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**MEDITATION ACCORDING
TO THE UPANISHADS**
SWAMI KRISHNANANDA

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PUBLISHERS' NOTE

The 25th of April 2022 marks the auspicious occasion of the Birth Centenary of Worshipful Sri Swami Krishnanandaji Maharaj. To commemorate this sacred occasion, the Headquarters Ashram has decided to bring out booklets comprising the illuminating discourses of Worshipful Sri Swami Krishnanandaji Maharaj for free distribution.

Worshipful Sri Swami Krishnanandaji Maharaj arrived at the holy abode of Gurudev Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj in 1944, and remained here until his Mahasamadhi in November 2001. Swamiji Maharaj was a master of practically every system of Indian thought and Western philosophy. "Many Sankaras are rolled into one Krishnananda," said Sri Gurudev.

Over the years, Swami Maharaj gave many profound and insightful discourses during Sunday night Satsanga, and on holy occasions such as Sri Gurudev's birthday, Sri Krishna Janmasthanami, Mahasivaratri, etc., and also during Sadhana Week and Yoga Vedanta Courses conducted by the Yoga

Vedanta Forest Academy of the Ashram. Sri Swami Maharaj always spoke extempore, spontaneously, without any preparation, and every discourse was fresh, unique, and divinely inspired. The audience was bathed in that stupendous unfathomable energy that radiated from Swamiji Maharaj during these discourses.

We are immensely happy to bring out some of Sri Swamiji Maharaj's discourses in booklet form as our worshipful offering at his holy feet on the blessed occasion of his Birth Centenary. The present booklet, '**Meditaton According to the Upanishads**', consists of two discourses given by Sri Swami Krishnanandaji Maharaj on 14th January 1973 and February 1997 respectively.

May the abundant blessings of the Almighty Lord, Sadgurudev Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj and Worshipful Sri Swami Krishnanandaji Maharaj be upon all.

—The Divine Life Society

MEDITATION ACCORDING TO THE UPANISHADS

Today we shall take an excursion into the Upanishadic method of meditation, which is the predominant note of all Vedantic texts.

The Upanishadic approach to Truth is out-and-out philosophical and mystical. The Upanishads take a comprehensive view from three angles of vision: the external, the internal, and another feature which transcends them both.

The Mandukya, the Taittiriya and the Aitareya Upanishads may be taken as examples of this type of approach, which also receives elaborate treatment and profound consideration in the Chhandogya and Brihadaranyaka Upanishads. The Upanishadic method is something not unknown to students of Vedanta, but yet the Upanishads have a peculiarity of their own which demands a very acute understanding and a thoroughgoing philosophical approach from the student. This is what is generally called the *jnana* method of approach, also known as the *jnana* yoga path, wherein meditation becomes

identical with understanding. It is a gradual enlightenment taking place inside and settling upon Reality. Knowledge is the undercurrent of the thought of the Upanishads. That is why they are called scriptures on *jnana*, *tattva darshana*. They deal with Reality, the Supreme Being.

In the Aitareya Upanishad particularly, we have what may be called the objective approach to Truth, which means to say, the Upanishad here considers the universe as created out of the Supreme Being in a manifold manner. The description of the process of creation in the Upanishad is given to us not so much to enlighten us about the actual process that might have taken place at the time of creation, as to tell us how we stand in relation to it. The purpose of the Upanishad is to cause the liberation of the soul, not to give a metaphysical system. All creation theories in the Upanishads have this purport before them, the liberation of the soul, and this can be achieved only by a proper appreciation and understanding of the relationship of the individual soul to the Supreme Soul.

The understanding that the individual has of its relation with the Supreme Being is its status. The individual generally regards itself as standing outside creation as a creature evolved in the process

of creation, as something ignorant, impotent and miserable. The creation theory, the doctrine of the process of the evolution of the universe described in the Upanishads, gives us an idea as to whether we are in any way connected with Reality at all, or whether we stand outside it. That we stand outside it is out of the question because if that were the case, liberation would be impossible. If the individual soul is absolutely outside the operation and the activity of the Supreme Being, there would be no connection between the two, and the soul would ever be in bondage. It would be what is called the 'eternal damnation theory'. According to certain religions, there are some souls who are eternally damned and will never attain salvation. That would be the most uncomfortable doctrine—that the individual stands absolutely outside the existence and activity of the Supreme Being.

