

प्रथमोऽध्यायः

CHAPTER I

प्रथमा वल्ली

SECTION I

The Story of Nachiketas in the House of Death

उशन् ह वै वाजश्रवसः सर्ववेदसं ददौ ।

तस्य ह नचिकेता नाम पुत्र आस ॥ १ ॥

Uśan ha vai Vajasravasah sarva-vedasam dadau ;

Tasya ha Nachiketa nama putra asa.

(1) Once desirous of heaven, the son Vajasrava (Gautama) gave, in a sacrifice, all that he possessed. He had a son Nachiketas by name.

Uśan (being desirous).—The opening word of the *Upanishad* declares the very basis of the religion of the *Brahmanas*. The sacrifices and rituals are all performed for gaining some wished for end. The *Karmakanda* promises a temporary cure for the desire-pestilence in the bosom of man. But later on in the *Upanishad* we shall read of repeated advices to man to renounce “Desires” and reach peace and bliss. There is again an insistence with which this *Upanishad* concludes : II, vi. 14-15 “When all desires are renounced the mortal becomes immortal and realises Brahman, even here.”

This is the traditional way of interpretation following Sankara's commentary. Bhatta Bhaskara Misra in his commentary of *Taittiriya Brahmana* interprets as “*Uśan*, the son Vajasravas” (*Uśan Nama Vajasravasa Putrah*). This seems to be quite in order and a more direct interpretation. We shall have then here a Bunuyan-like name making *Uśan*, Mr. Desirous, son of Vajasravas.

Note that verses 1, 2 and 4 are in prose and are almost exact reproduction of the version of the story in *Taittiriya Brahmana* : Verses 3, 5 and 6 which report on the reflections of

Nachiketas are in metre as of the rest of the *Upanishads*, and these reflections are not in the original *Brahmana* story.

तं ह कुमारं सन्तं दक्षिणासु नीयमानासु
श्रद्धाऽविवेश सोऽमन्यत ॥ २ ॥

*Tam ha kumaram santam daksināsu niyamānāsu
śraddha vivesa so manyata.*

(2) When the presents were being distributed, filial anxiety (about the welfare of his father) entered the heart of Nachiketas, who was still a boy, and he thought.

The very opening stanza of this inimitable *Upanishad* gives us the intimate information about the parentage and pedigree of the hero, Nachiketas. Indeed Nachiketas was not an ill-bred, low-born, unwanted child. His grandfather was a *Vajasrava*, meaning one who has become famous by his distribution of food in charity. The son of Vajasrava, the father of Nachiketas, is now, in the story here, engaged in the performance of a great sacrifice called *Visvajit* in which the performer has to give away in charity all that he possesses. This was generally performed by the kings of old when they, after conquering kingdoms, victoriously returned to their own capitals. Again, householders in the past used to perform this Yagna before they renounced everything and entered the Order of *Sanyas*. It was no mean achievement for an individual if he could perform this *Visvajit Yagna*. Thus, Nachiketas was born of a great father, himself a son of a greater man. Hence, the cultural purity of the student is hinted at here by Mother Sruthi.

No stanza is there in this Section which is not adding some definite strokes to the expression in the hero's portrait ! In the very second stanza though it is only a mere statement of fact, the word *Sraddha* is very expressive. *Sraddha* in Sanskrit is so expressive a word, pregnant with such sacred suggestions, that it is almost impossible to translate it into any European language. The best translation that this Sadhu has come across is from Wesley who asks, "What is faith ? ", and he himself answers "not an opinion or any number of opinions put together, be

they ever so true. It is the vision of the soul, that power by which spiritual things are apprehended, just as material things are apprehended, by the physical senses."

In the very first reading this translation may look as though it is too far-sighted. Sri Sankara's commentary explains to us the term *Sraddha* as "an unswerving faith in the words of the teacher, in the teachings of the scriptures and in the dictates of one's own self."

One of the main four qualifications declared as necessary for a fit student, has been the six great qualities ; *Sraddha* is one of them. Without *faith* in a philosophy no one can follow its dictates. The modern youngsters generally misinterpret *faith* as a certain blind brief and confidence in some supernatural Power or Force. In the sense in which they have come to mean *Sraddha*, certainly the word deserves all the condemnation they hurl at it. But *Sraddha* only means confidence or faith. Nobody can do in this world, as a matter of fact, anything without *faith*.

For example, you eliminate entirely the concept of *faith* from your own make up ; then you will not be able to even walk out of this Yagna Sala and reach your home. Supposing, you are an applicant for a job. Certainly, to begin with, you cannot have any previous experience ! But you entertain a certain amount of confidence in yourself that, given a chance, to work under favourable circumstances, you shall successfully carry out the work to the satisfaction of your employer. Without this *faith* no one can exist in this material world even for a day. There are some who have not this *faith* in themselves and they are either hysterical or even lunatics ; they entirely lose their *faith* in themselves* and they dare not get up from the corner where they sit or, if at all they move, they walk round each tiny pebble since they have lost *faith* in themselves to step-out safely over them ! In the world of philosophy also we must have first of all a *faith* in the Teacher, a *faith* in the scripture and above all a *faith* in ourselves, if we must live the philosophy and claim its blessings.

There is yet a more sacred implication in this term "overcome by faith". Injunctions in all religions must have, and

* "Faith is the resolution to stand or fall by noblest hypothesis."—F. Myres.

they do have, a flexibility in themselves. This is perceptible in their golden ages ; but soon they harden themselves into shells and caskets around the faithful, binding them with " must " and " should " rules.

Vajasravasa, the aged father, seems to have not recognised the deeper significance of the *Visvajit*-sacrifice, and he had fully adopted it according to his station in life and to the status and worth of the *Pundits*. The sacrifices had become soulless and each a mechanical routine. Nachiketas the boy having developed sufficient discrimination and daring to interpret independently the inner significances of the sacrifice was filled with " Faith " and judged rightly the significance of what his father did.

We find here the expressions of some historical facts : the frozen *Brahmana*-injunctions and a silent revolt against them, which gave us the final fulfilment of the rituals in the philosophy of Truth as expounded in the *Upanishads*.

पीतोदका जग्धतृणा दुग्धदोहा निरिन्द्रियाः ।

आनन्द नाम ते लोकास्तान्स गच्छति ता ददत् ॥ ३ ॥

Pitodaka jagdha truna

dughdha-doha nirindriyah ;

Ananda nama te lokas

tan sa gacchati ta dadat.

(3) (These cows) have drunk water for the last time, eaten grass for the last time, have yielded all their milk and are barren. Joyless verily are the worlds which he attains who gives these (*Dakshina*) presents (in a Yagna).

This stanza is an example of the masterly poetry employed in this *Upanishad* to bring forth the song of the soul. The deft handling of the words to yield the maximum efficiency out of a few but chosen words is nowhere so clear as in this stanza, where the four epithets, describing cows that were given away as presents, together give the reader a full picture of their sad lot. Cows, they would no more drink water nor would eat any more grass, so that naturally they shall not be of any use to us even as much as for a ball of cowdung ! Again, they are so

old that they would yield no milk and many of them were barren and probably lame too !

The stanza at the same time is not a mere wasteful indulgence merely for the word play. *Sruthi* never indulges in over-talking. Minimum words and maximum suggestiveness is the *Upanishad* style. In this stanza, besides the poetry of it all, there is a definite purpose accomplished, namely, throwing one more shade and stroke into the picture of Nachiketas. That the boy of nine years was able to quote the *Sastras* and say that the performers of sacrifices, who become stingy and miserly in their gifts to the priests, would reach joyless worlds, clearly showed that Nachiketas was not an illiterate, but on the other hand, was a student well versed in the texts of the *Sastras*.

स होवाच पितरं तत कस्मै मां दास्यतीति ।

द्वितीयं तृतीयं तं होवाच मृत्यवे त्वां ददामीति ॥४॥

Sa ha uvaca pitaram

Tata Kasmai mam dasyas iti ;

Dvitiyam tritiyam tam ha uvaca,

Mrtyave tvam dadami iti.

(4) He said unto his sire, 'father to whom wilt thou give me': he said this again and again, and again for the third time (when the enraged father) said, 'unto Death do I give thee'.

Through the trellis of the chiselled words of this *Upanishad* no reader can afford to look for, and miss the vivid picture of the home of Gautama with his courtyard crowded by the hundreds of priests assembled there to receive presents. The melancholy team of cows is being led in and the father is busy distributing them to the *Ritwiks* (priests who officiate in *Yagnas*). In the verandha of the house there stands the child Nachiketas visibly upset with his own confusions within. He is not able to reach the sacred meaning of his father's actions. He is anxious that his father who is performing the *yagna* with desire (*Utsah*) should attain its fulfilment. But in his knowledge of the *Sastras* he knew that the sacrifice called *Visvajit* can be fully potent only when the performer sacrifices everything that he possesses.

"But somehow, due to some sense of attachment and delusory feeling of proprietorship, the old man has decided to make small compromise between injunctions of the *Sastras* and his own promoted impulses", so thought Nachiketas in his immaturity. In this inner conflict of Vajasravas, so clearly indicated by his external actions, Nachiketas reads a sure tragedy in store for his father in future.

The young boy, overcome by his sense of duty towards his father, walks up to the old man who is busily engaged in the distribution of the cows, and enquiries of him, "*father, to whom will thou give me.*"

The *Yagna* performed being *Viswajit* the performer is bound to give away in charity all that he owns as his own. Naturally, the son approaches the father offering himself as a happy sacrifice. Certainly, no father has a right to give away his son without his consent merely to gain for himself a greater Realm of Experience. After all, as an individual with independent life the son has a right to demand his own privileges as the son of his father. Nachiketas in thus offering himself to his father, is surrendering his individual rights at the altar of his greater duties towards his parent. Or, may be, it was an intelligent hint suggesting a volume of criticism at the father's suicidal miserliness exhibited so shamelessly at a moment of challenge in his life.

The old Brahmin, though intellectually a great master of the scriptures, is in no sense of the term a saint or a sage who has transcended the misty realm of self-confusing thoughts and self-debasing temptations. Where he a saint he would not have acted by desire (*Usan*). But he was a progressive man of knowledge and could dare interpret the inner and sacred significance of the sacrifice and adapted it to the circumstances of his stage in life and to the quality of the *Pundits* he had to satisfy with gifts.

There is in him evidently a sense of attachment to his wealth. Naturally, Nachiketas fears that his father may not sacrifice his only son, under the cloak of assumed righteousness and the high-sounding ideology that no father has the right over his son's life to sacrifice it for fulfilling his own personal

ambitions.

You need not consider this as a very far-fetched interpretation. Human mind is capable of even greater self-deceptions. When a challenge comes in life we yield to the temptation knowing full well that we have fallen from the heights of perfections which we have chosen to follow, and in all such cases our mind is a faithful ally to sabotage us from within and always provides us with irrefutable arguments to justify our own lapses !

To the old man, the young boy's insistence was unbearable. At first the father ignored the repetition ; probably the old man might have scolded the boy and ordered him " shut up ". But, on repeating for the third time, in sheer despair and disgust at the nuisance, the father in a harmless curse burst out, " Unto Death do I give thee " ; equivalent to any angry Englishman's " Go to hell " !

Certainly, we shall not understand the words to have any real significance in the mouth of the father ; it was only an outburst of his annoyance at the ' priggish ' son. A Brahmin who cannot give in ' *dakshina* ' anything more than the useless, old and barren cows cannot be expected to have the large heart and the true spirit of charity to offer his only son as an oblation to Lord Death.

बहूनामेमिप्रथमो बहूनामेमि मध्यमः ।

किं स्वित्त्वमस्य कर्तव्यं यन्मयाऽद्य करिष्यति ॥ ५ ॥

*Bahunam emi prathamo,
bahunam emi madhyamah ;
Kimsvid Yamasya kartavyam,
yan maya dya karisyati.*

(5) (Nachiketas thought) : " Of many I go the first ; of many I go midmost ; what is there for Death to do which he now can do by me (who is thus given) ?

The stanza is the inner soliloquy of a perfect Aryan child, born and bred up on the sacred milk of the Vedic culture. When the father has thus exiled him from this plane-of-consciousness into the Realms of death, Nachiketas retires from the presence

of his preoccupied father to ponder over and digest the circumstances. This is a true sign of a matured soul. No grown-up intellect will allow itself to be clouded and confused at the mere approach of challenging circumstances. It will neither allow emotion to play its wild pranks and act in a maddening impulsive way, nor will such an intellect allow itself to be cowed down by the threatening aspect of the challenge and run away from its fields of activity into a cowardly retreat of inertia and dumbfoundedness. Here is Nachiketas surprisingly bombed by a most unexpected development around and about him in the external world of his relationships. And like a true matured intellect he quietly retires to ponder over, to analyse, to discriminate, and to judge.

In that quietude he gains his balance by a reference to his knowledge of the ever-truthful *Sastras* and the sacred words of the learned masters. It is a Sastric injunction and an Aryan code of morality, that the duty of a disciple or a son is to be ever implicit in the *seva* of his Teacher or his father. With reference to the execution of duty to a Guru the disciples are classified under three heads : (a) the best, (b) the so-so, and (c) the bad.

'The best' ones are those who, knowing the wish of the Guru, always serve him ; the so-so are those who are infallibly obedient and execute any order from the Guru *when expressly commanded* : and the bad ones are those despicable wretches who fail to execute *even when commanded* by the Guru. Here, in our story, Gautama was to Nachiketas both father and Guru in one. Hence these words from the son-disciple, Nachiketas.

With reference to the above Sastric injunction we shall now easily understand what exactly was in the mind of Nachiketas when he thought as in the stanza now under discussion. He meant to say that he was ever diligent to act up to the expectations of his Guru and parent : that in some cases, now and then, he had slipped down to "the so-so" category when he could not understand the wish of his Guru for the moment and could not, therefore, execute it before the Guru's expressed command. In short, Nachiketas confesses that he has never been consciously or unconsciously of the last type and that he never hopes now

to become one by disobeying a command expressed by his father-and-Guru.

The boy knew that his father never meant what he said. But no compromise is sanctioned or allowed in *Sanathana Dharma Sastra*. Moral and ethical codes of living are to be followed, if at all, *in toto* and as such. To add our own conditions and interpretations to it is to molest *Dharma* openly and serve our sensuous nature. Rank *Adharma* is far better, friends, than compromised *Dharma* practised with insincerity.

The tomb of our culture has been opened up with the spades of such distorted practices of the Eternal *Dharmas* by the Hindus. Had we, as a nation, the brutal animal-courage to be outright *Adharmis*, we would have been today, probably, far better, at least, in our material life ! Neither have we the spiritual heroism to walk the path of *Dharma* nor have we the flesh-fleshy daring to be *Adharmis*. Compromising ourselves in our womanly cowardice, we have been playing the calamitous game of living two contradictory ideas : *Dharma* like *Adharmas* and *Adharma* like *Dharmas*.

Nachiketas knew this and he dared not compromise. It is a blasphemy to attempt to reconcile to our convenience, the Eternal Values of Truth with the passing demands of false temptations. And hence, Nachiketas wondered, "*what is the great work that will be accomplished by Yama through me, who am thus sent forth by my father.*" Herein there is a sacred trip for all true aspirants who are seeking their goal of life. Nachiketas certainly knew that his father never meant what he said.

But his father was also his Guru and a Guru's words are never futile.

Many are the stories in our *Puranic* treasure-houses which indicate how even a passing word of a great Master has come true in the end. There is nothing strange in it. It ought to be so. When a radio is tuned up to Delhi and if that radio sings, it cannot but be the songs sung in the Delhi broadcasting room. A radio is incapable of making its own noises. Similarly, a God-man, who in his realised self-perfections has totally tuned himself to *That*, will not and cannot express himself in words futile. All his thoughts are the thoughts of the Total Mind.

His words are always the immutable words of the Divine Will. This ought to be the intelligent understanding of every disciple if he is to profit himself by the grace of a Guru in the spiritual field. Nachiketas, true to this eternal principle, acts upon the words of his Guru, though they were but unmeant words spoken in the heat of the moment by a father to a son. And yet, ultimately the great student comes to the greatest of wealth and achievement at the feet of Lord Death—because he implicitly followed his Guru.

The words, "*what will be the work of Yama which he had to do by or through me ?*" are the expressed form of speech which indicates the ethereal atmosphere of thought behind ! The young boy has divinely determined to follow strictly the Path as advocated by the text-books of *Dharma*. The wonderment in him is but an anxious impatience to peep into the future and to come to witness what is the great mission that is to be fulfilled through him by Lord Death ; for, his Guru's words can never be in vain.

अनुपश्य यथा पूर्वे प्रतिपश्य तथाऽपरे ।

सस्यमिव मर्त्यः पच्यते सस्यमिवाऽजायते पुनः ॥ ६ ॥

*Anupasya yatha purve,
pratipasya tatha pare ;
Sasyamiva marthyah pacyate,
sasyam iva ajayate punah.*

(6) "Remember how our forefathers acted : Consider also how others now act, like corn, decays the mortal and like corn is born again."

This stanza is directly addressed to the father by the son. It contains in the essence the wisdom of all the *Sruthis* and the cream of the entire *Sanathana Dharma*. The stanza indicates the inevitable Philosophy of Rebirth which is the very backbone of the Hindu faith.

This ought to be the sane conclusion arrived at by every honest thinker if he were to analyse the wherefrom and the wherefore of life. Had it not been for the *Karma* done in the past there should not have been so much differences among

those who are living now. A boy born to a leper has to suffer from his very birth the sorrows of this despicable disease ! At the same time, elsewhere, in the palace a child is born to wear the crown and to enjoy the kingdom ! Why ?

