millions of suns, and in each globule is a miniature picture of the sun-form. In the same way all these souls are but reflections and not real. They are not the real 'I' which is the God of this universe, the one undivided Being of the universe. And all these little different beings—men, women, animals, etc.—are but reflections, and not real. They are simply illusory reflections upon Nature.

There is but one infinite Being in the universe, and that Being appears as you and I. What are you and I and all these things we see? Mere self-hypnotism. There is but one existence, the infinite, the ever-blessed One. In that One we dream all these various dreams. It is the Ātman, beyond all, the infinite, beyond the known, beyond the knowable. In and through that we see the universe. It is the only reality. That reality is this table, it is the audience before me, it is the wall, it is everything *minus* the name and form. Take away the form of the table, take away the name, and what remains is that one reality.

The Vedāntist does not call that reality either He or She.² These are fictions, delusions of the human brain. There is no sex in the soul. People who are under illusion, who have become like animals, see a woman or a man. Living gods do not see men or women. How can they who are beyond everything have any sex-idea? Everyone and everything is the Ātman—the Self—the sexless, the pure, the ever-blessed. It is the name, the form, the body, which are material, and they make all this difference. If you take away these two differences of name and form, the whole universe is one, there are no two, but one everywhere. You and I are one.

The appearance of divisions is, after all, a delusion. The reality—or God—has not been divided, but only *appears* to be divided. This apparent division is caused by

² Vedānta generally uses the word *Brahman* to denote the Absolute Reality. In Sanskrit the word is in neuter gender. Swamiji sometimes uses the pronoun 'He' to refer to the Absolute, not because the Absolute is masculine, but in order to emphasize that the Absolute is a living, conscious being, not an inert, unconscious something.

looking at Him through the network of time, space, and causation. When I look at God through this network, I see Him as the material world. When I look at Him from a little higher plane, yet through the same network, I see Him as an animal; a little higher, as a human being; a little higher, as god—but yet He is the one infinite Being of the universe, and that Being we are. I am that and you are that. Not parts of it, but the whole of it.

No good comes out of those who day and night think that they are nobodies. If you day and night think you are miserable, low, and nothing, nothing you become. If you say yea, yea, “I am, I am,” so shall you be; and if you say “I am not” and think that you are not, and day and night meditate upon the idea that you are nothing, ay, nothing shall you be. That is the great fact which you ought to remember. We are the children of the Almighty, we are sparks of the infinite, divine fire. How can we be nothings? We *are* everything, we *can* do everything, and we *must* do everything. Losing faith in one’s self means losing faith in God.

दिव्यो ह्यमूर्तः पुरुषः सबाह्याभ्यन्तरो ह्यजः ।
अप्राणो ह्यमनाः शुभ्रो ह्यक्षरात् परतः परः ॥२.१.२॥

*Divyo hyamūrtah puruṣaḥ sabāhyābhyantaro hyajah;
Aprāṇo hyamanāḥ śubhro hyakṣarāt parataḥ paraḥ.*

The Eternal One is everlasting, formless, without beginning, inside and outside of every being—beyond all life, beyond all mind, the Pure One, beyond even the unchangeable, beyond everything.

एतस्माज्जायते प्राणो मनः सर्वेन्द्रियाणि च ।
खं वायुर्ज्योतिरापः पृथिवी विश्वस्य धारिणी ॥२.१.३॥

*Etasmājjāyate prāṇo manah sarvendriyāṇi ca;
Kham vāyurjyotirāpaḥ pṛthivī viśvasya dhārīṇī.*

From Him is born the vital principle. From Him comes the mind. From Him come all organs of the senses. From Him are air, light, water, and this earth, which holds all beings.

अग्निर्मूर्धा चक्षुषी चन्द्रसूर्यौ
दिशः श्रोत्रे वाग् विवृताश्च वेदाः ।
वायुः प्राणो हृदयं विश्वमस्य
पद्भ्यां पृथिवी ह्येष सर्वभूतान्तरात्मा ॥२.१.४॥

*Agnirmūrdhā cakṣuṣī candrasūryau
diśaḥ śrotre vāg vivṛtāśca vedāḥ;
Vāyuh prāṇo hṛdayam viśvamasya
padbhyām pṛthivī hyeṣa sarvabhūtāntarātmā.*

These heavens are, as it were, His head; His eyes, the sun and moon. The cardinal points are, as it were, His ears. The eternal knowledge of the Vedas is, as it were, His manifested speech. His life is the air. His heart is this universe; His feet, this world. He is the eternal Self of every being.

तस्मादृचः साम यजूंषि दीक्षा
यज्ञाश्च सर्वे क्रतवो दक्षिणाश्च ।
संवत्सरश्च यजमानश्च लोकाः
सोमो यत्र पवते यत्र सूर्यः ॥२.१.६॥

*Tasmāḍṛcaḥ sāma yajūṃṣi dikṣā
yajñāśca sarve kratavo dakṣiṇāśca;
Samvatsaraśca yajamānaśca lokāḥ
somo yatra pavate yatra sūryaḥ.*

From Him have come the different Vedas.

तस्माच्च देवा बहुधा सम्प्रसूताः
 साध्या मनुष्याः पशवो वयांसि ।
 प्राणापानौ व्रीहियवौ तपश्च
 श्रद्धा सत्यं ब्रह्मचर्यं विधिश्च ॥२.१.७॥

*Tasmācca devā bahudhā samprasūtāḥ
 sādhyā manuṣyāḥ paśavo vayāmsi;
 Prāṇāpānau vṛihiyavau tapaśca
 śraddhā satyam brahmacaryam vidhiśca.*

From Him have come the gods and the *Sādhyas*. The latter are superior beings, much higher than ordinary humans and very much like the gods. From Him are all human beings. From Him are all animals. From Him is all life; from Him, all the forces in the mind; from Him, all truth, all chastity.

सप्त प्राणाः प्रभवन्ति तस्मात्
 सप्तार्चिषः समिधः सप्त होमाः ।
 सप्त इमे लोका येषु चरन्ति प्राणा
 गुहाशया निहिताः सप्त सप्त ॥२.१.८॥

*Sapta prāṇāḥ prabhavanti tasmāt
 saptārciṣaḥ samidhaḥ sapta homāḥ;
 Sapta ime lokā yeṣu caranti prāṇā
 guhāśayā nihitāḥ sapta sapta.*

The seven organs are all from Him. The seven objects of perception are from Him. The seven actions of perception are from Him. From Him are the seven worlds in which the life currents flow.

अतः समुद्रा गिरयश्च सर्वेऽ-
 स्मात् स्यन्दन्ते सिन्धवः सर्वरूपाः ।
 अतश्च सर्वा ओषधयो रसश्च
 येनैष भूतैस्तिष्ठते ह्यन्तरात्मा ॥२.१.९॥

*Ataḥ samudrā girayaśca sarve'smāt
 syandante sindhavaḥ sarvarūpāḥ;
 Ataśca sarvā oṣadhayo rasaśca
 yenaīṣa bhūtaistiṣṭhate hyantarātmā.*

From Him are all these seas and oceans. From Him are all rivers that roll into the sea. From Him are all plants and all liquids. He is the inside. He is the inner soul of every being.

पुरुष एवेदं विश्वं कर्म तपो ब्रह्म परामृतम् ।
 एतद् यो वेद निहितं गुहायां
 सोऽविद्याग्रन्थिं विकिरतीह सोम्य ॥२.१.१०॥

*Puruṣa evedam viśvam karma tapo brahma parāmṛtam;
 Etad yo veda nihitam guhāyām
 so'vidyāgranthim vikiratiha somya.*

This great *Puruṣa*, this great One—He is this universe, He is the work, He is the sacrifice. He is Brahman and He is the trinity. Whoever knows Him frees one's own soul from the bond of ignorance and becomes free.