Now, is it so? Is it a fact, or is there something else, a deeper truth standing between the soul and God? The Aitareya Upanishad tells us that this is not the whole truth. The objective analysis given to us in this Upanishad regarding the process of creation, the description of the way in which the universe has evolved, tells us that everything has come from that One. *Ātmā vā idam eka evāgra āsīt* (A.U. 1.1.1):

“The Atman alone existed in the beginning.” *Nānyat kiñ cana miṣat*: “Nothing living existed at that time. “The Supreme Atman, Paramatman, existed. That has somehow become this cosmos. This is what the Aitareya Upanishad tells us. It has become the objective cosmos and also the subjective *jīvas*. It has become not only the objective universe, not only the individual *jīvas*, but also the presiding deity standing midway between the objective and the subjective sides. This is what we generally call the *adhibhautika*, *adhidaivika* and *adhyatmika* phases of creation. All these three are said to be Ishvara Himself. The Atman itself has become all this.

The objective analysis given to us in the Aitareya Upanishad tells us that the individual seeking freedom and salvation has come out from the Supreme Being itself; therefore, its blessedness, its final destiny, lies in the realisation of its original identity with the Supreme Being. The Atman is Consciousness, Brahman is Consciousness. *Prajñā pratiṣṭhā prajñānam brahma* (A.U. 3.1.3) says the Upanishad. This *prajñana* is also the essence of the individual soul. By the *saman adhikarana* method, or the *bhauda saman adhikarana*, as they call it, the recognition of a common substratum being there between two entities establishes the existence of a

common factor between them. The objective side as the creative principle and the subjective side as the individual soul have a common substratum called Consciousness, and in Consciousness they are one. *Tat tvam asi* (C.U. 6.8.7), *ayam ātmā brahma* (Ma.U. 1.2), *prajñānam brahma* (A.U. 3.3). These dicta of the Upanishads bring out the truth that the sides we call objective and subjective are not really bifurcated by a negation of the specific characters of objectivity and subjectivity—*bhauda*, as we call it. We get the *saman adhikarana*, or the common basis of the two. This is *bhauda saman adhikarana*, the realisation of a common basis by a negation of the specific attributes that have accidentally crept into the creative process.

The subjective side is given to us in the Taittiriya Upanishad where, in the Bhriguvalli precisely, we have an analysis of the individual involucre, the sheaths, or *koshas*: the *annamaya*, *pranamaya*, *manomaya*, *vijanamaya* and *anandamaya koshas*. Bhrigu is instructed by his father Varuna, who is also his Guru, to realise Brahman through *tapas*. Here *tapas* means knowledge, the *tapas* of knowledge. Gradually Bhrigu pierced through these various layers of his personality. From the physical he entered into the vital, from the vital he entered into the mental, then the intellectual, and

then the blissful. *Prāṇo brahmeti vyājānat* (T.U. 3.3.1). He realised finally that Bliss is Brahman, and the physical, the vital, the mental and the intellectual sheaths are not Brahman.

Hence, by a subjective entry into our own personality we come to the depths of our being. We go to the bottommost essence of what we really are and come to realise that Bliss is Brahman. This is the essence of the soul. *Ananda* is our nature, not sorrow, not grief. Pain is not our essential nature; Bliss is our essential nature. So from the subjective side we get into this essence of our being, which is *ananda*, and from the objective side we enter into the Supreme Consciousness. The two are identified. *Vijñānam ānandam brahma* (B.U. 3.9.28): “Consciousness-Bliss is Brahman,” says the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad. Also the Taittiriya Upanishad tells us *satyaṁ jñānam anantam brahma* (T.U. 2.1.1): “The Supreme Being is reality, intelligence and infinity.” The Taittiriya tells us that Consciousness is Brahman, the Aitareya tells us that Bliss is Brahman, and the Brihadaranyaka tells us that Consciousness-Bliss is Brahman. So all this combined tells us that Brahman is Existence, Consciousness and Bliss.