If we are to assume that this life has started directly from Him then we will be forced to assume that the Creator, in His omnipotence and might, is a tyrant, and, like any mortal king, dispenses His favours according to His will and pleasure ; such a monstrous Creature who acts according to His whim and fancy, sometimes justly and often unjustly, always partial and inconsistent, is no God at whose feet a devotee can offer his heart of love in total surrender and devotion. And there is no Religion in the world wherein we have the conception of a God who is cruel, partial, unjust and mad in His lustful powers !

The stanza now under review hints at the sublime truth that our present existence is not a mere accidental happening but is a measured link, shaped out by ourselves, which makes the chain of life complete, connecting the dead past with the unborn future. These words indicate not only that there were many incarnations taken by the 'ego' in us in the past, but also that it shall again continue manifesting in numberless incarnations in the future too. In short, the present life in this form upon the earth is but an incident in the Eternal Existence of the Soul.

Generations after generations come upon the surface of the earth, feed themselves, grow to maturity, breed their kind and die away yielding their place to the new crowd of the latest generation ! This idea has been here expressed in this unforgettable metaphor taken from the birth, growth and decay of the seasonal weeds. Weeds grow up during the rainy season and soon thrive themselves to flower forth, and, in a couple of months, they fulfil themselves in their seeds and die away. So too man must yield his place for his children to flourish.

Nachiketas is here hinting to his father that life must necessarily end after a period of existence and that, compared to the Endless Time, the life span of an individual ego living on this globe is but momentary. The general import suggested is that when life is so fleeting why should one stoop down to perpetrate

Adharmas, tempted, by one's own delusions and false attachments? This is indeed a very strong argument raised by the son to help the father to come to a final decision and allow the youngster to leave for the Palace of Death, and thus, thereby fulfil the idle words of the preceptor-father.

Besides, Nachiketas discusses with his father the correct way of discriminating between *Dharma* and *Adharma* during moments of high tensions in life. Many are the moments when a faithful seeker feels lost on the path of life not knowing what is *Dharma* and what is *Adharma*. At such moments of *Arjuna-Sthithi*, the advice that the *Sruthi* gives us is, "Remember how our forefathers acted; consider also how others now act."

This is a very significant advice which is to be noted by all true seekers. At moments of moral and ethical challenges in our lives it is not always possible for all of us to keep cool and bring our senses of judgment and discrimination to work out the pros and cons, and to provide us with a final verdict as to the right mode of action which we are to pursue. Here is, then, the practical tip for the aspirant. At such moments we are to consider how the great masters of old acted under similar circumstances. May be, the occasion that has arisen for us to react is one which was unknown in the days of yore. For example, travelling in a crowded tram is certainly an occasion possible today but a parallel of which we may miss in the records of the past. And so how to act in a tram, or what are the *Dharmas* to be followed in a tram are to be known and copied from those noble ones who are living and acting today: "Consider also how others act now."

Thus, with a reference to the chaste actions of the great ones of the past and of the present we can always instruct ourselves upon what is good and what is bad.

This is the interpretation given by Sankara, and the majority of Indian commentators follow him.* After all, to die is not anything mysterious or unique. He is but one in the endless march of the dying crowd: first of many who will come after; one in the midst of his contemporaries.

* Maxmuller however, regards both *mantras* five and six as meditations of Nachiketas upon the transitoriness of life.

He sends his gaze of meditation to the (*anu*), predecessors, and then towards the other direction to meet (*prati*) those who are coming after him. To everyone the lot is the same and the classical couplet describes how like corn man too rots to be reborn again—one of the earliest declarations expressing the Theory of Transmigration in Hindu thoughts : the earliest is of course seen in *Bṛihadaranyaka*.

वैश्वानरः प्रविशत्यतिथिर्ब्राह्मणो गृहान् ।
तस्यैतां शान्तिं कुर्वन्ति हर वैवस्वतोदकम् ॥ ७ ॥

*Vaisvanarah pravisati
atithir brahmano grihan ;
Tasya etam santim kurvanti,
hara Vaivasvata-udakam.*

(7) A Brahmin guest enters a house like fire. Men give this to quieten him. Vaivasvata ! fetch water.

Between the previous stanza and the present there is a dramatic silence which is to be supplemented from our knowledge of the same story as narrated in the *Brahmana* portion of the Veda ; therein, however, it was a formless voice that directed the boy to the Palace of Death.

Nachiketas comforting the father and persuading him to act up to the high ideals in which the true *Aryans* ever walked in the past, the young boy left his home and entered the Domain of Death. There he arrived at the Portico of Death and the boy had to wait for three days and nights since Lord Death was then ' out of station '.

At this juncture Chinmaya pauses to answer some gross doubts raised by some of the hasty readers. Some enquire, " how exactly could a mortal child enter at will the World of Death ? " Some others ask, " did the child visit the Kingdom of *Dharmaraja* in his physical body or in his subtle body ? " The absurd questions array themselves in the same uniform tone and to repeat them all would be to parade too long a list of pithless doubts.

Such questions can suggest themselves only to an

unsympathetic head and heart. This is, after all, a story, the main purport of which is not to discuss how far mortals can, at will, travel into the Realms of the Dead, but it is meant to bring a great student of life and a burning seeker of Truth to a master-mind, Lord Death Himself. To wander away from the story into the labyrinth of such futile enquiries is to miss the greater purpose of the *Upanishad*.

No comparison is to be understood to be effective in all its details. If a poet describes the face of Miss Saroj and compares it with the moon, it does not mean that she has a face which is geometrically circular and contains in its very centre some dark patches ! Such unsympathetic readers should avoid reading poetry and take to Mathematic text-books to engage their leisure hours ; for, not only would they find no education in poetry but shall ruin the very poetry they read !

Lord Death was not at home and the disciple had to wait three days and live through a self-imposed discipline of fasting. Here again, it is meaningless to wonder if such a thing was ever possible, when the consorts of Death were there at home ! The story wants us to understand only that a certain amount of self-discipline and self-control are to be practised by every seeker ere he can come to be blessed by the contact of perfect Guru.

At the end of the third day Lord Death returns home and the stanza under review gives us the words of either his consorts or of his ministers.

A Brahmin guest, a noble cultured man of purity and righteousness, is considered in our Hindu Sastras as a double-edged weapon ; we can avail of it either to cut open our paths clean out of the jungles of life or to destroy ourselves by ignoring him or by disobeying his right advices.

The comparison of a guest with fire is very appropriate inasmuch as in the Vedic period worship of Fire was the most common method for gaining merits for the hereafter. At the same time, fire can burn down the houses and bring sorrow and disaster to the householder. Also *Vaiswanara* means "belonging to all men". This term has been used as many as sixty times in *Rig Veda* to indicate Fire in all its aspects. Here one thing is to be noted ; in modern societies too, a cultured and educated

guest is always respected and revered. The word Brahmin in this connection means not the one who has come to claim it as an accidental privilege of birth ; but as I said, it means one who has the necessary cultural purity and mental and intellectual powers manifested in him as an individual.

आशा प्रतीक्षे संगतां सूनृतां च
 इष्टापूर्ते पुत्र पशूञ्च सर्वान् ।
 एतद् वृङ्क्ते पुरुषस्याल्पमेधसो
 यस्यानश्नन्वसति ब्राह्मणो गृहे ॥ ८ ॥

*Asa pratikse sangatam sunrutamca,
 ista putre putra pasum ca sarvan ;
 Yetad vrnkte purusasya alpa medhaso,
 yasya anasnan vasati brahmano grhe.*

(8) " Hope, expectation, company with good men, friendly discourse, sacrifices and fruits of pious gifts, sons and cattle—all these are destroyed in the case of the ignorant man, in whose house a Brahmin guest stays without taking food."

Vrnkte.—This word comes from *Vrnakti*—to turn, to twist. Thus the Brahmin " wrenches " away all these above mentioned from the person who does not respect the guests.

Not only in the simple houses of the mortals do we see the working of *Sanathana Dharma*, but even in the Palace of Lord Death, *Sastras* are quoted and implicitly followed. This is a stanza which enumerates the consequences one will have to live through as a result of one's deliberate insults to a man of knowledge and culture.

Hope and expectations are blasted in the life of one who insults a saintly guest. Here, *Asa*, ' hope ', means " wish for something unknown, such as heaven, etc." and *Prateeksha*, ' expectation ', means " looking forward to the obtaining of a known object such as material wealth, relationship, etc."

A house-holder who insults a saintly guest is called by the *Sruthi* as an idiot (*Alpamedhasah*). If today we find in our society more folks who ignore charity and hospitality, in the language of the *Sruthi*, we are a generation of idiots !

In the concept of *Sanathana Dharma* a guest is an *Athithi-Narayana* or an embodiment of God. Feeding the guest with *Narayana Bhav* is considered to be one of the Five Great Yagnas (*Panchamahayagna*) which a house-holder has daily to perform for purposes of his future growth in the scales of his conscious evolution. To a certain degree *Kathopanishad* can be considered as indulging in *Brahmin*-propaganda in the sense in which we understand Brahmins today as a special and privileged class. In this and in many other *Upanishads* the Divine Knowledge is represented as having been revealed to a *Brahmin* boy.

However, though the traditional belief is that *Brahmins* alone are eligible for *Upanishad* studies and for *Gyana* method of Self-realisation, we find that in earlier *Upanishads* the Great Knowledge was revealed first to a King (*Kshatriya*) and through him to a Brahmin.

Thus in the *Brihadaranyaka* and in the *Chandogya*, the Brahmin Saint, Gautama Aruni, is represented as receiving instructions from Pravahana Jaivali, King of the Panchalas, who says : "This knowledge has never been revealed to Brahmins before you !" In *Kaushitaki*, Sage Aruni is said to have approached King Citra Gargyayana as pupil ; and, again, in *Brihadaranyaka* the proud *Brahmin*, Gargya, is shown as a pupil learning from the King of *Kasi*, Ajathasatru.

तिस्रो रात्रीर्यदवात्सी गृहे मे
 अनशनब्रह्मन्नतिथिर्नमस्यः ।
 नमस्तेऽस्तु ब्रह्मन्स्वस्ति मेऽस्तु
 तस्मात्प्रति त्रीन्वरान्वृणीष्व ॥ ९ ॥

*Tisro ratrir yad avatsir grhe me,
 anasnan brahmann atithir namasyah ;
 Namaste stu brahman svasti me stu,
 tasmad prati trin varan vrrishva.*

(9) Yama said : "Oh Brahmin, thou, a venerable guest, hast dwelt in my house three nights without eating. Therefore, choose now three boons, in return, O Brahmin, my prostrations unto thee. May good befall me."

The spirit of the stanza is the true spirit in which the Aryans

accepted and followed their immortal *Sanathana Dharma*. As a matter of fact, it is surprising that such a Godly Power as Lord Death Himself should bow down in modesty in front of his guest, a boy merely nine years old, and beg of him to pardon the host's inevitable lapses.

These are days when the governors themselves outrageously step over their own laws ! No one would have found fault with Lord Death for having ignored a guest when He was Himself not at home ; and yet herein we see Lord Death apologising for his unintentioned misconduct and begging the Brahmin-boy-guest to accept in return an atonement in the form of three boons ! If only men in power and might, persons in position and status, were to be so straight in following the laws of *Dharma*, others, the lesser ones, would not have dared to disobey them at all !!

Here, there is also an under-current of compliment paid by Lord Death to the Brahmin boy. "May peace befall me", is a request which has been already sanctioned by the guest even before the house-holder has asked for it ; since, a highly cultured man of intellect and heart, a true Brahmin, is always won over by humble prostrations and due reverence shown. He is not one to nourish a grudge for even an insult expressly shown.

1-9. To keep his father's words Nachiketas goes to the Palace of Death, where for 3 nights he remains unfed. To atone for His inhospitality Death offers the boy three boons.

शान्तसंकल्पः सुमना यथा स्याद्वीतमन्युर्गौतमो माऽभि मृत्यो ।
त्वत्प्रसृष्टं माऽभिवदेत्प्रतीत एतत्त्रयाणां प्रथमं वरं वृणे ॥ १० ॥

*Santa sankalpah sumana yatha syad,
vita manyur Gautamo ma bhi mriyo ;
Tvat prarstam ma bhivadet pratita,
etat trayanam prathamam varam vrne.*

(10) Nachiketas said, "O Death ! as the first of the three boons, I choose that Gautama, my father, be pacified, be kind and free from anger towards me, and that he may know me and greet me, when I am sent away by thee."

Though Lord Death has given the boy only three boons, he encashes the very first one in favour of his father. In the character and temperament of the boy this action indeed clearly throws a lot of glorious light. Though he is now in the higher Realms of Death he is first and foremost a dutiful son, and so, the very first boon is utilised in bringing peace and joy into the heart of his father. Nachiketas wants his father to enjoy comfortable nights without regrets for having sent his son to the Abode of Death.

A loving consideration for the feelings of one's own parents and guardians is the beginning of an individual's expansion, which ends only when his mind can give an equal place for even the inanimate objects of the world !

A man of perfection is he, who, in his State of Experienced Godhood, has expanded to become the all and has come to feel for not only his own relations or countrymen, but equally for all : that is, such a Perfect Master alone is a true Citizen of the World with a perfect Universal Love. To achieve this Acme of Perfection, a *Sadhaka* must begin with a consideration and love, selfless and all-giving, first towards his parents and relations.

These are days of cruel misunderstandings, when in the name of Religion, people sedulously practise many a vulgarity. Of them none is so detrimental and sad as the misplaced enthusiasm with which youngsters, when they have made a mess of their life by living unintelligently a span of licentiousness and sensuous freedom, suddenly decide to run away from it into the open portals of *Sannyas*. Such runaways and moral desperadoes cannot succeed in this highest vocation, called *Sannyas*. They are ever a misfit, not only in society for material life, but equally so in the jungle for spiritual seeking and steady self-perfecting. In the character of Nachiketas we have a clear restatement of our ideal duty to those who depend upon us and towards the world.

यथा पुरस्ताद् भविता प्रतीत औद्दालकिरारुणिर्मत्प्रसृष्टः ।

सुखं रात्रीः शयिता वीतमन्युस्त्वाददृशिवान्मृत्युमुखात्प्रमुक्तम्

*Yatha prastad bhavita pratita,
Auddalaki Arunir mat prastutah ;
Sukham ratri sayita uta manyuh,
tvan dadrsivan mrtys mukhaat pramuktam.*

(11) "Through my favour, Auddalaki, the son of Aruna, will recognise you as before. He will sleep peacefully at night and when he sees you released from the mouth of death, will lose his anger."

In this stanza Lord Death is blessing the boy with the fulfilment of all his demands in all their details.

Nachiketas' father has four names as is evident from the pages of this *Upanishad*, viz., Gautama, Auddalaki, Aruni and Vajasravasah. He was a son of Uddalaka and an adopted child of Aruna. Or, some commentators identify Vajasravasah, father of Nachiketas, as the famous Uddalaka Aruni ; therefore Anda-Aruni will be Nachiketas himself. Thus, "seeing Nachiketas freed, Vajasravasah will be happy, etc.," a patronymic name, since as Vajasravasah means "Son of Vajasravas".

10-11. *As the first gift, Nachiketas wants the blessing to return to his father.*

स्वर्गे लोके न भयं किञ्चनास्ति न तत्र त्वं न जरया बिभेति ।
उभे तीर्त्वाऽश्नाया पिपासे शोकातिगो मोदते स्वर्गलोके ॥ १२ ॥

*Svargē lōke na bhayam kinchana asti,
na tatra tvam na jaraya bibheti ;
Ubhe tirtva-sanaya pipase,
soka-atigo modate svargaloke.*

(12) In Heaven there is no fear. You are not there : nor there do they in old age fear. Having crossed both hunger and thirst, one in Heaven rejoices being above grief.

In order to ask the second boon promised here Nachiketas is glorifying the life in the higher Plane of Consciousness, called the Heavens. In establishing the greatness of Heaven, Nachiketas adopts the method of comparing it with the sorrows of the world. Heaven is comparatively without fears, since, life in that Plane of Conscious-existence is longer compared to the

fleeting span of existence in this Mortal Plane. Hence, Nachiketas declares to Lord Death, "you are not there". This is not an *absolute* truth ; even for those who live in the Heavens there is mortality : their career there ends when they exhaust the merits they had gained while they were living in the mortal plane during their previous embodiments.*

Man has five stages to live through in life : birth, childhood, youth, old age and death. But the gods have only the first three stages. And hence, Nachiketas says : "Nor there do they in old age fear." Not only have they none of the pains of old age or death but also they have neither the agonies of hunger and thirst under which the ordinary mortals suffer through their span of existence here.

It is interesting to note here that in the earlier periods Death was not considered so ferocious and threatening a Lord of Bereavement as in the later period. In earlier portions of the Vedas, Lord Death is considered as a Guide who takes men to the doors of the Heaven ! By the time of the Katha this bright and joyous faith has passed away.

स त्वमग्निं स्वर्ग्यमध्येषि मृत्यो प्रब्रूहि त्वं श्रद्धधानाय मह्यम् ।
स्वर्गलोका अमृतत्वं भजन्ते एतद्वितीयेन वृणे वरेण ॥ १३ ॥

*Sa tvam agnim svargyam-adhyesi mriyo,
prabruhi twam sraddadhanaya mahyam ;
Svargaloka amritatvam bhajante,
etad dvitiiyena vrne varena.*

(13) Oh Death I thou knowest the fire which leads to Heaven ; explain to me who am zealous, that (fire) by which those, whose world is heaven, attain immortality, I pray for this my second boon.