CANTO TWO

आविः सन्निहितं गुहाचरं नाम
महत् पदमत्रैतत् समर्पितम् ।
एजत् प्राणन्निमिषच्च यदेतज्ज्ञानथ सदस-
द्वरेण्यं परं विज्ञानाद् यद्वरिष्ठं प्रजानाम् ॥२.२.१॥

*Āviḥ sannihitam guhācaram nāma
mahat padamatraitat samarpitam;
Ejat prāṇannimiṣacca yadetajjānatha
sadasadvareṇyam
param vijñānād yadvariṣṭham prajānām.*

He is the bright one. He is inside every human soul.
From Him are all names and forms. All the animals and
human beings are from Him. He is the one Supreme.
Whoever knows Him becomes free.

How to know Him?

धनुर्गृहीत्वौपनिषदं महास्रं
शरं ह्युपासानिशितं सन्धयीत ।
आयम्य तद्भावागतेन चेतसा
लक्ष्यं तदेवाक्षरं सोम्य विद्धि ॥२.२.३॥

*Dhanurgr̥hītvaupaniṣadam mahāstram
śaram hyupāsāniṣitam sandhayita;
Āyamyā tadbhāvagatena cetasā
lakṣyam tadevākṣaram somya viddhi.*

Take this bow, which is the Upaniṣad, the knowledge of Vedānta. Place upon that bow the sharpened arrow of worship. Stretch that bow, by what? By making the mind of the same form as He, by knowing that you are He. Thus strike at it; strike at that Brahman with this arrow.

प्रणवो धनुः शरो ह्यात्मा ब्रह्म तल्लक्ष्यमुच्यते ।
अप्रमत्तेन वेद्धव्यं शरवत् तन्मयो भवेत् ॥२.२.४॥

*Praṇavo dhanuḥ śaro hyātmā brahma tallakṣyamucyate;
Apramattena veddhavyam śaravat tanmayo bhavet.*

Om is the bow. This human mind is the arrow. Brahman is the object which we want to hit. This object is to be hit by concentrating the mind. When the arrow hits the mark, it penetrates into the object and becomes one with it—a unity. Even so, this mind, the arrow, is to be thrown upon the object so that it will become one with Him—

यस्मिन् द्यौः पृथिवी चान्तरिक्षम्
ओतं मनः सह प्राणैश्च सर्वैः ।
तमेवैकं जानथ आत्मानमन्या
वाचो विमुञ्चथामृतस्यैष सेतुः ॥२.२.५॥

*Yasmin dyauḥ pṛthivī cāntarikṣam
otam manaḥ saha prāṇaiśca sarvaiḥ;
Tamevaikam jānatha ātmānamanyā
vāco vimuñcathāmṛtasyaiṣa setuḥ.*

in whom are the heavens, this earth and the skies, in whom are the mind and all that lives. In Him, that One—in Him alone, the Ātman—exist all other worlds. What is the use of all other talk? Know Him alone. This is the bridge over this life to reach universality.

The only knowledge that is of any value is to know that all worldly knowledge and activity is humbug. But few, very few, will ever know this. "Know the Ātman alone, and give up all other vain words." This is the only knowledge we gain from all the knocking about in the universe. This is the only work—to call upon everyone to "Awake! arise! and stop not till the goal is reached."³

Give up all ideas of enjoyment in this world and the next, care only for God and Truth. We are here to know truth, not for enjoyment. Leave that to brutes, who enjoy as we never can. We are thinking beings and must struggle on until we conquer death, until we see the light.

Do not spend yourself in vain talking that bears no fruit. Worship of society and popular opinion is idolatry. The Ātman has no sex, no country, no place, no time. Think constantly of your real nature. Get rid of superstition. Do not hypnotize yourself into a belief in your own inferiority. Day and night tell yourself what you really are, until you *actually* realize your oneness with God.

What an immense pleasure people take in the objects of the senses! They go anywhere, run through any danger, to get the thing which they love, the thing which their senses like. What is wanted of a devotee is this very kind of intense love which has, however, to be directed to God. When men are really and intensely in love with women or women with men, they feel a kind of natural annoyance in the presence of all those whom they do not love. Exactly the same state of impatience in regard to things that are not loved comes to the mind when higher devotion (*parā-bhakti*) holds sway over it. Even to talk about things other than God becomes distasteful to them. "Think of Him,

³ A favourite quote of Swamiji, inspired by the exhortation in the *Kāthopaniṣad*, 1.3.14—उत्तिष्ठत, जाग्रत, प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत ।

think of Him alone, and give up all other vain words." Those who talk of Him alone, the devotee finds to be friendly, while those who talk of anything else appear to a devotee to be unfriendly.

This Upaniṣad goes on to show a practical way. So far it is very figurative.

अरा इव रथनाभौ संहता यत्र नाड्यः
स एषोऽन्तश्चरते बहुधा जायमानः
ओमित्येवं ध्यायथ आत्मानं
स्वस्ति वः पाराय तमसः परस्तात् ॥२.२.६॥

*Arā iva rathanābhau samhatā yatra nāḍyaḥ
sa eṣo'ntaścarate bahudhā jāyamānaḥ;
Omityevam dhyāyatha ātmānam
svasti vaḥ pārāya tamaśaḥ parastāt.*

Just as all the spokes of a wheel meet at the axle, even so in this body is that place from which all the arteries flow and at which they all meet. There, meditate upon the Om that is in the heart. May thou succeed. May the gentle one attain the goal. May you go beyond all darkness to Him—

यः सर्वज्ञः सर्वविद् यस्यैष महिमा भुवि ।
दिव्ये ब्रह्मपुरे ह्येष व्योमन्यात्मा प्रतिष्ठितः ॥
मनोमयः प्राणशरीरनेता
प्रतिष्ठितोऽन्ने हृदयं सन्निधाय ।
तद् विज्ञानेन परिपश्यन्ति धीरा
आनन्दरूपममृतं यद् विभाति ॥२.२.७॥

*Yaḥ sarvajñaḥ sarvavid yasyaiśa mahimā bhuvi;
Divye brahmaṇpure hyeṣa vyomnyātmā pratiṣṭhitah.
Manomayaḥ prāṇaśarīranetā
pratiṣṭhito'nne hṛdayam sannidhāya;*

*Tadvijñānena pariśaśyanti dhīrā
ānandarūpamamṛtam yad vibhāti.*

who is omniscient, the all-knowing. His glory is in heaven, on earth and everywhere. He who has become the mind, the *prāṇa*, He who is the leader in the body, He who is established in the food, the energy of life. By supreme knowledge the sages see Him whose nature is bliss, who shines as immortality.

There are two words: one is *jñāna*; the other, *vijñāna*. *Jñāna* may be translated as science (this means intellectual knowledge only) and *vijñāna* as realization. God cannot be perceived through intellectual knowledge. We need realization or direct experience. One who has realized God—what will become of such a person?

भिद्यते हृदयग्रन्थिश्छिद्यन्ते सर्वसंशयाः ।
क्षीयन्ते चास्य कर्माणि तस्मिन् दृष्टे परावरे ॥२.२.८॥

*Bhidyate hṛdayagranthiśchidyante sarvasamśayāḥ;
Kṣīyante cāśya karmāṇi tasmin dṛṣṭe parāvare.*

“All doubts vanish forever, and all the crookedness of the heart is made straight, and all the bondages vanish, and the results of action and karma fly when He is seen who is nearest of the near and the farthest of the far.” That is religion, that is *all* of religion. The rest is mere theory, dogma, so many ways of going to that state of direct perception.

Religion does not depend upon scholarship. It is the soul itself, it is God, not to be attained by simple book-knowledge or powers of speech. You may take the most learned people and ask them to think of spirit as spirit; they cannot. It is impossible to think of spirit without training.

