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**ÍSAVĀSYA UPANISHAD**

for beginners

by

**SWAMI KRISHNANANDA**

Half hour talks

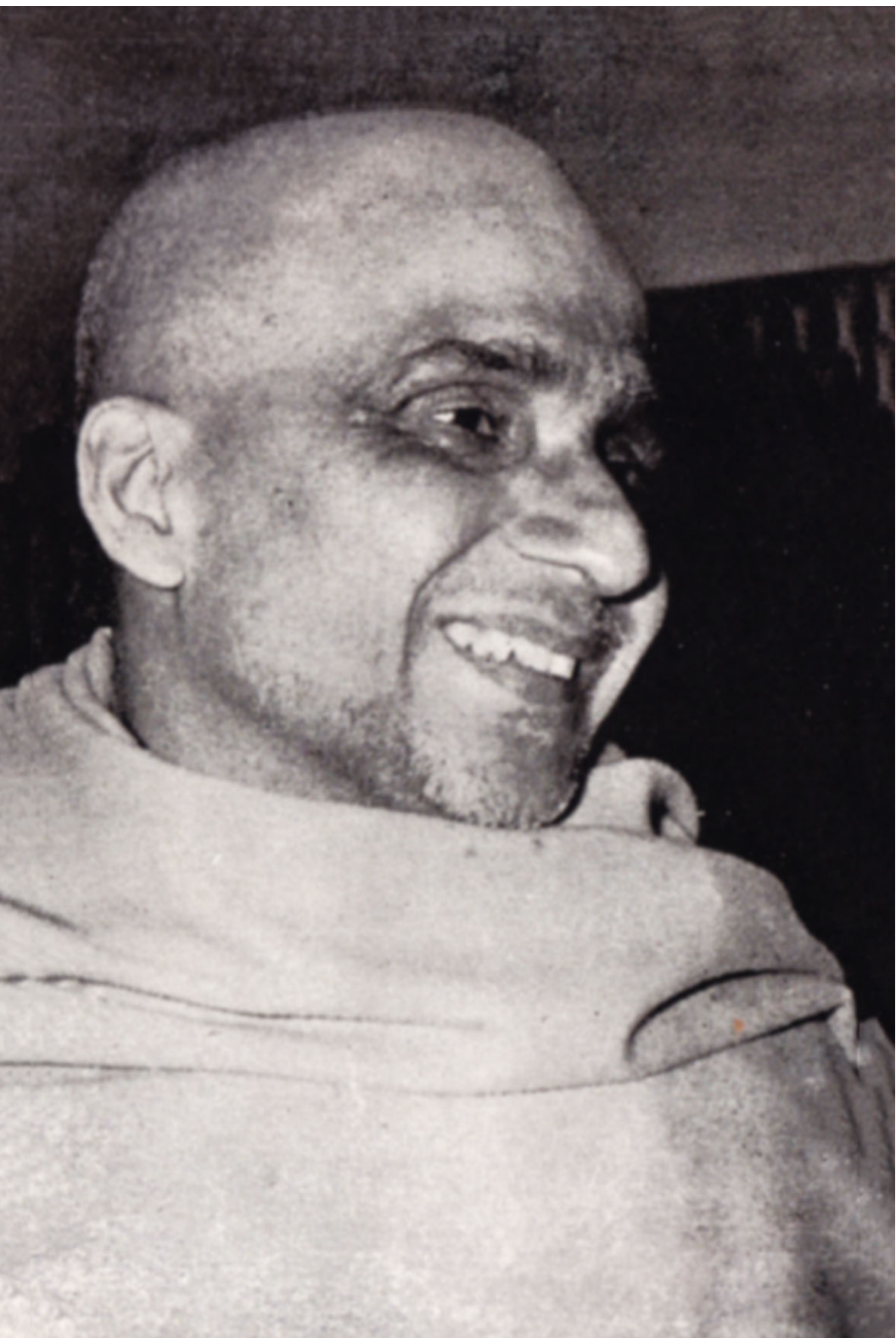
in Hindi

Translated Into English

by

**S. BHAGYALAKSHMI**

**Sri Swami Krishnananda**



**Sri Swami Sivananda**



# Foreword

OM Sri Satguru Paramatmane Namah.

Salutation to the Supreme Being who Indwells this Universal Process as the support of all existence and as the Power that moves all things:

The wisdom of the Vedas constitutes the most precious Gem in the priceless treasure in the form of Bharatavarsha's inner spiritual culture. The greatest contribution of India and its people toward the common Human Heritage of Global Mankind is Upanishad-Jnana. It has enriched and will continue to enrich human life and culture with the unique factors of Universal Vision, recognition of Unity, spiritualisation of Activity and Divine Illumination. The portal to this inner wisdom is provided by the first of the ten classical Upanishads, namely, the Isavasya Upanishad.

This present volume giving an exquisite exposition of this beautiful and sublime Upanishad provides a valuable key to the entry into further and deeper study of the other Upanishads. It deserves to be in everybody's hands. Mother Bhagyalaxmi deserves our congratulations for the pains she has taken to present this English version of Swamiji's Hindi talks. I wish this work the widest circulation.

Swami Chidananda  
Holy Maha-Shivratri 29-2-1976

## Preface

True, Pujya Swami Krishnananda Maharaj is a sanyasi, an *ashramavasi*, a *jnani*. His knowledge or wisdom, however, is as much a result of his deep and great scholarliness as of the intuitive knowledge of the sages that meditate on the Absolute in the seclusion of forests and mountain caves.

Not only through all parts of India but through many parts of the world over, Revered Swami Krishnanandji Maharaj's profound knowledge is well-known. Whether they be the works of masterminds in the West or the East, or the schools of philosophies from Aristotle and Plato to late Dr. Radhakrishnan and Sri Aurohindo, they are as familiar to him as the Hindu Vedic literature. His capacity to expound, in a crystal-clear, incisively intellectual and amazingly oratorical style through the vehicle of lucid, faultless, idiomatic English has thrilled every audience, every time; and this again is well-known.

But there is another side to Rev. Swamiji, which the few fortunate ashramites, particularly the aspiring *sadhaks*, have learnt to love and cherish. This side of his is the "Guru" of the traditional "Gurukul", in which ancient institution even Lord Krishna sat as a disciple at the holy feet of Sandipani to receive the teachings of the sacred texts. A few Upanishads (1) Kathopanishad, (2) Isavasyopanishad, (3) Prasnopanishad, 4) Mundakopanishad and (5) Mandukyopanishad, with Sankara's commentary of the 'Karika', were all explained to us the lowly *sadhaks* by Revered Swamiji in Hindi in very simple sentences. Of these the study of Mandukyopanishad Karikas was not completed because of a breakdown in his health which has unfortunately continued to be poor to-date. And, only the tape recordings of Īśāvāsyopaniṣad were available to me besides my own notes; and even in these, the last four slokas are not recorded, but have been completed from the notes taken down by Vishnu Chaitanya and myself. Among those that sat at his holy feet in these studies were those who knew little Hindi, and less English. The languages they knew rather well were their own mother-tongues as there were almost as many mother-tongues as the number of disciples gathered around him. So Revered Swamiji used the simplest of Hindi words

and sentences in explaining the ambrosial meaning embedded in the “Mantropanishad”— the “Isavasyopanishad”. These study classes lasted only half-an-hour a day. These talks which are more correctly put as “chats” I have translated with utter humility, into English, in my own highly limited capacity; for, my mother-tongue is Tamil and I hold a degree in Science—not in English literature.

Gurudev Sivananda Maharaj’s mandate is: “Share your knowledge with others”. It came to me that there must be a host of intellectuals as well as co-disciples, who, like me, would thrill thankfully to these simple sentences as much as to his inimitable linguistic heights which have stirred an ineffable joy in all hearts. In these simple Hindi words the greatest of Truths from the deepest of spiritual compendium have been presented. And for this reason, I have dared to attempt this work.

I have not attempted to rephrase or in any way interfere in the text of these “chats”, for this is far beyond the capacity for such as mine. I have merely translated the sentences as they are.

These thoughts on this Upanishad were the outcome of Revered Swamiji Krishnanand Maharaj’s profound knowledge. These were spoken to us; and what Revered Swamiji Brahmananda Maharaj has so very kindly done is to bring this conversational style into a written style. I had wanted to include everything that had been spoken by Revered Swamiji Krishnananda and thus there were repetitions and verbosity. It is only in this respect that editing has been done by Revered Swamiji Brahmananda Maharaj. Even so this has been done so effectively only because Revered Swamiji himself is a great scholar and a profound thinker whose writings are much appreciated and read widely. Thus both the Revered Swamis are fully exonerated in the presentation of this Upanishad in this booklet form of all omissions, commissions and blunders too, perhaps. As a ‘beginner’, a humble student of the sacred lore, I have given what I understood and have put it in the manner I interpreted Revered Swamiji’s thoughts which were spoken in Hindi. The scope of this booklet is only this much. Maybe, these pages are like the tons and tons of coal (“Pitch-Blende”), or the raw material out of which Madame Curie extracted a globule of radium. I leave the reader to play the role of Madame Curie; I am content to remain the raw material.

As such, I crave the reader's pardon and indulgence in judging the justification of this booklet form of the great Isavasyopanishad.

I cannot bring to the reader (I) the cascading splendour of million diamonds scintillating in Revered Swamiji's lectures and expositions. Nor, (2) the highly lovable spiritual intimacy during these talks which Rev. Swamiji would dramatise by mono-acting a point or put to you in the grandmotherly style: Can you look at a thousand suns shining in the sky ? No-o-o! We can't even look at one sun; we will go blind.

It is such an intimate atmosphere which prevailed during these half-hour "chats" on the various Upanishads. Hence the atmosphere in these pages is but at the disciple's (my) level. If even so I have taken too big a bite, forgive this humble *sevak*.

This endeavour has been possible only due to the blessings of Revered Swamijis Chidananda Maharaj, Krishnananda Maharaj and Brahmananda Maharaj, as also the cooperation and help from my well-wishers. The Revered Swamijis have allowed me to go ahead with this task which is a blessing to me. I owe a great debt of gratitude to Revered Swamiji Chidananda Maharaj for his ever kind encouragement in any endeavour for any worthy goal; and his encouragement is not only a great moral support, but also takes material form, as for instance in the Foreword which he has so benevolently given for this booklet; and this has been done despite the crushing load of work he is under, which is as much of his own choice as due to the contingency of Revered Swamiji Krishnananda Maharaj's absence away from the ashram.

Shri Ramaswamy's ready cooperation and hard work has been mainly contributory to my being able to take the Ms. on to the printers in quite a short time. His typing has always been a joy to Revered Swamiji Krishnanand Maharaj; his gentle, patient ways have helped me to hold my head above the valley of tears! And to Moti-Ma goes my heart-felt thanks for the way she has looked after my creature comforts, bringing up my food, scrubbing my vessels, and her help in the equally important work of comparing Ms. copies. Also to Vishnu Chaitanya my thanks are due for lending me his notes (taken in English) during the half-hour Upanishad classes; this helped to check and counter-check what my own notes had with

the original in the tape-recordings. It is the confidence that Shri S. D. Chowdhri of the English Book Store, my Guru Bhai, with his natural earnestness and devoted approach, will shoulder the whole burden of printing and allied matters that has given me the courage to publish this little booklet. May Guru Dev's blessings abide with him—is my prayerful thanks to him.

My thanks go to Smt, Lola Chatterji and to Shri P. C. Chatterji for their ready help in all the manner and in all matters asked for.

I truly believe that it is Gurudev Sivananda Maharaj's Will that has got me to make this effort. And to Him, I say what He has taught us: "I am thine; all is thine".

S. Bhagyalakshmi



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## Invocation

ॐ पूरणमदः पूरणमदिं पूरणात् पूरणमुदच्यते ।  
पूरणस्य पूरणमादाय पूरणमेवावशषियते ॥  
ॐ शांतिः शांतिः शांतिः ॥

*om pūrṇamadah, pūrṇamidam, pūrṇāt pūrṇam udacyate,  
pūrṇasya pūrṇam ādāya pūrṇam evāvaśiṣyate.*

That which is *anantavavtu* is spoken of as *pūrṇam*. It is that to which there is no limit; beyond which there can be nothing. If there is something outside it, it becomes an individualised object. But objects cannot be *pūrṇam*. The *sāstrik* meaning of *pūrṇam* is, that more than which nothing can exist, i.e., it is the infinite. And creation has come from *pūrṇam*. And this creation too is *pūrṇam*. This *śloka* is from the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad and forms the *mangalā-carana* mantra for this Īśāvāsya Upaniṣad. The terms *adaḥ* and *idam* have often occurred in Kathopaniṣad also. *Adaḥ* means the cause from which the effect comes. *Idam* means that which is manifest and here it means the world. The objects of the sense organs are spoken of as *idam*. That which is beyond the sense organs is *adaḥ*. As the cause is, so is the effect. The effect exists within the cause in an unmanifested form. In the seed, the tree is not seen, but it is in an unmanifested state. In reality, the world is also limitless. Wherever you go, you still will see it extending further. You find that ether, a subtle manifestation of the Supreme is limitless, and wherever you go you cannot find its limit. This is so, because it is a manifestation of that which is infinite. This mantra says that, that which has come from the Infinite is also Infinite from this point of view, even though it is comprehensible to the senses. Really speaking, the world is not outside you, that is to say, outside the senses, but within you. This, the later mantras of the Upanishad is going to tell us. The world appears to exist outside you. And hence it is correct to say, ‘this world is *pūrṇam*.’

*Pūrṇam evāvaśiṣyate*—When the effect which is *pūrṇam* has been removed from the cause which is *pūrṇam*, what is left over is also *pūrṇam*. It remains undiminished. That is why Sankaracarya

says that *Īśvara* is *advitīya*, that which has no second. It is not a mathematical calculation where one minus one leaves zero. *Īśvara* is not a numerical like 1. *Īśvara* who is infinite is beyond all numericals. This is a bit difficult to comprehend with our minds. We have neither seen the *pūrṇam* nor can go beyond numericals. We can go on saying crores, a hundred crores, a hundred-thousand-crores and so on, that is all. But He is beyond countable numbers. Hence the word *pūrṇam* is used to indicate *Īśvara*. There is no place where He is not. This is the essence of this verse.

*Īśāvāsya Upaniṣad* is a *mantropaniṣad*. We are initiated into the Supreme Truth. There are two types of *upaniṣads* viz., the *Brahmopaniṣads* and the *Mantropaniṣads*. *Īśāvāsya Upaniṣad* is a *Mantropaniṣad*. Now it may be asked, if the *Upaniṣads* are placed at the end of all *Vedas*, why this separate division into what are known as *Brahmopaniṣad* and *Mantropaniṣads* etc. All *Vedas* have four divisions: (1) *Samhita*, (2) *Brahmana* (3) *Aranyaka* and (4) *Upaniṣad*. Some *Upaniṣads* come within the *Samhitas*, like this one before us. The *Īśāvāsya Upaniṣad* is placed (perhaps) in the 40th chapter, in the *Sukla Yajurveda*, at the end of the *Samhita*. The other *Upaniṣads* are placed at the end of the *Brahmanas*. And because this *Upaniṣad* is placed in the *Samhitas*, it is also known as *Samhita Upaniṣad*.

## Verse 1

ॐ ईशा वास्यमदिँ सर्वं यत्कञ्चि जगत्यां जगत् ।  
तेन त्यक्तेन भुञ्जीथा मा गृधः कस्यस्वदिधनम् ॥ १ ॥

*om īśāvāsyam idam sarvam yat kiṃ ca jagatyāṃ jagat,  
tena tyaktena bhujñitha, ma grdhaḥ kasyasvid dhanam* (1)

The Upaniṣad begins with the word *īśāvāsyam*, and so goes by the name of *Īśāvāsyopaniṣad*. There are other such examples of this tradition. Kenopaniṣad, for instance, is so named because the very first word of it is *kena*.