Here in this stanza Nachiketas is asking of Lord Death the second of his boons. The heavenly life that has been explained in the previous *Mantra* is the demand of the greatest number of men striving in life. They dedicate their entire spiritual and religious work only to live at least a period of time in the heavens. In the name of these ignorant folk, Nachiketas is

* Refer Swamiji's "Discourses on Gita," Ch. IX-21.

now cashing-in the second of his boons and asking Lord Death to give the secret knowledge regarding the *Karma* that is to be done by a mortal in the world, so that, as a result of its reactions he would come to gain the Elysian pleasures of the heavens.

Herein we find Nachiketas, an ideal and a fit student for religious growth and spiritual unfoldment, sacrificing the second of his boons in a spirit of dedications to the world at large. A true Hindu is one who will come to seek his own liberation only when he has fulfilled his duties toward his own relations and to the generation in which he is living. Unless one has practised universal love sufficiently for long one cannot expand oneself fully to contain the Cause and Essence of all the universes, the Lord or the Truth. Here in the life of Nachiketas, *Sruthi* wants to emphasise this point as a necessary prerequisite for a successful seeker.

In the *Mantra* Nachiketas is requesting Lord Death to initiate him into the secret of the ritual by which the performer can reach 'immortality'. This is not to be construed as the true goal and aim of life, the Godhood or Immortality. To understand it thus would be against the fundamentals of Vedanta. *Karma* (selfless work) cannot procure for the performer the Supreme Goal of life, for, if the Supreme were to be a product achievable through an action, then it would be a thing made or 'born' and, as such, it shall be finite. The Infinite or the Eternal God-principle or Truth cannot be the product or the result of an action or actions done. Thus, the word 'immortality' here is used in a relative sense; compared with the daily deaths in life, the longer periods of existence for each ego-centre in the higher planes of the Heavenly Regions is the 'immortality' (*Amritatvam*) mentioned here.

प्र ते ब्रवीमि तदु मे निबोध स्वर्ग्यमग्निं नचिकेतः प्रजानन् ।

अनन्तलोकाप्तिमथो प्रतिष्ठां विद्धि त्वमेतं निहितं गुहायाम् ॥ १४ ॥

*Pra te bravimi tadu me nibodha,
svargyam agnim Nachiketa prajanan ;
Ananta lokaptim-atha pratistham,
viddhi tvam etam nihitam guhayam.*

(14) "I will tell thee well ; attend to me, Oh Nachiketas, I know the fire leading to Heaven ; know the fire which leads to Heaven and also the support of the Universe and that which seated in the Cavity (of the heart).

Here Lord Death is obliging the Brahmin boy with the blessings of the second boon, requested for. It is noteworthy that in the Vedic Period instructions were received always directly from the Guru's mouth, and as such, the method of education was not like that in our own times, through the medium of notes and the leisurely mugging up of them by the students. They had to understand directly and memorise on the spot the import, as well as the words, given out by the teacher. This method of direct learning demands an acute intelligence and an extra capacity to concentrate on the part of the student and hence, Lord Death is warning his disciple, "I will tell thee well, attend to me, learn it from me".

This preface would be redundant in the mouth of a modern professor and, probably, he will be hooted down as a madcap if he were to start his lectures each day with a call to his students to attend well. Neither does the method of modern education warrant it, nor will the students of the present day have the capacity to follow such an instruction. The epithets used are deliberate attempts to praise the *Agni Vidya* (the Fire Worship), in order that the passion-riddled and desire-prompted lesser souls may be encouraged to perform this ritual.

Fire is a support of the universe in its micro-cosmic aspect, the *Virat*. This is situated in the heart-care, meaning, in the intellect of the wise. *Nihitam guhayam*—Hidden in the cave : this is a very familiar phrase in the *Upanishad* literature. Perhaps in this stanza we have the beginnings of a revolt against and evolution from the ritual-chained slavery of Hindu Religion. There is a declaration that the outer fire is to be considered as the vital heat energy in the performer's own heart.

Thus, though *Katha* begins with the ritual religion of the *Brahmanas*, it does not stop there ; as every other *Upanishad* it pushes the thoughts and the technique further. It is hinted at here that the sacrifice in itself is not all ; its significance is to be subjectively realised by the performer—for his final and eternal liberation.

लोकादिमग्निं तमुवाच तस्मै या इष्टका यावतीर्वा यथा वा ।
स चापि तत्प्रत्यवदद्यथोक्तं अथाऽस्य मृत्युः पुनरेवाह तुष्टः ॥ १५ ॥

*Lokadimagnim tam uvacha tasmai,
ya istaka yavatir va yatha va ;
Sa ca-pi tat pratyavadaḍ yathoktam,
Atha-sya mṛtyuḥ punara evaha tuṣṭah.*

(15) Yama then explained to him that Fire Sacrifice, the source of the worlds, what bricks are required for the altar, how many, and how they are to be placed ; and Nachiketas repeated back (to the teacher) all as explained. Then Yama being pleased with him said again.

This can be considered as a stanza repeated by Rishi Kathaka or *Sruthi Bhagavathi* Herself.

Even in this scrappy and skeleton draft of a story, Mother *Sruthi* exhibits a perfection of touch and a delicacy of stroke in her art. She not only labours to throw as much colour as possible in the character of the hero but also pauses, now and then, to brighten up the story with sure touches of emotion to paint true life.

It is a natural instinct with every school-master to feel extremely happy towards that student who is smart at grasping the lessons at the very first hearing. This is a compliment to the master himself and at the same time he feels a satisfaction and fulfilment.

Lord Death had explained to his disciple the ritual in all its details ; but since this is *Gyana Khanda* the details of this ritual are only mentioned in their broadest outline and hinted at by a mere enumeration of its sub-headings.

Strictly following the ancient method of teaching, here also Lord Death asks the taught to repeat the lesson at the end of the instruction. Nachiketas stood the test well and repeated in all details the entire lesson. Lord Death, feeling happy at this, blesses the disciple with another extra boon.

तमब्रवीत्प्रीयमाणो महात्मा वरं तवेहाद्य ददामि भूयः ।
तवैव नाम्ना भवितायमग्निः संकां चेमामनेकरूपां गृहाण ॥ १६ ॥

*Tam abravīt priyamano mahatma
 varanī tava-īha adya dadami bhuyah ;
 Tava eva namna bhavita yam agnih
 srnkantī ca imam aneka rupam grhana.*

(16) Satisfied, Death, the magnanimous spoke to him : " I give thee this other boon ; this Fire Sacrifice shall be named after thee ; and take thou this many-coloured chain."

According to Max Muller verses 16-18 are an insertion ; and certainly, he seems to be very well justified in declaring them to be a later interpolation. The stanzas are confusing in their meanings and unfaithful to the lucid style of the whole Upanishad.

Lord Death is offering here to his disciple a medal-of-appreciation in the form of a jewelled necklace (*Sringam*). Sree Sankaracharya in his commentary gives two meanings for the word *Sringam* : (a) ' garland ' and (b) ' actions which shall yield many glorious fruits '. May be, as Sree Sankara says, Lord Death might have initiated his disciple into some more secret methods of fulfilling the desires of mankind through mystic rituals and propitiatory ceremonies. Or may be, Lord Death presented the Brahmin boy with a chain studded with precious jewels. Whatever it may be, the purpose of the *Sruthi* is served if we understand that the acute intelligence and the extraordinary retentive capacity of the student have brought forth an applause from his own teacher !

Sankara is compelled to bring out these two meanings separately because later on (in ii-3) the same term is used clearly meaning " a path ". The same meaning " Chain " can also be accommodated in both the *mantras* : here as " ornamented " and there as " golden fetters ".

One should be intellectually a Nachiketas if one were to pursue the study of the *sastras* and thus plan out one's own liberation. We may take the warning and understand that *Brahma Vidya* is to be pursued in a real *Sannyas-attitude*, not by illiterate scums of society, who cannot seek and find success in life even when they have the chances to pursue their education fully !

त्रिणाचिकेतस्त्रिभिरेत्य सन्धि त्रिकर्मकृत्तरति जन्ममृत्यू ।

ब्रह्मजं देवमीदं विदित्वा त्रिचाय्येमां शान्तिमत्यन्तमेति ॥ १७ ॥

*Trinachiketas-tribhir etya sandhim,
trikarma krt tarati janma mrtuyu ;
Brahma ja Jnam devam idyam vidditva
nicayya imam santim atyantam eti.*

(17) Whoever performs three times this sacrifice of Nachiketa Fire and has been united with the "three" and has performed the three duties overcomes birth and death. When he has understood this adorable bright, omniscient Fire, born of Brahman and realised Him, then he obtains everlasting peace.

This stanza reads today as a strange riddle, and, certainly had it not been for Sri Sankara's commentary, the modern students of the *Upanishad* would have gasped at this stanza. But that need not necessarily mean that even in the days of the Vedic Period these stanzas were equally confusing riddle bits. At that time students were so well grounded in the Vedic lore and practices that to them this language was self-explanatory and needed no special commentary. And wherever special commentary was needed, certainly, the great *Rishis* of the *Upanishads* must have given their students long discourses and explanations.

"Three-fold Nachiketa Fire" (a) It may mean one who has performed thrice the Nachiketa Sacrifice, or (b) it may mean he who learns, knows and performs the 'Nachiketa-Fire-Sacrifice', (c) Since Nachiketa-Fire seems to be a form of *Agnihotra*. "The three" may mean the usual *Garhapatya-fire*, *Ahavantya-fire* and the *Dakshina-fire*.

United with the 'three': Here again it may mean (a) one who has the three great influences, viz., the father, the mother and the teacher, i.e., he who has these three great forces of blessings and who, through obedience and reference to them all, has come to claim their blessings. Or (b) the 'three' may refer to the three sources-of-knowledge, viz., Direct Experience (*prathyaksha pramana*), Inference (*anumana pramana*) or Words of the Wise (*agamas*). According to Sankara it may also mean, (c) the *Vedas*, the *Smrithis* and the declarations of Wise Men

(Sastras).

The three duties.—The three-fold *Karmas* that every Brahmin house-holder is expected to perform daily are sacrifices, chanting of Vedas, and giving away gifts in charity.

Those who can afford to act up to all the above instructions, shall come to enjoy a comparative peace and rest from the whirl of life and death in the Kingdom of Indra, when they have realised the Fire as the Self. *Brahman-ja-Jnam* is but a name of Fire : The knower (*Jna*) of what is *Brahma-ja*, i.e., what is born of Brahman, meaning the *Jagat*. Note *Jatavedas*—all-knower—is another name of Fire used in Vedas.

त्रिणाचिकेतस्त्रयमेतद्विदित्वा य एवं विद्वांश्चिनुते नाचिकेतम् ।
स मृत्युपाशान्पुरतः प्रणोद्य शोकातिगो मोदते स्वर्गलोके ॥ १८ ॥

Trinachiketas trayam etad veditva
ya evam vidvans-cinute Nachiketam ;
Sa mrtyu pasan puratah pranodya
soka-atigo modate svargaloke.

(18) He who knows the three Nachiketa-Fire with this knowledge, throws off the chains of death, goes beyond sorrows and rejoices in heaven.

Lord Death is here concluding his advice on the Nachiketa-Fire-Sacrifice with a glorification of the *Karma* and the fruits thereof. He says that those who know full well the three main sections of the knowledge concerning this *Agni Vidya* shall go beyond the sorrows and tears of the world and reach a plane of Consciousness wherein he shall live and enjoy eternally. The three Nachiketa-Fire-Knowledge constitutes in the understanding of what has been already said about (a) the bricks, (b) their number, and (c) the mode of their use. He who performs this *Yagna* and also meditates for long upon the Fire as the very *Atman* (Self) of the meditator, shall after death reach the State of the Total Intellect called the *Hiranyagarbha* or the *Brahmaloka*.

This is as it ought to be. We have found in the earlier discussions how a synthesis of ritual (*Karma*) and meditation (*Upasana*), when pursued with sincerity, conveys the ego to

the greater joys of the *Brahmaloka* where, being advised by the Creator Himself, it gains complete liberation, *Kaivalya-hood*, at the time of the dissolution. This is called *Krama Mukthi* (gradual liberation) in Vedanta. The stanza under discussion is very important, inasmuch as it provides the basis for one of the most important beliefs established in the philosophy of Vedanta regarding the process of Gradual Liberation.

The *Upanishad* here insists that one who performs Nachiketa Fire along with the meditation suggested goes beyond the shackles of death even while living in one's mortal coil. Herein "death" means the living death in rotten negativities such as ignorance, desires, hatred, etc. The practitioner of this synthesis of ritual *Karma* and meditation *Upasana* realises his Self to be the Micro-cosm, *Virat*.

एष तेऽग्निर्नचिकेतः स्वर्ग्यो यमवृणीथा द्वितीयेन वरेण ।

एतमग्निं तवैव प्रवक्ष्यन्ति जनासस्तृतीयं वरं नचिकेतो वृणीष्व

॥ १९ ॥

Esa te gnir Nachiketah svargyo

yam avrnitha dvitiiyena varena ;

Etam agnim tava eva pravaksyanti janasa-

ttiiyam varam Nachiketo vrnisva.

(19) This is tri-Fire, Oh Nachiketas, which leads to heaven and which you craved for, by the second boon ; people will call this Fire thine alone ; Oh Nachiketas, demand the third boon.

Extremely pleased at the disciple's intelligence, sincerity and devotion, Lord Death is heaping upon him blessing after blessing. Dharmaraja declares that the details of this ritual given out for the men of the world through the boy shall be eternally called after Nachiketas.

Again, in this stanza, Mother Sruthi has cleverly concealed a beautiful artistic stroke which throws a flood of light upon the magnanimity and truthfulness of Lord Death. Though Lord Death was pleased to shower upon the disciple extra boons, he yet feels obliged and indebted to the Brahmin boy, and since he had not given the promised 'third' boon it was possible

that Nachiketas himself would forget the first promise made by Lord Death, "Ask of me three boons". But Lord Death, the magnanimous, the Master of Righteousness, Himself reminds the Brahmin boy of the third boon : "Choose now, Oh Nachiketas, thy third boon."

With the second boon Nachiketas chooses to know the knowledge of the Nachiketa-Fire-Sacrifice, which leads to Heaven.

येयं प्रेते विचिक्ष्वा मनुष्येऽस्तीत्येके नायमस्तीति चैके ।

एतद्विद्यामनुशिष्टस्त्वयाऽहं वराणामेष वरस्तृतीयः ॥ २० ॥

*Ya iyam prete vicikitsa manusye,
asti iti eke, na ayam, asti iti ca eke ;
Etad vidyam anusistas tvaya ham,
varanam esa varas tirityah.*

(20) There is that doubt when a man is dead—some say he is and some say he is *not*—this I should like to know, taught by thee. This is the third of my boons that I ask.

Not even a Shakespearian genius could have so deftly delineated the character of the hero with mere suggestions made with unsaid words as the *Rishis* of the *Upanishads*. Our salutations to the immortal *Rishis*.

We have found earlier how the ideal spiritual aspirant in Nachiketas liquidated the first of his boons in ensuring the peace and joy of his father and how he dedicated the second boon to bless the community of man. Now, only when cashing on the last of his boons does he think of his own *Kalyan* (liberation) and presents one of his great doubts for clarification.

This spirit of sacrifice and capacity to find within oneself enough sympathy to serve not only one's own near and dear relatives but also the whole universe and thus put their *Kalyan* first, even before one's own redemption, is one of the most important qualifications unavoidable in a true seeker, if he is to be a total success in his pilgrimage to Truth. This is certainly against the belief that has now come to be rampant among the devotee-class. In this misunderstanding is an entire hornet's nest of sorrows suffered by the devotees.

Religious pursuit will not and cannot be a bar to perfect social and communal living. A spiritual aspirant is not to be dumb and deaf; he must be one fully aware of the needs and sorrows of the world of men around him and must seek and find within himself a kindness and toleration enough to make his heart weep for the sorrows of others. If he has not the capacity to identify himself with his own relations and his own generation he is not fit to enter the holy-of-holies in the Temple of Truth.

With this stanza the *Upanishad* proper starts. So far the effort was in building up a dramatic situation wherein a matured soul is brought into the presence of a full-fledged Teacher.

The doubt now raised by the young Brahmin boy shows his own scriptural knowledge and self-evolution. Rarely has the animal man, ever running after sensuous pleasures, the mental poise and the intellectual stamina to ponder over life as a whole and come to entertain such a deep and pointed doubt.

Many are the thinkers who have been tantalised by the horrid beauty of this tearful incident in life, called death. Even today death is a fascinating idea with all writers and thinkers, authors and philosophers in all climes and conditions. But often we find that men of the required calibre rarely come to solve this serious problem. It is only the *Rishis* of old, who in their quietude had prepared their instruments of understanding and feeling to the required efficiency to soar into the sublime Realms of the Beyond, that have really succeeded in observing coolly, in analysing scientifically and in concluding truly the what, how and why of the phenomenon called Death.

Even among the thinkers of India we do meet with apposing conclusions and self-contradictory arguments regarding this common but strange happening, Death. As Nachiketas says in the stanza there are some schools of thinkers who have established that death is the end of all and *there is nothing but a zero* beyond it. There are yet others who accept, argue and establish that *there is existence* even beyond the grave.

This question whether there is existence after death or not is not one which belongs to the Realm of the Mind and the Intellect. These instruments of feeling and knowing do, at

their best, give us only some vague directions pointing towards a World of Knowledge that actually lies spread out beyond their own frontiers. In order to travel towards that Land of Pure Knowledge the ordinary mortal, however intellectual and sensitive he may be, has not the necessary vehicle. It is only the great Masters of renunciation and wisdom who have specially developed their intuitive faculty that can at will take one into these Realms Beyond.