So no matter how much theology you may learn—you may be a great philosopher and greater theologian—a Vedāntist would say, “Well, that has nothing to do with religion.” Can you think of spirit as spirit? Then alone all doubts cease and all crookedness of the heart is made straight. Then only all fears vanish and all doubtings are forever silent when the soul and God come face to face.

Realization alone is the *soul* of religion. Everyone can abide by some observances and formalities. Everyone can fulfil certain injunctions and prohibitions, but how few have this longing for realization! This intense longing—becoming mad after realizing God or directly experiencing the Self—is real spirituality.

To realize the spirit as spirit is practical religion. Everything else is good so far as it leads to this one grand idea. Realization is to be attained through renunciation and meditation—renunciation of all the senses, cutting the knots, the chains that bind us down to matter. “I do not want to get material life. I do not want the sense-life, but something higher.” That is renunciation. Then, by the power of meditation, undo the mischief that has been done.

Cleanse the mind, this is all of religion. Until we ourselves remove the spots, we cannot see the Reality as it is. Get rid of the defects within yourself, and you will not be able to see any without. A baby sees robbery done and it means nothing to the baby. The wicked see this universe as a hell, and the partially good see it as heaven, while the perfect beings realize it as God Himself. Then alone the veil falls from their eyes and, purified and cleansed, they find their whole vision changed. The bad dreams that have been torturing them for millions of years all vanish.

Once you find the hidden object in a puzzle picture, you see it ever more. So once you are free and

stainless, you see only freedom and purity in the world around. Your real nature now stands unfolded as being higher than heaven, more perfect than this universe of ours, more infinite than infinite time, more omnipresent than the omnipresent space. Thus alone you become fearless and free. Then all delusions cease, all miseries vanish, all fears come to an end forever. Birth goes away and with it death; pains fly, and with them fly away pleasures; earths vanish, and with them vanish heavens; bodies vanish, and with them vanishes the mind also. That moment all the knots of the heart are cut asunder, all crooked places are made straight, and this world vanishes as a dream. And when we awake, we wonder how we ever came to dream such trash! The whole universe disappears, as it were—it becomes transfigured into one infinite, unbreakable, unchangeable existence and we find we are one with that existence.

Ramanuja says in his commentary on *Brahma-Sūtra* 1.1.1—"Meditation is a constant remembrance (of the thing meditated upon) flowing like an unbroken stream of oil poured out from one vessel to another. When this kind of remembering has been attained (in relation to God), all bondages break. Thus it is spoken of in the scriptures regarding constant remembering as a means to liberation.

"This remembering, again, is of the same form as seeing, because it is of the same meaning as in this *Muṇḍaka* passage, 'When He who is far and near is seen, the bonds of the heart are broken, all doubts vanish, and all effects of work disappear.' He who is near can be seen, but he who is far can only be remembered. Nevertheless the scripture says that we have to see Him who is near as well as Him who is far, thereby indicating to us that the above kind of *remembering* is as good as *seeing*. This remembrance when exalted assumes the form of

seeing.... This constant remembrance is denoted by the word *Bhakti*.⁴

Religion is to be realized, not only heard, it is not in learning some doctrine like a parrot. Neither is religion mere intellectual assent—that is nothing. Religion must come into us. Therefore the greatest proof that we have of the existence of God is not because our reason says so, but because God has been *seen* by the ancients as well as by the moderns. Let us understand this, and the more we understand it, the less we shall have of sectarianism, for only the person who has realized God and seen Him is truly religious. In such a person alone the knots have been cut asunder and doubts have subsided. This person has become free from the fruits of action.

How can you doubt? How foolish and childish you will think these fights and quarrels of different sciences and different philosophies and all this! You will smile at them. All doubts will vanish, and all work will go away.

⁴ ध्यानं च तैलधारावद् अविच्छिन्नस्मृतिसंतानरूपम्—‘ध्रुवा स्मृतिः । स्मृतिलम्बे सर्वग्रन्थीनां विप्रमोक्षः ।’ (Ch. Up. 7.26.2) इति ध्रुवायाः स्मृतेः अपवर्ग-उपायत्व-श्रवणात् । सा च स्मृतिः दर्शन-समानाकारा—‘भित्तये हृदयग्रन्थिश्छिद्यन्ते सर्वसंशयाः । क्षीयन्ते चास्य कर्माणि तस्मिन् दृष्टे परावरे ।’ (Mu. Up. 2.2.8) इति अनेन-ऐकार्थ्यात् । एवं च सति—‘आत्मा वा अरे द्रष्टव्यः’ (Br. Up. 2.4.5) इति अनेन निदिध्यासनस्य दर्शनरूपता विधीयते । भवति च स्मृतेः भावना-प्रकर्षात् दर्शनरूपता । वाक्यकारेण एतत् सर्वं प्रपञ्चितम् । ‘वेदनमुपासनं स्यात् तद् विषये श्रवणात् ।’ इति सर्वासु उपनिषत्सु मोक्षसाधनतया विहितं वेदनं उपासनं इति उक्तम् । ... ‘उपासनं स्याद् ध्रुवानुस्मृतिः दर्शनात् निर्वचनात् च ।’ इति तस्यैव वेदनस्य उपासनरूपस्य असकृद् आवृत्तस्य ध्रुवानुस्मृतित्वम् उपवर्णितम् । ... एवरूपा ध्रुवानुस्मृतिः एव भक्ति-शब्देन अभिधीयते, उपासन-पर्यायत्वाद् भक्तिशब्दस्य ।

हिरण्मये परे कोशे विरजं ब्रह्म निष्कलम् ।
तच्छुभ्रं ज्योतिषां ज्योतिस्तद् यदात्मविदो विदुः ॥२.२.९॥

*Hiraṇmaye pare kośe virajam brahma niṣkalam;
Tacchubhram jyotiṣāṃ jyotistad yadātmavido viduḥ.*

Beyond the golden sheath is Brahman—without any impurity and without parts. His is the brightness, the Light of all light. The knowers of the Ātman realize Him as such.

And when you have done that,

न तत्र सूर्यो भाति न चन्द्रतारकं
नेमा विद्युतो भान्ति कुतोऽयमग्निः ।
तमेव भान्तमनुभाति सर्वं
तस्य भासा सर्वमिदं विभाति ॥२.२.१०॥

*Na tatra sūryo bhāti na candratāarakam
nemā vidyuto bhānti kuto'ayamagniḥ;
Tameva bhāntamanubhāti sarvam
tasya bhāsā sarvamidam vibhāti.*

there the sun cannot illumine, nor the moon, nor the stars. A flash of lightning cannot illumine the place; it is mental—away, deep in the mind. He shining, everything else shines. When He shines within, the whole person shines. This universe shines through His light:

Take such passages for memorizing later on, when studying the Upaniṣads.

The difference between the Hindu mind and the European mind is that whereas in the West truths are arrived at by examining the particular, the Hindu takes the opposite course. There is nowhere such metaphysical sublimity as in the Upaniṣads.

The *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* leads you on beyond the senses—to things infinitely more sublime than the suns and stars. First Āṅgiras tries to describe God through sense sublimities—that His feet are the earth, His head the heavens. But that does not quite express what he wants to say. He first gives that idea to Śaunaka, his student, and then slowly takes him beyond, until he gives Śaunaka the highest idea—the negative—too high to describe.

ब्रह्मैवेदममृतं पुरस्ताद् ब्रह्म
 पश्चाद् ब्रह्म दक्षिणतश्चोत्तरेण ।
 अधश्चोर्ध्वं च प्रसृतं
 ब्रह्मैवेदं विश्वमिदं वरिष्ठम् ॥२.२.११॥

*Brahmaivedamamṛtam purastād brahma
 paścād brahma dakṣiṇataścottareṇa;
 Adhaścordhvam ca prasṛtam
 brahmaivedam viśvamidam varīṣṭham.*

He is immortal, He is before us, He is behind us, He is on the right side, He is on the left, He is above, He is beneath.