*Īśāvāsyam*: *Īśvara* is 1st person singular. So, *īśāvāsyam* means *īśvara* resides. Sankaracarya says that the rot is *it* (eit) meaning *īṭ*; and *īṭ* means God. So *īśāvāsyam* can also mean through *īṭ*. Or, the compound word is split thus: *īśā + āvāsyam – āvāsyam* means, that alone which is fit to bear or cover, that is (it is), *īśvara*'s temple, the fit place for Him. Another meaning is that which is fit to be enveloped by *īśvara*. Many meanings can be given according to whether it is *īśā + vāsyam* or *īśā + āvāsyam*—*vāsyam* fit for *īśvara* to stay; *āvāsyam*—that which envelopes the world. Again, *īśena + āvāsyam* can mean filled with or dwelt in by *īśvara* like salt in salt-waters.

We have already said that *idam* means this world, the whole of creation which is manifest before us. All this is covered by, or filled with God. Whatever is seen or unseen, gross or subtle, effect or cause, the sentient or the insentient, everything is covered by *īśvara*. He exists as the *sattā*.

How does He exist as *sattā*? Is it as water present in a wet cloth? Is the world covered by Him as a cloth over it? Or is it like the pot of the potter? We can interpret the phrase as suits our intellectual way of thinking, or our philosophy. If *īśvara* is only a causal or a *nimitta kāraṇa*, then He is outside the world like the potter who remains separate from the pot he makes. The clay is the instrumental or *upāddāna kāraṇa*, and the potter is only *nimitta* for the pot and these two are separate factors; also the potter is separate from the pot which is an effect. This is the view of *naiyayika* and schools

belonging to that system of thought. *Īśvara* is both *nimitta* and *upāddāna kāraṇa*.

Another view is, that *īśvara* pervades the world like salt in water. The salt is not visible as salt in salt-water; yet they both are different and separate factors. However, if *īśvara* is but in the world, then He is limited by time and space. But, His nature is unbroken Existence-Consciousness-Bliss-Absolute, whereas the world is impermanent, transient and perishable. *Īśvara* is creation, *īśvara* is the cause of creation—these are the two different viewpoints which different Upaniṣads explain. He is like salt in water, is the view of Viśiṣṭāvaita philosophy.

*Īśvara* is not separate from the universe—this is Advaita philosophy. When Sri Rama asked Sri Hanuman “Who are you?”, Hanuman replied: “*deha būdhyā to dāsoham, jīva budhyā tvadamśakaḥ; ātma budhyā tvemevāham ityevam mama niśchayaḥ.*”

“If you confer the status of a body to me, I am Thy slave; if you consider me as *jīva*, I am a part of Thyself, an *amśam*, one cell of Thyself; if you accept me as the *ātman*, I am Thy own Self. I am homogeneous with Thyself; Thou art the indivisible.” In the same sense, in the light of the meaning of this quotation, God’s existence in the world can also be stated to be and explained variously. There is no place where He is not—whether in time or space. He is present in the sentient and insentient. In the latter His *sat* alone is present; but volition and consciousness are absent. In the insentient, *tamas* is greatly predominant; still the *sat* of the insentient, the essence of it, is the essence of the *sat* of *īśvara*, indivisible and homogeneous. The sentient possess both *sattā* and *caitanya*, while only a little *ānanda* is present in them. All living beings, including man, come under this head of the sentient in which *īśvara*’s existence and consciousness aspects are manifest. There is predominance of *rajas* and *tamas*, although *tamas* is a little less in man than in the animals and much less than in the insentient. Man’s *rajas* is so great that there is very little *ānanda* in him. A little *ānanda* does exist in man, for man does experience *ānandam* though to a very feeble extent. When *rajas* and *tamas* are destroyed, simultaneously *sat* rises up and only then *ānanda* is experienced, for *sat* is *ānanda*.

*Īśvara* exists in everything: *yat kim cit*—that is everything

sentient and insentient, subtle or gross is *īśvara*. Everything is the body of *īśvara* and He is connected to the world in the way the soul is connected to the body.

*Teña tyaktena bhuñjithāḥ*—There are different interpretations for this phrase from different viewpoints. For *tena*, one meaning is “through”; “therefore” is another. Madhvacarya’s view is—from or through Him. So, Madhvacarya’s interpretation is, giving up that which has been given through Him. Sankara says: From whom? Him from which all creation has come. And, for this reason, ‘therefore’, *tyaktena*, is that which has been sacrificed or that which has been given up through *vairāgya* (and not shedding of unwanted or extra things). This first mantra is an aphorism and so does not give the meaning in detail but gives it in a pithy form. From *īśvara*; i.e., what He has given, that enjoy and do not desire beyond that which has been given to you. In the first line, it has been stated that everything is *īśvara*. Then, what can be yours? What did you bring with you when you came and what do you take with you when you leave the world? For, the question is *kasyasvid dhanam?*—Whose (is this) wealth? In this question the self-evident answer is given. And wealth does not mean only money but includes all desirable possessions, wealth of any kind which gives us joy and pleasure. Be content with what wealth God has given you. To want more than that is a kind of greed. So get yourself free from this greed. You know what *īśvara* has given—He has given you the world. The Bhagavadgita also affirms this statement by stating: *yadṛchā lābha santuṣaḥ*. Whatever has been given to you by *īśvara*, whatever you have received from *īśvara*, with that be happy and contented. But again you have only the right of enjoyment, not of ownership. For, everything is *īśvara*’s and it cannot belong to anyone else. You are therefore only a trustee of God’s wealth. This is the first meaning.

The second meaning is this: *teña tyaktena bhuñjithāḥ*. For the reason that *īśvara* is everything, enjoy what is God-given through sacrificing everything. What does this mean? This statement is a great *siddhānta* and is worth pondering over. As much as you give up the desires of the world, gross or subtle, so much is your happiness; the greater your sacrifice the greater increase in the *ānanda* or Bliss that you attain. This has a secret within it. It is a very subtle statement.

The converse of the above statement also affirms this same secret. The more you try to obtain the object, the greater your anxieties and the greater your sorrow. For, contact with or union with objects does not beget happiness. We only imagine it to be so when we think that contact with objects or possession of them increases happiness. This is a mistaken notion as we can see from what we have just stated. What is the reason for not obtaining happiness by, with or through objects? The answer is simple; because bliss is the nature of *īśvara* and NOT that of the object, whether in connection with the body or in connection with things. Due to our ignorance, we run after things and try to possess objects. To take that the little joy we get from the objects comes from the objects is a wrong and mistaken notion, and we only waste ourselves in the efforts to possess the objects and run after them. This understanding is that of ignorance only. *īśvara* is not in contact with objects. Has it not been stated at the outset that *īśvara* is everything! He is the Essence. And where there is *parama-sattā* alone, there exists *parama-ānanda*—not in objects. For He has no contact with objects, being infinite. He is Supreme Consciousness which is the same as Supreme Bliss. Therefore, to the extent that infinite, the Supreme Existence is manifest in you, to that extent will be the manifestation of Bliss in you. The greater the proportion of manifestation of God-consciousness in your mind, the greater would be the revelation of God. Bliss is proportionate to the manifestation of God. God-consciousness and Bliss-consciousness are one and the same. They are not two different things. Why? Because, God's manifestation is Bliss-manifestation. So, give up running after objects. Sacrifice the objects by running towards God. This is *tyāga*. This is the view of Sankaracharya. This Bliss spoken of herein is not the usual enjoyment of objects, but it is *sātvic* enjoyment. It is the Bliss that saints and sages enjoy. This Bliss comes to them by giving up the objects. It has no trace of desire in it. The *jñānins* are filled with Bliss, like the *gopis* of Brindavan, not because they achieve their objects of desire, but because they turn away from objects of desire and run towards God. This is the way to enjoy Bliss. This Bliss we superimpose on the objects and we expect to get it from them! But the Bliss enjoyed by the *mahāpurushas*, the *yogins* and *bhaktas* is of *sātvic* nature. God-consciousness is *sātvic ānanda*. It

is the very form of *īśvara*. You cannot superimpose this form on objects with which He has no contact as we have already seen and expect the very same *ānanda* from them. The Bliss of the *yogins* and the others of that class does not arise out of objects, neither from food nor clothing, nor a palace, nor possessions by way of wealth and property. They are devoid of any desire for any object. They desire nothing but *īśvara* and *īśvara* alone. They enjoy a spring of Bliss, a spring of a great flow of *sattā*—Existence, alone. This is their *ānanda*. This is not due to enjoyment of any object outside them. Therefore, through, *vairāgya* realise *ānanda*; that is, *īśvara*. Hence, what has been given by God to you, that alone you should consider as yours. Do not even look at objects belonging to and in possession of others. What is God-given, that you enjoy; desire nothing else. What is not your wealth, do not even think of it. Do not be greedy. Do not lust for objects which are not yours.

*Kasya svid dhanam?* For this phrase also there are two meanings: One from the relative and the other from the absolute point of view. What has been given to you, of that you are the owner. What you have earned with the sweat of your brow, that you enjoy. But what is earned by other people's sweat of the brow, do not even look at that. Do not let your mind go towards that. It is unlawful to do so. It is against moral and ethical laws. You have no right even to look at what you have not earned yourself. If you look at it, would that not lead you to desire it? Therefore *ma gṛdhaḥ*—do not be greedy. This is from the worldly point of view.

Whose is this wealth, this wealth of the Universe? This is from the view of the Absolute. As everything belongs to *īśvara*, you dare not even look at anything with a desire to possess it. This is unlawful. You have no business to do so. To desire objects of the world therefore is wrong. Let your mind desire *īśvara*. Let your mind go towards *īśvara* alone. The world belongs to Him; and it is not your property, and so do not run towards the objects of the world. When you run towards *īśvara* alone and you possess Him, you can possess the whole world also. But you cannot possess the world if you run after the world. When you are established in *īśvara*, He is in your possession; that means, He along with the world created by Him; that is, the world also becomes yours as your inheritance!



Father's property goes to his children. So *īśvara*'s property, viz., the world of creation comes to you as His inheritor. Thus you acquire the right of possession. When the cause is your property, the effect also logically becomes your own. *Īśvara* is omniscient and omnipresent. He is the all-embracing Cause; He is the cause and effect in every root of the hair in your body, in every cell of your being, in every atom of creation, sentient or insentient. Realising *īśvara* as such, with this wisdom enjoy *īśvara*'s Bliss. Be happy with what God has given you. This is the second meaning.

Through *tyāga*, *tena tyaktena*, by giving up the objects of the world, be happy with what has been earned by the sweat of your brow. Do your duty as an offering to God. Let your mind dwell upon God and God alone. Let your thoughts run ever and always towards God. Realising *īśvara* you can obtain *ānanda*, also the whole world, the universe itself. Why then run meaninglessly after petty objects saying "Oh! here is joy, there is joy, this object can bring me happiness, that other can", and so on and so forth? *Īśvara* is *parama sattā*, the *parama puruṣārtha*, the *paramadhana*, transcendental wealth. When you run towards Him and possess Him, all this is yours. Thus should God be understood. Thus should God be contemplated upon. Thus should the mind dwell on *īśvara*—through *tyaga* thus be happy.

Thus far in the first *śloka*, three points have been stated: (1) The metaphysics of the *sattā*; i e. the relationship of God, world and soul, (2) *jīva* and the world, and (3) the duty of *jīva* towards the world and *īśvara*. This is why Mahatma Gandhi stated that even if all the sacred texts are lost to the world, this one single *śloka* can be a substitute for all of there. All the *tatva śāstras* deal particularly and specifically on these three matters. (1) *īśvara*'s *sattā*; (2) *jagat*'s *swarup* (3) *jīva*'s *kartavya*. In other words, this is metaphysics, explaining the characteristics of the relationship of God, world and soul. All these factors have been stated in this very first *sloka* of this *Īśāvāsyopaniṣad*—firstly, of *īśvara*'s existence, secondly, the nature of the existence of the world, and thirdly, man's duty.

*Īśvara* is all this world, *īśvara* is the primary cause of the world. The world exists on the substratum of *īśvara*. Because of *īśvara*'s existence the world appears to exist. Therefore, the world has

only a secondary existence. And because *īśvara* is Bliss-Absolute, due to His existence alone the universe enjoys happiness. *īśvara*, Consciousness-Absolute penetrates into the world and hence the world also has consciousness. Thus is determined *īśvara*'s *sat* or Existence.

Now, what is the nature of the world? Again, as already stated in the foregoing pages, the whole universe, every atom of it is filled with *īśvara*. The world has no existence without *īśvara*.

## Verse 2

Next, *śloka* No. 2 explains what our duty is. What is our duty? It is to act for *īśvara* as His agent and not to act for your own self as an individual, a personality. If we should dwell on, meditate upon, and run towards Him and towards Him alone, we must do our duty also as an offering to Him; this has already been concluded earlier. We must understand that the world is but *īśvara's pratibimba*, a reflection of Him. Thus we should have the feeling, 'I am nothing, I have no standing, I am entirely dependent on Him alone'. With this feeling we should do our duty.

All these elaborations are given in the form of an aphorism; in this *śloka* the very first in the *Īśāvāsyopaniṣad*. By reading between the lines, we get all this fund of meaning. *Īśvara* fills the universe, it states. This means, what? It means that as the *bimba* (the original) is, so is the "*pratibimba*" (the reflection) *bimba* and *pratibimba*—to say this, is to say that what is *pūrṇam* is seen in the reflection also as "*pūrṇam*". *Īśvara*, is *sat-cit-ānanda*. And since *īśvara* fills this world, it follows that everywhere there is *sat*, everywhere in this world there is *cit*, and

In short, *īśvara* is everything. Existing everywhere, He is the ultimate Cause for all; He is also all this effect in the form of the universe, in every atom of the universe, sentient or insentient. Understanding this, with the help of this knowledge through *tyāga*, (sacrifice of the individual personality) be happy, enjoy *ānanda* without letting greed for others' wealth enter your mind. With the conviction that *īśvara*, the *parama sattā*, the *parama puruṣa* alone is your wealth, you can enjoy the whole universe. With no thought other than of Him, as His agent, you must perform your duties. As much as you are self-less, so much this *ānanda* pervades you. In this one *śloka* is condensed all the purport of all the texts on *dharma*.

Now there is another question arising out of this statement. Man's individual intellect is but a poor one in comparison to what has to be understood. He is after all human, an individual personality filled with desire, anger, jealousy, etc. How are we to conduct ourselves in life so that we may do all our duties as God's agent? Once you concede that *īśvara* is the Supreme Existence you have to offer all

duties unto Him as the Supreme Doer. On this statement again arise a number of questions. Life is not easy. It is a very difficult problem. It is not a joke. *Jīva*'s predominant characteristic is action. The whole life is action, whether it is of the mind, speech or the other limbs of the body. Everything in life is caught in a mesh of action, In these circumstances, placed as we are, how should we do our duty? What is that kind of action? Is there any particular karma? Is there any particular discipline according to which we should do it? Or can we do it in any way we can? What is action? What is its cause? What is the effect of that cause? What form does the effect take? What is its process? So on and so forth, such questions arise. Answers to these questions, we get in the second verse.