In short, such transcendental questions cannot be explained by words and established through any of the ordinarily known 'proofs of knowledge' such as Direct-perception, Inference, Comparison, etc. The only way to solve them is through the *Agamas*, which are the words of Wisdom given out by men of greater realisation . . . the Saints and Sages.

Hence, the justification for Nachiketas to put this question to Lord Death, the King of all Dharmas (*Dharma Raja*).

It is the Nihilists of the Buddhistic Order, and the Materialists (*Charvakas*) of the Hindu-fold that mainly come to the conclusion that the end is a 'Nothing'.

To the Materialists this body is all that is and life is a manifestation that is incidental to the occasion when the limbs and the sense organs are assembled together to form a body ; to them the warmth of pulsating life is not a Divine Power presiding over the destinies of the body, but it is a by-product, just as when betel-leaves, lime and nut are chewed together, a third entity the 'red colour' becomes the by-product which, in fact, is not a quality in any one of the three things when chewed separately. Similarly, they claim, when the parts of the body are all assembled together by Prakrithi, Life manifests.

And to such a team of believers, death is disappearance of the body, and so of the life, into a zero : " Out of zero the life comes, plays out its uncertain games for a time, and into zero back again it disappears."

This philosophy is but a hollow dum-dum to any thinking individual ; for, out of *nothing* a thing cannot come nor can a thing disappear indeed, to become *nothing*.

On examining closely the arguments of the Nihilists, we can very easily find their self-contradicting stand. They argue

to establish that the Ultimate Truth is *Non-Existence*. According to them, then, *Non-Existence* existed, which is certainly a statement of self-contradiction. Sankara takes up the same argument to thrash the Nihilists out of the field of serious consideration. If we are to accept the entire argument raised by the Nihilists we have to conclude that they have positively known the *Non-Existence* State : that is, they have a positive knowledge of this negative state called *Non-Existence*. To Sankara and the Vedantins the Knower or the Knowledge that knows the *Non-Existence* is the Supreme Truth, and " the Knower in us knows no decay, disease or death ", says the *Sruthi*.

Thus, a mere book-knowledge can only confuse a seeker, since, there are different conclusions arrived at by different thinkers, each arguing and thinking independently according to his own temperament and culture. The only Daniel that can give us a true judgment is the Master who has the subjective experience of Truth. Nachiketas is, therefore, fully justified in asking of Lord Death this *Adhyatmic* question.

देवैरत्रापि विचिकित्सितं पुरा न हि सुविज्ञेयमणुरेष धर्मः ।
अन्यं वरं नचिकेतो वृणीष्व मा मोपरोत्सरति मा सृजैनम् ॥ २१ ॥

*Devair-atra-api vicikistitham pura
na hi suvijneyam-anur-esa dharmah ;
Anyam varam Nachiketo vrnisva,
ma ma uparotsir-ati ma srja-enam.*

(21) " On this point even the gods of olden times have doubted. Verily it is not easy to understand it—subtle is its nature. Oh Nachiketas, choose another boon ; do not press me on this ; give this up for me."

Here onwards we shall find a series of stanzas in which Lord Death is testing his disciple. There are hundreds of people who, though immature, might stumble themselves upon a doubt or two on themes transcendental. All such people are not generally ripe in intellect or pure in mind sufficiently to grasp the subtle Truth as discussed in the *Sastras*. To give out the Absolute standpoint and to discuss with them directly the Divine Nature of the Immortal Soul is wasteful effort which

shall not produce any effect upon the hearers.

Great Masters, therefore, always test their disciples and only when the disciples are found to be fit for the great initiation do they deliver the goods as such.

This does not mean that the Vedantic principles are to be kept as close secrets and are to be given out only to a select few. Vedanta-knowledge is the birth-right of man ; it belongs to all at all times.

This kind of a wise discrimination is actually being practised in our everyday-life, by almost all of us. For example, if an infant child were to enquire of his father "Dad, how does it rain ?" the Dad, if he be intelligent, would tell the child of the 'white elephant' that stands always behind the dark clouds and sprinkles the water contents of its trunks on to the people. While the same father would answer the same question to the same boy after some ten years, explaining to him the vapour contents of the clouds and the principles of condensation when the clouds reach the cooler forest areas. These two different explanations of the same phenomenon are given out to the same child at different stages of his growth, since the later explanation will not and cannot appeal at the earlier stage !

It is only in this sense that the Teacher tests the student's maturity and then gives out his discourses according to the standard and category to which the particular disciple belongs. Lord Death is here trying to examine Nachiketas, the seeker. He, in an assumed air of sincerity, says to the Brahmin boy that He dares not waste the blessings of one of his boons in explaining a futile enquiry of the boy, "*what happens to the soul after death*". The topic is so subtle and difficult to understand that "even Gods of old have to this day their own doubts !" adds the Lord.

Deva means effulgent : meaning those Divine ones who live in the Heavens and who have in their make-up an ampler potency of intellect and mind. The Gods have a greater capacity to feel and to reason out, and also they have a longer period of existence to enquire, analyse and understand such themes. "Even they," says Lord Death, "have not yet come to a final understanding of the Nature of the Soul" naturally, it is self-evident that the topic is futile for a mere mortal child to hope

even to understand the great theme ; let alone to experience it.

Indeed, Lord Death has very efficiently argued in this stanza against Nachiketas' insistence for an answer to his question. We must always remember that Lord Death had no intentions of evading the question. Probably, more than the disciple, the Guru was anxious to give Knowledge. But unless the recipient has the required receptivity, it is not only futile but at times even dangerous to give out the sacred Truths of Vedanta to such an unprepared candidate. For, the lesser intellects are apt to misunderstand the real import and purpose of the *Sruthi*-declarations. Vedanta when rightly understood, can make a pure devotee a God upon earth ; but it shall make the student a devil if he is not properly conditioned to receive the Knowledge in its right bearing and significance.

A match-box, a blessing in the hands of a grown-up, may be a danger in the hands of a child !

देवैरत्रापि विचिकित्सितं किल त्वं च मृत्यो यन्न सुविज्ञेयमात्थ ।

वक्ता चास्य त्वादृगन्यो न लभ्यो नान्यो वरस्तुल्य एतस्य कश्चित्

॥ २२ ॥

Devair-atra-api vicikitsitam kila,

tvam ca mṛtyo yaṁ na suvijñeyam-attha ;

Vakta ca asya tvadṛg anyo na labhyo

na anyo varas-tulya-etasya kascit.

(22) Thou sayest, Oh Death, that even the Gods have doubts here and that this is not easy to know. None other like thee, who can tell of this can be found : no other boon can at all equal this.

If Lord Death's tempting words in the last stanza were a masterpiece in their suggestiveness for psycho-analysis, the unrelenting words of firm resolve to know and to understand, as expressed by the student here, are equally a great masterpiece. According to the student, there are no boons which can be equal to an answer to this great question of the Beyond, since the fruits gained from all the boons are finite and perishable as they are all mere material gains. Again, if even the Gods could not, of their own accord, seek and successfully reach a

final understanding of the Nature of the *Atman* it is but in the fitness of things, that we, the men of the world, need a great Master to give us this Knowledge. And we can have no greater master than Lord Death Himself.

सतायुषः पुत्रपौत्रान्वृणीष्व बहून्पशून्हस्तिहिरण्यमश्वान् ।

भूमेर्महदायतनं वृणीष्व स्वयं च जीव शरदोयावदिच्छसि ॥ २३ ॥

Satayusah putra pautran vrnisva,
bahun pasun hasti hiranyam asvan ;
Bhumer mahad ayatanam vrnisva,
svayam ca jiva sarado yavad icchasi.

(23) "Choose sons and grandsons who may live a hundred years, herds of cattle, elephants, gold and horses. Choose the wide abode of the earth live yourself as many autumns as you like."

Lord Death is now continuing his endless charms to test the calibre of the student. Unless a seeker has come to feel a complete detachment from the delusory charms of the sense-objects there is no hope for him to get attached to the Real and the Permanent World of Truth. Hence the justice in such severe trials meted out by the Masters to their beloved students. These examinations are held in our Vedic System not in the present-day spirit of breaking the student but they were conducted with a view to making the student. If, in case, a student unfortunately falls below the standards of Vedic expectation, he is not condemned as hopeless for ever, but the teacher's instructions would be to purify and enable the student and thereby lift him up to the highest standards of efficiency.

The list of offered temptations seems to be an exhaustive one and no ordinary mortal can easily stand against its killing tentacles. Lord Death has offered Nachiketas many sons and grandsons, all centenarians too. Moreover, His list contains material wealth, kingdoms and power. All these would have been useless if the recipient of these blessings had not himself a sufficient span of life to live. Wealth would be indeed a tragedy to a man who dies young. But Nachiketas is here offered as many years of life as he would like to live and enjoy.

एतत्तुल्यं यदि मन्यसे वरं वृणीष्व वित्तं चिरजीविकां च ।
महाभूमौ नचिकेतस्त्वमेधि कामानां त्वां कामभाजं करोमि ॥ २४ ॥

*Etat tulyam yadi manyase varam,
vrnisva vittam cira jivikam ca ;
Mahabhūmau Nachiketas tvam edhi
kamanam tvam kama bhajan karomi.*

(24) Some other boon equal to this, if thou thinkest fit demand—wealth and longevity ; the king of the wide earth, Nachiketas, I shall make thee, enjoy all thy desires.

Here is a supplementary list which Lord Death appends to his previous offerings as already contained in the last stanza.

Probably at the end of the previous stanza Lord Death vainly watches for some glow of satisfaction in the face of the pure devotee, Nachiketas.

Friends, any one of you at the mere hope of a fair chance of getting some five rupees somewhere in another part of this city, would certainly now run away from this Yagna-shala ; but here is a seeker who has been offered a hundred per cent sure boon giving him not only children, grandchildren, gold, cattle and kingdoms but also an inordinately long span of life, and yet, the true seeker in Nachiketas, not even brightens up a little. A similar single-pointedness of purpose and a ready willingness to sacrifice everything at the altar of Truth is the true spirit found in all successful seekers.

In this stanza Lord Death is completing the list of things offered to see if the boy can be tempted away from his main pursuit. " May be, Nachiketas has some secret desires of his own which have not yet been covered by my long list. This, may be probably, the cause of the disinterestedness that is evidently written large in the boy's face." Thinking thus Lord Death invites Nachiketas to ask for any boon of anything that he might cherish a desire for, besides ample wealth and long life.

Even after this, Lord Death fails to see in the boy's face any enthusiasm, and so, He offers Nachiketas the lordship over the whole world and promises to make him an enjoyer of all his possible desires.

All these boons to be exchanged for a simple request to drop the main question, "Is there an existence after death?" What a bargain! And yet; what a sad failure for Lord Death.

ये ये कामा दुर्लभा मर्त्यलोके सर्वान्कामांश्छन्दतः प्रार्थयस्व ।
इमा रामाः सरथाः सत्पूया न हीदृशा लम्भनीयाः मनुष्यैः ॥
आभिर्मत्प्रताभिः परिचारयस्व नचिकेतो मरणं मानुषाक्षीः

॥ २५ ॥

*Ye ye kama durlabha martya loke,
sarvan kamams chandatah prarthayasva.
Ima ramah sarathah satpurya
na hiidrsa lambhaniya manusyaish.
Abhir mat prattabhih paricarayasva,
Nachiketo maranam manuprakshili.*

(25) Whatever desires are difficult to attain in the world of mortals, ask for them according to thy wish. These fair maidens with their chariots and musical instruments such are indeed not enjoyable by mortals—be attended by them, I will give them to thee but O Nachiketas! do not question about the state of the Soul after death.

Even a single, unsuspected and unconscious desire-worm lurking anywhere in the sub-conscious, ruins the entire psychological make-up of a seeker! A true *Sadhaka* who is marked out for success is he who has come to enjoy a balanced development of his physical, psychological and spiritual personalities. If any one of them is distorted then the entire combination becomes ill-adjusted, and from such a maladjusted instrument no true music can emerge. As a true Doctor of the Soul, Lord Death, the Teacher here is examining thoroughly the personality and the condition of the inner instruments in the disciple. Hence Lord Death requests Nachiketas not to insist upon knowing the State of Existence after death but to wish for any material gain or sensuous happiness which may be waiting in him for fulfilment. The student is offered the services of heavenly damsels, divinely beautiful and godly graceful. Chariots, horses, ornaments . . . what not.

स्वोभावा मर्त्यस्य यदन्तर्कतत्सर्वेन्द्रियाणां जरयन्ति तेजः ।

अपिः सर्वं जीवितमल्पमेव तवैव वाहास्तव नृत्यगीते ॥ २६ ॥

*Svobhava martyasya yad antaka etat
sarvendriyanam jarayanti tejah ;
Api sarvam jivitam alpam eva,
tava eva vahas tava nrtya gite.*

(26) Ephemeral these ; Oh Death, these tend to decay, the fire (vigour) of all the senses in man. Even the longest life is indeed short. Thine alone be the chariots, the dance and the music.

The patient has reacted well to the suggestive questions of Lord Death who erstwhile acted as a psychiatrist. This is evident from the tone and the word of Nachiketas' answer. Moreover, the very argument hinted at by Nachiketas, based upon which he has come to the same conclusion that the finite sense-objects have no eternal value clearly shows that Nachiketas, though a boy, has lived a fruitful life of intelligent self-analysis and critical discrimination of men and things.

He characterises truly all objects of the senses as finite and ephemeral, and hence, his disgust for them. During his short life in the world, he has been living intensely, and in his discrimination, he has come to the wise conclusion that material objects, even if they be heavenly, are but things delusory and so will not last long, "even till tomorrow" *Swaabhave*.

Again, not only the sense-objects are in themselves finite, but to meddle with them is to weaken the very instruments of our appreciation and enjoyment. Without the sense-organs the sense-objects cannot influence our minds and produce therein any experience either of joy or sorrow. When the light of Nachiketas' discrimination comes to play fully upon them, it becomes clear that the disastrous sense-objects, themselves perishable, would also hasten the deterioration of the sense-organs. The first *laddu* may be sweet, but the fifth one may not be so sweet ; the twentieth *laddu* may be full of pain. And, the forty-second-one would be cruelty manifest ! Such being the case, no thinking individual (who has the courage of intellectual conviction to pursue only the path shown by his intellect) will

run after the material pleasures born of ephemeral objects, however glorious they may look for the time being.

As to the offer made by Lord Death regarding the long span of life, Nachiketas has but a smile of understanding disgust for it. To Nachiketas life in this combodiment, however long, is but fleeting ; for, can a human mind ever come to feel any sense of complete satisfaction however long he may succeed in living here on this globe ? Whatever be the span of life allotted, there is, after all, a death lurking at the end of it all. And death is equally painful whether it be today or a thousand years afterwards !

And hence, at the peak of his disgust, born out of a right understanding, Nachiketas cries, " keep thou thy chariots, the dance and the music." One must be a true Guru himself to realise the ocean of joy Lord Death must have felt at this seemingly outrageous explosion of the young boy. This declaration in its very vehemence unveils the brilliant inner personality of this matured soul, Nachiketas. To a Nachiketa-like student, Self-realisation is immediate and imperative.

न विस्तेन तर्पणोयो मनुष्यो लप्स्यामहे वित्तमद्राक्ष्म चेत्वा ।

जीविष्यामो यावदीशिष्यसि त्वं वरस्तु मे वरणोयः स एव ॥ २७ ॥

*Na vītena tarpaṇiyo manuṣyo,
lapsyaṃ he vittaṃ adrakṣma cet tva ;
Jivisyāmo yavadi-īśisyasi tvam,
varas tu me varaniyah sa eva.*

(27) Man is not to be satisfied by wealth, if wealth were wanted, we shall get it, if we only see thee. We shall also live, as long as You rule. Therefore, that boon alone is fit to be craved for by me.

Nachiketas, though a child, has the wisdom of a sire. He has not been living life as a dumb driven animal. He has lived intelligently and has been everfully aware of all his own experiences and many of the experiences of others. Thus he has come to the sane conclusion that mere wealth cannot and will not provide the possessor with a free passport to happiness. Here wealth means not only bank balance, debentures and shares,

but the word is used here in its amplest scope to embrace in itself every detail and item in all the possible circumstances in life.

It is an obvious truth that by arranging the external world in which we are living we cannot guarantee our happiness. Happiness is a state of the mind arrived at by itself during its transactions with the external set-ups functioning in time, place and condition. The objects remaining the same, the same mind can react differently upon them according to its condition at the time of the reaction. Thus, pudding which is always sweet, may taste unsatisfactorily bitter when the mind that plays behind the tongue is embittered by some immediate sorrow or pain. It is, in fact, only a statement of truth, which is obvious and yet rarely recognised, when Nachiketas says that no man can be made happy by wealth only ; in life we are too often meeting with sad rich men. Even millionaires are often known to have committed suicide.

“ Again,” argues Nachiketas, “ having gained all the wealth a man can enjoy, they are available only till such time as he has not met with Lord Death.” A dead man shall need no more, not even a penny out of his rich coffers !

This very same portion in the stanza can also be interpreted to mean that having met thee, Oh Lord Death, who can go back poor ? Here, it means that a mere ‘ *darshan* ’ of Lord Death is sufficient to bless the devoted with all material gains and as such, Nachiketas means to say that it would be unwise to spend out his third boon for the blessing of a thing which he has already come to enjoy.

That is, it is indeed a criminal waste, almost amounting to madness, if a school-master labours to gain an interview with the Education Minister only to request him for an appointment as a school-master—in the same school and in charge of the same class ! !