These features of analysis given in the Upanishads are brought together into a focus in the Mandukya

Upanishad, which is perhaps the most important of all the Vedantic texts from the point of view of Vedantic sadhana. It is said that for the liberation of the soul, the Mandukya alone is sufficient because it gives us the quintessence of Upanishadic teaching. The external and the internal are brought together here in a universal analysis. The main method of meditation according to the Upanishads is given to us in the Mandukya Upanishad. It is very short; therefore, its analysis is difficult unless it is studied together with comparative statements made in the other Upanishads also.

The Mandukya Upanishad is an analysis of the states of consciousness, as the Vedantic meditation of the Upanishads is mainly a meditation on Consciousness. Consciousness is the Supreme Being, *prajñānam brahma*; therefore, a study of Consciousness is imperative for meditation on Consciousness. The bound soul is a state of consciousness, the liberated soul is also a state of consciousness, and meditation is a condition of consciousness. The whole of the Upanishadic teaching is, therefore, a huge essay on consciousness.

Thus, entering into a study of the states of consciousness, the Mandukya Upanishad gives us a beautiful exposition of at least three of the strata of

consciousness, which we generally call the waking, the dream and the sleep states of consciousness, the condition through which our essential being passes in respect of its object. There are really no states for Consciousness; it is eternal, yet it appears to have states when it sets itself in opposition to an object. The three states mentioned here are really three states of the conflict of consciousness with its object. If consciousness were not set in opposition to its object, there would be no states at all. But there are objects of consciousness, and it is these objects that create a series of states. The difference in the states of consciousness is due to the difference in the kind of object that is presented to consciousness in the different states. When the objects change in their relationships and intensity, consciousness also seems to change.

Waking consciousness, the condition in which we are at present, is that state of consciousness where it is in relation to physical objects. The confrontation of consciousness in the waking condition is with physical things, the physical universe. We are struggling to find a proper relationship of our consciousness with the world outside. The activities of life, all the enterprises of whatever kind in which we may engage ourselves in the waking condition,

are a struggle of consciousness to recognise a balance between itself and the object. This is waking life. We are busy throughout the day in various professions and fields merely to bring about a balance of our consciousness with the outside world, in which we do not succeed. Whatever be our effort at trying to bring about this equilibrium between ourselves and the world, we remain a failure. Nobody has established a balance between himself and the world, but yet this is the aim behind the activities of the world.

When the mind is tired of this effort at striking a balance between itself and the world outside, it withdraws itself due to sheer fatigue and the inability of the bodily condition to maintain this period of tension for a long time. Then we fall back into an internal struggle similar to our struggle with the external world. This is called dream. The condition of dream is that in which consciousness is in a state of tension similar to the tension in waking, except that the objects in dream are psychic while in waking they are physical.

In dream the struggle continues, but with imagined objects. There is very little difference between the waking and the dreaming conditions as far as the efforts and struggle of consciousness are

concerned, and the experience of pain and pleasure are concerned. Irrespective of the fact that there is a difference between physical and psychic objects as they appear in waking and dream, as far as the experiencer himself is concerned, there is very little difference. The sorrows and joys of our waking life can come to us also in dream, and consciousness may not find itself in a different situation than the one in waking.

But the purpose of consciousness is to cease, to put an end to, all tension with objects. In this effort it has not succeeded in the waking condition, and it is not going to succeed in the dreaming condition either. Merely because we only contemplate objects in the mind instead of actually confronting them physically, it does not mean that the mind has ceased from its effort. What gives pain, inconvenience and discomfort is struggle of every kind.

In sleep, consciousness falls back into a condition of inactivity where, though it is not in a state of harmony with its objects, at least it is unconscious of the disharmony that is there. See the difference between samadhi and sleep. While in samadhi we have a consciousness of harmony, in sleep there is an unconsciousness of disharmony. Quite different and opposite they are, though they look alike. The

difference is as between the joy of a wise man and the joy of a fool. Both are happy people. An idiot is happy and a genius is also happy, but the difference is very obvious. The negative condition into which we enter in sleep is a defeatist position of consciousness where it has struggled but failed in its attempt.