कुरुवन्नेवेह कर्माणाजिजीवषिच्छत समाः ।  
 एवं त्वयानान्यथेतोऽस्तनि कर्म लपियते नरे ॥ २ ॥

*kurvann eveha karmāṇi jijīviṣet śataṁ samāḥ,*  
*evaṁ tvayi nānyatheto 'sti na karma lipyate nare (2)*

*Karma yoga siddhantā* is stated in this second *śloka* of the *Īśāvāsyopaniṣad*. Duty arises so long as we feel we are separate personalities and the notion of an embodied being persists. We feel that we are individuals, there are objects outside us, the world exists, the society exists, and so on. *Jijīviṣa* means the wish to live. As long as this idea that we want to live exists, so long action also exists. It is the will of the *sattā* to live; it is *sattā*'s characteristic; it is an *īśvara-bhāvā* to which the *jīva* adds *abhiniveśa* or its eagerness to cling to the body. So the *jīva* says: "I am not only an individual, also I must live". So long as this desire is the basis of life, there will be the necessity to take care of the body and prevent its destruction, for the body is needed for carrying out our duties.

You should live doing your karmas as selfless, dedicated ones and without lusting for that which has not been given to you by *īśvara*. This is your duty, which should be performed in this spirit only. This has been told to us in the first *śloka* itself. Because of the present condition in which you are this placed by *īśvara*, this discipline of karma yoga is laid on you. This is a law that pertains to all individuals who cannot give up the notion that they are individual person. In the circumstance of your being compelled to

live in a body, the mantra says *na anyathā asti, evam tvayi*, for you no other way exists but this and this alone, What has been given in an aphoristic form in this mantra, has been elaborately explained in the Bhagavadgīta, and what is expounded in the latter in exegesis is given in a condensed form in the former. There is no other way to do your karma but in a selfless and dedicated way. However, fear not, for karma done in this way, *na lipyate*, will not bind you. Karma can also liberate you even as it can bind you. It is a double-edged sword which can either cut or save you. Karma liberates you when you base all your actions in *īśvara*. So dedicate them to *īśvara*. And, action unassociated with individuality and associated with God is liberating karma. Actions associated with one's individual personality and unassociated with God is binding karma. All these explanations can be inferred from the meaning of this short phrase *na lipyate*. Well, you should understand your present position; you are in a very dangerous position. We, attached to the body as we are, are not *siddha puruṣas* who have Divine Consciousness. If we want to be liberated through karmas, we should understand the precarious position we are in. We should unequivocally and firmly understand that we are in body-consciousness; and that our knowledge of things here is next to nothing. Staying in this body we have to carry out our duties. We are puny individuals before *īśvara*, the *virāt puruṣa*. We are embedded in this perishable body. How much *śādhana* can we do? Not much. Little is our strength and little is our knowledge. In this state of affairs, how can we refrain from not doing our karma? And if we do karma for the sake of body alone, it lands us in pit-falls. So now, in the waking consciousness, consider yourself as one of the millions in the creation of *īśvara* and do karma founded on this unselfish idea. You can then save yourself. Hence the *śloka* assures that duty done on this understanding does not bind one. "When you go to Rome do as Romans do" is the saying. You are now in the world with only the consciousness of being just a human being, an individual, and there is no question of your having anything to do with Divine Consciousness. Beyond this body-consciousness and world-consciousness you see nothing. And yet even in this condition the *jīva*'s desire to live is natural. For, as already explained, this is of the nature of *īśvara*'s *satta*, the essence of Being. In *īśvara* there

is oily pure *sat* (existence). Unfortunately, to this nature of *īśvara*, *jīva* adds another clause and changes its own true nature which Sage Patanjali terms as *abhineveśa*, meaning love of life and fear of death. *Jīva* now gets a desire to live and to go on and on living for ever in this body. This is *jivjīṣet*. Under these circumstances, karma becomes a duty, an inescapable duty, a law inseparable from life, determining life itself. Life is action. Karma and life mean one and the same thing. Karma or duty is a kind of force which connects you to the atmosphere and conditions outside and external to you. He who wishes to live but does no karma will destroy his own life and will defeat the purpose of the wish to live a long and lasting life.

You are dragged towards karma, why? Because you are a part of the universe. Every cell in your body works in accordance with a certain set law. What is the necessity for the cells to work according to this set law? The reason is that the cells are a part of the body. The system of the body is such that it takes work from every cell of it. So they work unceasingly night and day, inseparable from existence and continuously, inescapably, set into action. *īśvara* is *virāt svarūp*. Even as every cell in the human body works continuously and unceasingly without in anyway interfering with the working of other cells in the same body, the body of *īśvara* the *virāt svarūp* works as the universe. Man thus is like a single cell in the body of *īśvara*, the *virāt*. And therefore, man's duty should be done in the same way as the single cell works without interfering with the work of other parts of the body. "You will be forced to work" declares Lord Kṛṣṇa "for everyone is made to act helplessly indeed by the qualities born of *prakṛti*". That is, *virāt* will pull you by the ear and put you to work, stand over you and see that you work. But, how is this work to be done? As duty, without expectation of fruits and as worship to God, as has been stated in the very first *śloka* of this Upaniṣad.

Inasmuch as the determination to live and duty are inseparable, man should live a long, healthy life. The *sandhyā-vandana* mantras also pray similarly : "May I see for a hundred years; may I hear for a hundred years; may the fire (*agni*) be with me a hundred years" and so on. Longest life in all health is its prayer. And he who thus wishes to live a hundred years, should do his duty and do it as karma yoga. Consider yourself as just one of the millions in the creation of

*īśvara* and do karma founded on this selfless idea. In this way, save yourself.

These two *śloka* may be said to be the *mūla* mantras for the whole of this Upaniṣad, in the same way as the first chapter of Rāmāyana is called the *mūla* Rāmāyana, or the soul of Rāmāyana, because all the rest that follows is only an exposition upon the first chapter. Even so all that is taught in the succeeding mantras of this Upaniṣad are contained in the first two *ślokas* we have just studied.

## Verse 3

असुरया नाम ते लोका अन्धेन तमसाऽऽवृताः ।  
तामस्ते प्रेत्याभगिच्छन्तये के चात्महनो जनाः ॥ ३ ॥

*asuryā nāma te lokā andhena tamasā vṛtāḥ,*  
*tāms te pretyābhigacchanti ye ke cātmahano janāḥ (3)*

Now, *īśvara*'s *satta* has come in the first *śloka* starting with *īśāvāsyam idaṁ sarvam*. But who is this *īśvara*? This knowledge is given in the *ślokas* 3, 4 and 5. Here *ātman* is the primary word. This word *hana* in verse 3 means to destroy, kill or demolish. And it refers to those who kill the *ātman*, i.e. those who commit suicide. What is committing suicide? It means that you yourself, by your own self, destroy the *ātman*. In the waking consciousness, the *ātman* is identified with the 'body; in the dream state the *ātman* is identified with the mind, and in deep sleep-state, you do not know what is to be identified with what, for there seems to be nothing at all. So, during all the three states we do not understand what this *ātman* is, nor its nature. To engage oneself in action without realising what this *ātman* is, or understanding its nature, is to act contrary to its nature. This is referred to as killing the *ātman*. You make a prisoner of your own self. It is something surprising that you do acts against your own self! Doing actions which are not good for you, which cannot bring you the right fruits, is what is spoken of as killing of the *ātman*. Not understanding one's own self and thereby destroying the self by doing irrelevant and wrong actions, in a wrong manner, is suicide. To think that the *ātman* is the group of organs or the mind, is to invite sorrow; for these are not the *ātman* and such a knowledge is neither correct nor true. And so, the farther you are from the self or the *ātman*, the greater is your sorrow. This is the cause for your rebirth. Who but you causes your rebirth? None but yourself causes it. You build your own prison-house and get into it. The reason for rebirth and for getting another body is due to your wrong identification of the *ātman* with the body. Therefore it is, that desire and anger, attraction and repulsion arise in you. These qualities belong to the aggregate of this body and not to the *ātman*, and, they bring about rebirth. The first mistake you commit is the wrong understanding



that the *ātman* is the body. Next you commit the mistake of saying that objects are outside you. Then you connect yourself with them and say: ‘I am connected with these objects and I must obtain them’, or, ‘I must avoid them’. This results in seeking connection with the outside world. Now we land in this mess of wrong knowledge and we are caught up in this mess of wrong knowledge. This mental condition ends in rebirth bringing in its wake, desire, anger, lust, hatred, etc. etc. This state of affairs is designated by this Upaniṣad as *tamas*, darkness.

The third *śloka* next states that such darkness prevails in the *asurya lokāḥ*, i.e., the world filled with *asuras*, the demons. In other words, it is a world filled with the demoniac wealth, a veritable kingdom of the demons. Some give the meaning of this phrase differently. *Asūrya* is split into *a* and *sūrya* and they give the meaning as the worlds where there is no light. There are two types of darkness; one is physical caused by the elements of nature, known as *ādhibhautik*; and the other is *ādhyātmik* relating to one’s own self. The latter darkness is always existing in us, because of which we do not have self-knowledge. To be without God-consciousness is to be in darkness. This the Bhagavagīta also states : To the *jñānins* to whom Light of wisdom shines this darkness appears as nonexistent; it is light for them, for they see everything clearly. On the other hand, what we see with the light of the physical sun only, to the *jñānins* that, is darkness, i.e., they do not see the objects of this world as we see them. The *jñānins* see only the Reality behind the objects. Hence what is darkness for us is light for them. The world of phenomena which we see does not exist for them. We see the phenomena of the world with but the light of the physical sun, because we are not conscious of the real nature of the world-phenomena. Such a phenomena is night for the *jñānins*. The sages live in the *ātman*, while that life in the *ātman* is night for us. To the *jñānins* full of the knowledge of the self, there is no darkness of the spirit, and they see the Supreme Reality directly. It is different with us; not only are we ignorant of the spirit, the Supreme Reality, but also caught up in the veil which covers it—the *āvarana śakti*. This *āvarana śakti* is something in addition to the darkness, the ignorance which causes rebirth. It is not that it is merely the ignorance which causes

darkness, it goes further, beyond even this condition and sees that which is not there. This further blunder is *vikṣepa* which means a perverted view. The confusion due to ignorance causes *jñānins* which results in seeing that which is untrue and in remaining blind to what is true. This is the condition we are in. It is one thing not to be able to see at all, but quite another thing to see wrongly. Both these conditions are two types of *ajñāns*, viz., the veiling, and the perverted view. All that we see outside us as earth, water, fire, air, ether, the physical body, etc., is but the mischief of this perverted view, caused by the *vikṣepa śakti*. First, the veiling power makes a fool of us and next the *vikṣepa śakti* puts before us an illusion. The veiling power makes the organs act and they act busy chasing after an illusion created by *vikṣepa*. Sri Sankarcharya describes *vikṣepa* as the whirlwind that throws up dust and covers everything, when the sun is already covered by the clouds! First we forget the *ātman*, next we get hold of something else as the *ātman*. Thus in one breath we commit two wrongs, first we forget the *sat* or the real and next we catch hold of the *asat* or the unreal. This is the nature of the world experience. We are like the monkey caught in a trap. Some sweets were placed in an empty coconut shell with a small opening. The monkey slowly thrust one of its hands into it and took as much of the sweets as the hand could hold. When it wanted to take out the hand, the opening being too small, it could not, and it would not let go the sweets! So it is caught. [Swamiji enacted this story. As he narrated it acting the monkey struggling to get its hand out of the opening in the coconut he roared with laughter along with us.] We are also caught like this. We do not let go the world and yet we wish to pull out of the world to save ourselves. Thus we are caught up in the chain of birth and death. And so long as we are unaware of the Self and far from the Absolute, we will remain in darkness, for we are then under the force of the power of the sense organs and the mind forgets the atman. For, to be under the sway of the sense organs is the same as forgetting the *ātman*. So long as the mind is supported by the sense organs only the objective world alone appears as real. The *ātman* cannot rest peacefully in any limited time or space; and this is an unalterable fact and a psychological truth. When the mind loves an object, it does not consider it to be different from the self

and considers the object as part of itself. The object being identified with the *ātman*, when this loved object is lost, there is a feeling of having lost a part of one's very self. One feels as though a limb of the body is cut off because one feels, I am the object, and what happens to the object happens to myself. To thus live in a world of wrong identification is to live in the world of objects, or the *asūrya loka*. To live in the world of objects is the characteristic of *samsāra*. And this is our present condition. To consider objects as outside us is to bind ourselves to them and we exert ourselves to pull them towards ourselves. This is *samsāra*. How can objects be identified with the *ātman*? This can never be. This is why we live in *asūrya loka*, the world of darkness. We think we are in the bright daylight of the sun. But this daylight is but a kind of spiritual darkness. Schopenhauer has written a book called "The World as Will and Idea". The crux of his writing is that all knowledge which we have acquired by our intellect and rational thinking is also a kind of illusion. For, intelligence exists in foolish people also, and conversely a foolish man also can be an intelligent man. Intelligence and knowledge are not the same thing. Intelligence is acted upon by the veiling power, the *āvaraṇa śakti*, understanding and knowledge by *vikṛpa Sakti* or perversion in assessing the information brought in by the *indriyas*. Both these affect the action performed. Not only do the *indriyas* cover the Truth behind the objects, but also veil the understanding, thereby giving rise to wrong actions. The two meanings, side by side, are taken together for interpreting the term "The world of darkness".

One who forgets the *ātman* is the one who commits suicide, not he who hangs himself with a rope. Forgetting the *ātman* is killing the atman and this is the suicide referred to in the mantra. Forgetfulness of God is *ātmahatti* or *ātmahana*. Such people are destined for the chain of rebirths. The Kathopaniṣad also says: Living in the midst of ignorance and considering themselves intelligent, the non-discriminating persons suffer in this cycle of birth and death (I-2-v). For they who live in blinding darkness, who do not know the *ātman*, are the killers of the Self; and we are in this state. So we must understand that we will take birth where no knowledge exists. *Tam te pretyābhigacchanti ye ke cātmahano janāḥ*. To save one's self from this kind of birth-death cycle, one should purify the mind

by methods already indicated, i.e., doing *karma* as an offering to *īśvara*, *īśvarapraṇidhāna*, as sage Patanjali puts it.

## Verses 4-5

अनेजदेकं मनसो जवीयो नैनददेवा आप्नुवन्पूर्वमरषत् ।  
तद्धावतोऽन्यानत्येततिषिठत्तस्मन्निपो मातरशिवा दधातु ॥ ४ ॥  
तदेजततिननैजततिददूरे तद्वन्तकिं ।  
तदन्तरस्य सर्वस्य तदु सर्वस्यास्य बाह्यतः ॥ ५ ॥

*anejad ekam manaso javiyo nainad deva āpnuvan pūrvamarṣat,*  
*tad dhāvato'nyān-atyeti tiṣṭhat tasminn apo mātariśvā dadhāti (4)*  
*tad ejati tan naijati tad dūre tad vad antike,*  
*tad antarasya sarvasya tad u sarvasyāsya bāhyataḥ (5)*

These two verses explain to whom we are to dedicate our actions. It is to tat, i.e., *īśvara*. Where is He? What does He do? *īśvara* has no motion, no activity, and no vibration. He is just Existence which has no action. *Sattā sāmānya, parama sattā* are Its nomenclatures. “He is the unmoved mover”—says Aristotle. He moves everything, Himself remaining unmoved. *īśvara* will not move, for He is *paramārtha sattā*. He is *ekam*, one. He is *advīṭyam*, without a second; He is indivisible, immeasurable, of illimitable prowess, and has nothing to do with time and space. There is nothing beyond or other than Him.