Based upon the above arguments, Nachiketas, the wise and discriminating seeker, firmly informs his teacher that the boon he had asked for is all that he demands of the Master.

अजीर्येतामृतानामुपेत्य जीर्यन्मर्त्यः क्वधस्थः प्रजानन् ।

अभिध्यायन्वर्णरतिप्रमोदान् अतिदीर्घे जीविते को रमेत ॥ २८ ॥

*Ajiryatam amrtanam upetya
jiryam martyam kvadhashtah prajanan ;
Abhidhyayan varna-rati-pramodan
atidirgha jivite ko rameta.*

(28) "What decaying mortal living in the world below and possessed of knowledge, after having approached the company of the undecaying and the immortal, will rejoice in the long life, after he has pondered over the nature of the pleasures produced by song and sport (beauty and love)."

This stanza is not a pessimistic cry of despair that has risen up from a rotten mind and intellect steeped in sensuousness and ignorance, but it is the glorious song of optimism and knowledge born out of a healthy mind and a developed intellect basking in the glory of cloudless wisdom. In its very core the words contain a burning satire at the human-worms that gloat and revel in the leprous ditch of flesh-fleshy enjoyments, and thus waste their precious heritage of true living as a God upon earth.

Nachiketas, while condemning the agonising existence of the men of the world struggling to earn, striving to possess, labouring to hoard and hurrying to spend, has at once the sympathetic understanding to find an excuse also for the suicidal mischief of mankind against itself. He says that, "*Having approached the company of the undecaying and the immortal*" none will come to entertain any attachment or fascination for the destructible and the dying.

Though all religions unanimously claim that man must learn to detach himself from this body-mind-intellect combination and its relationships, yet it is very rarely understood by the generality of people that this act of detachment can be a success only to a degree equal to the degree of attachment a seeker developed towards the inner Truth Principle which guides and vitalises not only the inner equipments as the 'Knower', but also the outer world consciously cognised as the 'known'. It is with this philosophic truth in mind that Nachiketas makes his statement, "none can rejoice in long life", with a conditional clause, "when once he has approached the Undecaying and the Immortal".

To attach ourselves to the Divine is to detach ourselves from

the undivine. To walk into light is to walk out of darkness. To swim on to the shore is to move out of water. To wake up is to escape the dream. Thus, all true religions can be called either as the Religion of Attachment or as the Religion of Detachment, according to the emphasis that has been laid by the Master in the Bible ! !

यस्मिन्निदं विचिकित्सन्ति मृत्यो यत्साम्पराये महति ब्रूहि नस्तत् ।
योऽयं वरो गूढमनुप्रविष्टो नान्यं तस्मान्नचिकेता वृणीते ॥ २९ ॥

*Yasminn idam vicikitsanti mṛtyo,
yat samparaye mahati brūhi naś tat ;
Oo'yam varo gūḍham anupravisto,
Na anyam tasman Nachiketa vṛṇite.*

(29) " O Death tell us that in which men have this doubt, and which is about the great passing beyond. Nachiketas does not choose any other boon but that (concerning the Soul) of which the Knowledge is hidden."

(Thus ends the First Valli of the First Chapter)

The opening section of the first chapter is rounded off with a firm and determined demand of the disciple. No temptation was big enough to entice away the aspirations of Nachiketas into the deluding charms of the brittle sense-objects and their glittering joys.

This Valli (Section) not only gives a dramatic setting for the whole *Upanishad*, but also at the same time leaves upon the minds of the readers an unforgettable picture of the adorable spirit and the burning thirst in the young Brahmin boy. He has not only a discriminating intellect but also a godly share of the spirit of detachment from the false and saintly attachment with the Real.

In this first section we have very little of the *Upanishad* proper ; the philosophic disquisitions start only from the second section. Herein, so far, it was the labour of Sruthi Bhagavathi to emphasise the special qualifications demanded of a perfect student of Vedanta in his coming to experience intuitively the Absolute Truth as his own Self.

These qualifications are : (1) *Vyragya* : dispassion for all

enjoyments here and in the hereafter ; (2) *Viveka* : discrimination between the Real and the Unreal ; (3) *Shad Sampathi** : the six ethical perfection and (4) *Mumukshatva* : a burning desire to realise the Self within, which is the Self in all.

20-29. *With the third boon he wants to know the meaning of the "Great Passing-beyond". Death tests Nachiketas. The seeker insists to know and rejects all other substitute gifts.*

* *Shad Sampathi* : (i) tranquillity of mind (*Sama*) ; (ii) restraint of senses (*Dama*) ; (iii) Renunciation of desires (*Upavasi*) ; (iv) endurance (*Tithiksha*) ; (v) faith (*Saddha*) ; and (vi) mental poise (*Samadhi*). Read Swamiji's *Vivekachoodamani*, Part I.

द्वितीयो वल्ली

SECTION II

*Death's teaching on Immortality . . . the
comprehension and apprehension of the Eternal Reality*

अन्यच्छ्रेयोऽन्यदुतैव प्रेयस्ते उभे नानार्थे पुरुषं सिनीतः ।

तयोः श्रेय आदधानस्य साधु भवति हीयतेऽर्थाच्च उप्रेयो वृणीते ॥ १ ॥

Anyai sreya nyad uta eva preyas te,

ubhe nanarthe purusam sinitah ;

(Tayoh) sreya adadhanasya sadhu bhavati,

hiyate rihadya u preyo vrñite.

(1) Yama said : " One is good, while another is pleasant. These two having different objects chain a man. Blessed is he who, between them chooses the good alone, but he who chooses what is pleasant, loses the true end."

Having thus tested the disciple and found him worthy of the great Knowledge, Lord Death said, 'good is one thing and pleasant is another'. Every action of all the living beings is motivated by an irresistible instinct to be happy. Happiness seems to be the goal of every struggle and strife in life. Even a worm crawling in faecal matter wanders about motivated by a hope that it would reach a point where a greater joy than it is enjoying at the moment, would be its lot. In full and Absolute Contentment all desires and hopes end, and this Supreme State of Desirelessness or Hopelessness is the Goal of life. This is called Godhood, or the State of *Kaivalya*. If thus to act is our lot and we cannot remain without striving for this State of Total Contentment, it is time that we analyse our experiences and decide for ourselves what the true way of striving is.

It is a consideration upon this problem that has brought out this learned stanza from Lord Death Himself.

Dharmaraja classifies all actions with reference to their fruits, into two divisions. The fruits of actions can be of two

kinds ; those contributing to the ephemeral joys in life and those leading to the Immortal Bliss in the beyond. That is to say our efforts can be such as contributing to some immediate passing material gain or such as shall contribute in the long run to our self-culturing and self-purification.

A heartless black-marketer or a characterless corrupt officer, through foul and fiendish-methods, revelling in greed and lust, can win in the "hoard-money-race". And to the ignorant and the sensuous this may appear to be an inviting prospect and a welcoming success too.

We, as individuals, are also free to build our lives upon the more enduring principles of living, such as honesty, piety, truthfulness, mercy, love, tolerance and so on and live for the greater wealth of self-culturing and the consequent inner peace and joy.

It is these two paths of choice freely open for each individual that have been hinted at here by Lord Death when he says, "*one is good while another is pleasant*". That which is 'good' need not necessarily be always pleasant, although there are pursuits which are 'good' and are at once 'pleasant' also.

That spiritual hero, who consistently sticks to the Path of Good, unmindful of the unpleasantness and material privations, and who has to suffer in course of his higher pursuits, is the one who reaches the True End, the enduring state of joy.

The statement, "*both these chain a man*" is very significant from the highest standpoint of the Supreme Goal. The Path of Pleasant abducts the pursuer often into the dangerous jungles of crimes and sins thereby insuring him for a long lease of painful existence as conscious beings born in the lower wombs (*yonis*). That is, by the pursuit of the pleasant we are pulling ourselves down and scheming to remain in the lower scales of evolution ; sins and criminalities are blockades over which we tumble to fall back into the lower rungs on the ladder of evolution. In this context sin is but an act which makes us miss our aim in life.

Similarly, too, a conscious following of the Path of Good, with a desire to enjoy the fruits thereof, would be demanding for ourselves a transfer into the softer Planes of Consciousness,

the Worlds of the Gods, wherein such people will have to take embodiments to live through the fruits of their meritorious acts. To the perfect seeker of the Absolute, therefore, both the Path of Pleasant and the Path of Good, are bondages indeed.

श्रेयश्च प्रेयश्च मनुष्यमेतस्तौ सम्परीत्य विविनक्ति धीरः ।

श्रेयो हि धीरोऽभि प्रेयसो वृणीते प्रेयो मन्दो योगक्षेमाद्वृणीते ॥ २ ॥

*Sreyas ca preyas ca manusyam etah
stau samparitya vivinakti dhirah ;
Sreyo hi dhira (abhi) preyaso vrnite
preyo mando yoga ksemaad vrnite.*

(2) Both the good and the pleasant approach the mortal ; the intelligent man examines and distinguishes them ; for the intelligent man prefers the good to the pleasant, the ignorant man chooses " for getting and keeping " ; the pleasant for the sake of his body.

Life is a series of challenges. Moment to moment we are faced with, as it were, a question mark—to do or not to do—that swims towards us in the flood of time. Temptation after temptation approaches us. The future becomes the present and it rolling over us, as it were, passes on to merge into the beginningless past. Our intellect and discrimination are called upon to value each moment independently and to come to a judgment upon things and beings. The eternal objects being finite, they can never remain the same even for a single moment and as such their combinations and patterns eternally present a kaleidoscopic variety. With reference to this ever-changing pattern the thinking animal, man, is called upon to make independent decision anew from moment to moment to ascertain and maintain his relationship with the external.

At each challenge two Paths, as it were, are open for us to follow. On one side we are temptingly beckoned to playfully dance through a seemingly well-lit Path of Pleasant, but the Path ultimately leads us to a dark cave of sorrow and endless death, and on the other side lies a quite uninviting path, ill-used, winding and uphill, but that which ultimately leads us to the

sunlit pasture-lands and flowery-meadows of Eternal living and happiness. This latter Path is called the Path of Good.

The wise and discriminating man at each moment intelligently judges the various phases of the challenge he is in, and solidly determines ever to stick to the Path of Good. He continues his pilgrimage and ultimately fulfils the mission of his life. The ignorant one on the other hand lives like a mule following the generality and leads the path of least resistance motivated mainly by the animal urges of his body-consciousness. He follows the Path of Pleasant, the sensuous modes of satisfying every demand of the ever-craving senses and thus ultimately stoops so low as to commit sins and cruelties as a result of which he reaches the gruesome state of eternal death in the lower scales of evolution.

These words of Lord Death give any intelligent reader a direct and effective clue to the ideal way to live life and in the end he can successfully come to claim a real and abiding success. If we are to live each moment of our life as slaves to our passions, lusts and cravings, we shall in our thoughtlessness and indiscrimination slowly sink down to the level of the animals, and it is certainly but natural that such two-legged animals cannot come to claim the heritage of man, which is real joy and happiness lived in the achieved self-perfection.

The beautiful idea hinted at in these two opening stanzas of the *Valli* (Section) gives us, therefore, the theory and the logic of self-effort. At each moment of challenge the Path of Pleasant and the Path of Good are stretching open before us, but the Lord or God does not stand at the junction of these two roads either to abduct us through the Path of Pleasant into the caves of sorrows, or to canvas our journey through the Path of Good.

At each moment man has a limited freedom to follow either the Path of Good or the Path of Pleasant. Certainly, man has not got a complete and unlimited freedom over the external circumstances; but he has been given this limited freedom to be good or to be vicious in his moment-to-moment contact with the external world. This limited liberty is the real character of freedom for man, by a wise use of which he can soar into the

greater realms of perfection and become himself the God.

Religion is indeed an art of self-perfection and this is accomplished by careful living of each moment in wise and studious self-discipline. At a moment of challenge, a beginner may find that he has been instinctively driven to act viciously. The power or the force by which an individual is driven to do wicked action "in spite of himself" is indeed not explained by that pair of idle and empty words which we so often use "our destiny".

It is the pattern of thought which we have deliberately developed in ourselves by repeatedly thinking in a particular symmetry during our past moments, that actually drives us into the wrong or the right lines of action. Thus, a butcher or a hunter might instinctively feel it quite natural and decent to eliminate his enemy of the moment by killing, while one who has been living and thinking in terms of non-violence might never come to think of eliminating his enemy through death. A barbarian cannibal of the African jungle might not feel any pang of conscience in killing his neighbour's child for satisfying his own hunger ; while you and I, children of the modern age, living the modern ideologies of citizenship, may not think of even harming our neighbour's son, although often he deserves more than death for the nuisance he causes to us !

Man is his mind. As we cultivate and train the mind so shall we become. Tune our mind to the impermanent lower values of negativity ; and we become a gross insensible two-legged animals. Train the mind to think and to act in terms of the higher and the permanent values of love, tolerance, mercy, etc., and we get ourselves cultured and perfected to become signatories in our own appointments for the future. We may choose to sign today a death warrant for the future or a life-lease in Godhood and we shall correspondingly come to suffer the death or enjoy the life.

There is no destiny beyond and above ourselves ; we are ourselves the architects of our future.

There seems to be the trend of the wise in the pregnant words of Lord Death with which he begins the second section here.

सत्त्वं प्रियान्त्रिरूपांश्च कामानभिध्यायन्नचिकेतोऽत्यन्ताक्षीः ।

नैतां सृङ्गां वित्तमयीवाप्तो यस्यां मज्जन्ति बहवो मनुष्याः ॥ ३ ॥

*Sa tvam priyam priya-rupams-ca kaman,
abhidhyayan Nachiketa tyasrakshih ;
Na etam srnkam vittamayim avapto,
yasyam majjanti bahavo manusyah.*

(3) Oh Nachiketas, thou hast renounced desires and desirable objects of sweet shapes, judging them by their real merits, thou hast not accepted this "road of wealth" in which many mortals sink.

Herein we are listening to an irrepressible out-burst of applause which rose from the bosom of Lord Death, when he found that such a young Brahmin boy as Nachiketas was able to withstand all the trials and temptations. The temptations with which Lord Death wanted to lead the boy into the meshes of the sensuous life were such that the entire kingdom of mankind would have easily fallen a victim to them, even if they are not openly invited to enjoy them ! That this boy resisted all these temptations and found the strength for the same in his power of intellectual discrimination between the Real and the false is an occasion for Lord Death to cheer and applaud him, for, rare indeed are such chances for a great Master to have the blessings of meeting an equally great student.

Nachiketas has been offered not only sons and grandsons, all to live as centenarians, but also music and dance and even the free services of heavenly nymphs. But all these were mere trifles and insignificant toys to the matured spiritual personality in Nachiketas.

The word *Sringam* has been interpreted both as 'garland' and also as the 'path'. It may mean to say that Lord Death is surprised at the sense of detachment in Nachiketas as evidenced in his rejection of the present of the jewelled garland or as evidenced in his general disgust exhibited for walking the Path of Wealth.*

* *Ibid*, I, i, Sl. 6.

दूरमेते विपरीते विषूची अविद्या या च विद्येति ज्ञाता ।

विद्याभीप्सितं नचिकेतसं मन्ये न त्वा कामा बहवोऽलोलुपन्त ॥ ४ ॥

*Duram etc viparite visuci,
avidya ya ca vidya iti jnata ;
Vidya-bhispitam Nachiketasam manye,
na tva kama bahavo lolupanta.*

(4) These two, ignorance and knowledge, are wide apart and lead to different points or goals. I believe Nachiketas to be one who desires for knowledge, for, even many desires have not shaken thee.

These first four stanzas may constitute among themselves the stream of thoughts that came to flash through the mind of Lord Death when his team of temptations and trials was so efficiently blockaded at the portals of Nachiketas's bosom by the seeker's own dispassion (*Vyragya*) and discrimination (*Viveka*).

Lord Death estimates his observations and the results of his experiments with Nachiketas in this stanza. He says that the Path of Pleasant and the Path of Good are both eternally different from each other, since they diverge to reach two different points or destinations, which in their very nature are as opposing as light and darkness. The Path of Pleasant is the Path of Ignorance and the Path of Good is the Path of Knowledge. The Supreme Knowledge, the Science of Sciences, the *Brahma Vidya*, can be given out only to one who is a sedulous pursuer of the Path of Truth. Since Nachiketas has been proved to be one who is a staunch devotee of the Path of Good, Lord Death here decides in his mind that the Brahmin boy is indeed a fit student for this great Knowledge.

अविद्यायामन्तरे वर्तमानाः स्वयं धीराः पण्डितं मन्यमानाः ।

दन्द्रम्यमाणाः परियन्ति मूढा अन्धेनैव नीयमाना यथान्वाः ॥ ५ ॥

*Avidyayamantare vartamanah,
svayam dhirah panditham manyamanah ;
Dandramyamanah pariyanti mudha,
andhena eva niyamana yathandhah.*

(5) The ignorant, who live in the midst of darkness but fancy themselves to be wise and learned, go round deluded in many crooked ways, as the blind that are being led by the blind.

The comparison used here is so impressive that this has become a proverbial stanza and it is often used in criticising the smaller *Pundits* who take the duties of guiding the society or the community in their assumed privileges as 'men-of-knowledge'.

In criticising the self-conceited pharisees in the Bible also we have a similar statement : "*If the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.*"*

Any amount of book-knowledge cannot make one a real *Vidwan* unless one has come to live in a spirit of renunciation and live actually a life dedicated to self-purification and self-knowledge. Mere book-knowledge cannot make one really wise : and a wise one need not necessarily be a great student of books, and yet, can be living a life of piety and self-control.