Motion is a necessary adjunct of the phenomenal, but it cannot be predicated of the universal. Every little bit, every atom inside the universe, is in a constant state of change and motion, but the universe as a whole is unchangeable, because motion or change is a relative thing. We can think of something in motion only in comparison with something which is not moving. There must be two things in order to understand motion. The whole mass of the universe, taken as a unit, cannot move. In regard to what will it move? It cannot be said to change. With regard to what will it change? So the whole is the

Absolute, but within it every particle is in a constant state of flux and change. It is unchangeable and changeable at the same time, Impersonal and Personal in one. This is our conception of the universe, of motion and of God, and that is what is meant by "Thou art That."⁵

Thus we see that the Impersonal instead of doing away with the Personal, the Absolute instead of pulling down the Relative, only explains it to the full satisfaction of our reason and heart. The Personal God and all that exists in the universe are the same Impersonal Being seen through our minds. When we shall be rid of our minds, our little personalities, we shall become one with It. This is what is meant by "Thou art That." For we must know our true nature, the Absolute.

⁵ *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, 6.8.7— तत्त्वमसि ।

CHAPTER THREE

CANTO ONE

द्वा सुपर्णा सयुजा सखाया
समानं वृक्षं परिषस्वजाते ।
तयोरन्यः पिप्पलं स्वाद्वत्त्य-
नश्नन्नन्यो अभिचाकशीति ॥३.१.१॥

समाने वृक्षे पुरुषो निमग्नोऽ-
नीशया शोचति मुह्यमानः ।
जुष्टं यदा पश्यत्यन्यमीश-
मस्य महिमानमिति वीतशोकः ॥३.१.२॥

*Dvā suparṇā sayujā sakhāyā
samānam vṛkṣam pariśasvajāte;
Tayoranyah pippalam svādvattya-
naśnannanyo abhicākaśīti.*

*Samāne vṛkṣe puruṣo nimagno'-
nīśayā śocati muhyamānaḥ;
Juṣṭam yadā paśyatyanyamīśa-
masya mahimānamiti vītaśokaḥ.*

The whole of the Vedānta philosophy is in this story:
Upon the same tree there are two birds, one on the top, the
other below. The bird on the top is calm, silent, and
majestic, immersed in his own glory; the bird on the lower

branches, eating sweet and bitter fruits by turns, hopping from branch to branch, is becoming happy and miserable by turns.

After a time the lower bird eats an exceptionally bitter fruit and gets disgusted and looks up and sees the other bird, that wondrous one of golden plumage, who eats neither sweet nor bitter fruits, who is neither happy nor miserable, but calm, and who sees nothing beyond his Self. The lower bird longs for this condition, thinking, "How I would love to be like him!" and hops a little way towards him. Soon he forgets all about his desire to be like the upper bird, and again begins to eat the fruits.

After a little while he eats another exceptionally bitter fruit, which makes him feel miserable, and he again looks up, and tries to get nearer to the upper bird. Once more he forgets and after a time he looks up, and so on he goes again and again, until he comes very near to the beautiful bird. He sees the reflection of light from the upper bird's plumage playing around his own body. He feels a change and seems to melt away. Still nearer he comes, and everything about him melts away, and at last he understands this wonderful change.

The lower bird was, as it were, only the substantial-looking shadow, the reflection of the higher; he himself was in essence the upper bird all the time. This eating of fruits, sweet and bitter, this lower, little bird, weeping and happy by turns, was a vain chimera, a dream: all along, the real bird was there above, calm and silent, glorious and majestic, beyond grief, beyond sorrow.

The upper bird is God, the Lord of this universe; and the lower bird is the human soul, eating the sweet and bitter fruits of this world. The human soul knows that it is weak and small, and tells all sorts of lies. It says it is a woman or it is a man. It says it will do good or do bad; it

will go to heaven and will do a hundred sorts of things. In delirium it talks and works, and the central idea of its delirium is that it is weak. Thus it suffers because it thinks it is nobody. It is a created little being. It is a slave. It is governed by some god or gods, and so is unhappy.

Now and then comes a heavy blow to the soul. For a time, it stops the eating and goes towards the unknown God, and a flood of light comes. It thinks that this world is a vain show. But again the senses drag it down, and it begins as before to eat the sweet and bitter fruits of the world. Again an exceptionally hard blow comes. Its heart becomes open again to divine light. Thus gradually it approaches God, and as it gets nearer and nearer, it finds its old self melting away. It finds that its individuality—its low, vulgar, intensely selfish individuality—is melting away.

When it has come near enough, it sees that it is no other than God, and it exclaims, "Why, it was my own glory whom I called God, and this little 'I', this misery, was all hallucination, it never existed. I was never a woman, never a man, never any of these things." Then the soul gives up all sorrow.

The lower bird was but the reflection of the one above. So we are in reality one with God, but the reflection makes us seem many, as when the one sun reflects in a million dew-drops and seems a million tiny suns. The reflection must vanish if we are to identify ourselves with our real nature which is divine. The universe itself can never be the limit of our satisfaction. That is why the miser gathers more and more money, that is why the robber robs, the sinner sins, that is why you are learning philosophy. All have one purpose. There is no other purpose in life, save to reach this freedom. Consciously or unconsciously we are all striving for perfection. Every being must attain to it.

That which is in every atom, everywhere present, the essence of all things, the God of this universe—know that thou art He, know that thou art free. This is what Vedānta teaches. It tells us that we are essentially divine. It shows us the real unity of being, and that each one of us is God Himself manifested on earth. All of us, from the lowest worm that crawls under our feet to the highest beings to whom we look up with wonder and awe—all are manifestations of the same Lord.

Like the lower bird which found that it was the upper bird all the time, we too, if we persevere in our efforts, will find that we are the Self all the time and the rest was but a dream. To separate ourselves utterly from matter and all belief in its reality is true knowledge. We must always keep in our mind “*Om Tat Sat*”, that is, Om the only real existence. This is the cornerstone of Vedānta: “Brahman alone is true, all else is false and I am Brahman.”⁶ Only by telling this to ourselves until we make it a part of our very being, can we rise beyond all duality, beyond both good and evil, pleasure and pain, joy and sorrow, and know ourselves as the one, eternal, unchanging, infinite—the “One without a second” (*ekam eva advitiyam*).

यदा पश्यः पश्यते रुक्मवर्णं
कर्तारमीशं पुरुषं ब्रह्मयोनिम् ।
तदा विद्वान् पुण्यपापे विधूय
निरञ्जनः परमं साम्यमुपैति ॥३.१.३॥

Yadā paśyaḥ paśyate rukmavarṇam
kartāramīśam puruṣam brahmayonim;
Tadā vidvān puṇyapāpe vidhūya
nirañjanaḥ paramam sāmyamupaiti.

⁶ ब्रह्म सत्यं जगन्मिथ्या । अहं ब्रह्मास्मि ।

When this Golden One—the Creator, the Lord, the *Puruṣa*, the God of this universe—is seen, then the sage has washed off all stains of good and bad deeds. (Good deeds are as much stains as bad deeds.)⁷ Then the sage attains to total sameness with the Pure One.

The sage knows that He who is the Soul of all souls—this *Ātman*—shines through all. He is the man, the woman, the cow, the dog. He is in all animals. He is in the sin and in the sinner. He is the *sannyāsin*, He is in the ruler, He is everywhere.