Hence, the Upanishad tells us all these three states are phenomenal. They are states to be traversed through, transcended, and the real nature of Consciousness cannot be recognised or seen either in waking, dream or sleep. Sleep is, actually speaking, the mischief maker. The real ringleader we will find in the deep sleep state. The potentiality for suffering is there in a covered form even in the state of deep sleep, like a tree existing in a seed, and it will sprout up into activity, into the actual experience of pain and pleasure, when we enter the dream and the waking conditions.

Therefore, the three states—waking, dream and sleep—are only temporal efforts at the bringing about of a cessation of disharmony between consciousness and objects, now struggling, now turning back, and then completely forgetting the trouble itself due to exhaustion. It is like a warrior going to the battlefield and fighting and, unable to conquer the enemy, returning home to rest; then,

unable to even bear this suffering, he goes to sleep as if everything is all right, but he dreams of the battle, and wakes again only to realise the searing fact that the battle is going on and he has yet to face it. The whole of the *samsara chakra*, the cycle of births and deaths, the pains and joys of life, are a series, a circular movement, as it were, of the effort of consciousness to completely free itself from the clutches of objective confrontation. Hence, we are no better whether we are in waking, dream or sleep. We are equally fools in all three states.

The freedom of the soul is in the fourth state of consciousness, called *turiya*. This fourth state of consciousness is not really the fourth, numerically. It is the fourth in the sense that it is not any one of the three states already mentioned. It is universal consciousness and, therefore, we cannot call it the fourth. But because it is not any of these three, we categorise it as the fourth state, *turiya*, for our own convenience. In the waking condition we are externally conscious, in the dreaming condition we are internally consciousness, in the sleeping condition we are absolutely unconscious, and in *turiya* we are super-conscious. External consciousness, internal consciousness, unconsciousness and super-consciousness are the states through which we have to pass.

Super-consciousness, sometimes called the supramental state, *turiya*, is inclusive of all that is in the other three states of consciousness. Whatever was there of worth and meaning in the condition of waking, dream or sleep is also to be found in the *turiya* state, only freed from the tension of it. The *turiya* state of consciousness is the goal of life. It is described as *nāntaḥ-prajñam, na bahiḥ prajñam, nobhayataḥ-prajñam, na prajñañā-ghanam, na prajñam, nāprajñam, adṛṣtam, avyavahārayam, agrāhyam, alakṣaṇam, acintyam, avyapadeśyam, ekātma-pratyaya-sāram, prapañcopaśamam, śāntam, śivam, advaitam, caturtham manyante, sa ātmā, sa vijñeyaḥ* (Ma.U. 7). This is how the Mandukya describes the fourth state of consciousness. In the *turiya* state we are not aware of anything outside as we are now seeing so many things in front of us in the waking state, nor do we see things inside as in dream. In that condition we are not externally aware of anything, nor are we internally aware of anything, nor are we unconscious. Then what are we? We are conscious. Conscious of what? Not of external things, and not of internal things. Nobody can say what it is. *Prapañcopaśamam*: The world ceases to exist there. It is dissolved. Like a sugar cube is dissolved in water, the whole universe gets dissolved into it. *Prapañcopaśamam, śāntam,*

śivam, advaitam, caturtham manyante, sa ātmā: That is our Self, that is our essential nature. Our essential nature is not a struggle with objects, with persons and things in the world, nor is our essential nature a condition of sleep and reverie. Our essential condition is the universality of Consciousness.

This analysis of the three states individually experienced by every person every day is also said to have a cosmic counterpart, which is not very clearly set forth in the Mandukya Upanishad. The Upanishad deduces that there should be a cosmic counterpart of these three states experienced by individuals—namely, the waking, dream and sleep states. While we are individually body-conscious in the waking state, the cosmic counterpart, known as the Virat, is said to be universally, physically conscious. Or, to explain it in another way, there is a simultaneous consciousness of all the physical existences in the cosmos. This is said to be the cosmic counterpart of the individual, physical condition.