The mind reaches even the *brahmaloka* in no time. Such is the speed of the mind. But the speed of the *ātman* is faster. When the mind reaches *brahmaloka*, the *ātman* is already there! What does this mean? It does not move and yet it is faster in speed than even the mind. This can be explained in this way. Very intense activity looks like no activity at all, like the stars though moving with great velocity appear to be stationary in the sky; it is highest dynamism and not the inertness of a stone. This is what is meant by the statement, It moves not. *īśvara* is full of speed. He moves so fast that neither Garuda, nor air Hānuman, nor the great, strong-winged beings like *devatas*, nor air-borne beings can speed faster than He. The word *devatas* in this context also means the *indriyas* even which cannot beat Him in speed, for, He reaches much earlier than they. Know that the *ātman*'s speed is greater than that of the mind, It being in fact the pre-supposition of even the thought. This is so because It

pervades all. While devas are running to reach their destination, the *ātman* sitting and without motion or any effort, reaches there, for It is already there.

The *ātman*, this *śloka* says, is *mātariśva*, Air. The root meaning of this word is that which moves in space. Some interpret this word to mean the same as *hiraṇyagarbha*, also as *māhapraṇa*. *Hiraṇyagarbha* does all activities founded on the law of the *ātman*. Everything works in strict accordance with this law. Creation, sustenance and destruction are all meant by work or activity and whatever be the form of creation, *mātariśva* works in all these three modes and allots their activities. We see that everything in creation works systematically, with mathematical accuracy. “For fear of Him the wind blows” states another scripture. This is so in the whole universe. What is the cause behind such systematic working? The reason is that the great *māha-sattā* is working it. All the separate individual objects seen in the world are founded in this indivisible *sattā*—Existence, the universal essence. Under the multiplicity and divisibility lies the one, non-dual indivisible *sattāsāmānyā*, the pure-Essence as their substratum. Look at the human body. How many different and complicated mechanisms work in wonderful co-ordination! There is the circulatory system of the heart, the respiratory system, the digestive system, the nervous system, the bones, the muscles and the thousands of cells, all working in perfect unison. The human body is a most wonderful system, continuously working, without stop, from birth to death. What controls this grand systematic working? It is the indivisible *caitanya*, the pure-Consciousness.

It is this pure-Consciousness alone that can work this wonder. If It were of a divisible nature, this system could not have worked thus. Everything is founded on this *aklumdet caitanya*, and therefore such a working is made possible. What works in the macrocosm or the universe works in the microcosm or the individual. *Hiraṇyagarbha* is the creator, the *ṣṣṭi-kartā*, the *mahat-tatva* or the Ego principle which is the foundation which keeps everything in its place and does all work in the microcosm as well as in the macrocosm. *Mahat-tatva* is like the Central Government working in the Local Government. If the former is weak, the latter also is weak. A strong Central

Government is the cause behind a strong Local Government. The *mahat-tatva* stands apart in majestic aloofness. It does not speak and appears to do nothing and yet It is responsible for doership in all. All this is the great Inner Controller's grand work. Never forget this—*īśvara's sattā* or Existence and *kriya* or action are one. In the case of man, existence and action are two different things. Based on His existence and action alone everything in creation exists and works: for, such is *īśvara*.

He is the innermost existence, the wonder of wonders. He acts and is at the same time actionless. He moves and yet moves not. He is inside and outside. All these contradictions are reconciled in God. All that is good and all that is bad, ugly and beautiful, everything looks resplendent in God. In Him there is nothing contradictory and there is no argument or quarrel. Everything is beautiful. Nothing dies; everything is eternal. It is near and It is at the same time far also—*tad dūre tadvanike*. All contradictory factors, let us repeat, lie in unison in God. It is a synthesis of all thesis and anti-thesis, *tad antarasya sarvasya tad u sarvasyāsyā bāhyataḥ*. It is within and outside and everywhere. Who can understand this! Unless all contradictions are merged into unison no one can know it. It moves and moves not. It is like the ether. It is there wherever it wants to be. If you are already there where you want to move to, how can you move? Hence, It moves not. Yet, from the empirical point of view, it is said that It moves and It does not move. In the transcendental sense none of these verbs that It is inside, It is outside, It is near and far away, can apply to that Supreme Being. From the objects and the senses and the thinking faculty of the mind, It is far off. This is what these expressions mean to say. It is the nearest of all things, because It is the Self of every being. In *yoga vāsiṣṭa sage vāsiṣṭa* explains this point through a story. Agni (Fire God) wished to measure the length and breadth of the universe of the Creator. Agni went up soaring higher and higher but could not, beyond the region of the Sun. Defeated Agni falls back and gives up the attempt. [It is said that Sanaka and his brothers, the mind-born sons of Brahma, are still walking the universe in the attempt to measure it.] Therefore, It is far off and yet It is the nearest of all, and It is your best friend. Who is this friend? It is the atman also. Hence it is inside

everything in creation, even inside the electron of the atom. But it is beyond even the macrocosm and therefore, outside everything. All this is only exemplification. The purport of all this is that there is nothing else besides It. By separately and severally enumerating such a large number of contradictions, what is sought is to teach the mind the truth about the *ātman*. The *puruṣa sūkta* declares the same idea: *sa bhūmim viśvato vṛtvaatyatiṣtat daśāṅgulaṃ*—after pervading the whole universe He extends further still. He is bigger than the biggest, smaller than the smallest, best of the best, speedier than speed, brighter than the brightest. He is also the *ātman*. Whatever is perceived by the ear, eyes or the mind is only His form. He is the one *sattā-īśvara*. Therefore, there can be none of the three kinds of differentiation, *sajātiya*, *vijātīya*, *svagata*. i. e., there is no differentiation, as between one man and another, nor any differentiation as in the case of a tree being different from a man, nor yet the differences that exist among the limbs of man. None of these types of differences exist in Him. Neither internal distinction, nor external variety is permissible in the Supreme Being.

Thus we come to the end of the three verses 3, 4 & 5. The next two verses, 6 & 7, go on to further enlarge upon the explanations about the *ātman*; they tell us of the nature of a *jīvanmukta* or the liberated soul, who continuing to live in the world like ordinary people, is ever established in *brahman*, in the Absolute.



## Verses 6-7

यसत्तु सर्वाणि भूतान्यात्मन्येवानुपश्यति ।  
सर्वभूतेषु चात्मानं ततो न वज्रिगुप्सते ॥ ६ ॥  
यस्मिन्सर्वाणि भूतान्यात्मैवाभूद्वज्रिगतः ।  
तत्र को मोहः कः शोक एकत्वमनुपश्यतः ॥ ७ ॥

*yas tu sarvāṇi bhūtāni ātmany evānupaśyati  
sarvabhūteṣu catmānaṁ tato na vijugupsate (6)  
yasmin sarvāṇi bhūtāny ātmaivābhūd vijānata  
tatra ko mohaḥ kaḥ śokaḥ ekatvam anupaśyataḥ (7)*

*Rāga* and *dveṣa*, i.e., likes and aversions exist in everyone. These are due to the mind which remains in and works from within the body, and what is more, does not wish to go outside the body-consciousness. So man has desire for some things and aversion for some other things. These feelings are subjective and they are not really a part of the objects liked or hated. There is no end to these likes and dislikes. With us there is no question in any way of our satisfying the mind; nor is the mind ever filled with *ānanda* (Bliss), complete happiness. The mind requires only that which is tentatively needed for the satisfaction of the senses. It does not want the whole world, but only that which is connected with the physical body. If what is not needed for the limited physical existence comes before the mind, it does not want to be with it.

But this is not the attitude of the great sages. To them *sarvāṇi bhūtāni ātmā eva*—everything in creation is only the *ātman*. In this view, what is yours and what is not yours? How and on what authority do you call this yours and that, not yours? You cannot give a satisfactory logical answer. So your love and aversion for things is unfounded and unjustifiable. Suppose we hear that a child had a fall and is badly wounded. We do not know whose child it is. So everybody rushes to the spot. When you find that that child is not yours, you say: “Thank God! God is great! He has saved my child. So merciful is He!” If on the other hand you find it is your own child, you shout: “Oh! God, why do you treat me so mercilessly? Have you no heart? Why did you let my child fall and injure itself so

grievously?” So for the same God, you have one thing to say at one time and another thing to say at another time! You relate yourself to Him through your limited human mind with such opposite thoughts. When you see different objects, you should perceive their Essence which is the same in all, and not their names and forms. The understanding you get through such perception is *jñāna*, Knowledge of the Truth behind the objects. You should not, through *ajñāna*-nescience, superimpose love and aversion upon objects. And this is what you did in the example cited above. You should understand that everything is the *ātman* and nothing is outside yourself. This is the highest stage of mental evolution, the stage of highly advanced *yogins* and *mahātmās*. It is very difficult to understand things in the light *jñāna*—i.e. pure knowledge, or wisdom at its highest level, but it is easy to understand what knowledge is at the lowest level, and by this latter type of knowledge we consider everything as outside us. There are three levels of understanding by the human mind.

One is *satya-jñāna*, true Knowledge, the Knowledge that everything is *ātman* alone. The second is the understanding that, everything is separate by itself; and here arise desires and aversions. The third is the understanding that you are a member of the society living a life of mutual co-operation. This understanding is higher than the previous second one. True Knowledge is the highest in which one feels: “Everything is myself, I am all that is”. This is attained when the injunction to “love thy neighbour as thyself” is carried to its logical limit, because, the neighbour is you yourself. He is non-different from you. Why should you love your neighbour as thyself, and, for what purpose? He is non-different from you and hence how can you avoid loving your own self! Thus, from separation you advance to co-operation, and from co-operation, to complete unity. When you see a thing, you should not feel as though you have not seen that object for years, for it is you yourself and surely you know yourself! Nothing external to you is needed to know about yourself. Hence, what effort is there in order to get this Knowledge!

We should see the *virāt* as our own *ātman*. There should neither be *rāga* nor *dveṣa*, nor feelings of exhilaration nor grieving. This is how the Sage who looks at everything as his own self feels. Such a man is not an individual but the universal. He is the &man that sees

everything in itself and itself in everything. Is it not true that you are in the limbs of your body and your limbs are in your body! This is how you should relate your individual self with that of virat. For the average man this is certainly something very difficult to digest, and indeed a very hard nut to crack. Those that are well established in the import of the *upniṣads* are alone capable of undertaking this supreme task. To understand this intellectually and then to put this understanding in one's practical life—such a thing is almost beyond the capacity of ordinary human beings. We are not quite fit for suddenly entering into this superhuman task. With all this, we cannot bypass this inescapable fact. For, this is exactly our *dharma*, the great law of life. This is the *summum bonum* of all *puruṣārthas*, the end and aim of all desires, whether it is *dharma*, *artha*, *kama* or *mokṣa*. All objects are the Supreme, and the Supreme is all objects. The waves are in the ocean and the ocean is in the waves without either difference or separateness. Neither should anyone dislike you, nor should you entertain hatred for anyone. In either case, it is only forgetfulness of the true nature of the world. Therefore, you must look at everything in the light of the Self.

You should have that attitude towards others, which you expect of others towards yourself. Such should be your attitude towards the animal kingdom also. Nothing is inferior to you nor anything there is to make another take you for his servant. It is only your thinking of another as your inferior and yourself as superior and feeling proud that your status is higher than his that makes the other take you for his servant; for he also feels as much as you that he is superior. The sage disconnects his self from everything, and even from himself ultimately. This is the nature of a *jīvanmukta*, the Self-realised soul continuing to live in the physical body. This is also one way of reaching the Absolute. On this knowledge one should meditate. The more you meditate on this, the more will be your internal *ātmik* bliss. You will always be happy whether you are walking, talking or doing anything else. Is there any unfulfilled need of water for the fish living in the ocean! You are in the ocean of Bliss. What then have you not got! What can you lack! Where is the need to feel depressed or grieved over anything? None; you feel no need, you feel no emptiness. This is the true knowledge with

which you have to cover everything here, that is referred to in the first *mantra* of this *upaniṣad*. And it is in this knowledge that you should live. So, these two *ślokas* (6 & 7) instruct you to meditate on this knowledge. Another sacred text also enjoins us to consider the objects, those heard, those touched, etc., as the & *ātman* alone. It is only the erroneous attitude of the mind that causes delusion. Poverty and other miseries are only creations of our thinking. We can in a minute become the owner of all the wealth of this world, if only we can change our present mode of thinking and the wrong attitude of the mind. Why are you so poor as not to be able even to think properly? Poverty of thought is the only real poverty. It is like King Lavana who was put to sleep for a split second by Siddha Sambarika with a touch of his peacock feathers, a bundle of which the *siddhas* carry in their hands. The king had a dream in which he found himself as a dog-eating out-caste *candāla* unable even to procure water to drink. He was shaken awake by the *siddha* who said, “How can you think you are a *candāla*, you are a king.” It did not take time and effort on the part of Lavana to change from the *candala* condition to that of a king. The very second he woke up, he was King Lavava and no more the *candāla*. Even so, the very second you realise that you are in the Absolute, you are liberated. To become the Absolute, you have only to wake up from this dream of feeling that you are different from it. To one who has thus woken up to the knowledge, that he ‘himself’ is in everything and everything is in ‘himself’, what delusion and what sorrow can there be! We as the men of the world have fallen into an error and that error has been committed by us, and because of this error we are in great grief. The mistake is that we do not have the correct understanding viz. that life is Truth. We are born in ignorance and being in ignorance all along, we take it for granted that this is our real state, and continue to behave in tune with this state. Our condition is a fallen condition. The primary question now is, where are we to find this Bliss and Freedom, our birth-right? Both the learned and the ordinary consider that what is existing outside is the cause of our happiness and grief. And because of this reason we are incessantly engaged in the efforts to attain happiness and to get rid of grief. Day and night we are meeting and seeking help from people, and making all such efforts to this ends.

To us this alone forms life. We wish to connect ourselves with the objects outside us, and connect ourselves in such a way that we get Bliss and Freedom—our birth-right. Sloka No. 7 says that all these we can get only through the knowledge that all is in the *ātman* and the *ātman* is in all. The trouble is, our education has become such that even the best teachers tell us that knowledge is to be obtained only through connection with objects outside us, and that life has nothing to do with *jñāna*, for this cannot give us what we want. *Jñāna* as we understand it is separate from life; and because of this wrong understanding, despite all our learning, no matter how much our knowledge is, it does not help us to get the Bliss and Freedom we aspire for. This is the natural result as already seen of our having accepted that *jñāna* is outside us and that we have no use for it in our empirical life. The truth is just the reverse. In reality these two, *jñāna* and life are one and the same; what is more, they are inseparable factors. For as *jñāna* increases, life becomes enlarged. The increase of real knowledge is the same as the extension of the Self. *Jñāna* and Self are the same. The *ātman* and *jñāna* are not capable of being separated from one another. It is usually thought that *jñāna* is very vast and *ātman* is comparatively small. This is wrong thinking. Both *jñāna* and the *ātman* are unlimited. The *ātman* is not a small tiny thing sitting within us crying and weeping. *Jñāna* is the light of the *ātman*; it is the *atmaprakasa*; it is this light that goes by the name Aka. This does not come from outside. Even as your *jñāna* increases, so also your knowledge of the *ātman* grows in proportion with it. This is to say that when our *jñāna* becomes all-enveloping, the individual *ātman* becomes the *viśātman*, the *ātman* of the universe which shines through all the worlds. Such *jñāna* has reached its culmination.