प्राणो ह्येष यः सर्वभूतैर्विभाति
विज्ञानं विद्वान् भवते नातिवादी ।
आत्मक्रीड आत्मरतिः क्रियावान्
एष ब्रह्मविदां वरिष्ठः ॥३.१.४॥

*Prāṇo hyeṣa yaḥ sarvabhūtairvibhāti
vijānan vidvān bhavate nātivādī;
Ātmakrīḍa ātmaratiḥ kriyāvān
eṣa brahmavidām varīṣṭhaḥ.*

Knowing this the sage speaks not. (He gives up criticizing anyone, scolding anyone, thinking evil of anyone.) His desires have gone into the *Ātman*. This is the sign of the greatest knowers of Brahman—that they see

⁷ All karma performed with desire produces results: good karma, good results—meaning happiness; bad karma, bad results—meaning pain and sorrow. No matter what the result, to experience it we need a body. No matter what the body, it comes packaged with limitations, vulnerability, disease, old age, and death. That is why, in the ultimate analysis, good deeds and bad deeds are both “stains”. Vedānta teaches us to do all karma *without* desire for its results. That produces purity of mind (*citta-śuddhi*), an indispensable requirement for Self-realization.

nothing else but Him. He is playing through all these things. Various forms—from the highest gods to the lowest worms—are all He.

“He whose joy is only in himself, whose desires are only in himself, he has *learned* his lessons.” This is the great lesson that we are here to learn through myriads of births and heavens and hells—that there is nothing to be asked for, or desired for, beyond one’s Self. “The greatest thing I can obtain is my Self.” “I am free,” therefore I require none else for my happiness. “Alone through eternity, because I was free, am free, and will remain free forever.” This is Vedānta.

Neither powers nor wealth nor learning nor eloquence nor anything else will prevail, but purity, *living the life*—in one word, *anubhūti*, realization. Let there be a dozen such lion-souls in each country, lions who have broken their own bonds, who have touched the Infinite, whose soul is gone to Brahman, who care neither for wealth nor power nor fame—and these lion-souls will be enough to shake the world.

Here lies the secret. Says Patañjali, the father of Yoga: “When one rejects all the superhuman powers, then the person attains to the cloud of virtue.”⁸ Such a person *sees* God—*becomes* God, and helps others to become the same. This is all I have to preach. Doctrines have been expounded enough. There are books by the million. Oh, for an ounce of practice!

⁸ See *Yoga-sūtras* 4.28—

प्रसंख्यातेऽप्यकुसीदस्य सर्वथा विवेकख्यातेर्धर्ममेघः समाधिः ॥

Swamiji’s translation and commentary on this sūtra can be seen in CW 1:302.

सत्येन लभ्यस्तपसा ह्येष आत्मा
 सम्यग्ज्ञानेन ब्रह्मचर्येण नित्यम् ।
 अन्तःशरीरे ज्योतिर्मयो हि शुभ्रो
 यं पश्यन्ति यतयः क्षीणदोषाः ॥३.१.५॥

सत्यमेव जयते नानृतं
 सत्येन पन्था विततो देवयानः ।
 येनाऽक्रमन्त्यृषयो ह्याप्तकामा
 यत्र तत् सत्यस्य परमं निधानम् ॥३.१.६॥

*Satyena labhyastapasā hyeṣa ātmā
 samyagjñānena brahmacāryeṇa nityam;
 Antaḥśarīre jyotirmayo hi śubhro
 yaṁ paśyanti yatayaḥ kṣīṇadoṣāḥ.*

*Satyameva jayate nānṛtam
 satyena panthā vitato devayānaḥ;
 Yenā'kramantyrṣayo hyāptakāmā
 yatra tat satyasya paramam nidhānam.*

Divine wisdom is to be got by devotion, meditation and chastity. "Truth alone triumphs, and not untruth. Through truth alone the way is spread to Brahman"—where alone love and truth are.

I will compare truth to a corrosive substance of infinite power. It burns its way in wherever it falls—in soft substances at once, hard granite slowly, but it must. "Youth and beauty vanish, life and wealth vanish, name and fame vanish, even the mountains crumble into dust. Friendship and love vanish. Truth alone abides." God of Truth, be Thou alone my guide! "Without fear, without shopkeeping, caring for neither friend nor foe, do thou hold on to Truth, *sannyāsin*, and from this moment give up this world and the next and all that are to come—their

enjoyments and their vanities. Truth, be thou alone my guide.”

It is the patient upbuilding of character, the intense struggle to *realize* the truth, which alone will tell in the future of humanity. Perfect sincerity, holiness, gigantic intellect, and an all-conquering will. Let only a handful of people work with these, and the whole world will be revolutionized. Multitude counts for nothing. A few heart-whole, sincere, and energetic people can do more in a year than a mob in a century. If there is heat in one body, then those others that come near it must catch it. This is the law. So success is ours, so long as we keep up the heat, the spirit of truth, sincerity, and love.

My own life has been a very chequered one, but I have always found the eternal words verified: “Truth alone triumphs, not untruth. Through truth alone lies the way to God.” Be you holy and, above all, sincere; and do not for a moment give up your trust in the Lord, and you will see the light. Whatever is truth will remain forever; whatever is not, none can preserve. Whatever others think or do, lower not your standard of purity, morality, and love of God.

Above all, beware of all secret organizations. They make men and women impure, weak, and narrow; and the weak have no will and never work. Have nothing to do with secret societies. All this false love of mystery should be knocked on the head the first time it comes into your mind. No one who is the least impure will ever become religious. Holiness is the highest and divinest power on earth and in heaven. Do not care for a moment who joins hands with you or not, be sure that you touch the hand of the Lord. That is enough.

Stand firm like a rock. Truth always triumphs. Let the children of Sri Ramakrishna be true to themselves and

everything will be all right. Be pure, staunch, and sincere to the very backbone. If you have marked anything in the disciples of Sri Ramakrishna, it is this—they are sincere to the backbone. Upon ages of struggle a character is built. Be not discouraged. Truth can never be lost; for ages it may be hidden under rubbish, but it will show itself sooner or later. Truth is indestructible, virtue is indestructible, purity is indestructible.

Work on, be lions; and the Lord will bless you. I shall work incessantly until I die, and even after death I shall work for the good of the world. Truth is infinitely more weighty than untruth; so is goodness. If you possess these, they will make their way by sheer gravity. I like to work on calmly and silently, and the Lord is always with me. Follow me, if you will, by being intensely sincere, perfectly unselfish and, above all, by being perfectly pure. My blessings go with you.

यं यं लोकं मनसा संविभाति
 विशुद्धसत्त्वः कामयते यांश्च कामान् ।
 तं तं लोकं जयते तांश्च कामां-
 स्तस्मादात्मज्ञं ह्यर्चयेत् भूतिकामः ॥३.१.१०॥

*Yam yam lokam manasā samvibhāti
 viśuddhasattvaḥ kāmāyate yāṁśca kāmān;
 Tam tam lokam jayate tāṁśca kāmām-
 stasmādātmaññam hyarcayed bhūtikāmaḥ.*

The Upaniṣad tells us that if we want to get to heaven and all these places, we will get there. That is to say, in the language of the Vedas, whatever one desires one gets.

There is nothing outside of the mind. Even what you see as this world does not exist outside. It is all a mental projection. When the mind becomes functionless, it reflects

the Brahman-consciousness. Then the vision of all spheres of existence may supervene, "whatever sphere one may call up in mind." Whatsoever is resolved on becomes realized at once. One who, even on attaining this state of unfalsified self-determination, preserves one's watchfulness and is free from the bondage of desire, verily attains to the knowledge of Brahman. On the other hand, one who loses balance after reaching this state gets the manifold powers but falls off from the supreme goal.

The Ātman neither comes nor goes. It has neither birth nor death. You are all omnipresent, you are the Ātman. You are at this moment in heaven and in the darkest places too. You are everywhere. Where are you not? Therefore how can you go anywhere? These comings and goings are all fictions—the Ātman can never come or go.

These visions change. When the mind is in a particular condition it sees a certain vision, dreams a certain dream. In our present condition, we are all seeing this world. But in this very place, this condition will change. And the very thing we are seeing as earth we shall see as heaven, or we may see it as the opposite place or as any place we like.