Virat, or Vaishvanara, is the cosmic physical consciousness, of which the *vishva*, or the individual waking condition, is regarded as a part, a segment or a section. Similarly, consciousness in the dreaming condition, known as *taijasa*, is said to have a cosmic counterpart, known as Hiranyagarbha.

The individual causal condition we call sleep has a cosmic counterpart, known as Ishvara. Ishvara, Hiranyagarbha and Virat are the names given to the universal counterparts of the individual states of consciousness—sleep, dream and waking, known as *prajna*, *taijasa* and *vishva*, respectively. But the distinction is made that while the individual conditions are powerless and ignorant, the cosmic conditions are omnipotent and omniscient.

We may wonder how, though the parts are ignorant, the total becomes omniscient. The total is not merely a total of ignorances. When the total is reached, the characteristics of the particulars change automatically because the particulars, or the individuals, are isolated from one another on account of the existence of *tamas* and *rajas*; and inasmuch as *tamas* and *rajas* cannot be said to exist in totalities, they are completely removed, lifted up in the cosmic condition where *shuddha pradhana shakti* is said to predominate. Therefore, Ishvara, Hiranyagarbha and Virat are regarded as omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent, as opposed to the individual conditions of location in a particular place, which are ignorance and unhappiness.

The Vaishvanara aspect of this analysis receives a detailed and elaborate treatment in the fifth

chapter of the Chhandogya Upanishad, known as the Vaishvanara Vidya, wherein the glory of the Supreme Being is described, the meditation upon which is said to burn up all sins. In an analogy of this Upanishad, as fire burns cotton into ashes leaving no residue whatsoever, meditation on the Vaishvanara burns up all *samskaras*, all impressions of the mind, all sins and defects, and makes one Self-realised. From the description of the Vaishvanara given to us in the Chhandogya Upanishad we can also infer the conditions of Hiranyagarbha and Ishvara, which are not specifically mentioned but are implied therein.

Hence, the method of meditation in the Upanishads is primarily a juxtaposition of the objective and subjective sides in order that the two may be brought together into unison in the Universal state, and the Universal may be meditated upon. In order to understand what exactly is the meaning or the implication of the Mandukya Upanishad, you have to read, if you have time enough, the Karikas of Gaudapadacharya on the Mandukya Upanishad; or, if you have no time to read such a lengthy treatise, at least read a very short exposition of it in sixty-two verses given by Sureshvaracharya, known as Pranava Vartika, also called Panchikarana Vartika. How the individual is to be set in tune with the

cosmic is described there. Sureshvaracharya tells us to abolish the perception of difference, and regard the individual waking as the cosmic waking. This is what he says.

Thus, the Upanishads give us a purely philosophical, analytical, mystical and spiritual method of contemplation by a denial of diversity through a contemplation of the totality of things. The Mandukya, Taittiriya and Aitareya Upanishads are specifically useful for this type of meditation. An elaborate commentary on this is to be found in the Chhandogya and Brihadaranyaka Upanishads, as I mentioned, one giving us what is known as the *saprapancha* view of things, and the other giving us the *nishprapancha* view of things.

The Chhandogya Upanishad gives us the *saprapancha* view of Reality, which means to say, Reality as interpreted in its relation to the cosmos. This is called the *saprapancha* view. *Saprapancha* means 'with *prapancha*, with the cosmos'. The various factors of the Supreme Being's relation to the cosmos are described in the Chhandogya Upanishad. But in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad we have the *nishprapancha* view of Reality, where Reality is described as it is in itself without any kind of relation to the cosmos, or to anything whatsoever. The

Chhandogya and the Brihadaranyaka Upanishads form complimentary teachings for us, and they are wonderful expositions of the secrets already given in a pithy form in the Mandukya Upanishad.