There are many steps or stages in this process of *jñāna* reaching its end in the *viśātman*. The first stage is the body-consciousness which is present even in the animal kingdom. The animal has no knowledge beyond its body. To the animal there is nothing beyond the body and to maintain its body, it harasses and kills other bodies. It has no mercy; nor has it the sense that the others also must live. The lion, the tiger, the bird of prey—all behave in this manner. “I must live and it matters not to me who pays for it or how I get what

I want”—this is the philosophy of animals. Man, if he also behaves thus, is but an animal, even though he has the form of a human being. He who thinks only of his body, identifying himself with the body alone, and for the sake of which does anything, irrespective of the fitness of what he does, or the justice of it, unmindful of the crime of depriving another of his rights and share in life, such a man is an animal-man. This animal-man is at the lowest rung of the ladder in the rise of the individual consciousness to that of the *visātman*. Slightly of higher and wider vision, is the man who is engaged in the well-being of others closely connected with him, as for instance his own wife, children and other members of his own family. At the next higher stage is the man who includes all his kith and kin, the neighbours and society around him in his thinking. Higher than this is the social worker who works for a group of people, higher still the nationalist whose concern is for the Nation; these wish that the society and the Nation should live in brotherhood. Further up stands the man who takes the whole of mankind as one single unit, for his acts are international, for the benefit of the world as a whole, and his concern is for the welfare of the whole of mankind. Thus stage by stage, the life of man expands to greater and greater dimensions. But, for all that, it will be seen that even though he works for international welfare, everything is not in his hands and he cannot work it according to his will and plan. His acts are but tiny samples of good work, for despite the maximum you can do for the welfare of mankind, you can never fulfil all the needs, for all times, of the whole of mankind. And who are you to undertake this stupendous task! What is the magnitude of the work on hand and what is your capacity to accomplish it! Your life-span is three days, four days—so to say, compared to the infinite life of the world. After you, who is to carry on the work? He who can think of the universe which is above the international level, is still higher. Because nations are only parts, even though they are large and to think of a part here and a part there, has not much relevance for one who is aiming at the universe. And, even if you take the whole of the earth, it is not the universal which you have in view. Besides mankind, there are higher manifestations, which are beyond the ken of our knowledge and which have to be taken into consideration in order to bring good to

all creation in the universe as a whole. “*Sarve bhavantu sukhinah*” means, let the whole universe be happy and not that it is enough if just this or that section of humanity on earth, or on any other planet alone lives in happiness. The whole creation should be included in the matter of well-being. The vision of one who can think thus, is universal. Mankind is only a part within the universe, which is the whole, and to him who sees thus, what is a national or international achievement? And what is the place of this earth, our world in, this context! This is the knowledge possessed by a *viśātmā*. And this knowledge or wisdom is *jñāna*. If the universe were to shake and totter in chaos, of what use is the good given to humanity whether at the national or international level! Now, our fears are caused by that which we consider is outside and separate from us. We are afraid of the tiger. But the tiger-cubs even bite the mother-tiger’s ears, pull them playfully, and walk over its head. The tiger never snarls at the cubs, nor attacks them. Why? Because, the tiger considers that the cubs are a part of itself, members of its own family, and not outside it. To us, the tiger is outside us and we do not consider that we are a part of its family. So, we fear the tiger and dare not go even near it, leave alone pulling and biting its ears! Our thinking and actions should be similar to those of *viśātman* to whom the whole universe is one homogeneous unit. When we can think and act as *viśātmās*, where is the need to think and act for oneself as an individual! There is no more delusion, or pain, or sorrow for him as an individual, for he is included in the good that he brings to all creation in the whole universe. In the Kenopanisad we find this idea expressed in its mantra IV—5: *yadetad gacchatīva ca manaḥ*: the mind seems to go to *brahman*. In its next verse it says: *taddha tadvanam nāma*—brahman is to be adored by all beings. All creation is an indivisible whole, and not made up of parts or bits. The whole universe is one family. What happens to you as an individual is connected with the whole universe. The man whose thinking is on these lines is a universal citizen. It is this great man who is described in these two verses. In the Self of that Self-realised man, the *jīvanmukta*, all beings, all creation becomes the Self alone. As a result of the realisation of the Supreme Self, he the *jīvanmukta* understands the Truth. And what is that Truth? It is this: that everything is within

you, and that you include everything in creation and that there is nothing outside you. These are the truths complementary to one another. You fear that man who abuses you, because you take him to be outside you. Now, you see your own hand also outside you (not inside you), you see it as an object. Are you afraid of your own hand? No. Because, you consider your hand as your own, a part of you. Even the little finger is a part of yourself. If all creation is thus understood to be within you, as part of yourself, of whom will you be afraid? You do not harm your own self. This never happens. There is no *ragadvesa* concerning what is your own, like your hand, for example. That which is part of you does not create these opposing passions of likes and dislikes. Only with objects outside you, this pair of opposites come into play. When you consider that the universe is within you, there is none to be afraid of, for none dare to touch even a hair of yours. It is not only that none can harm you, it is much more, the whole universe will start loving you. What you think the universe is, even that it will be to you. If you think the universe is yours, then it also will consider you to be its own and will look after you, feed you and protect you. Everything will come to you of its own accord from the world. For, in this stand that you have taken, you do not feel that the world is other than you, an object outside you. That which you consider as outside you will only run away from you, for it is afraid of you. In the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, Yajnavalkya says: "Whichever individual thinks that such and such objects are outside him, separate from him, those objects will run away from him. Wife and children also will run away from that individual who considers that they are separate from him." If, on the other hand, with equal vision, you realise that you are indivisible from the rest of the creation, the world also will look after you as non-separate from itself. This is what is conveyed in the Bhagavadgita also in the verse *ananyāś cintayanto mām ye janāḥ paryupāsate, teṣām nityābhīyuktānām yogakṣemaṁ vahāmyaham*: "To those men who worship me alone thinking of no other, of those ever-united, I secure what is not already possessed by them and preserve what they already possess." When you include the whole creation within you, you are that *alak niranjan masth*; the independent, non-related Bliss-Supreme. Because, it is the Self within you which is of this



nature. You are the Self which has no fear of anything or anyone. You are full of *ānanda*, Bliss. Then for whom, is fear? For whom, is delusion, grief or sorrow? Not for this *alākṣīraṅjan*. Because, such a man has become one with everything; he is himself everything. This is the meaning of these above two mantras.

## Verse 8

The next mantra enumerates a few of the characteristics of the Self spoken of above, to indicate that Its true nature is really Īśvara's own nature.

स पर्यगाच्छुक्रमकायमव्रण मस्नावरिँ शुद्धमपावदिधम् ।  
कवरिमनीषी परभिः स्वयम्भू र्याथातथ्यतोऽस्थान्  
व्यदधाच्छाश्वतीभ्यः समाभ्यः ॥ ८ ॥

*sa paryagāc chukram, akāyam, avraṇam, asnāviraṁ, śuddham, apāpavidham, kavir manīṣī, paribhūḥ, svayambhūḥ, yāthātathyato 'rthān vyadadhāc chāśvatībhyas samābhyah (8)*

Wherever there is creation there the Self is; whatever there is, He is that; pervading everywhere there is no place He has to reach; and no place is there where He is not. There is nothing that He needs to possess and nothing that He needs to achieve. He no has need to go anywhere and has no need of any help. Where He is there is perfection, there everything is present. He is the seed, the substratum, the cause of all. He is father, mother and grandmother. He is pure, effulgent, indivisible and bodiless. He has no physical body for he has no need for it. He goes everywhere and He is in everything. He is not limited by time and space; for if it were so, He would become perishable and impermanent. It is only as long as there is body that there is happiness and misery. If there is no body the pleasant and the unpleasant never make their appearance. He has neither fear, nor fatigue of any type. Fatigue is weakness. He is prowess itself. He has plentitude and so has no greed. Where He is, there is no end to anything. In the world, only certain things can be in certain places. As He is in everything everywhere He has them all. He has no flesh, no bone, blood or muscles. Even the physical bodies of *avatars* like Lord Rama and Lord Krishna, it is said, were non-physical. They were not made of the five great elements, *tanmātras* ether, air, fire, water and earth principles. He is pure Consciousness and hence has none of the physical characteristics. He is beyond all the three *gunas*, *tamas*, *rajas* and even *sattva*. Though from *tamas* to *rajas*

and *rajas* to *sattva* there is an increasingly greater transparency and inward penetration, *sattva* also is a hindrance, for it is as it were, still on the other side of the transparent glass. *Īśvara* is extremely pure. He is Himself, with no screen separating Him from the three *gunas*. There is no obstruction, no hindrance in Him. *Sattva* is purer than *rajas* which is purer than *tamas*; He is purer than even *sattva*. While we can describe in words what is *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*, He being none of these, words cannot describe Him who is beyond even the *sattva*. This transcendental Being is beyond expression through words: this is all we can say of Him. He is free from the results of good and bad deeds. He neither commits sins, nor does virtuous actions. This is so, because all actions of Consciousness are identical with Itself. It is only in the individual man that his existence is different from his actions, because of which he has to enjoy the fruits of his actions. The Lord's actions do not yield any fruit. His Being itself is His action. Every act of His is a cosmic act and therefore free from sin and virtue. It is only man who commits sin while doing action, for man has a motive, a purpose of his action. But *īśvara's* action is causeless and causelessness cannot produce any effect. What is good action? It is doing according to the Law of God, and to sin is to work against God's laws, even as to work against man's law is a crime. To do an act against *sat* is to sin. God's law is universality of existence. Man is separate from the effect he creates by his action. God is not so, for Existence-Consciousness-Bliss, or *sat-cit-ānanda*, is one single factor. Hence, there is no question of sin or virtue in Him. And, when neither cause nor effect exists, where is the question of fruits accruing thereof? None. Only in the world of men, the lack of understanding of God's law brings about the breaking of it; and thus even the wise men commit sin in this sense. What else is He? He is *Kaviḥ*, He is Himself knowledge. God is all-knowing; He is the past, the present and the future. There is no seer other than He. He is omniscient. Also He is the Master of his mind, *manīsī*. Mind's very nature is change, it is not mud. Wisdom, intellect, or knowledge is all but the mind which keeps changing its form. Mind is impermanent and transient, hence mind cannot be taken as *sattā*; man goes along with his mind and therefore is not the master of his mind. *Īśvara* is *sattā* and so there is no change in

Him. He is not transient, and therefore, He is the master of the mind. These are all but tentative, accidental, temporary definitions, to say that He is *sarvāntaryāmi*, *sarvajña*, and *sarvaśaktimān*. These are only to indicate that everything reaches its limit in Him. One may ask if there is no question of space in respect of *īśvara*, then what is the meaning of saying He is *sarvāntaryāmi*? The reply is that He is the highest in all qualities, and all these expressions are only indications. While He is the source of all knowledge, what sense does it make to say that He is all-knowing! Similarly, from Him alone all strength emanates, what is the meaning of calling Him *sarvāntaryāmi*? All this only means that enveloping everything He yet transcends everything. In that Cosmic Being there is nothing wanting; He is in a state of *paripūrṇatva*. This is *paribhūḥ*. Another meaning for *paribhūḥ* is that He is present in all directions. He is also *svaymbūḥ*, the self-born and self-existing, the causeless cause, the knower of Himself and the doer of all actions. There is none to teach Him, none to instruct Him, none to influence Him. When from Him everything comes into being, how can anything be a cause for His being? He is His own father and mother; none conceived Him. No one is the cause of His Being. He is all that is transcended and also all that is transcendental. Hence, He is Self-existent.

The *upaniṣad* here places a beautiful idea before us in this verse: *yāthātathya* – creation is in that state of being, or everything is, as it ought to be; everything has been placed and done exactly as it should be; this is how it is, even from when He created this universe. Everything in creation has come into being exactly in the way it ought to be and exactly in place. He has put everything in its own place, in a faultless manner. There is no ugliness, nothing bad, nothing wrong in this universe. Therefore, there is no need and no meaning in wanting to effect any change in any manner in this creation. To try to do this is a foolish man's errand. In this effort, man seems to presume that he is wiser than God and that he can do something to set right God's work! We of the world feel that there exists in His creation defects and incompleteness, mistakes and shortcomings. So we start doing this and that, thinking that we are going to set things right. We find in the world thorns, poison and many similar objects which give us pain, The question arises: where have these come

from, and if they have come from God how can these be reconciled with His perfection in creation? The reason is not far to seek. We are responsible for these, the thorns and poison. While all creation is going on in all perfection, we live in a world of names and forms. You may ask, if everything is placed in its right time and place, how comes any suffering? The suffering exists because of our perverted view of the universe. To see two moons is the mistake of the eye, the cause is not that there are two moons but what is known as *timira* (a disease of the eyes). The world is beautiful, it is perfect, and so, it is as it ought to be.

Such a perfection has been for all eternity. The world was never imperfect in the past, nor is it in a bad state in the present, nor will it go wrong in the future. Out of *amṛta*, the immortal divine elixir something other than it cannot come. How can anything different come out of that which is *satcidānanda*, Existence-Knowledge-Bliss-Absolute? There is no question of such a thing ever happening. The universe has come from *pūrṇatva*, all-fullness, all completeness: *pūrṇamadaḥ*, *pūrṇamidam*. *Īśvara* is eternally *pūrṇam*, so will the world be eternally *pūrṇam*. And also all duties have been allotted in the manner they should be.

## Verses 9-11

The next three slokas have a single thread of thought and they have to be studied together. They are treated as one group.

अन्धं तमः प्रवशिन्तयिष्वदियामुपासते ।

ततो भूय इव ते तमो य उ वदियायाँ रताः ॥ ९ ॥

अन्यदेवाहुरवदिययाऽन्यदाहुरवदियया ।

इतश्शुश्रुम धीराणां ये नस्तदवचिचक्षुरि ॥ १० ॥

वदियां चावदियां च यस्तद् वेदोभयं सह ।

अवदियया मृत्युं तीर्त्वा वदिययाऽमृतमश्नुते ॥ ११ ॥

*andham tamaḥ praviśanti yo'vidyām upasate,*

*tato bhūya iva te tamo ya u vidyāyām ratāḥ (9)*

*anyad evāhur vidyayā anyad āhur avidyayā,*

*iti śuśruma dhīrāṇām ye nas tad vicacakṣire (10)*

*vidyām cāvidyām ca yas tad vedobhayam saha,*

*avidyayā mṛtyuṁ tīrtvā vidyayāmṛtam aśnute (11)*

These verses have to be understood properly. It is difficult to understand the real import of these mantras. Commentators give all kinds of possible meanings, and each commentator expounds the meaning from his own point of view. For, the mantras lend themselves to all those meanings and interpretations.

From the view point of Ramanujacarya and Madhvacarya, the Mimamsakas, the Naiyayikas, and the Bhakti school there are various interpretations, each from the point of view of its own philosophy. Hence, there are different interpretations for the same words. The terms *vidyā* and *avidyā* have been variously interpreted. Sanskrit grammar, Vedanta, *kārikās* or commentaries, etc., again have got their own interpretations for these words. But all are agreed that *vidyā* and *avidyāupāsana* should not be done separately, but together, and each in equal measure to the other i.e., well-balanced. The great *ācāryas* state that knowledge of an object and the object of knowledge are different. They are never identical. This is their established view. And this is accepted by all. They say that *vidyā* and *avidyā* have different meanings. The latter, *avidyā* is useful in the

world of actions performed under motivation and which, therefore, bear fruits. Motivated action seems permissible for they are causes for the effects in end. But, if this meaning is followed up, we would arrive at a wrong interpretation in the context of the rest of the verse. The verse states that we should equalise *jñāna* and *ajñāna* and should not adhere to either the one or the other alone. How is this to be done? The meaning is very deep indeed. The whole purport of the verse depends on these two words with their literal meanings and their real import in the context.