All this depends on our desires. But this dream cannot be permanent. We know that any dream in the night must break. Not one of these dreams will be permanent. We dream of what we think we will do. So these people who are always thinking in this life of going to heaven and meeting their friends, will do that as soon as their dream of this life is ended. And they will be compelled by their desires in this life to see those other dreams. And those who are superstitious and are frightened into ideas such as hell will dream that they are in the hot place. Those whose ideas in this life are brutal will become, when they die, pigs and hogs and all these things. Whatever we desire, we find.

This Upaniṣad starts by telling us that those who know nothing better than a little road-making or hospital-building and such good works will have a good dream when they die. They will dream that they are in a place where they will have god-bodies and can eat anything they like, jump about, go through walls and so on, and sometimes come down and startle someone.

In our mythology there are the *devas*, who live in heaven. The *devas* are like angels, only some of them from time to time become wicked and find that the daughters of human beings are good. Our deities are celebrated for this sort of thing. What can you expect of them? They were here as simply hospital-makers—and have no more knowledge than other people. They did some good work with the result that they have become *devas*. They did their good work for fame or name or some reward and have got this reward, dreaming that they are in heaven and doing all these things.

Then there are demons who have done evil in this life. But our books say that these dreams will not last very long, and then they will either come back and take the old dream again as human beings, or still worse. Therefore, according to these books, every sensible, right-thinking person should, once and for all, brush aside all such foolish ideas as heavens and hells.

Two things exist in the world—dream and reality. What we call life is a succession of dreams. One dream is called heaven, another earth, another hell, and so on. One dream is called the human body, another the animal body, and so on. All these are dreams. The reality is what is called Brahman, the Being who is existence, knowledge, bliss absolute.

We must get rid of all dreams. We must be able to stand aside and know our own nature. We must go beyond

this self-hypnotism. When we desire, we are hypnotizing ourselves. When we desire to go to heaven, that hypnotizes us and we will find we are in heaven after we die. We will see angels and all sorts of things. I know about fifty people who have come from death's door, and they all have told me stories about being in heaven. These are the mythologies of our country, and it shows that it is all hypnotism.

Where Western people make a great mistake is here. So far as they have these ideas of heaven and hell, we agree with them. But they say this earth is real. That cannot be. If this is real, then heavens and hells are also real, because the proof of each of these is the same. If one is a hypnotic condition, the whole of it must be so.

Vedāntists say that not only are heavens hypnotic, but so is this life and everything here. Some people want to go from one hypnotic condition to another, and these are what we call the fools of the world—the *Samsārins*, the travellers who go from dream to dream, from one hypnotic trance to another, seeing themselves as men or women.

What nonsense is this—the idea of a man or a woman in the soul! It is terrible hypnotism. How can the soul have any sex? It is self-hypnotism. You have hypnotized yourself and think you are men and women. If we are fools, we will again hypnotize ourselves and want to go to heaven, and hear all this trash of gods and goddesses and all sorts of humbug, and will kneel down and pray, and have god-bodies by the millions to worship on thrones. In the end, we have to hypnotize ourselves again.

We are all in the same boat here, and all who are in the same boat see each other. Stand aside—free, beyond dream and hypnotism. Some fools have hypnotized themselves that they have bodies and wives and all these things. I also am a fool and have hypnotized myself that I have senses and all these things. So we are all in the same

boat and therefore see each other. Millions of people may be here whom we do not see, touch or feel. Just as in hypnotism there may be three books before you, but you are hypnotized and are told that one of them does not exist. And you may live for a year in that condition and never see it. Suppose thirty men are under the same hypnotic influence and are told that this book does not exist. Those who are in this condition will all fail to see the book. Men, women, animals are all hypnotized, and all see this dream because they are all in the same boat.

Vedānta says that this whole universe—physical and mental—is hypnotic. Who is the cause of this hypnotism? You yourself are the cause. This weeping and wailing and knocking your heads into corners against brick walls, as it were, will not do you the least good.

However, knocking everything that is hypnotic on the head leads to what is called non-attachment, and clinging to more and more hypnotism is attachment. That is why in all religions you will find they want to give up the world, although many of them do not understand it. Some fellows used to starve themselves in forests and see the devil coming to them.

You have heard those wonderful stories of India—of how those magicians can make a person see a rope rise from the ground to the skies. I have not seen any of them. One of the Mogul emperors, Jahāngir, mentions it. He says, "Allāh, what do these devils do? They take a rope or a chain, and the chain is thrown up and up until it becomes firm—as if it were stuck to something. Then they let a cat go up the chain—then a dog, then a wolf, then a tiger, then a lion. All walk up the chain and vanish. Sometimes they will send men up the chain. Two men will go up and begin to fight, and then both of them vanish. And after a while you hear a noise of fighting—and then a head, a hand, and

a foot fall. And, mind you, there are two or three thousand people present. The fellow showing it has only a loin-cloth on."

They say this is hypnotism—throwing a net over the audience. It functions within a certain limit. If you go beyond this limit or come close to the hypnotist, you do not see the magic. The man who is playing does not see anything. So if you stand near him, you also do not see anything. Such is the hypnotism here.

So we have either to get beyond the limit of hypnotism (this is the path of *jñāna*) or stand within the limit but holding on to God (this is the path of *bhakti*). God is the Great Player who is playing all these things: He projects the whole universe.

Māyā is the power which creates all these tremendous things. God is the ruler of *māyā*, and the human soul is ruled by this *māyā*. Since Brahman or Ātman is the only reality, we can express this idea in a better way: That portion of the Ātman which rules *māyā* is called God, and the little bits of the Ātman deluded by it are called souls—you and I.

The *bhakta* says, "Crawl nearer and nearer to God 'the hypnotist,' and when you get to the centre you do not see anything. You become free."

The *jñānī* does not care to undergo all this trouble. The *jñānī* reasons differently. When you are covered with mud, will you take more mud to wash yourself—unless you are a lunatic? So why increase the hypnotism? Get out of the circle. Cut it off and be free. When you are free you will be able to play, even without being caught yourself. At present you are caught, then you will catch—that will be all the difference.

Therefore in this Upaniṣad we are told that we must give up this idea of heaven and of birth and death and so

on. It is all nonsense. No person was ever born or ever died. They are all hypnotized. The so-called eternal life and all that is nonsense. Heaven is hypnotism and so is earth.

It is not as the materialist says: that heaven is a superstition and God is a superstition, but the materialist himself is not a superstition. If one is superstition, so is everything else that depends on it. If one link is nonexistent, the whole chain is nonexistent. The existence of the whole chain depends on the existence of one link, and vice versa. If there is no heaven, there is no earth, and if there is no God, there is no human being. You are under this hypnotism, and so long as you are under it, you will have to see God and nature and the soul. And when you are beyond this hypnotism, God will vanish—so will nature, and so will the soul.⁹ So we must give up all these ideas of God and heaven and enjoying the fruits of karma, and so on.

⁹ What is meant here is that the partitions apparently dividing the One, ever-existent reality into entities called God, nature, and soul will vanish.

CANTO TWO

The Upaniṣad next goes on to tell us how to get out of this hypnotism. And the one important idea that emerges from various other ideas is that we must be one with the universal Being. What is manifested is all nonsense; it is all *māyā*. But that upon which all these things are being played—the background upon which all this picture is painted—is the universal Being and we are one with Him. We must realize this truth.

नायमात्मा प्रवचनेन लभ्यो
न मेधया न बहुना श्रुतेन ।
यमेवैष वृणुते तेन लभ्य-
स्तस्यैष आत्मा विवृणुते तनुं स्वाम् ॥३.२.३॥

*Nāyamātmā pravacanena labhyo
na medhayā na bahunā śrutenā;
Yamevaiṣa vṛṇute tena labhya-
stasyaiṣa ātmā vivṛṇute tanum svām.*

The Self is not to be reached by too much talking, not even by the highest intellects, not even by the study of scriptures. This is what the Upaniṣad itself says. Do you find in any other scriptures such a bold assertion as that—not even by the study of the Vedas will you reach the Self?