When the mere bookworms come to glorify the 'Seat of *Raja-Guru*' the society or the country led by such *Pundits* makes a direct bee-line towards national ruin and international confusion. Neither mere birth nor parentage can make one a *Pundit*. When such *Pundits* lead, Lord Death says, the leader and the led would ultimately reach a similar tragic situation, at once sad and comic, as when a blind man is led by another equally blind man ! !

"*Deluded in many crooked ways*" :—As a consequence of the individual's cultivated imperfections and spiritual ignorance he develops desires in his mind for the satisfaction of which he does *Karmas*, good, bad, and indifferent, and thus earns a wealth of 'reactions' to be suffered or enjoyed in unending future births. As a consequence of their indifference to their own Real Nature they develop an acute sense of ego and the consequent pain-riddled varieties of I-ness and my-ness.

न साम्परायः प्रतिभाति बालं प्रमादन्तं वित्तमोहेन मूढम् ।

अयंलोको नास्ति पर इति मानी पुनः पुनर्कशमापद्यते मे ॥ ६ ॥

* Mathews, XV. 14.

*Na samparayah pratibhati balam,
prantadyantam vitta-mohena mudham ;
Ayam loko na asti para iti mani,
punah punar vasam apadyate me.*

(6) The way to the Hereafter is not apparent to the ignorant man who is childish, befooled by the glamour of wealth. "This is the world," he thinks "there is no other thus he falls again and again under my sway."

One, who is constantly and entirely engaged in the pursuit of earning, procuring and hoarding material wealth, cannot and will not have either the time or the occasion, or the required inner subtlety of heart and head, to enquire into the possibilities of a *Here-after*. So long as the intellect and the mind are lying drowned in the vulgar values of life, based upon the thoughtless conclusions and instinctive identification of oneself with one's own body, etc., one shall not come to feel easily any thirst to know or to entertain any urge to go beyond the shackles of mortal limitations.

To such men, pure materialists, the life in this plane of consciousness—generally noted for its tears and sweat, passing smiles and fleeting joys—is all the life that is. To them the ideals of a higher and a diviner life do not even suggest as possibilities. Even if they are told of the existence of a higher realisable life or greater perfections they will have neither the intellectual capacity to grasp such a philosophical ideal nor the mental accommodation to feel the divinity. The term child or childish has been used here in a sense different from the sense of the same term used either in *Brihadaranyaka* or in the Christian Bible. In *Brihadaranyaka* on enquiring how the Self can be contacted, Yajnavalkya says : "Let a Brahmin, casting aside his learning take his stand on childhood." Here the childhood indicates its simplicity and lack of passions. This eternal idea of the sages almost echoes in Jesus' words, "Except ye become like little children ye shall not see the Kingdom of God."

To such childish prattlers—the materialists—this short and uncertain span of existence is all that is : a life, that came from nowhere, that exhausts itself into a zero, that during its existence lives on without any reference to the past or any ambition for

the future. To such men life is a humdrum scheme of madness inexplicable and mysterious, logical but meaningless, confusing and confounding ! And certainly, such men cannot and will not be fit ones for philosophical contemplation, or for the pursuit of strict and conscious life of self-control or for the voluntary insistence of a constant self-discipline.

1-6. *The two paths : of knowledge and good ; of ignorance and pleasure. Deluded by the passing joys men fall into cheap materialism and become slaves to Death.*

श्रवणायाऽपि बहुभिर्यो न लभ्यः शृण्वन्तोऽपि बहवो यं न विद्युः ।
आश्रय्यो वक्ता कुशलोऽस्य लब्धाऽश्रय्यो जाता कुशलानुशिष्टः ॥ ७ ॥

*Sravanaya api bahubhir yo na labhyah,
srnvanto pi bahavo yam na vidyuh ;
Ascaryo vakta kusalo asya labdha,
ascaryo jnata kusalanusistah.*

(7) " He (the Self) of whom many are not able even to hear, whom many, even when they hear of Him, do not comprehend ; wonderful is a man, when found, who is able to teach the Self : wonderful is he who comprehends the Self, when taught by an able teacher."

Lord Death continues his ' thinking out loud ' and roars this Truth which has been an inspiration even for Sri Bhagavan Vyasa. In fact *Kathopanishad* seems to have been the main inspiration for Bhagavan Vyasa to produce the immortal Love-classic, *Shrimad Bhagavath*. Later on we shall find many stanzas lifted up even as such from this *Upanishad* by the philosopher-poet in his greatest work of literature and wisdom, *Shrimad Bhagavat Gita*. The present stanza re-echoes in the *Gita* : "*Manushyanam Sahastreshu*", etc.*

It is indeed a well-accepted fact in all the Indian schools of philosophy that the higher themes of transcendental contemplation are prescribed only for a select few who have come up to the required evolutionary progress in the inner instruments of thought and feeling. This does not mean to claim that *Brahma Vidya* is a secret knowledge to be preserved in air-tight tombs

* Refer Swamiji's Commentary on "*Gita*" (Ch. 7, Sl. 3).

in a dark corner of some dilapidated temple, and that the Brahmin priests should sit guarding over it like wandering ghots that guard their treasures secreted away under some jungle tree. Nor does it mean that like a dog guarding with a vengeance a hay-stack the priests should bark at innocent and starving cows that come to enjoy the fund of Knowledge piled up in the *Upanishads*. Whatever may be the wise-looking quotations the present-day *Pundits* may bring forth to establish the monopoly of knowledge to a special class or people, it shall all be a blasphemy against the very spirit of the God-men who had given us the *Sastras*.

The Eternal Law provides each one of us with a circumstance in life and an occasion to enjoy or suffer strictly according to and in continuation of our past. Nothing happens in fits and starts. There are no accidents in the Eternal Law. Moment to moment life is progressive, continual and logical. There is a strict mathematics about it all. As such, it is not the lot of every one even to hear of a greater and immanent Truth that pervades and penetrates the fleeting panorama of life's existence-cycle which is apparent, obvious and realistic day by day, about and around us.

That this is a pure statement of fact and not an exaggeration of a missionary, should be by now clear to many of you during these 60 days of the *Gyana Yagna*. Many of you had even come to this very *Sadhu* to report how their relations were daily canvassed by them to come and attend the great *Yagna*. Those who had been persuaded to come up to this very door could stand only on the roadside and had, alas, suddenly remembered of the box that had been left open or of the office-key that had been kept on the table, and so, had to hurry home, before the evening's *satsang* had actually started.

Those of you who are now here regularly attending may rest assured that they are the rarest few who have come to earn this privilege in the lives before. An assembly of devotees, meeting at a place for purposes of discussing and singing the glories of the Lord, needs no *Chowkidar* at the doors. The fit one, who carries the 'ticket' alone, has an admission into it. It is absurd on the part of a mortal, a seeker himself, to pass

judgment upon the fitness or otherwise of another secker, in the absence of the data necessary for arriving at such judgments.

Preach Vedanta if necessary wherever thou wilt, the fittest one alone will hear the Message. Others will be shouldered out by the very authority of the Eternal Law. Translate the *Upanishad* into any language you like, distribute them freely round the globe, and yet, it is only the fittest ones that shall ever come even to peep into it.

The secrecy of this secret document need not be guarded by man-made protections. This is not an Atom-Bomb-secret discovered in a spirit of hatred and preserved as a shameful declaration of man's lust and passion. *Brahma Vidya* is the Science of Truth not born of human mind and intellect and is not maintained for purposes of asserting the lower animal urges in us. As such, the very Science has a secret potency to guard itself against all undeserving intruders.

Even when heard, the theme of *Brahma Vidya* is not easy to be understood. Even to understand the right import of the words heard in all their deepest significances the student needs an inordinate inner purity and the consequent intellectual sharpness. The steadiness of our minds and the acuteness of our intellect are not accidental happenings but are the product of continued and conscious living the Life Divine. It is with this principle in mind that our *Sastras* prescribe for lesser *Adhikari*s (less-fit aspirants) the discipline of *Karma* and *Upasana* (worship and meditation). These form the most important technique by which a "lesser one", one of a "lower standard," is purified, ennobled and cultured to a greater degree of competency.

It is only when the great ideas of Truth and Immortality, heard either directly from a *Guru* or indirectly from a text-book, are well digested in intellectual reflections, can they leave any strong impression upon the listener. Study of the *Upanishad* cannot be pursued in a spirit of drowsy idleness in which one can enjoy a six-penny detective novel.

"*Wonderful is the man who is able to teach*" :—Indeed, if fit students are rare, real Masters, who can deliver the goods, are also rare. A true teacher is one who is not only a God-man in his subjective experience of Truth but he is also one who is a

great master in the text-books of the *Upanishad*. The qualities of a teacher are thus described in our sacred books* as *Srothriyam* and *Brahmanishtam* (well-versed in the *Sastras* and well-established in the God-consciousness). The *Pundits* have the former qualification fully but they lack the supreme experience of a direct perception of Truth. Many are the well-known Saints and Sages who have an intimate personal experience of Truth but have, unfortunately, not the proficiency and mastery over the text-books. Both these classes cannot claim a right to 'Gurudom'. It is with this idea in mind that Lord Death exclaims that a "true teacher is a wonder".

It should not be construed that a true teacher is a wonder because of the length of his 'Jata' or because he sleeps not, eats not or goes about naked. These external symbols have nothing to do in determining whether one is fit to be a *Guru* or not. Beware ! Many aspirants have fallen into this mistake of accepting the outer-show to find in the end the inner hollowness ! !

"Wonderful is he who comprehends" :—What a rare percentage of the whole can in each generation come to live the voiceless joy of life's fulfilment. The chance to hear is rare ; even when heard, people who can digest and understand those subtle ideas are rarer ; a Master, who is efficient enough to initiate a student into the Absolute and satisfying all his doubts, guide him into the Realms Beyond is 'rarer-cr', and, even when an individual is lucky enough to enjoy the blessings of all the above three, Lord Death says, only the luckiest one comes to experience Godhood in this very birth while listening to the teacher discoursing upon the *Sruthi* texts.

Friends, from the above you should not conclude that if it is so rare and difficult, none of us shall ever succeed. Why not ? Are you not the rarest few, who are regularly attending this *Gyana Yagna* ? On this globe of ours, in these days of irresponsible and licentious breeding, seething millions are being roasted in sorrow and salted with tears to the devil's own taste ! Are you not then the very few indeed who are listening to this

* *Mundakopanishad*. Ch. 1—Sec. 2-12.
Vivekachoodamani.

Science of Life :

No true seeker has a right to be pessimistic ; he should be ever consciously optimistic. Remember, behind each one of you there stand a million who can, at their best, grace only the lower rungs of the ladder of evolution. It is for the ' man-animal ' that *Brahma Vidya* is rare and difficult. To those who are in the ' Man-Man ' state of evolution the achievement of the goal of life is but a mere question of choice and a walk into the Temple of Perfection ! Be optimistic ; and if you cannot, each of you may take it from Chinmaya :

"Thou art a fit *Adhikarin*, and with a little self-effort thou shalt reach, in this very birth, the Supreme Success and the Godly achievement. Never hesitate—Never doubt, but sincerely strive and achieve."

न नरेणावरेण प्रोक्त एष सुविज्ञेयो बहुधा चिन्त्यमानः ।

अनन्यप्रोक्ते गतिरत्र नास्ति अर्णयान्हातव्यमणुप्रमाणात् ॥ ८ ॥

*Na narena avareṇa prokta eṣa
suvi jñeyo bahudha cintyamanah ;
Ananya-prokte gatiṛ atra naṣṭi,
aṇiyam hy atarleyam anupramanaṭ.*

(8) "That Self, when taught by a man of inferior intellect, is not easy to be known, as it is to be thought of in various ways. But when it is taught by a preceptor who is one with *Brahman* (who beholds no difference), there is no doubt concerning it, the Self being subtler than the subtle and is not to be obtained by arguing."

Much of the explanations already given under the last stanza must throw enough light upon this *Mantra*. For purposes of emphasis Lord Death is here voicing forth the very ideas suggested in the earlier stanza. We have already found that neither a mere book knowledge nor a mere Experience can be a complete qualification for a perfect *Guru* to serve the world at large. And when a man of knowledge and experience explains the *Śruti Mantra*, the disciple, if he is perfectly conditioned, gains the complete knowledge instantaneously.

In this *Mantra* the words *Ananya Proktha* and *Gathi* have

been explained by Sankara to hint at four different meanings. (i) If the *Atman* is taught by preceptor, who is free from the notion of duality and has thus become one with the Absolute, the student shall have no doubts in the explanations. (ii) When the *Atman*, which is none other than the disciple's own Self, is taught, there can be no more doubt. (iii) The word *Gathi* may mean 'passage' (when the meaning would be that, when the *Atman*, not distinct from the Self, has been taught, there shall be no more travelling in *Samsar*). (iv) The word '*Gathi*' can also mean '*Chingha*' (doubt) and, in this case, the interpretation is that, when *Brahma Vidya* is given by one who is himself well established in truth consciousness there will be no lingering doubts in the bosom of the student.

There are critics who try to prove that Sankara is here facing his own interpretations upon the text. According to them *Ananya-Prokto-Gathir-Athra-Nasthi* must mean a simple and direct translation : "Not taught by another, there is no way thither." It is true that this rendering is simple but it is naked and horrid. Shakuntala's virgin perfections and the vivacity of her ethereal spirit are not in her skeleton lying crumbled and burnt on her funeral pyre ! They can no more smile and send thrills of love through any one ! Such a direct translation ruins the glorious beauty of the text.

The above different interpretations are in such detail taken here only with a view to introducing you all into the laborious but ultra-intelligent ways in which Sankara and other commentators have approached this Sacred Bible of our Religion before they have concluded and established the Truth of these *Mantras*. The potency of intelligence, the quietude of the mind, the serenity of tempo, sincerity, faith and devotion which these master-minds could bring to play upon their work, while they were at their desk, bear something of a model of extra genius that we, individually or in teams, can never hope to gather and apply in our meditations upon these *Mantras*. In short, it would be a compliment to our own intelligence if we were to accept Sri Sankara's conclusions *in toto*. It is with this idea in mind that we have today gone into such lengthy discussions upon the four interpretations given by Sankara to two insignificant phrases.

नैषा तर्केण मतिरापनेया प्रोक्तान्येनैव सुज्ञानाय प्रेष्ठ ।
 यां त्वमापः सत्यधृतिर्व्रतासि त्वादृङ्गनो भूयान्नचिकेतः प्रेष्ठा ॥ ९ ॥

*Na esa tarkena matir apaneya,
 prokta'nyena eva sujñanaya prestha ;
 Yam tvam apah satya-dhrtir vrata asi,
 tvadrūk no bhuyat Nachiketah prastha.*

(9) This knowledge is not to be obtained by argument, but it is easy to understand it, O dearest, when taught by a teacher who beholds no difference ; thou hast obtained it now ; thou art fixed in Truth. May we have, Oh Nachiketas, an enquirer like thee :

This is probably the first time when Lord Death, who has all along been choked with appreciation for his great disciple, has come to compliment the boy quite directly. As a corollary to the previous two stanzas Lord Death states that truth is not a theme that can be reached or understood by a play of the intellect. Mere reasoning can cover only the frontiers of the world of objects. The Land of Truth lies extended beyond the frontiers of the intellect and the mind.

We have already seen during our discussions of the *Mantras* of the *Kathopanishad* that the Reality in us, the Spark of life, is the Controller and the Prompter behind the mere dead-matter-envelopments around, called our mind and intellect.* In fact, they are insentient and inert. The dead-matter that constitutes them gains a verisimilitude of life when they are in contact with the all-dynamic Life-Centre in us called the *Atman*. This Divine Spark vitalises the mind and the intellect, and it is only then that they function through their natural feelings and willings.

Since the *Atman* is thus the director of the intellect and the mind, it is obvious that they, mere instruments, cannot of themselves come to discover the Energy behind them.

However smart we may be in seeing with our eyes, we cannot see with our eyes our own eyes ; however tired you may be, you cannot ride even for a yard upon yourself. Similarly, the mind and the intellect cannot make Truth an object for

* Refer Swamiji's *Discourses on Kenopanishad*.

their observations and analysis. The moment the Truth is detached from the observing mind and the analysing intellect, the poor mind and the intellect become inert and dead. A driver cannot be run over by the very car he is driving ; the moment the driver is out of his driving seat, and runs towards the front of the car, the wheels stop. Similarly, the *Atman*, the Vitaliser and Director of the intellect, when removed from its place and brought before the intellect as an object for its analysis the intellect becomes dead. Hence, Lord Death says, " This knowledge is not to be obtained by argument."

If the ordinary instruments of knowledge, such as the mind and the intellect, cannot discover the Truth we are not to conclude that the entire Vedic literature is discussing a covetable but unrealisable goal. An unending line of Masters of God-realisation, expressing their own intimate subjective experience of the Divinity that is All-pervading, are the various *Upanishads* which form the third book of each Veda. Even in our own times, and in recent history, we have brilliant examples of God-men who lived with us, mortals in form but immortal Gods in Spirit.

This self-realisation is not an impossibility. Rather, to realise the Godhood that now lies dormant in each one of us is the heritage of man. This embodied existence as man is fulfilled only with this superb achievement. From the egg-shells of our limitations, we can, through a scientific process of self-purification and growth, grow out into the stature and dimension, might and power, wisdom and perfection, of God. Reaching this State of Perfection is the accomplishment of the goal, the evolution ; and man is great, in the sense that he alone has the instruments necessary and the powers of application required for hastening nature's own slow process of evolution.