The *ācāryas'* final conclusion is that knowledge of *īśvara* cannot be obtained by *karma* alone nor by knowledge alone, *avidyā* referring to *karma* and *vidyā* to knowledge. *Avidyā* or *karma* will yield fruits which have a beginning and an end. And so, attainment of Godhead is not possible, and in order to enjoy the fruits of *karma* several births have to be taken. This is falling into utter darkness, which in other words is *samsāra*. This is the established conclusion in the ultimate analysis. But what is its real meaning? The verse further states that if *upāsana*, devotion, is offered only to *avidyā*, you will enter into darkness; and if you do *upāsana* of *vidyā* alone, it is still worse, for you again enter into greater darkness. He who understands the correct meaning of *vidyā* and *avidyā* and thereby brings about a balance between them and does *upāsana* on this balanced understanding, such a man crossing the world of death, attains immortality. This is stated in verse eleven.

But, what is the correct meaning of these two words? No one can establish the meaning with any finality. Some *ācāryas* say that knowledge and the object of knowledge are not one and the same thing. Our knowledge of this table is not the table. These two are not identical. Likewise, knowledge of *īśvara* is not therefore *īśvara*. Our knowledge that it is a table does not mean that we have become the table. So, to have knowledge of *īśvara* is not to become *īśvara*. This view is accepted by all commentators. Scholarly knowledge alone, it should be admitted, cannot bring about the knowledge of the Self. To pundits, *karma* being taken as *avidyā*, these scholars well versed in the scriptures, will not even speak about it, leave alone engaging in *karma*. If *vidyā* and *avidyā* are combined in this negative way excluding *karma*, it will defeat its purpose—this is

the view of the *ācāryas*. The Mumasakas' view is that through *karma*, *īśvarasākṣākāra* or attaining to Godhead is possible. But *īśvara* is not an object of knowledge and He cannot come under any *viṣayākāravṛtti* i.e. modification of the mind in the form of an object, projected outside of Him. And *karma* has Godhead as an object, external to it. So this view in combining *vidyā* and *avidyā* is not satisfactory.

The *ācāryas* of the *bhaktimārga* state that love of God alone can give *īśvarasākṣākāra*. To love God, to dedicate all work to God, to be lost in God, to be united with Him in thought, word and deed, without break for even a second—this alone can lead you to the attainment of God-head or Immortality. According to them, *bhaktimārga* is therefore *vidyā*, and *avidyā* the *karma* in this path. The knowledge of the scholastic pundits divorced from *karma* cannot lead them to *mokṣa*, for they, as stated already, completely avoid all *karmas*. They completely eschew *karmas*, and therefore, do not attain the final Goal of life.

We generally take that the world is one thing and *īśvara* is another thing and that the two are different. But through the experience of the sense, we also infer that there must be a cause the result of which is all that the senses perceive. The world appears solid before us. The physical body also appears so. As long as we are in the body, we have to accept the world, for the body is in the world. But we cannot get *darśan* of *īśvara* in the same way as we perceive the objects of the world. Knowledge of *īśvara* is deductive knowledge. Though we cannot see Him, we can all the same have knowledge of His Existence. The changing condition of the world leads us to the inference that a condition exists, where no change should exist, for change always seeks its end. So, we conclude that we can neither be satisfied with the world alone, nor with *īśvara* alone. We have to take both together. The Bhagavadgita also tells us that you can forget neither God nor the world. So our duty falls towards both with *vidyā* and *avidyā*—*aparokṣa jñāna* of the world and *parokṣa jñāna* of *īśvara*. They are in other words direct and indirect knowledge of God. Therefore, our updsana of both should be done. So, combine these two and *mokṣa* is yours.

Through another interpretation of these two words, *vidyā* and



*avidyā*, we come to the conclusion that the world is not in reality different from *īśvara* Existence, they appear as distinct from one another, due to nescience. So, our duty to the world seen as distinct from *īśvara* is of the nature of *avidyā* and is not *vidyā*. Therefore, it is that we are asked not to accept God and the world as separate entities. Because of *īśvarasatta*'s presence, the world appears to exist. Between them there is really perfect harmony. We cannot therefore consider the world as separate and unconnected with *īśvara*. The world is a distinct fact for us, so long as we live in the body. For, we have already noted that the body is a part of the world. The trouble is that while the body and the world are experienced as solid facts, *īśvara*'s Existence in connection with it is only an inferential knowledge. But again, the restless and changing nature of the world visible to us goads us to contemplate on the truth behind it. Deep reflection leads us to the conclusion that our *upāsana* should be a combination of both these types of knowledge. On one side is the ever changing condition of the world, and on the other side is the perfect harmony and system in its working—the appearance, as also its substratum—both are facts—and neither can be left out. The substratum is *vidyā* and the action based on it, our bounden duty is *avidyā*. God's existence is without a body, non-physical in every sense. Our bounden duty is to the world; and though based on God alone as its substratum, it is *avidyā*, because the world is unreal. In essence, the instruction is that we should do our duty to the world, based on the knowledge of *īśvara*. And this is *karma* yoga. This is also parallel in thought to the *tantraśāstra* which says: 'you can also rise by that by which you fall'.

The world is the face of God, it is the symbol of God, a reflection of God. This is why we say that God is in everything. So long as your body exists you only see the names and forms in the world. It is in this sense it is said that our bounden duty to the world comes under *avidyā*. So *karma* and *īśvara-jñāna* must be combined together in *upāsana*. When *karma* is done as devotion to God, there cannot be greed for ends and means. The fruits of bhakti and karma practised separately, are different. They then are *vidyā* and *avidyā* respectively. So these two types should be combined in the adoration of God. *Mokṣa* can be attained.

Acarya Sankara's commentary may appear to be different to what has been discussed so far. His method is to get hold of a subtle meaning of the words and through analysis of this subtle point establish his case. He always advocates the *advaita* philosophy. This is how he explains the words *vidyā* and *avidyā*: the knowledge of the world is *avidyā* and knowledge of God is *vidyā*. The world of objects is presented to us by our sense, and we accept it as real. We are not conscious of the thread of Consciousness running through each and every object. There is no conviction also that there must be some connection between this seen world and the unseen *īśvara*. The experience of the world of objects is direct, but that of God is indirect. And yet an undercurrent of a vague feeling exists that there is something that is the cause of all that is perceived, and that this something is the reason behind the incessant change and activity in this world. There is also this feeling: the *jīva*, the phenomenon of individuality and the world are not *īśvara*. He is a different entity; but all the same, there is connection between the *īśvara* and the world. The cause of the existence and experience of the world seems to be the presence of *īśvara* in the world. So, we live in the world living the life of the *jīva*, and also accept that *īśvara* is the cause behind everything. That is to say, our conduct in the world of objects as *jīva* can be stated to be *avidyā*, while our acceptance of *īśvara*'s presence in the world, to be *vidyā*. Our dependence on God as the substratum is *vidyā*; and our life as we live it in jivahood is *avidyā*. Neither can *īśvara* be separate from the world, nor the world can exist as an entity independently. So long as we are in the world with a sense of separate existence as the *jīva*, the world has to be accepted as though it is real. The world stands before us in all its solidness as an object which all the *indriyas*-the senses can directly perceive. This experience of the physical world by the *jīva* is blinding darkness; for the experience is of the world which has no reality of its own, So we should take *vidyā* and *avidyā* to be one single factor and not as two which have to be combined in our *upāsana*.

The *cārvākas* (materialists) argue to a definite end and say that there is nothing other than and beyond the perceived world. If you accept this view or again that of the *naiyāyikas* (the logicians) who almost completely accept the philosophy of the *vaiiēyikas*), then

you are in the wrong path and will reach the wrong end. In other words, you will fall into blinding darkness. Because you will get lost in this cycle of endless transmigration, great will be your suffering, pain and grief, as a result of following wrong paths such as these.

How then to reconcile *vidyā* and *avidyā*? This seems to be a very hard task to accomplish. Know that the world is the face of God. This is the secret of existence of the world. He is *sarvāntaryāmi*, and therefore, dwells in all, in every being, sentient and non-sentient. So, the world must be accepted and cannot be rejected completely. How can he who does not believe in a God he perceives, believe in a God whom he does not perceive?—asks a philosopher. As said earlier, the *tantrasāstra* says that, that by which we are caught, even by that itself we can be liberated. This world can do both, it can catch us in its hold and at the same time, it can liberate us also from its hold. To be devoted to the world alone or *īśvara* alone, will only be acceptance of a part and not the whole. To think of the world alone apart from God, is to reject the latter. Neither should you dislike the world, nor be attached to it. And taking both God and world together, your duties to the world must be done in the light of this knowledge of God. All actions should be an offering to Him, as a *bhakta* does. *Īśvara* is the culmination of all activities.

Furthermore *vidyā* and *avidyā* can be considered as the two counterparts of the one whole. Thus *vidyā* can mean knowledge, introversion, transcendental, eternal, subtle, Existence, Clod and meditation; and *avidyā* may, therefore, mean their counterparts, viz *karma*, extroversion, empirical, transient, gross, the law of God, the world and worship.

The sum and substance of all this is that we should adopt a wise combination of *avidyā*. In other words, the trick you should adopt in *sādhana* is to bring about a harmony between God and the world. But, we fail in this work of harmonising, for we always hate either the world or God. To us God and world always seem to stand opposed to each other. The characteristic quality of the spiritual neophyte is to hate the world, and that of the materialist is to hate God. But the hand of God is in the world, in every atom of it. He has his finger in all creation. It is only that the impure mind does not reflect God.

By *niṣkāmyakarma*, unmotivated, desireless action, the mind can

be purified, and by meditation one can attain God. For meditation on God, the pre-condition is purity of mind. Without purity of mind, meditation is impossible. If the mind is full of the vibrations in the form of desires or thoughts of various kinds on the objects of the world, meditation or controlled thinking is not possible. The mind cannot become one-pointed. One-pointedness is exactly what the mind has to achieve before one takes to meditation. Unmotivated actions or selfless work is a great help in purifying the mind and acquiring this one-pointed thinking or concentration. Work done as one's duty in life where there is no hankering after the fruits thereof, is selfless work. Doing your duty comes as the law of the universe and it is not therefore in your power to escape doing it.

There are two levels in which the law of the universe works. One is universal and the other is transcendent. The eternal law operated by *īśvara* at the transcendental level is *satya* while *ṛta* in Vedantic parlance is that eternal law manifested in the universe as the law of creation. You will have to accept both. You have to see the one in the other. No partial acceptance can help you. Doing unmotivated or selfless action is to accepting both. And by doing your duty thus, you will be established in *vidyā* or the knowledge of God. Even so doing *karma* is termed *avidyā*, because while the world exists in *īśvara*, it does not exist in His transcendental aspect. The Bhagavadgita also says: "He who sees Me everywhere and sees everything in Me, is never separated from Me, and I am not separated from him." The Kathopanisad also says: What is here is verily there, and what is there is here, likewise. So combine these two *satya* and *ṛta* which are the universal law working at the two levels; this is combining *vidyā* and *avidyā* in one *upāsan*; and this verily is the work of a hero.

*Vidyā* and *avidyā* have to be taken together and combined for the very reason of our being in the world as a limb of it. This is the real significance of the saying: 'when you go to Rome do as Romans do'. It becomes necessary for us, living as we are in this world, to do our duty as selfless work. This means that work should be done in such a way as to transcend it, i.e., rise above the fruits thereof. We have already seen that *karma* can bind us only if done without the knowledge of God; and we can also keep it well under our control, when we know the truth about the nature of *karma* and its relation

to God. The truth is that all *karma* is based on *īśvara-sattā*. Physical existence is a compulsion for doing *karma*. Like the lion in the forest, *karma* can eat us up if we separate it from the substratum of *īśvara-sattā*. But once we know the secret of *karma*, even as the lion is controlled by the circus-master, *karma* remains under control and loses its binding character. The circus-master knows the secret of controlling the lion, because he possesses the knowledge of the lions' nature and behaviour. In the same way, once you are in possession of the secret of *karma*, it can be kept under control. *Karma* is a double-edged sword. When you know how to handle the sword, you conquer your enemies. A sword in the hands of a soldier vanquishes the enemy, and the same sword in the hands of a child can be the source of the gravest danger to itself and others. If you do your duty ignorant of the true nature of *karma* divorced from the knowledge of God or *vidyā*, *karma* will bind you. Know the secret of *karma* by uniting *karma* with *vidyā*. When thus we do our duty knowing the truth of it, we combine *avidyā* with *vidyā* and we attain God, and we are saved from the cycle of birth and death. Understanding *īśvara-sattā* does not mean attaining Godhood; it is unifying the existence of God and world that achieves this.

What is the cause of death and rebirth? The cause is motivated action, *sakāma karma*. Unmotivated action does not cause re-birth; it will gradually take you to Godhood. To be liberated from the bonds of *karma* is the same as obtaining *īśvarajñāna*. To be free of all disease, is to be healthy, although the literal meanings of health and disease are different. To be free from disease and to be healthy are not two different states, but one and the same. To combine *īśvarajñāna* and *karma* is synthesis of yoga. When through *avidyā* you get beyond the clutches of *karma*, you overcome death, and through *vidyā* you obtain liberation. We arrive at the same goal. Overcoming death and attaining immortality are one and the same thing. This is the conclusion of all *ācāryas*; Madhvacarya, Ramanujacarya, and all great *siddhas* also affirm the same conclusion.

Sri Sankaracarya has a different explanation. To him, *vidyā* and *avidyā* do not have in this context their dictionary meaning of knowledge and action respectively. He says depending on the interpretation of the word *jñāna* there is a deeper meaning than

the literal meaning. The whole set of the different interpretations is based on this single word *jñana*, knowledge. The other *ācāryas* say that an object and the knowledge of it, are ever separate and never identical. To know *īśvara-sattā* is therefore not becoming it. But, to Sri Sankara, the knowledge of the world is knowledge of the thoughts of the objects of the world, or *viṣayākāravṛttijñana* is *īśvara-sattā* is the stand the *ācāryas* takes. Now, the world of objects is ever changing. What does this mean? The individual mind in knowing an object envelopes the object and identifies itself with it for the time being. Thus it is that the mind gets the knowledge of an object. The ever-changing nature of the world is due to this peculiar process of the mind, and perception of variety is the result. When knowledge is thus based on the modification of the mind, the objects will definitely be external to you. Through the extroverted knowledge you cannot know *īśvara*. For, such knowledge and the object of knowledge will always be separate, never identical. The mind projects the object and limits it in space and time; it then desires it and runs after it. But *īśvara* cannot be limited by time and space. Limitation and all-pervasiveness are opposed to each other; the one cannot be the other. The knowledge of the world, being *viṣayākāra vṛitti*, is obtained through the senses. Knowledge of God who is beyond the senses, cannot be obtained through the senses, because they do not have the capacity to go beyond the two factors of time and space. If *īśvara* were also in space and time, he would not be *īśvara*, but only *naśvara*, the perishable. He is not an individual whom the senses can perceive. Individuality has the characteristic of changing. That which has a beginning must also have an end. The senses cannot perceive that which is unchanging and permanent. Therefore, they cannot get *īśvarajñana* which is unchanging, eternal and imperishable. Sri Sankara's great *siddhānta* is—*yad-drśyam tat naśyam*—that which is perceivable is perishable. The world of objects is perceived, and is therefore perishable. It is the individual, the *jīva* that sees the world of objects through its senses and mind. Hence, what is perceived is not the knowledge of *īśvara* who is omnipresent i.e. who is unlimited and exists everywhere. *īśvara* is not an object that can be perceived by the senses. He is the subject who is the seer of objects. Therefore, the *viṣayākāra vṛitti*

or knowledge of the world cannot be combined with knowledge of *īśvara* or *īśvara jñana*, as it is termed.