नायमात्मा बलहीनेन लभ्यो
 न च प्रमादात् तपसो वाऽप्यलिङ्गात् ।
 एतैरुपायैर्यतते यस्तु विद्वां-
 स्तस्यैष आत्मा विशते ब्रह्मधाम ॥३.२.४॥

*Nāyamātmā balahīnena labhyo
 na ca pramādāt tapaso vā'pyalingāt;
 Etairupāyairyatate yastu vidvān-
 stasyaiṣa ātmā viśate brahmadhāma.*

'This Self is not accessible to the weak,' says this Upaniṣad. Both physical weakness and mental weakness are meant here. If there is no strength in body and mind, the Ātman cannot be realized. Never be weak. This I lay down as the first essential in all I teach: anything that brings spiritual, mental, or physical weakness, touch it not with the toes of your feet. Religion is the manifestation of the natural strength that is within us. A spring of infinite power is coiled up and is inside this little body, and that spring is spreading itself. Anything that makes you weak cannot be true.

The strong, the hardy are the only fit students. You must be strong; you have infinite strength within you. How else will you conquer anything? How else will you come to God? What can puny, little, decrepit things do? They will break to pieces whenever the mysterious forces of the body and mind are even slightly awakened by the practice of any of the yogas. It is the young, the healthy, the strong that can score success.

The weak have no place here, in this life or in any other life. Weakness leads to slavery. Weakness leads to all kinds of misery, physical and mental. Weakness is death. There are hundreds of thousands of microbes surrounding us, but they cannot harm us unless we become weak, until

the body is ready and predisposed to receive them. There may be a million microbes of misery floating about us. Never mind! They dare not approach us, they have no power to get hold on us, until the mind is weakened. This is the great fact: strength is life, weakness is death. Strength is felicity, life eternal, immortal; weakness is constant strain and misery: weakness is death.

Physical strength, therefore, is absolutely necessary. It is the strong body alone that can bear the shock of reaction resulting from the attempt to control the organs. So we must be strong and healthy. When the miserably weak attempt any of the yogas, they are likely to get some incurable malady, or they weaken their minds. Voluntarily weakening the body is really no prescription for spiritual enlightenment.

The mentally weak also cannot succeed in attaining the Ātman. We must be cheerful. In the Western world the idea of religious people is that they never smile, that a dark cloud must always hang over their faces which, again, must be long-drawn with the jaws almost collapsed. People with emaciated bodies and long faces are fit subjects for the physician, they are not yogis. Despondency is not religion, whatever else it may be. By being pleasant always and smiling, it takes you nearer to God, nearer than any prayer.

How can those minds that are gloomy and dull love? If they talk of love, it is false; they want to hurt others. Think of the fanatics; they make the longest faces, and all their religion is to fight against others in word and act. Think of what they have done in the past, and of what they would do now if they were given a free hand. They would deluge the whole world in blood tomorrow if it would bring them power. By worshipping power and making long faces, they lose every bit of love from their hearts. So whoever always

feels miserable will never come to God. It is not religion, it is diabolism to say, "I am so miserable." Everyone has one's own burden to bear. If you are miserable, try to be happy, try to conquer your misery. It is the cheerful mind that is persevering. It is the strong mind that hews its way through a thousand difficulties. And this, the hardest task of all, the cutting of our way out of the net of *māyā*, is the work reserved only for giant wills.

Yet at the same time excessive mirth should be avoided. Excessive mirth makes us unfit for serious thought. A mind in that state never becomes calm; it becomes fickle. Excessive merriment will always be followed by sorrow. Tears and laughter are near kin. People so often run from one extreme to the other. Let the mind be cheerful but calm. Never let it run into excesses, because every excess will be followed by a reaction. It also fritters away the energies of the mind in vain. The stronger the will, the less the yielding to the sway of the emotions. Excessive hilarity is quite as objectionable as too much of sad seriousness, and all spiritual realization is possible only when the mind is in a steady, peaceful condition of harmonious equilibrium.

You have to build the body by good nutritious food—then only will the mind be strong. The mind is but the subtle part of the body. You must retain great strength in your mind and words. "I am low, I am low"—repeating these ideas in the mind you should not belittle and degrade yourself. It is said in the *Ashtāvakra Samhitā* 1.11: "If one thinks oneself free, free one becomes; if one thinks oneself bound, bound one remains. 'As one thinks, so one becomes'—this popular saying is true."¹⁰ This truth holds

¹⁰ मुक्ताभिमानी मुक्तो हि बद्धो बद्धाभिमान्यपि ।

किंबदन्तीह सत्येयं या मतिः सा गतिर्भवेत् ॥

good both in spiritual and temporal matters. To me the thought of oneself as low and ignorant is a sin and ignorance. Those who are always downhearted and dispirited can do no work; from life to life they come and go wailing and moaning.

When you sit for your spiritual practice, think of your body as strong and healthy. Your body is the best instrument you have. Think of it as being as strong as adamant, and that with the help of this body you will cross the ocean of life. Freedom can never be reached by the weak. Throw away all weakness. Tell your body that it is strong, tell your mind that it is strong, and have unbounded faith and hope in yourself.

This Upaniṣad gave us two terms: one is intellectual or lower knowledge (*aṣarā-vidyā*), and the other is higher knowledge or realization (*parā-vidyā*). Intellectual assent is within this realization, but realization is beyond it. Therefore intellectual assent is not sufficient.

Every person can say this theory is right, but that is not realization. The person must realize it. We can all say we understand that this is hypnotism, but that is not realization. Realization will come when this hypnotic spell will break—even for a moment. Realization will come in a flash; it must come. If you struggle, it has got to come.

When the hypnotic spell does vanish, all idea of body will go away with it. Then what will become of you? If some part of your karma remains, this world will come back again—but not with the same force. You have known its true nature. You will no more be in bondage. So long as you have eyes, you will have to see; or so long as you have ears you will have to hear—but not with the same force.

I had read all sorts of things about the mirage, but had never seen one until about four years ago when I was travelling in western India. Of course, as a *sannyāsin* I was

travelling on foot, making my slow marches. So it took me about a month to travel through that country. Everyday I saw such beautiful lakes and the shadows of trees on the shores of those lakes, and the whole thing was quivering in the breeze. I saw birds and animals. Every day I saw all this and thought what a beautiful country it was! But when I reached some village, I found it was all sand. I said, how is this possible?

One day I was very thirsty and thought I would drink a little water at the lake. But when I went near the place, the lake disappeared, and with a flash the thought came into my mind: "This is the mirage about which I have read all my life." But the strange thing is that I was travelling for a month and could never recognize that it was a mirage—and in one moment the illusion vanished.

Next morning I saw the lake again, but along with it came the idea: "That is a mirage." From that time onward, whenever I saw a mirage, I said, "I know that is a mirage," and I was not deceived. Such will it be with this world when the whole thing will vanish once; and after that, if you have to live out your past karma, you will not be deceived by this world.

Take a carriage with two wheels. Suppose I cut one of the wheels from the axle. The other wheel will run for some time by its past momentum and will then fall. The body is one wheel, and the soul another; and they are joined by the axle of delusion. Knowledge is the axe which will cut the axle, and the soul will stop immediately and will give up all these vain dreams. But upon the body is that past momentum, and it will run a little, doing this and that, and then it will fall down. But only good momentum will be left, and so that body can only do good. This is to warn you not to mistake a rascal for a realized soul. It will be impossible for a realized person to do evil. So you must not be cheated.

When you become free, the whole hypnotic spell has vanished and you know the distinction between the reality and the mirage. The mirage will no more be a bondage. The most terrible things will not be able to daunt you. A mountain could fall upon you, but you will not care. You will know it for a mirage.