If this perfection is achievable, what is the import of Lord Death's words that Truth cannot be known by the intelligence ? This inability of our intelligence is explained in the second half of the first line that " It is to be thought of in various ways". If we bring into the realm of philosophy only our gross intellect to conceive and to visualise there can be as many different conclusions as there are heads that come to play upon this question.

Nachiketas has stood all the trials and he has been found to

be the fittest candidate for instructions in Vedanta and, as such, Lord Death says, "You have already reached the goal of *Brahma Vidya*," although, even the first lecture on the topic has not yet been given out. The actual delay in self-realisation is only in gaining by ourselves for ourselves the required inner purification. If once this is gained and the seeker is thus completely conditioned, the actual flight into the Realms of Experience in Godhood is but an efficient gliding through a thrilled silence of self-discovery.

The stanza concludes with a prayer rising from the very bottom of the kind heart of Sri Dharma Raja, and he says, "May we have many enquirers like thee." This is the ardent cry of all true Teachers who are blessed with innate and irresistible missionary zeal. With this ideal in mind, when we look round, if we can rarely see a true teacher among our days schoolmasters, it is a sad commentary on the disgusting fall of not only the teacher-class but also of the very spirit of the community of the taught. These are days when the very schoolmasters strike work, demanding more pay. Naturally, the world of students also must come to look down upon the teachers as their paid servants who shall serve their paymasters, the taught, as it pleases them ¹

जानाम्यहं शेषधिरित्यनित्यं न ह्यध्रुवंः प्राप्यते हि ध्रुवं तत् ।
ततो मया नचिकेतश्चितोऽग्निरनित्यैर्द्रव्यैः प्राप्तवानस्मि नित्यम् ॥ १० ॥

*Janamyaham sevadhir iti-anityam,
na hy adhruvaih prapyate hi dhruvam tat ;
Tato maya Nachiketas-ito'gnir,
anityair-dravyaih praptavan asmi nityam.*

(10) Know that the "treasure" is transient, for, that which is Eternal is not obtained by things which are not-eternal. Therefore, (yet) the Nachiketas-Fire has been propitiated by me with the perishable things and I have obtained the Eternal.

In paying tributes to his great disciple, Lord Death is here comparing his own past foolishness which, of course, he, in his new-found wisdom, has got over, though he has to suffer, yet for long, for his wrong actions committed in the past. He

admits that he knows the perishable nature of the *Sevadhi* "treasure" meaning "the fruits-of-actions". *Karma* is done with the help of things which are in themselves perishable. Anything that is made or resulted out of things perishable, can produce but a fruit or a result which is equally perishable. Out of a mass of mud it would be futile for us to hope to make even a tiny ornament of gold ! Man, wishing for an unending and limitless joy, pursues the Path of Good and performs sacrifices advised and sanctioned by the *Sastras*. Here Lord Death is hinting at the ephemeral nature of even the ethereal joy when it is compared with the truly Eternal and the Infinite.

The offices of Indra, Sun, Moon, Varuna, Agni, Vayu, etc., who were the only Gods of form known to the devotees of the Vedic Period, are all appointments given to such Egocentric *Jivas* who, during their existence as mortals, have pursued such life and performed such actions with a desire to gain these appointments (*Padavies*) and so, in order to enjoy the fruits thereof, they have come to identify themselves to be these office-bearers. This is the general philosophic belief of all schools of philosophy, especially, of *Vaiseshikas*. Lord Death is here providing the source of authority for this belief of our philosophers when he says that he has in his mortal days performed the Nachiketas Sacrifice and has therefore come to adorn the chair of Lord Death.

"I have obtained the Eternal". It is only a relative-eternity that is meant here. Compared with the hourly death in the mortal plane the office of Lord Death, which is generally continuous and unbroken till the deluge (*Pralaya*), is Eternal indeed.

In short, Lord Death, comparing Himself and His own ideas at a time when He was Himself a seeker like Nachiketas, expressed His deepest appreciation for the extraordinary and blessed *Viveka* (discrimination) and *Vyragya* (detachment) in his disciple.

Some commentators, like Max Muller and Hume, put this stanza into the mouth of Nachiketas. It cannot be in any sense acceptable, since we know that the boy was initiated into this Fire-Sacrifice only just then.

कामस्याप्तिं जगतः प्रतिष्ठां क्रतोरनन्त्यमभयस्य पारम् ।
स्तोममहदुरुगायं प्रतिष्ठां दृष्ट्वा धृत्या धीरो नचिकेतोऽत्यलाक्षीः

॥ ११ ॥

*Kamasyaptim jagatah pratishtham,
krator anantyam abhayasya param ;
Stoma mahad urugayam pratishtham drstva,
dhritya dhiro Nachiketo'tyaskakshih.*

(11) The end of all desires, the foundation of the world : the endless rewards of sacrifice, the other shore where there is no fear, the praiseworthy, the great and the wide-extended sphere and the abode of the soul—all these though are seen, and being wise, O Nachiketas, thou hast with firm resolve rejected them all.

It seems that the qualities in this ideal disciple which deserve a full-throated compliment are un-ending and inexhaustible. When the enthusiasm of the teacher gains more and more fire, the more he does *kirtan* upon the qualities of the ideal Vedanta student.

The *Hiranyagarbha* State, otherwise called *Brahmaloka*, has been the one goal of all mortals. No worshipper can courageously stand away from the charms of the unending joys in this captivating realm of perfections as constituted in the Total Mind or Intellect. Every performer of sacrifices (*Karma*), if analysed, shall show himself to be psychologically craving to make a *Brahmaloka* to enjoy there for a time at least, and thereafter to gain *Kaivalya* at the time of dissolution through the processes of (*Krama-mukhti*) gradual liberation.

Lord Death is surprised here on seeing that his disciple is not tempted even by the subtlest of joys, which a mortal can hope to enjoy through sense-organs, available in the *Brahmaloka*.

The various adjectival phrases used in the stanza all go to qualify the state *Hiranyagarbha*.

“*The Stay of all the universe.*” The *Hiranyagarbha* State is the first emergence of the manifested world from its unmanifest conditions. To compare this with a parallel would be to say that the ‘Total-Mind-State’ is the sprout that peeps out at first to begin its career as a tree from its earlier unmanifest conditions in the seed. In this case just as we can see that a sprout is the Support of the tree, similarly, the grosser manifestations, consti-

tuting the universe, are said to be supported by the State of *Hiranyagarbha*. The entire worlds of *Adyathma* (bodies), *Athibootha* (element), and *Adhidaiva* (God) are supported by the *Hiranyagarbha*.

The wide-extended (*Uru-gayam*) : "wide-going"—used in *Rig Veda* as an epithet for *Soma* ; for *Vishnu* ; "far-striding" and the wide-opening glory of the early dawn.

According to Sankara that which is sacrificed and rejected by Nachiketas is the *Hiranyagarbha*—the Total-mind-identification. Though this *Hiranyagarbha* idea is first mentioned in the famous Creation Hymn of *Rig Veda*, as the first born in the Creation process, this idea never developed as we have it in later Vedanta—*Swethaswathara Upanishad*—during the early *Upanishads*. And therefore, Sankara's reading can be considered as an anachronism if we view *Kathopanishad* as separate from the later *Upanishads*.

"Being Intelligent has thou rejected them all" : Here is a clear compliment paid to the sense of discrimination and the quality of detachment which Lord Death has noticed in his disciple. The true seeker in Nachiketas is impatient at any compromise with his highest demand to attain and achieve the supreme-most state of Perfection. He rejects all heavenly joys.

7-11. The Supreme Reality is amazing and difficult to understand through personal study of books. The importance of a real Guru is explained. Yama accepts Nachiketas as a disciple : compliments him, for the student has in one respect (*Vyagya*) excelled the master.

तं दुर्दृशं गूढमनुप्रविष्टं गुहाहितं गह्वरेष्ठं पुराणम् ।

अध्यात्मयोगाधिगमेन देवं मत्वा धीरो हर्षशोकौ जहाति ॥ १२ ॥

*Tam dur darsam gudham anupravistam,
guha hitam gahvarestham puranam ;
Adhyatma-yoga adhigamena devam,
matva dhiro harsa sokau jahati.*

(12) "The wise sage, who by means of meditation on his Self, recognises the Ancient, Who is difficult to be seen, Who is hidden in the cave of the heart, Who dwells in the abyss, Who is lodged in the intelligence and seated amidst, miserable surroundings indeed, he renounces joy and sorrow."

Having rejected the State of *Hiranyagarbha* what is it upon should a true seeker's heart be fixed ? Is there anything subtler to be realised whereby a greater perfection can be achieved ? These questions naturally rise up in the mind of any student who is pursuing a study of *Kathopanishad*. And the Teacher's answer to these questions, the real *Upanishad* part, starts from this stanza on. With this stanza starts the entire discussion of the theory and the technique of Self-perfection.

Lord Death in this statement clearly indicates that there is an Eternal Truth far subtler than the State of the 'Total Mind' and that a seeker can discover It and realise It as "This I am"—*Ayam Aham Asmi*—in an intimate personal experience. The various descriptive phrases used in this stanza indicate this Truth-factor which is the Real essence and the Real Entity behind the I-Sense of *Ahamkar* (ego) in each embodied soul.

"*Puranam*" (ancient) : The Truth Principle that controls and directs the matter envelopments constituted by the body, mind and intellect, etc., is indeed ancient, because, It, in Its essence, has never been born. Just as the space in a pot and the all-pervading space are one and the same, irrespective of the Pot's existence or destruction, so too the Pure Consciousness or the Light of Wisdom as such has neither been ever born nor will it ever know any decay or death. Thus the unborn, undecaying, deathless *Atman* can only be indicated by the word, 'ancient'.

"Hard to see" (*Durdarsam*) : Truth being thus the presiding intelligence that lends life to the dead and inert coatings of matter which seemingly envelops It, it is difficult for the eye to see It. The eye, being an instrument, can only see objects other than itself ; it can never hope to see itself.* A telescope cannot be used for viewing the very eye of the observer himself. In this sense the Controller and Director of the eye, the *Atman*, cannot be seen by the eye. It is to be noted here carefully that in negating for our eyes the capacity to see Truth, the intention of the *Snithi* is to negate for all other sense-organs, the mind and the intellect, any capacity to visualise, feel or know the subtle Truth as an object.

* See *Discourses on Kenopanishad* by Swamiji.

In short, Truth-realisation or *Eswara Darsan* is not earned through the same processes as those by which we see an object, feel an emotion or know an idea. Truth can only be subjectively experienced as the experiencer's own Self.

"*Lodged in the inmost recess*" : Certainly, to limit the all-pervading *Atman* as lodged in the innermost recess is to deny it ! But Lord Death is no blasphemer and the *Sruthi* is not the work of Ingersoll ! By using this epithet the *Upanishad* is not denying Truth any existence outside, but she means to indicate that it is the subtlest Principle in us.

The grossest matter envelopment, the flesh-fleshy body, is the outermost covering. Still within, as it were, is the *Prana* (the Vital air), and certainly, we know that the *Prana* is subtler than matter with form : subtlety being measured always with a reference to its greater pervasiveness (*Vyapakathvam*).

Subtler than the *Prana* is the mind, since, if the disturbances created by our *Prana* can influence a larger area about us than the space occupied by our body, the thought-disturbances which our minds can create are certainly much more ! Thus the mind is conceived of as residing in a deeper point within us than the area covered by the *Prana*.

Compared with the Mind, *Prana* and Body, we have the still subtler, hence a deeper, point governed by the intelligence ; still deeper is the Bliss Sheath.

The *Atman* or the Truth, the Source of all life in us, the Spark of the Divine Touch that vitalises, controls and directs all the above mentioned five sheaths, constituted merely of the inert matter, must necessarily be the subtlest-of-the-subtle, hence occupying the holly of the holies in us. It is in this sense that the *Sruthi* says here that the Truth or *Atman* resides in the innermost recess. This is equivalent to saying that water resides in ice and steam lies in the core of the water.

Hidden in the cave of the hearts : It is an ancient Aryan concept, sanctioned by the Vedas and acceptable even today, that in the cave of the heart is the seat of True Intelligence. To a modern microscope-gazer, whose philosophy rises no higher than the principle of "see to believe", this statement may read absurd, for, to him intelligence is lodged in the brain. But if we walk

from the laboratory to the library and listen to the opinion of great authors of what true intelligence is we shall even today hear quite a different story. The immortal Shakespeare himself has caricatured more than one of his unforgettable characters to show that sheer intelligence divorced from the softness of emotions amounts to brutality and villainy.

All poets and men of letters, philosophers and thinkers, in short, all but the matter-of-fact scientists, roar in unison, that enduring thoughts can bubble up only when an intellect is sweetened by the syrup of the heart.

In spiritual Self-discovery also, an intellect tempered by the qualities of the heart alone can be of service. And this truth is pointed out by the general acceptance in the Vedas that intelligence resides in the cave of the heart and Self-realisation is gained through a controlled application of a happy synthesis of both the head and the heart.

"Seated amidst miserable surroundings" (*Gahwareshtam*).—To an ordinary man steeped in his own delusions and living the life of slavery to his own desires, passions and loves, ideas, hopes and ambitions, low negativities as jealousies and hatreds, indeed, the cave-of-the heart is ever in a medley of maddening thoughts. In the midst of these, the *Samsarin's* intellect, overworked and exhausted, weary and forlorn, is not at all efficient to ponder over the Transcendental Truth and the nature of the Self. Hence, the aptness of this expression.

If the Self is thus incomprehensible, and unknowable, does it not amount to declaring that it is impossible to know or to reach this Perfection-State? And the Indian philosopher is not satisfied by a mere "view of life" which cannot be realised as a practical subjective experience. In this very stanza, true to the spirit of the Indian thought and practical ambition of the Aryan seekers, therefore, there is a pointed declaration of a "way-of-life" (or a technique) by which the seekers can come to experience this State of All-perfection, the Selfhood or the Godhood.

Adhyathma Yoga (the technique of meditation).—This is the only place where this word appears in this *Upanishad* and so it is very difficult to ascertain what *Yama* meant by it. As a matter of fact, this is the first occasion in the entire *Upanishadic*

literature we have the mention of "Yoga" as a term. "Yoga" the word comes from the root 'Yuj' to join or unite. Earliest usage of this root was in the sense to yoke horses, bulls, etc. It is later on that the word developed into complete *Sastra* and today it has a meaning of exertion or disciplined activity of the body; and, with reference to the mind, it means concentration or control through meditation. Sankara therefore combines both these meanings and says "Yoga" is deep meditation (*Samadhan*) with thoughts withdrawn from external objects.

In this initial stage of its career Yoga as used in *Kathopanishad* indicates a positive meaning of meditation, while in its later history, as in *Pathanjali Yoga Sutras*, it has gained almost a negative aspect—viz., sense-suppression and a morbid retirement from bodily activities.

The impossible is achieved through the process of self-perfection called meditation. Meditation is the process by which a purified mind, and therefore, a highly concentrated mind, is brought to contemplate exclusively upon the nature of the Atman through a total avoidance of the mind wandering into any other object of contemplation. This process of making the mind think solely through an appointed channel of thinking to the total effective exclusion of all dissimilar thought currents eroding in to disturb and muddy the planned channel of thought, can be successful only when the mind of the meditator is weaned from all its negativities.

Such a successful meditator, meditating long upon the Nature of Truth as is evident within himself, in the sacred spirit of his practices, comes to gain an intimate subjective experience of Godhood. Though the ordinary means and methods of getting our day-to-day objective knowledge are not available in seeking or knowing or realising Truth, there is a special method by which we can develop our powers of intuition, which are now lying dormant in us beneath the thick layers of our own fattened discussions, and by which we can experience the *Atman*. This technique of communion with the Self is the exact significance of the word *Adhyathma Yoga* here.

If Truth is so subtle, the process so very complicated, the chances so rare, the percentage of success so meagre, is it not a

sheer madness to renounce and to go into a quiet cave in some Himalayan jungle, there to suffer privations, to starve out the body and to keep vigil over mere fantastic ideas, unrealisable and imperceptible : Is it not far better to live here sweating and toiling, weeping and sobbing, sighing and laughing, dancing and revelling ? To one who asks this question there is no real answer if he is so low as to be nothing more than a two-legged animal. Not even the crudest of religions dares to serve such a low worm-man. How then can *Brahma Vidya*, which is the last text-book in religion, meant to guide a "full-man" to the very State of Godhood, cater to the worm-man. But if the questioner is one who has lived life intelligently and has come to the sane conclusion that even the best that it can give is but a hornet's nest of imperfections, sure to provide endless sorrows and pains, to him is the *Upanishad* addressed. And it is to such *Sadhakas* or aspirants that we have here in this stanza a declaration of the result gained when the *Adhyathma Yoga* is pursued, and the realisation of the Self is attained. The text says that such a one "renounces both joy and grief".

The ammunition hall of *Samsar* is stacked with the pairs-of-opposites (*Dwandvas*) such as heat and cold, joy and sorrow, success and failure, praise and insult, and so on. The self-perfected Saint or Sage, in his experienced Godliness and knowledge, becomes the very Illumination or the Knower of these opposite states of the mind, and thus becomes a mere onlooker or witness of the varied experiences of life. He thus rises, as it were, above the tyranny and persecution of the moment to moment experiences in life. And this is the glory of a God-man who comes to live and bless the world by his mere presence.

एतच्छ्रुत्वा संपरिगृह्य मर्त्यः प्रवृह्य धर्म्यमणुमेतमाप्य ।

स मोदते मोदनीयं हि लब्ध्वा विवृतं सद्य नचिकेतसं मन्ये ॥ १३ ॥

*Etat srutva samparigrihya martyah,
pravrhya dharmyam-anum-etam apya ;
Sa modate, modaniyam hi labdhva,
vivritam sadma Nachiketasam manye.*

(13) Having heard and well grasped this (the Self), the mortal abstracting the virtuous *Atman* and attaining this subtle Self, (this intangible spirit), rejoices, because he has obtained that which is the cause for all rejoicing. I think that the abode of Brahman is wide open for Nachiketas.