The means to obtain *īśvara jñana*, is a different and separate one. It cannot be combined with any other kind of knowledge. *Jñana* or knowledge is of three kinds: (1) *prātibhāsika* (illusory), (ii) *vyāvaharika* (empirical), and (iii) *pāramārthika* (absolute). The first is that knowledge which says that there is something before us, though there is really nothing, as in dream. Here, the internal subtle impressions in the subconscious mind appear as external objects. This is unreal. The internal impressions get projected into space and time which are also mere projections of the mind. This illusory knowledge cannot be of any use in the waking world and it vanishes when you wake up. This leads us to the conclusion that knowledge with which action is possible in the waking state, is different from this type of illusory knowledge.

The empirical knowledge is known as *vyāvaharika* knowledge. We can benefit by this knowledge and this is a little better than the illusory dream-knowledge. For, in this—the *vyāvaharika* knowledge—the object stands outside us and an idea of the object exists inside the mind. We, of course, do not know the ultimate truth of the object, say a tree in front of us; yet the mind understands that there is such an object before us and that it is a tree. This is the practical knowledge over which we have no control whatsoever. For, in reality we do not know the truth about the tree. Yet we do know something of it. We may say that in these present conditions the empirical knowledge is unlike the dream-knowledge, for it is not only in the mind, but outside also. This knowledge is of a separate type existing in its own right; but that does not prevent us from getting the ultimate knowledge. Such is the nature of *vyāvaharika* or the practical, empirical knowledge.

*Pāramārthikajñana* is that knowledge which is neither inside us nor outside us. It is neither introvert nor extrovert. It is neither in the mind nor in the world. It is neither like the illusory dream-knowledge, nor the empirical knowledge of the waking state. *Pāramārthika* knowledge is Absolute knowledge, for nothing exists beyond it. It pervades and transcends all other knowledge. Hence, Sri Sankara says, that while it is possible to combine empirical knowledge

with action, such a combination is not possible in the case of *Pāramārthikajñana*. In the empirical world, object and knowledge are separate and so they can be combined. Therefore, karma (*avidyā*) and knowledge (*vidyā*) can come into combination. *Vidyā* is not pure knowledge, though it is not the extroverted knowledge of the world. Here knowledge is separate from the world. So *karma* is possible and can be done through combining it with updsana, (meditation).

The physical body is connected with the world and the same body is also connected with the fruits of its action. *Karma* and its effects are ever inseparable. The result of *karma* is the transformation of the mind which is ever changing due to its nature. And this constant transformation taking place in space and time, and also conditioned by them, can cease only in an unchanging permanency. Action is an effect of the mind and is possible only when there is the limitation of space, time and object i.e. *deśa kālā vastu pariccheda*. The object and its knowledge are of the same kind, because both are the modifications of the conditioning mind, although the knowledge of a tree and the object the tree, are two different factors. Though we understand the knowledge of an individual as finite, in fact it is infinite, for *jñana* is not divisible. But so long as we take knowledge—*jñana* to be *vyāvaharika* it would be something outside us. However, this type of *jñana* has empirical existence, and it is possible to do *karma* in the light of it; i.e. *jñana* and *karma* can be combined.

But if you take *pāramārthikajñana* to be the meaning of *vidyā*, with what will you combine this! And again, how do you know that *vidyā* is *pāramārthikajñana*, for, outside the *pāramārthikajñana* nothing exists. There is nothing beyond it, and there is nothing which it is not. As long as we take *karma* and *jñana* to be of equal status, having a common ground, we can take them as *karma* and *upāsana* and combine them. Two individual entities can be united. But is *jñana* individual? Knowledge of the objects is a transformation of the mind. This knowledge we get by the mind covering the object. By this process it perceives an infinite number of objects. This knowledge is knowledge of something outside it, in space and time; in other words, it is finite knowledge. How can this finite know the Infinite, despite all it knows in terms of its vastness in space, time and number! It is the mind again that thinks that *īśvara* is infinite.



Is *jñana* different from the mind or one with the mind? If you think that *jñana* is different from the mind, then it becomes an object. But *jñana* is different from the object *jñana*. *Jñana* is non-different, indivisible, all pervasive, rooted in and the inner-controller of all. Such is *pāramāthikajñana*. Therefore, it cannot be combined with *avidyā*. If we take that the meaning of *vidyā* is this *jñana*. Then, with what will you combine this *pāramāthikajñana*? In the *vyāvaharikajñana* also you can argue thus: the object, say a tree, is external; but the knowledge of the tree is internal. But can we say that this *jñana* is real *jñana*? Can the knowledge of the tree be separated from the idea of the tree? Are these two different pieces of knowledge? Can one piece be cut away from the other? Neither are we omniscient. *Pāramāthikajñana* is not an object. Who then can piecemeal it or know it? None.

Let us, for argument's sake, assume for the time being, that *jñana* is divisible. All right. But, the question arises, who gave you that authoritative intelligence to make that assumption? How did you know that it is divisible? It is only through *jñana* that you say you know this. Has *jñana*, knowledge become the *jñanin*, the knower of knowledge, to tell you, 'my knowledge is authoritative and full'? If thus *jñana* has attained its fullness, it is its culmination. To know it as such, is to attain *cidānanda*, Knowledge-Bliss. Now the question is whether it is our intellect that thus attains Knowledge-Bliss, or is there something else beyond it? This Knowledge-Bliss is of such a nature that It covers everything, is everywhere and contains all in itself. How then can the finite intellect know the infinite? How can we think that knowledge which the mind can possess, is complete and full knowledge? The mind is of a finite nature, a thing which is not the full. Thus we see that (knowledge is really indivisible, though it appears divisible. Who makes this apparent division in the indivisible Knowledge? It is through the help of Knowledge itself that we say that Knowledge is limited. However to know the limited is also to know the limitless or the unlimited. If we know that the world is finite how can our knowledge which is finite know the Infinite? But, we want to know, and become the Infinite. This indicates that Knowledge or *jñana* is Infinite.

There is a further argument, says Sri Sankara, to show that there

is support for this view in this *upaniṣad* itself. It says that we should combine *vidyā* and *avidyā* and attain *mukti*, liberation. If this is so, this would be the path of *kramamukti*, i.e. attainment of God step by step. This is different from *sadyomukti*, immediate liberation. The prayer of this *upaniṣad* is: ‘O! Sun, O! agni, take me by the right path’. It is true, that in *sadyomukti* there is no question of either a path or going through it. But *pāramārthikajñāna* does give *sadyomukti*. Therefore, it is quite clear that *avidyā* and *vidyā* both come under *vyāvaharikajñāna* and not *pāramārthikajñāna*. Besides we exist on the level of physicality. The world is *vyāvaharikabhūmi* or the plane of empiricity. Therefore, combine the object of the world with the knowledge of them in a proper way, in a discriminating manner, and then engage in *kriya* and *karma*, action and duty. Know that *īśvara* is not limited by space-time factor; neither perceivable nor perishable. To do *karma* is our duty, for we of the world, are not intrinsically different from one another. World and God are not different from one another. Understand that God is the world and hence the world is Divine. Know also that God is not limited and is not like the world of which it is commented that that which is perceived is that which perishes. Act in this knowledge. Do your duties of the world in this knowledge. Knowledge of the world, the world, and your duty to the world are inseparable. We now come to the end of this set of three slokas, viz.. 9th, 10th & 11th.

## Verses 12-14

अन्धं तमः प्रवशिन्तयिऽसम्भूतमिपासते ।  
ततो भूय इव ते तमो य उ सम्भूत्याँ रताः ॥ १२ ॥  
अन्यदेवाहुः सम्भवादन्यदाहुरसम्भवात् ।  
इतिशिशुरुम धीराणां ये नस्तदवचिचक्षुरि ॥ १३ ॥  
सम्भूतचि वनिशं च यस्तद् वेदोभयँ सह ।  
वनिशेन मृत्युं तीरत्वा सम्भूत्याऽमृतमश्नुते ॥ १४ ॥

*andham tamaḥ praviśanti ye'sambhūtim upāsate,  
tato bhuya iva te tamo ya u sambhūtyāṁ ratāḥ (12)  
anyad evahūḥ sambhavād anyad āhur asambhavāt,  
iti śuśruma dhīrāṇām ye nas tad vicacakṣire (13)  
sambhūtim ca vināśam ca yas tad vedobhayaṁ saha  
vināśena mṛtyuṁ tīrtvā sambhūtyā amṛtam aśnute (14)*

The above three *slokas* 12, 13 & 14 also must be taken together for study for the same reason for which the last set of three was taken together for discussion. These two sets of three *slokas* speak of *vidyā* and *avidyā* from different points of view. It should be noted that while verses 9-11 speak of *vidyā* and *avidyā* in the microcosm, these three 12-14 speak of the same in the macrocosm. The two sets of *slokas* speak from different standpoints.

*Avidyā* and *vidyā* in the first are parallel in concept to *asambhūti* and *sambhūti* respectively in the second set. *Asambhūti* is unperceivable to the senses. It is also known as *avyakta* or the unmanifest as against *vyakta* which is manifest and perceivable to the senses. *Asambhūti* causes birth; *sambhūti* is the born. But *sambhūti* is not the way creation can be said to be born from *īśvara*. For, *asambhūti* is both cause and effect; hence it is parallel in concept to *avidyā*; *asambhūti* or the state of being unborn is not in the same sense that *Mara* is the unborn. The state of equilibrium or *sāmya-avasthā* in a *sambhūti* is due to the equilibrium maintained among the qualities *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. And *sambhūti* is, to have birth: it is an effect. All effects have causes. The cause for *sambhūti* is *asambhūti* or *avyakta* the Unmanifest. *Sambhūti* is the effect. The former is the unseen, and the latter is the seen. Since

*asambhūti* is unperceivable, it cannot be known through the senses. The *kathopaniṣad* says: Higher than the senses is the mind, higher than the mind is the intellect, higher than the intellect is the *mahat* and higher than the *mahat* is the unmanifest. It is from this manifest known as *prakṛiti*, or the *mahat-tattva* known as *hiranyagarbha* also the *sūtratman* is born. He is the first born principle the, one source of all gods; His another form is *virāt*.

These verses instruct us that we should do *upāsana* of the combination of *asambhūti* and *sambhūti*. The previous set of verses tells us that *vidyā* and *avidyā* should be combined into one *upāsana*; that we should not think of the world and *īśvara* as different; and that our duty to the world and the world are inseparable. This *upāsana* or meditation will bestow liberation from the effects of actions. Having liberated us from the clutches of death, the meditation will further take us to immortality. It is this same idea that is now being followed up with *asambhūti* and *sambhūti*. By a combined meditation of *asambhūti* and *sambhūti* we get liberated. Through *asambhūti* we overcome death, and through *sambhūti* we attain immortality. Just as verses 9-11 tell us that meditation of *avidyā* and *vidyā* is not two different but one *upāsana* alone, these verses 12-14 which are complementary, instruct us to combine the *upāsana* of *asambhūti* and *sambhūti*. The first set says: Do not think of karma divorced from the individual, the two being inseparable, have to be combined in one *upāsana*. The knowledge of the world and our duty to the world go hand in hand. Combination of knowledge and *karma* is combination of *vidyā-avidyā*. This gives *krama mukti*; through *avidyā* one crosses over death and through *vidyā* attains immortality. This is the way for us who are in the world forming limbs of it, and therefore, a part of it. Do not think of yourself as different from the world, for you and your duty to the world are inseparable. The second set of three verses 12-14 says that we should not think of the world as different from *īśvara*. Thus, these two sets of verses are complementary to one another.

Now *asambhūti*, the unmanifest causes the birth of the first born *hiranyagarbha*. In other words, the source of *Hiranyagarbha* is *avyakta* or *mūla-prakṛti* of the unmanifested cause. *Mūla-prakṛti* is insentient. The senses cannot know it because they are born of it.

How can the result know the cause! And these verses say that the unmanifested and the manifested must be combined in the *upasāna*.

Who are those that do *upasāna* of the *avyakta*? What is *prakṛti laya* to which this *upasāna* leads? *Prakṛti laya* is the state of this manifested world merging in *prakṛti*. But this is not the final state in which the *jīvas* merge into to *para-brahman* the Absolute. *Laya* means to melt into or dissolve in. That which is merged thus cannot come into creation again. But this is just what happens after *prakṛti laya* which is like the state of deep sleep. The condition of the body and mind that come out of sleep is just as it was before going to sleep. Similarly, when creation begins, out you come from *prakṛti laya* in exactly the same condition as you entered the *laya*. Nothing has changed in you or about yourself. You start all over again where you left off before the *prakṛti laya*. This is not therefore the final dissolution into the Absolute, it is only a process of involution. The individuality does not finally vanish but remains in seed form, hibernating so to say. If this *pralaya* is the seedless state of ultimate liberation, how can those who enter into this condition be born again at the time of creation? What happens is this. Those that merge in *prakṛti* maintain jivahood. Now those who meditate on *sambhūti* are those who meditate on the cosmos, that all creation is a single unit and that *prakṛti* is not separate from consciousness. Here we should remember that we have already stated *prakṛti* to be insentient and *hiranyagarbha* is the first-born principle. The jivahood is maintained even though they merge in *prakṛti laya*. By *asambhūti upasana* even though the *jīvas* become one with *īśvara* when next they emerge (from *prakṛti laya*) they are born as lords of the cosmos. The *jīva* emerges though qualified to be lord, but there is no merging or complete dissolution. And further Sage Patanjali in his aphorisms briefly indicates that *avyakta prakṛti* causes creation by itself undergoing changes, and reabsorbs the creation. And so merging in *prakṛti* is not the end of change or in other words, change has not reached its end. These three verses discuss what happens in the *upasana* of the unmanifested and the manifested separately and why they should be combined.

Let us examine what is Unmanifest and why meditation is done on it. We combine *vidyā* and *avidyā* in the microcosm. But

the world is in the microcosm and they cannot be separated from one another. All the same, we do make this mistake and meditate either on the one or the other exclusively, as if one is divorced from the other. Inasmuch as these two *upasanas* are not different from those on *vidyā* and *avidyā*, they also have to be combined into one meditation. *Vidyā* and *avidyā* relate to the microcosm. In the same way, *asambhūti* and *sambhūti* are with reference to the microcosm. The Nasadiya Suktum describes *mūla prakṛti* or the *avyakta* in these words: in the beginning, all this was just darkness as it were, unknown, indefinable, un-arguable, as though everything was in a condition of deep-sleep; in a state of utter oblivion, And Manu says: *prasupta iva*. Meditation on the unmanifest leads you into blinding darkness, that of the manifest into even greater darkness. So, combine them into one single *upāsana*, cross death in the form of *samsāra* (so called because of the endless transmigration) through the former and attain immortality through the latter *upāsana*. Thus, we see that these verses have the same purport as verses 9-11.

Those who consider *śakti upāsana* as the highest, following the *tantra sāstra*, get but poor results. For meditation on *śakti* takes one only to *prakṛti laya*. And this has re-birth inherent in it in the seed-form. The *upanīṣad* under study states that *prakṛti laya* is the sleeping state of macrocosm; and knowledge of the Absolute is not obtained and one does not get omniscience either. Therefore, it can be stated that this *prakṛti* is a kind of ‘darkness’, a state of *tamas* or inertia at the beginning of creation. In *śakti upāsana*, *śakti* and *śakta* are taken as different. *Śakti*, *maya*, *prakṛti* or *asambhūti* are all one and the same. Really there is no division between *śakti* and *śakta*. When *śakta* is separated, how can *śakti* exist even in name? So, this *upāsana* leads only to *prakṛti laya* which, as already seen, is a lower attainment and not the final mukti. So, this is not the right type of *upāsana*.