The Vaishvanara Vidya is a concrete instance of the *saprapancha* view of the Chhandogya Upanishad, of how the cosmos is to be regarded and contemplated as the body of the Supreme Being, while the teachings of Yajnavalkya, primarily in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, give us the *nishprapancha*, or the acosmic view of Reality. There is no cosmos in Reality. It is acosmic, super-cosmic. *Yatra hi dvaitam iva bhavati, tad itara itaram paśyati. yatra tv asya sarvam ātmāivābhūt, tat kena kam paśyet* (B.U. 2.4.14). Yajnavalkya tells us, “Where we have an object in front of us, we can see. Where there is no object in front of us, what do we see?” *Yenedam sarvaṁ vijānāti, taṁ kena vijānīyāt*: “How can we see That through which alone we are able to see everything?” This is the pinnacle of Upanishadic contemplation, the highest reaches of the Upanishads. With this, philosophy stops. We cannot go beyond it.

While that is the stunning super-cosmic meditation of the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, the Chhandogya Upanishad gives us a more sympathetic view, suited to our own weaknesses, because we

cannot get rid of the idea that there is a world in front of us. Therefore, the Chhandogya Upanishad tells us to contemplate the universe as unified in the Supreme Being. Both lead to the same goal.

The study of the Upanishads is a very difficult thing. It requires a good philosophical background because they tell everything, for the matter of that. There is no school of thought which is not touched upon in some Upanishad.

In connection with the meditations of the Mandukya Upanishad, special mention has to be made of a beautiful blend that it has brought about between meditation and the recitation of Pranava, or Omkara. The chant of Om, and the understanding of its relation to the three states of consciousness, are regarded as necessary for the practice of this meditation. The chant of Om is said to be constituted of three syllables, three morae, as they call it, three stresses of intonation. These three stresses of intonation of the chant of Om are identified with the three states of consciousness: waking, dream and sleep. Just as there are three states of consciousness, there are three stresses of Om chanting: A-U-M. When they are put together and chanted in a blend, they become a single compound, Om, in the same way as the three states

of consciousness, waking, dream and sleep, when contemplated together become the Creator of the Universe, Ishvara. *Tasya vācakaḥ praṇavaḥ* (Y.S. 1.27): “The name of God is Om.” Just as everything that is indicated has an indicator, Om is said to be a cosmic indicator of the Cosmic Being. While individual names particularise individual form, the Cosmic Being is denoted by the cosmic vibration of Om.

The Om that is referred to in the Mandukya Upanishad is not merely a linguistic chant. It is not a sound that we make through the vocal cords. It is a vibration that is set up. The Upanishad wants to tell us that the universe is nothing but a bundle of vibrations. It is not made up of things, objects, substances, etc. Today people are slowly realising how vibrations are ultimately the essential constituents of even solid things. Light can be converted into matter; matter can be converted into light. We do not say that light is an object like a stone, but that which we call a stone, or a heavy material, is only a concretisation of vibrations of force. Energy continuum is the universe. Om is not merely a sound; it is not a chant, not a language, not a word, not a syllable, but a vibration. So when we chant Om, we are not merely making a syllabic sound, but are setting up a vibration in the system

which harmonises the cellular constituents of our personality so that our body and our personality as a whole are set in tune with the object outside.

The whole problem of life is a problem of the harmony of consciousness with objects, and this harmony is to be brought about somehow or other, by some means. This is done by meditation. Various kinds of meditation are prescribed. One of them is the chant of Om, wherein a rhythmic vibration is produced in the system to set the mind in tune with its object so that when such harmony is established, the three states of consciousness slowly dwindle into a single state. The *amatra* of Om, its soundless form, becomes *turiya*, which means that the chanting of Om is a help in meditation. Any mantra is a help in meditation, but Om is said to be the mother of all mantras. All vibrations are contained within it. All the letters of the alphabet can be located in it.

Thus, taking a bird's-eye view of the techniques of meditation in the Upanishads, we finally get from them not only a philosophical analysis and exposition of the structure of the cosmos and individuals, but also a way the individual can approach the Supreme Being. Hence, the Upanishads are both a philosophy and a method of approach. They are full

of philosophical reasoning, psychological analysis, and practical suggestions.