स यो ह वै तत् परमं ब्रह्म वेद
 ब्रह्मैव भवति नास्याब्रह्मवित् कुले भवति ।
 तरति शोकं तरति पाप्मानं
 गुहाग्रन्थिभ्यो विमुक्तोऽमृतो भवति ॥३.२.९॥

*Sa yo ha vai tat paramam brahma veda
 brahmaiva bhavati nāsyābrahmavit kule bhavati;
 Tarati śokam tarati pāpmānam
 guhāgranthibhyo vimukto'mṛto bhavati.*

“He who knows Brahman becomes Brahman.” Between Brahman and the *knower* of Brahman there is not the least difference. There is nothing impossible to such a free soul. No more birth and death for him. He is free forever.

The Ātman cannot be known by the mind, for the Ātman is itself the knower. So our relative knowledge reaches only upto the *Avatāras*, that means, those who are always established in the Ātman. The highest ideal of a Personal God which the human mind can grasp is the *Avatāra*. Beyond this there is no relative knowledge.

Such knowers of Brahman—*Avatāras*—are born only once in a way and very few people can understand them. The *Avatāras* alone are the proof of the truths of the scriptures—the towers of light in the ocean of the world. By the company of such *Avatāras* and by their grace, the darkness of the mind disappears in a trice and realization

flashes immediately in the heart. Why or by what process it cannot be ascertained. But it does come. I have seen it happen like that.¹¹

Śrī Kṛṣṇa spoke the *Gītā*, establishing Himself in the Ātman. The passages of the *Gītā* where he uses the personal pronoun 'I' invariably indicate the Ātman: "Take refuge in Me alone,"¹² means "Be established in the Ātman." The knowledge of the Ātman is the highest aim of the *Gītā*. The references to yoga etc. are but incidental to this realization of the Ātman.

Those who have no knowledge of the Ātman are "suicides." "They kill themselves by the clinging to the unreal." They lose their life in the noose of sense pleasures. Why don't you ignore this trash of ephemeral sensual enjoyment? Should you also swell the ranks of those who are born and die in utter ignorance?

Speak of the Ātman to all, even to the lowest. By continued speaking your own intelligence will also clear up. Always repeat the great mantras: *Tat tvam asi*, "Thou art That," *So'ham asmi*, "I am That," *Sarvam khalvidam brahma*, "All this is verily Brahman." Have in the heart the courage of a lion. What is there to fear? Fear is death—fear is the greatest sin.

¹¹ Obviously, in his own case—by the grace of his guru Śrī Ramakrishna.

¹² *Gītā*, 18.66—माम् एकं शरणं ब्रज ।

In his commentary on this verse, Śrī Śaṅkara explains the word 'me' (*mām*) as follows:

माम् एकं सर्वात्मानं समं सर्वभूतस्थम् ईश्वरम् अच्युतं गर्भजन्म-जरा-मरण-विवर्जितम् अहम् एव इति एवम् एकम्... ।

"...in me alone, the Self of all, the same in all, existing in all beings, the Ruler (of this universe), the Imperishable, free from birth, old age and death..."

Truth is strengthening. Truth is purity. Truth is all-knowledge. Truth must be strengthening, must be enlightening, must be invigorating. Go back to the Upaniṣads—the shining, the strengthening, the bright philosophy—and give up all weakening things. Take up this philosophy. The greatest truths are the simplest things in the world, simple as your own existence. The truths of the Upaniṣads are before you. Take them up and live up to them.

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The Upaniṣad-verse numbers are printed in bold type followed by references from the *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, 9 vols. (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama), the source of this compilation.

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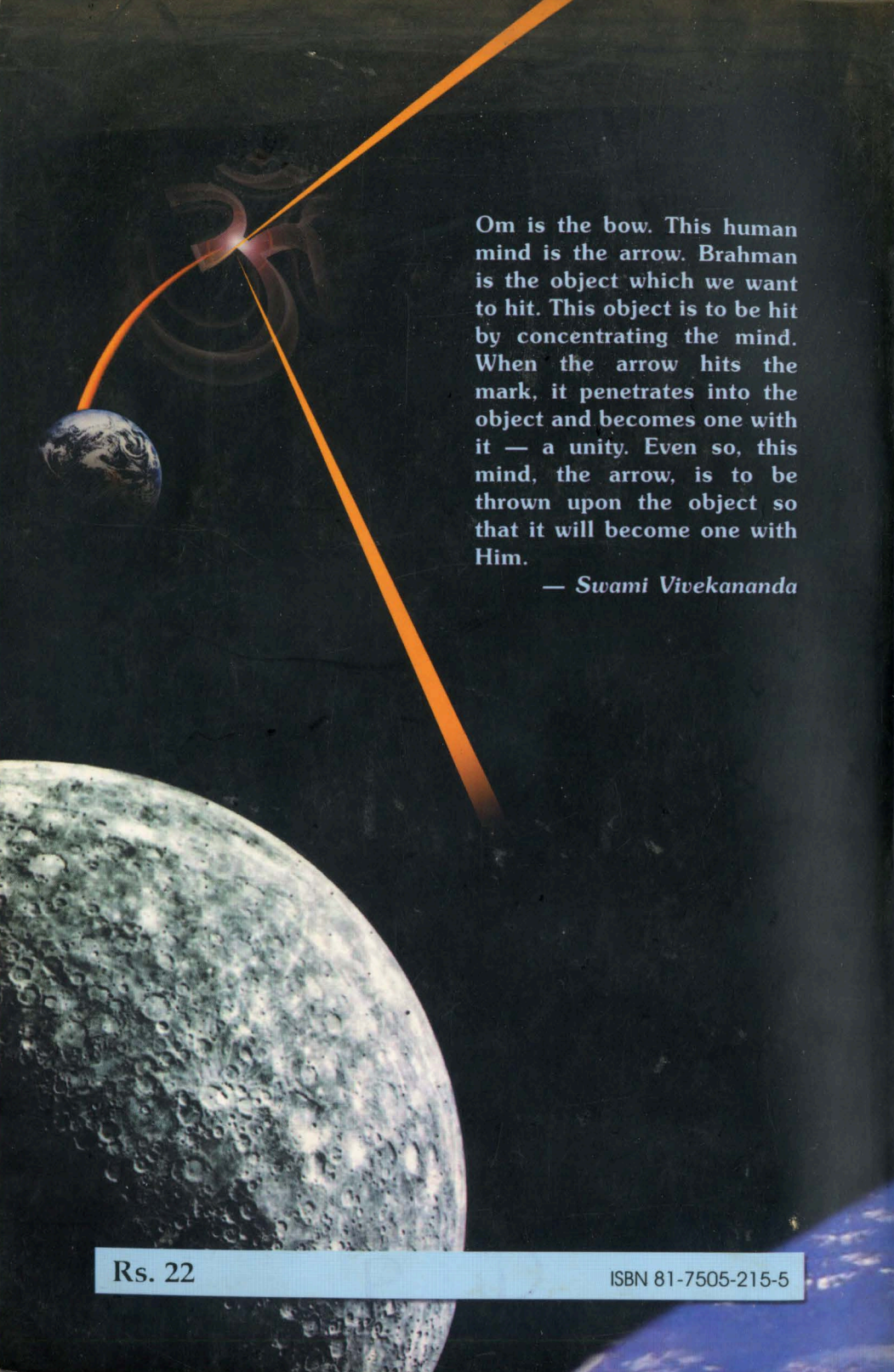
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Om is the bow. This human mind is the arrow. Brahman is the object which we want to hit. This object is to be hit by concentrating the mind. When the arrow hits the mark, it penetrates into the object and becomes one with it — a unity. Even so, this mind, the arrow, is to be thrown upon the object so that it will become one with Him.

— *Swami Vivekananda*