In the process of meditation on *sambhūti*, it is taken that Consciousness is different from the world, so we perform action for a desired result. Here, there is the desire to enjoy the fruits of one’s good deeds. Action must give its result and this result is transmigration. In this meditation since Consciousness and the world are considered different, the combination of *sambhūti* and

*asambhūti* will be through *avidyā* and this will not take you to *mukti*. The same mistake is being committed when *vidyā* and *avidyā* are considered as separate. Lord Manu gives five characteristics for *avyakta* or *mūla prakṛti*: (1) Complete darkness, (2) Unknowable, (3) of the form of *tamas*, (4) indescribable and (5) similar to deep sleep. So meditation on this also fails to bestow final *mukti*.

Again, even though it is cosmic in character, it is only *upāsana*, and the object for *upāsana* in which *avyaktam* is taken as an object, i.e., you consider that you are different and the *avyaktam* is different and you are meditating on the other. The cosmos is not really different from the Supreme Consciousness. This is why *sambhūti* and *asambhūti* must be combined to get ultimate liberation. You should not confuse this *upāsana* with what the Chhandogya Upanisad describes as the *vaiśvānara vidya*. The essential difference between this *upāsana* of the Isavasya Upanisad and the *vaiśvānara vidya* of the Chhandogya Upanisad is that in the latter, the cosmos and Consciousness are considered distinct from one another, while in the former this defect is avoided.

*Sambhūti* by itself is not the door to *mukti*. If you wish for *krama mukti*, *sambhūti* should not be considered as separate from *asambhūti* in meditation; for, as already seen, either of them taken separately, will lead only to darkness. They are not two but one single, united, combined sadhana. This is what we have seen in the case of *vidyā-avidyā upāsana* in the microcosm. And, so long as you take *sambhūti* as different from *asambhūti*, the *upāsana* on *vidyā* and *avidyā* also becomes not possible. The Supreme Consciousness is not different from the world. *Avidyā* is not different from the world, and the world is not different from *īśvara*. The former statement is contained in the first set of three verses (9-11) and the latter in the next set of three verses (12-14). These six verses are very instructive and *upāsana* has been very picturesquely explained in them. Just as we should not take the world as different from ourselves because we are in and not out of it, even so, the world should not be considered as distinct from *īśvara* since it is in Him and not outside Him, as explained in verses (12-14).

To continue the study of *upāsana* on the manifest and the unmanifest, let us find out what these two terms signify. God

as transcendental and therefore different from the world is the Unmanifest. Knowledge of the structure of creation is the manifest. To take them as separate and different from the Supreme Cosmic Consciousness, is to treat them as distinct in meditation. Our present concern is to find out the object of meditation. We get the fruit of *sadhana* according to the attitude we take towards *īśvara*. Sage Yajnavalkya in the Brihadaranyaka Upanisad has said: As you think of the world, so does the world think of you. When you separate *īśvara* from the world in your meditation, how can you expect any return from *īśvara*? There is no chance of *īśvara* coming into the picture at all. As you think of God, so will He think of you. God will respond to you only when He is meditated upon. If *īśvara*, you and the world are considered different, there can be no connecting link between them. Even so, if you meditate separating *īśvara* from the world, you are within the realm of ignorance and re-birth is the result. Whether you take the Supreme Consciousness as different from the world, or take the world as different from the Supreme Consciousness, both concepts are wrong. For, neither the subject separated from the object nor the object separated from the subject, can help us attain the ultimate liberation. Therefore, the knowledge of the objective world and the knowledge of the Supreme Consciousness must be combined in *sādhana*. And this combination is the existing reality. We have seen that the essence of the objective world is not separate from the Supreme Consciousness, though this is what one cannot understand easily, This lack of understanding is the problem.

One may say that inasmuch as *asambhūti upāsana* leads to *prakṛti laya*, it can also destroy Death. In *prakṛti laya* you reach blinding darkness, this is what Madhvacarya and Ramanujacarya say. But Acarya Sankara says that *asambhūti upāsana*, it is true, will take you to *īśvaratva* or lordship of the universe; you will also get all the eight *siddhis* but destruction of Death is not possible. Sankara interprets *vināśa* to mean destruction of Death. *Prakṛti laya* cannot be taken as this destruction for, *vināśa* is that in which everything is totally destroyed. The merging of the effect into the cause is not death. Death is getting caught in the cycle of birth and death. Getting out of this cycle is crossing Death. What is the reason for your getting into *samsāra*? If you get at the reason, you can



get the result also. It is desire for objects that gets you caught in *samsāra*. This desire activates you. You cannot escape experiencing the fruits of your actions. So back you come into the world, after death. You alone are the cause of this transmigration; no one else is the cause. Destroy this cause behind the cycle of rebirth and thus conquering death, attain *mukti*. By combining *vidyā* and *avidyā* and combining *sambhūti* and *asambhūti*, you will escape death and will attain Godhood.

Removal of the individuality and the objective world through *vidyā-avidyā upāsana* in the microcosm, and the removal of the differentiation between the Supreme Consciousness and the objective world in the macrocosm, both lead to the same result, graduated liberation or *krama-mukti* and both give freedom from death. However, both these types of *upāsana* are extremely hard and can be practised only by very advanced *sādhakas*.

A Guru is absolute essential for either of these meditations. This necessity is illustrated in the story of King Asvapati in the Chhandogya Upanisad. He was a great *jnānin* and also a great performer of sacrifices. Once six *brāhmanas* went to him while he was engaged in the *yajnasāla* performing sacrifices. They told the king that they had come for alms. The king thought that they wanted food, clothing and such material objects, and so told them to wait till he got back to the palace. But the *brāhmanas* said they did not want any material object but wanted alms in the form of Supreme Knowledge. The king was shocked and said that while they were *brāhmanas* he was a *kshatriya*, in the lower scale of social division, and he was not therefore competent to instruct them. But the *brāhmanas* explained that they had come to him not as *brāhmanas* but as seekers and disciples and insisted upon the king to be their Guru and teach them the correct method of meditation by which they could obtain ultimate liberation. Thereafter, the king enquired from each of them, on what they had been meditating till then. They replied that they were meditating on one or the other of the aspects of the Reality (as separate and entities in themselves). The king said: “Good you have come to me now. If you had continued your meditations, your heads would have been blown to bits.” And the *brāhmanas* were then instructed on the correct and combined type

of meditation.

Taking the *ātman* to be limited in space and time is one blunder we make. The second is that we separate the ‘seer’ from the ‘seen’. These two mistakes will be set right by combining *karma* and knowledge in your duties to the world, and combining the objective world with the Supreme Consciousness in your meditation. These are the central teachings of this Upanisad and are therefore very important.

To enumerate once again: there are two kinds of practices needed to achieve liberation. One is to escape getting caught by karma by combining it with knowledge. The other is to free oneself from desires through dispassion and discrimination. Both these practices of training the mind helps to firmly fix oneself in the Supreme Consciousness. Both in the microcosm and macrocosm, there are two ways of completely detaching the mind. Detach it by removing the desire for objects by *vidyā-avidyā updsana* (verses 9-11). Detach the mind from the world of objects and fix it in the Supreme Consciousness (verses 12-14).

## Verses 15-18

हरिण्मयेन पात्रेण सत्यस्यापहितं मुखम् ।

तत्त्वं पूषन्नपावृणु सत्यधरमाय दृष्टये ॥ १५ ॥

पूषन्नेकर्षे यम सूर्य प्राजापत्य व्यूह रश्मीन् समूह तेजः ।

यत्ते रूपां कल्याणतमं तत्ते पश्यामि योऽसावसौ पुरुषः सोऽहमस्मि ॥  
१६ ॥

वायुरनलिममृतमथेदं भस्मांतं शरीरम् ।

ॐ क्रतो स्मर कृतं स्मर क्रतो स्मर कृतं स्मर ॥ १७ ॥

अग्ने नय सुपथा राये अस्मान् विश्वानि देव वयुनानि विद्वान् ।

युयोध्यस्मज्जुहुराणमेनो भूयषिठां ते नमोर्क्ता विधिम् ॥ १८ ॥

*hiraṇmayena pātreṇa satyasyāpihitam mukham,*

*tat tvaṁ pūṣan āpāvṛṇu satyadharmāya dṛṣṭaye (15)*

*pūṣann ekarṣe yama sūrya prājāpatya vyūha raśmīn samūha tejaḥ,*

*yat te rūpaṁ kalyāṇatamaṁ tat te paśyāmi yo sāv asau puruṣaḥ,*

*so'ham asmi (16)*

*vāyur anilam amṛtam athedam bhasmāntaṁ śārīram,*

*aum krato smara kṛtaṁ smara krato smara kṛtaṁ smara (17)*

*agne naya supathā rāye asmān viśvāni deva vayunāni vidvān,*

*yuyodhyasmaj juharāṇam eno bhūyiṣṭhāṁ te nama-uktim vidhema*

*(18)*

Verses 15-18 are prayers to the sun-god and fire-god. The prayer is for liberation. According to our ancients we regard the sun-god as the best visible manifestation of the Absolute. In the sun, there is śakti which is beyond the ken of human understanding, and from the time of the Vedas till to-day we regard the sun as a representation of īśvara. This is a great spiritual secret, which our ordinary mind cannot understand. According to astrology, the sun is conjoined with the ātman, and the moon with the mind. These are facts of experience by the sages and saints. In our present condition, we cannot realise these truths. Therefore, these are said to be secrets. Further, the period of the movement of the sun towards the north, the Uttarayatta is considered auspicious and it is believed that even a sinner dying during this period attains to heavenly regions. Based on

this secret, this upanisad contains a prayer to the sun-god for giving us liberation: “O! Sun, we have to realise the Truth hidden in you. With our eyes, we cannot have the true vision of you. All we see is only a brilliant light, a *tejo bindu*. We are unable to see the Reality hidden within this great light. What is within you! O Lord, you have covered your real self with the rays of your light which appear like a golden vessel. You have covered your real form. Because of the brilliance of the light, we are unable to see the truth within this light. Your body is of golden hue, and your real self is hidden because of this golden vessel. Remove this golden vessel; do not cover yourself: Remove the veil you have covered yourself with, so that I can see you well. Who am I? Let me see through you. I am supported, dependent on you (the Truth). My life is according to *dharma*. [Here *satya* (Truth) and *dharma* (cosmic law) are shown as identical.] Truth is my *dharma*. So let me know who I am, by seeing your real self. [Living the life in accordance with the Truth is what is referred to as *dharma*. *Satyam* is that which is within you]. Even as my life is lived in *dharma*, you are the foundation of that *dharma* evolving out of you. My life of *dharma* befits me to realise the truth which can be effected by having your vision. For, you are that Truth in which *dharma* is to culminate. Therefore, there is similarity between us. You are the form of Truth and I want to see you. As I am also founded on Truth, I have a right to have your vision, the vision of Truth. If it were not so, how can I look at you and become the Truth Itself ! My *dharma* is Truth. Your principle also is truth.”

(N. B. So far the matter is from the recorded tapes. What follows and up to the end is what has been amplified from the notes taken, in main, by myself during these half-hour talks on the upanishads mentioned in the preface. The help of Vishnu Chaitanya’s notes, also taken during these classes and in English, has been taken to counter-check my notes.)

There is *ādhyātmik* connection and not just a *mānasik* or mental one between you (the sun) and me. For, the principle of existence that is in you, is in me also. *Satya* and *dharma* are one, for the latter is the law of the former. I follow this law and therefore you who are *satya* should reveal your *sat* to me. So, remove this golden vessel with which you are covering yourself, for I want to see *satya*.

Besides this upanisad, other scriptures also say that the Truth behind the sun and the Truth within everyone, are the same. The sun's rays take us to Truth. Another scripture says: 'From sun, a person effulgent with light came and conducted him up.'

"So, O, Sun, you must be behind the rays. Remove the cover, I must see the Truth within you." This Truth is the hidden Self. The Mundaka Upanisad says that by the light of the sun, the *jīva* ascends higher and higher to the heavenly planes. These planes are not lifeless worlds but full of consciousness. Man has got *ādhyātmik* relation with the sun.

*Hiranya-pātra* refers to the objects in front of us, which glitter like gold. But "all that glitters is not gold". We only see our projection in the objects. "Withdraw these projected rays that illumine the objects and thereby make me realise the Truth. What I took to be the world of objects is but an illusion due to delusion. Remove this wrong notion that the world is outside me. Then I can see Truth."

This prayer to the Sun is also a prayer addressed to the mind. Withdraw the mind from objects varied and different. Disconnected from the objects, your judgement will be dispassionate and so more accurate. With this withdrawn mind look at the world.

"O! Sun-god, who travels alone in the sky, you are the one who lays down *yama* and *niyama*, the internal and external disciplines. You are Prajapati's son; O god, let me learn your secret which brings all auspiciousness. In you and in me resides the same *puruṣa*. I am at my death-bed; I see before me the vision of death. May I not look at the world only as your creation or as your sport. Let me see you as you are."—this is the prayer implied here.

"Let me go by the northern path and attain liberation. Let all that for which and because of which all these years I lived in this physical body, go back to their respective sources. Let this effect, my physical body, go back to *hiranyagarbha*. Let the fruits of my *karmas* also reach their respective places. And through them may I live in such worlds. Let my physical body be reduced to ashes and thus be purified."

Now comes the prayer to the mind: "O mind, recollect and remember all the *karmas* you have done in this life-time. Ponder over the way in which you have lived this life; for only the fruits of

your *karmas* will go with you. Nothing else of this manifested world will follow you.”

This prayer is reminiscent of the words of Lord Jesus: “Repent ye for the Kingdom of God is at hand.” And in this *mantra* this is repeated deliberately twice in succession to emphasise its purport: “O Man, repent now because you are on your death-bed. Repent, now is the time for it. Om, O mind, remember all that has been done by me in this life-time, all your thoughts and all your work. O God of Fire (i.e. Brahma who is identified with the mind) remember; remember all that has been done through all of this life in this body; remember, thou of restless nature motivating incessant action, every bit of what in this physical body, in this life has been thought and done. Remember all that has been worked throughout this life in this body.” This stern, persisting, compelling command is given to the mind because, repentance is itself a very great form of *tapas* or austere discipline. Real repentance is like the *mahāvratas* which are disciplines for all time and never relaxed as Sage Patanjali explains in his yoga aphorisms. Once the vow is taken not to repeat that which is repentance for, it has to be observed for ever. It is the sword of Damocles hanging over your head to fall on it the minute this vow is forgotten.

So far, the prayer has been addressed to the mind. Then comes the prayer to the Fire Principle: “O, Lord of Fire, take me (who am on my death-bed) through the correct path.

You are the all-knowing Lord. Forgive me all my sins. Not only forgive, but also burn up and destroy all my sins. Do but that which is for my good. Salutations to thee by crores and crores. Burn up all my sins committed unknowingly and in my ignorance, in my perverseness.” By these prayers the *jīva* asks to be led by the sun to *īśvara*, the Absolute.

Because the *jīva* attains to the *sattā* of *īśvara* this upanishad goes by the name Isavasya Upanishad. The Upanishad ends with the same *mantra* with which it starts, the meaning of which has already been explained.

ॐ पूरणमदः पूरणमदिं पूरणात्पूरणमुदच्यते ।  
पूरणस्य पूरणमादाय पूरणमेवावशषियते ॥

ॐ शांतिःशांतिःशांतिः ॥

*om pūrṇam adaḥ, pūrṇam idam, pūrṇāt pūrṇam udacyate,  
pūrṇasya pūrṇam ādāya pūrṇam evāvaśiṣyate.  
om śāntih, śāntih, śāntih.*