These methods of meditation according to the Upanishads are not suited to common minds because they require of the student a high standard of discriminative power and dispassion. The condition, the prerequisite of such a meditation, is also laid down in the Upanishads themselves—though not in the Mandukya, but in certain other Upanishads. We have to be possessed of a Nachiketas element. The story of Nachiketas given in the Kathopanishad is a prelude, as it were, to the requirements of a student of the Upanishads. Such intensity of the spirit of renunciation as can be gathered from the story of Nachiketas is demanded of every student of the Upanishads. The Upanishads do not ask us to do anything else than to merely analyse, understand, and fix our attention on the goal, but with such fervour and ardour of approach as could be seen in Nachiketas. Rejecting the joys, the pleasures and the freedoms of the world that were offered in abundance, the seeker Nachiketas asked for the Atman alone. To seek the Atman is to seek the truth of the Upanishads, though the method expounded in the Kathopanishad cannot be regarded as an example of the Upanishadic technique because

it is more akin to the Bhagavadgita and the Yoga Sutras than to the main current of thought in the Upanishads, which distinguishes them from other approaches to Reality.

In Kali Yuga, these meditations are difficult because the minds and the wills of people are very weak. We cannot meditate like this, however much we may try. We cannot meditate like this even for a minute because the mind will slip down, fatigued and exhausted by the very attempt. But by a very beautiful combination of the essentials mentioned here with other techniques, such as those given to us in the *raja* yoga methods of Patanjali and the methods of *bhakti* yoga, we can achieve some success. *Tīvra samvegānām āsannaḥ* (Y.S. 1.21): This truth comes to those whose *vairagya* is one hundred percent perfect, who want nothing else.

The *vairagya* that is described by Sankaracharya in one of his works is pertinent. What is *vairagya*? What is the kind of *vairagya* that we require in order to study the Upanishads and meditate according to them? Sankaracharya says that we must be as indifferent even to the bliss of Brahmaloaka as we are indifferent to a clod of dirt. But what is the bliss of Brahmaloaka? We do not know what it is. We will become unconscious and swoon if we know what

it is, such is the joy of it. We will swoon by the joy itself. We know the characterisation and the calculus given in the Taittiriya Upanishad, how the joys go on increasing in intensity as we go higher and higher. If our bliss is one, multiply it by a hundred, and then multiply it by a hundred eleven more times—a hundred into a hundred into a hundred, eleven times. That is the bliss of Brahmaloaka, and this bliss we must reject, Sankaracharya says, as if it is dirt. Is it humanly possible? We will not reject the bliss of even a cup of tea, so Brahmaloaka is out of the question. We are unfit for the study of the Upanishads; that is the conclusion. We cannot study the Upanishads, and we cannot meditate like this, but we can keep it as an ideal that it may come to us at least in the next birth, if not in this birth.

This is the glory of the Upanishads: meditation on Vaishvanara, meditation on Hiranyagarbha, meditation on Ishvara, meditation on Pranava or Omkara as a cosmic vibration in its connection with Reality, all for the single purpose of Brahma *sakshatkara*, or the realisation of the Supreme Being.

We have gathered for a discussion of the nature of meditation, the various ways that we can employ in order to concentrate and harmonise the mind for the purpose of purifying it so that it

may become more and more free in its operation. The practice of meditation is, therefore, a very vast and elaborate technique of dealing with aspects of our consciousness in various ways and freeing consciousness from its relationship with objects, because the thought of objects is bondage. One of the minor Upanishads tells us that poison is not poison; thinking of objects is poison because if we drink poison, only one life is destroyed, but if we think of objects, we may destroy several lives. That means to say, we may have to pass through various series of births.

Thus, the meditation process is a gradual method of freeing consciousness from its entanglement in objects, and later on it is an acquisition of control over objects. We first get freed from its clutches, and then acquire mastery over them. In the beginning there is a withdrawal, and then there is a return to the very same object from which we withdrew ourselves so that we may possess it in reality, not possess it artificially as we tried earlier through mere sensory perception. Possession of a thing is artificial in sensory perception, whereas it is real in Realisation.

Thus, we conclude a survey of various methods of meditation. From these, the essentials have to

be culled and brought into operation according to the convenience and temperament of each person's mind. It is not that everyone can think in the same fashion. This is a wide dish that is served before you, from which you can take whatever you like, but put each item properly in harmony so that they may become fit instruments for the mental operation in your meditation.

WHAT IS HINDUISM

If you travel from the Himalayas to Kanyakumari and ask all the Hindus to tell you what Hinduism is, they will not be able to tell you. They will say that they are Hindus, but they will not be able to say what Hinduism is because they are floating on the surface of the outer religious performance and ritual, and its in-depth significance has not gone into their minds. You will find this problem everywhere, perhaps in every religion. Whether they are Muslims, Christians, Hindus or Buddhists, if you ask them what the essence of their religion is, they will scratch their heads and will not answer anything. They cannot give a reply. They will never be able to answer this question because they have not taken the time to properly think about it.

Ask a man who is a Hindu, "How do you know that you are a Hindu? Prove it." Let him prove that he is a Hindu. He will look up and say, "What is the matter?" It is very difficult to prove. What proof have you got that you are a Hindu? You cannot answer

this question by any amount of scratching the head. You will say, "I know that I am a Hindu." But how do you know? You have not put a label on your face that you are a Hindu. If you say you are a Hindu because you believe in the Vedas, does it mean that whoever believes in the Vedas is a Hindu? There are great German scholars who believe in the value of the Vedas. Do you call them Hindus? So, that definition is not good. If you say you are a Hindu because you pray to Narayana, then does anyone who prays to Narayana become a Hindu? There are Muslim saints who worship Lord Krishna, and yet they are not Hindus, so that definition is also not good. You will find it is such a comprehensive, interrelated complex that any stereotyped answer will not be sufficient. It is not possible to answer like that. It is a highly involved subject.

In Hinduism you will find the essentials of every other religion also, in some level. There are levels of Hinduism; it is not one compact thing. At one level, you will find the idea of Christianity is correct. In another level, you will find even Islam is correct. In another level, you will say Zoroastrianism is correct. In another level, you will find Judaism is correct. In another level, Taoism is correct. It all depends upon the layers of religion; and all the levels, Hinduism

accepts. The only thing is, it will not consider any level as final. This is why it is a very comprehensive religion and, therefore, you cannot even call it by the name Hinduism. It has no name at all. They call it Sanatana Dharma. Sanatana Dharma means eternal religion.

Hinduism is only a post-European concept. Europeans have given that name. We do not call ourselves by that name. 'Hindu' comes from the word 'Sindhu'. When Greeks and Persians came to India some years before Christ—Alexander and Jerious, and other Persian kings and Greek invaders—they crossed the Sindhu, and they wanted to know who these people staying in this country are. They did not know their name. They said that river is called Sindhu, and all those people who are on the other side are Sindhus. In Persian, 'S' is pronounced as 'H', so 'Sindh' becomes 'Hind', so they pronounce it as 'Hindu'; and in Greek it has become 'Ind'. The word 'India' has come from the word 'Sindhu'. 'Sindh' becomes 'Hind', 'Hind' becomes 'Ind'. Therefore, the words 'Hindu' and 'India' have both been created by these historical conditions, historical circumstances.

Really, this is Bharatvarsha. We call it Bharatvarsha. Even now they say 'Bharat'. It is not

India. 'India' is a historical exigency. Similarly, the word 'Hinduism'—there is no such thing as that. It is Sanatana Dharma—eternal religion. It is eternal religion because it accepts every level of religious thought. It does not reject any level, but it does not consider any level as final. That is the whole point.

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The Mandukya Upanishad is an analysis of the states of consciousness, as the Vedantic meditation of the Upanishads is mainly a meditation on Consciousness. Consciousness is the Supreme Being, *prajñānam brahma*; therefore, a study of Consciousness is imperative for meditation on Consciousness. The bound soul is a state of consciousness, the liberated soul is also a state of consciousness, and meditation is a condition of consciousness. The whole of the Upanishadic teaching is, therefore, a huge essay on consciousness.

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