The Absolute cannot be defined. "If God is defined God is defiled." God being Infinite, the finite words of no language can express Him. And yet, the theme of the *Upanishads* is the Absolute Truth. This is no contradiction. The *Upanishad* does not claim to define or explain Truth. It only, at its best, indicates the line of thinking, which the seeker should pursue independently with a mind and intellect prepared earlier for the purpose, in order to experience the Absolute Truth. Language in fact, is hollow when it comes to express actual experiences. If I go to America and there to my friend in New York I want to explain the *Laddu* I shall at best give him only an objective description of the shape and other qualities of it but shall surely fail in expressing to him the actual taste experienced when an Indian *Laddu* is in the mouth.

In this stanza Lord Death therefore, says that a seeker who has attentively heard and understood intellectually the indications given in the last stanza can come to an intimate experience of this Life-Centre within him, if he properly meditates upon the pregnant significances of the last stanza. Having known the Real Essence in us to be the Immortal and All-pervading Pure intelligence, we shall have all our false and delusory identifications with our body-mind-intellect equipment rolled off in our true attachment with the Truth Principle in us.

Having thus regained our real vanity that we are not the mortal—which we have been so long dreaming ourselves to be, although we are in fact nothing but the Absolute—we shall "rejoice", meaning, we shall go beyond the shores of all limitations, tears, sighs and despairs.

"*Having obtained what causes joy*".—A little correct thinking shall lead us to the understanding that what causes the greatest joy to us is the knowledge of our own Real nature ; hence, our inordinate love for ourselves. An officer once at his office received a 'phone message that his house was on fire and the fire brigade was heroically fighting it down in vain. In three jumps

he cleared the staircase and grabbing his hat he rushed out waving for a passing taxi. In he jumped and flew to the street, where amidst a crowd of observers, his wife and mother were weeping miserably. He approached them and missing his only child made enquiries. He came to know the despairing fact that the child was still upstairs getting slowly baked in its own cradle.

The officer standing there on the street cried out his despairing heart, "Is there not a single obliging soul in this crowd who will go into the house and bring out the child? Save my child; I shall give you a big present, nay, I shall give you all that I am today worth in this world—I want no money; I want only my child. My child, save my child," the officer moaned. "Is there none? Won't anyone of you oblige this poor father. Save my child."

None came forward. And the officer got his child burnt.

Though the father sincerely loved the child, probably more than what the ordinary fathers would love, yet, he himself never for a moment thought of walking into that burning house, rushing through the flaming rooms and snatching his dear son away from the cradle. The father loved his own person more than his only son for the sake of whom he was certainly ready to sacrifice his all except himself. The father instinctively felt that the son was but a poor hostage for his own life.

Based on this truth that we love ourselves the most, we have the famous declaration in the *Brihadaranyakopanishad*, that the mother loves the child not for the sake of the child but for the sake of the joy that the child can give to her; the husband loves the wife not because she is the wife but because of the joy she can give to himself—and so on.

If, thus, we really love ourselves the most we may as well enquire what is that in us which we love the most. Let us enquire. In this body equipment if a choice is given to us to amputate a leg or prick both the eyes, our choice shall be certainly to sacrifice the leg. That is, if the choice is between an organ-of-action and an organ-of-knowledge our preference will always be to maintain the organ-of-knowledge at the sacrifice of that of action.

Again, supposing an organ-of-knowledge, say ear, is

severely paining due to an ulcer in it and if the doctor says that by an operation the pain disturbance in our mind can be ended at the cost of the ear, the patient's choice would be to sacrifice the organ-of-knowledge for the sake of the much more intimate and beloved entity in us, the mind. Certainly, it is now clear, the mind is more beloved to us than the sense-organs.

Friends, have you not known the stories of martyrs who have suffered privations and lived through the agonising whip of the tyrants only to maintain and to keep up their ideals and ideas ? Is it not the story of our own recent history that men, born with golden spoons in their mouth, threw away in sacrifice all their belongings, renounced their successes in their professions, lived through hell and fire and *lathies*, only to maintain their ideas of freedom and liberty ? From the above it is clear that between the intellectual ideologies and the mental sufferings a cultured man will always choose the satisfaction of the intellect, showing thereby what we love and adore our intellect more than our mind.

Thus analysed we shall conclude, deep within ourselves, that the very Source of Life, because of which the intellect, the mind and the body seem to be potent and active, is the Factor, most loved by us, because, it is the source of our maximum joy. Thus, the Divine Spark that lies hidden in us, for the sake of which we are ready to sacrifice in fact, all the grosser envelopments about It, is indeed, as the *Upanishad* says, 'the cause for all rejoicing'. And when an aspirant comes to identify himself with That, who can measure the joy that is his ?

We thus realise the Self in us, which is nothing other than the All-pervading, All-perfect, Eternal Reality, and yet we see many recent enthusiasts who have, in their interpretations of the sacred *Upanishads* and in their discourses upon Vedanta, defined this Supreme state as a passive dynamism, and a characterless and colourless merger with the Supreme. The Supreme state of perfection is not "a night in which all cows are black"—but the stanza insists that it is a positive Life of inspired Joy—"He rejoices". *Sa Modate*.

The sum total of all the compliments so far paid by Lord Death to his disciple has come to this culminating statement

that the gateway to the temple of Truth is wide open for Nachiketas. It means that Nachiketas is a fit aspirant who even while listening to a discourse upon the *Sruthi Mantras*, can realise, in an intimate subjective experience, what Pure Consciousness the Self is.

12-13. *Beginning of spiritual instructions. Reality so deeply hidden can be experienced through Adyathma Yoga—meditation on the Inner Self.*

अन्यत्र धर्मादन्यत्राधर्मादन्यत्रास्मात् कृताकृतात् ।

अन्यत्र भूताच्च भव्याच्च यत्तत् पश्यसि तद् वद ॥ १४ ॥

*Anyatra dharmad anyatra adharmad,
anyatra asmat kṛta-akṛtai ;
Anyatra bhūtai (ca) bhavyat ca,
yat tat paśyasi tad vada.*

(14) Nachiketas said : " That which thou seest as other than virtue and vice—as right and 'unright' as other than cause and effect, as other than the past and future, tell me that."

To all the compliments paid by the *Guru*, the only answer that the disciple knows to give seems to be to repeat his own question upon his burning doubt once again in different words. To one who is a true seeker there are no eyes and ears for applauses or insults. Single-pointed, the seeker knows only to pursue the one idea, the problem of his enquiry. Almost unconscious of the surroundings, or of the blessings that are showered on him, Nachiketas has ears only for the wisdom reply that will come out of the Great *Guru*. All other talk is to him either meaningless prattle or a dull silence.

Nachiketas, the seeker, is here enquiring of his teacher the Nature of Reality. Instead of starting it directly he is here putting the question as though it were a confusing conundrum. This is not to confuse the issue, nor is it a futile attempt to show himself to be very "wise". On a closer enquiry it becomes obvious that the three parts of the question, separately and together, point out the vast area that he has covered himself, independently, during his endless meditations upon the life's

happenings which so far had visited him.

His enquiry points out to a Truth that lies beyond virtue and vice, which is neither the cause nor the effect, and which does not belong either to the past or to the future.

By the term virtue and vice it would be wise of us to understand that these represent the entire list of pairs-of-opposites as joy and sorrow, success and failure, hope and despair, health and disease, etc. Truth or the Ultimate Reality being "ONE-without-a-second" (*Advaita*) cannot of its very nature have anything to do with one or the other of any conceivable pair of opposites. Vice has got an existence only with reference to virtue ; light can be recognised only with reference to darkness ; life would be meaningless without death.

Thus, if we were to accept that Truth is virtue, then that Truth cannot be Absolute, for, it will be limited by the existence of vice also. When there are two things, different in their nature, one must necessarily limit the other. For example, a half tumbler of milk when watered sufficiently to fill the glass we cannot *in truth* say that the glass is full of milk ; the water limits the milk.

Again, if the Absolute Truth in its Pure External Nature were to have the quality of being virtuous, then Truth becomes a substance, and so, finite and perishable. It is evident, therefore, that behind the words of this question is a volume of thought pursued by a highly cultured intellect sedulously trained in the wisdom of the *Sastras*.

Thus, the question of the Brahmin boy to Lord Death was a demand for an explanation of that unknown Factor which is Eternal and Immortal, which in itself is neither virtuous nor vicious and without which neither virtue nor vice can have any existence, at all ! The question clearly demands a discussion of the Atman, which is pure Consciousness or the Awareness in us and which is the Eternal Witness beaming to illuminate equally both virtue and vice.

The street lamp of its very nature throws a pool of light on the road. Whatever portion of the passing parade comes into that light, gets illuminated so long as it remains within the area lit up. The lamp is a mere witness ; the light neither

dances in joy when a honey-moon couple passes that way, nor does the light reel in drunkenness when a reveller passes by, nor does it weep when it comes to illumine a tearful funeral procession. Irrespective of the merits or demerits of the scene, the light, in its own nature, brightens up that which comes within its illumined arena.

.. Similarly, there is an All-witnessing Eternal Light-of-Wisdom, the Divine Spark within us which is the source of All Life and Light and by which we become aware of the vice and virtue idea in our mind and intellect. Certainly this great witness, the *Atman*, is that which is other than virtue and vice, being Itself only a Witness.

Taking now the second part of the question let us enquire what is that which is neither the cause nor the effect. Every effect is the fulfilment of a cause and as such it is nothing other than the cause itself with reference to another period of time and changed conditions. A seed sown, the cause, in time and under certain favourable conditions, becomes the effect, the seedling or the plant. All effects can be reduced similarly to their causes, and yet, each time, the question would arise, "what has caused this cause?" Thus, we would arrive at an unending chain and this difficulty is termed in Sanskrit system of logic as *Anavastha Dosham* (*Regressus ad Infinitum*). In order to circumvent this absurdity, the God-principle, the accepted First Cause for the manifested *Jagat*, is considered by all schools of philosophy as "*Swayambhu*" the Uncaused Cause, the Self-caused-Cause or the Self-born.

But the question of Nachiketas goes even beyond the God-Principle or the Uncaused. It is accepted as a cause and a cause has a justification and an existence only with reference to its effects. But the theme of enquiry here, it is to be clearly understood, is of that Principle which is neither a cause nor an effect.

Thus, by this term also the Brahmin boy is enquiring of Lord Death for the Nature of the Witnessing Light of Intelligence which is the Knower of all the causes and effects, Himself being neither the cause nor the effect. That is to say, the seeker is questioning that Supreme who is independent of both becoming

and time. This is clear from the next phrase used.

Lastly, by asking his teacher to explain that which is neither the past nor the future, the Brahmin seeker is hungrily asking for instructions upon the Nature of the Ultimate Reality in us, the Self or the *Atman* which is realisable as Pure Awareness when we are neither rambling with our hopes and ambitions in the uncertain lands of the unborn time (the future) nor identifying ourselves with a team of ghost-like memories, recruited from the cremation-ground of dead moments, months and years which constitute our past.

We become aware of the Eternal Awareness in us to be ourselves only when we cut away our meaningless chains with the past and stop our dangerous flirtations with the unborn future, through the cobwebs of silky hopes, ambitions and desires. In short, the contents of an immediate moment is Eternity or Immortality. To capture a moment without the shackles borrowed from the past or the future, and thus to become fully aware of the moment in itself and, as such, is the culmination of the pilgrimage of a *Sadhaka*. This is called *Samadhi* and the experience gained therein is the Experience of Truth.

Nachiketas, now it is clear, must have spent many days and nights pondering constantly upon the happenings about and around him, as well as those within him. The all-witnessing Presence of Divinity, the Prompter, the Controller and the Regulator of our memories and yearnings, in short, the Recogniser of the future and the past, the *Atman* in us, is the theme indicated by the question.

Supremely self-confident of his own perfect book knowledge (*Sastra Gyan*) Nachiketas is carefully warning Lord Death not to repeat what the *Sastras* have already stated or what he has already heard from his own *Guru*, but to expound upon that which Lord Death is 'seeing' (*Yath Tath Pasyasi*). It means, on the whole, that Lord Death is to discourse upon His own subjective experience of Truth :—

14. *That is right, "I don't want," said Nachiketas, "to know religious duties or merits or their results. Tell me that which is even beyond Time and Causation. Instruct me in the Eternal Reality."*

सर्ववेदा यत् पदमामनन्ति तेषां च सर्वानि च यद् वदन्ति ।
यदिच्छन्ती ब्रह्मचर्यं चरन्ति तत् ते पदं संग्रहेण ब्रवीम्योमित्येतत्

॥ १५ ॥

*Sarve veda yat padam amananti,
tapamsi sarvani-ca yad vadanti ;
Yad icchanto brahmacharyam caranti,
tat te padam sangraheṇa bravimi om iti etat.*

(15) Yama said : "The goal (word) which all the Vedas speak of (praise), which all penances proclaim, and wishing for which they lead the life of *Brahmacharin* that goal (word) I will briefly tell thee. It is Om."

Here the preceptor with this stanza starts his famous discourse which is the very core of this *Upanishad*. To begin with, Lord Death in brief summarises all that he has to say upon that which is beyond *Dharma* and *Adharma*, which is other than the cause and effect, and which is something different from the past and the future. *Upanishad* itself conforms to a style wherein a redundant alphabet is considered to be a colossal sin and, in such a brief literature noted for superhuman brevity, for maintaining which at places even language has been sometimes sacrificed, we are surely heading to some insurmountable difficulty, when Lord Death Himself warns us that He is going to be deliberately "brief".

The word *Padam*, though it looks so small, has an accepted volume of meaning over which even a text-book can be written. There are something like 22 meanings for this two-letter, innocent looking word : such as, way, place, abode, state, foot-step, foot-prints, sign, word, a goal, etc.

"All the Vedas" meaning all the *Upanishads*, though they argue differently, point out to the same Goal of Truth. The 108 *Upanishads* may be considered as so many arrow-marks along the circumference of the same circle . . . all of them pointing out to the same centre. Just as in such a case, geometrically no two arrows on the circumference can be parallel, so too, no two approaches belonging to two different *Upanishads* run parallel : and yet, all of them when produced meet at one and the same point, the Centre, the Truth. Thus, "the Goal that

is pointed out by all the *Upanishads* is," says Lord Death, "the Factor that you are asking me now and that Factor is in brief indicated by the pregnant symbol OM."

All *Thapascharya* (all severe and conscious practices of self-control) are pursued and long years of studies are undertaken by living with a teacher, a life of service, surrender and devotion, by seekers, only to realise this Truth (which you are asking for) which in brief is indicated by the symbol OM. Acts of austerity declare OM, because they have this Supreme Self as their goal—otherwise all Tapas would be meaningless.

A close echo of this immortal stanza is heard in *Shrimad Bhagavat Gita*.^{*} And it is also noteworthy that in the *Gita* we have the second half of this *Mantra* repeated substantially.

The Reality is hinted at by the significance of the symbol OM ; but, thereby we shall not say that OM defines Truth, for to define Truth is to defile it. In the technique of self-perfection, as conceived by the *Rishis* of the *Upanishads*, the symbol OM is at once a formula indicating the Goal and a *Pratheka* (an idol of Brahman) for purposes of worship and *saguna* (with Form) meditation. However, it is also interesting to note that the word OM is not found in the *Rig Veda* or *Atharva Veda*, but occurs in the *Taittiriya Samhita* of the *Yajur Veda*.

एतद्ध्येवाक्षरं ब्रह्म ह्येतदेवाक्षरं परम् ।

एतद्ध्येवाक्षरं ज्ञत्वा यो यदिच्छति तस्य तत् ॥ १६ ॥

Etad hi eva aksaram brahma,

etad hi eva aksaram param ;

Etad hi eva aksaram jnatva,

yo yad icchati tasya tat.

(16) This word is verily Brahman, this word is verily the highest, he who knows this word obtains, verily, whatever he desires.

Just as we found in the previous stanza that the word *padam* has twenty-two meanings here is yet another word *Akshara* which has something like fourteen different meanings. Hence, the very language is called, in its pregnancy of suggestion and

^{*} Refer Swamiji's Commentary on *Gita*, VIII, 9.

free scope of import in each word, as “ the cultured ” the *Samskrita* or the *Samskarita* : This is a language which the Aryans, probably, by generations of effort and experimentation, evolved for the purpose of explaining to us through its mere wealth of suggestions and suggestiveness, the inexplicable Absolute Reality. To serve the purposes of the spirit of the age, everywhere we find new words coined by each generation. Similarly in the era of deep meditation and seeking of the Self, they too had to evolve a new vocabulary and a fit language to serve their purposes. In fact, through no other language can we so effectively convey the Science of the Self and the Nature of the Reality as through Sanskrit.

In this stanza under discussion, Lord Death is explaining the worship of the very symbol OM. We have already stated that OM, besides indicating the Supreme Goal through its significance, also provides the meditator with a symbol or form of the Supreme Reality. “ OM ” is used in the earliest time in Veda as a Psalm “ Yes, so be it ” meaning just as the *Amen* of the Hebrews. Later this *Amen* was converted by St. John as the name of the Lord, “ The Amen, the faithful and true witness.” Similarly, “ did OM slowly grow in its prominence ” —is a European theory not acceptable to those who have tested its vibrational effects and the divine nature. We have also seen earlier, how in the technique of the *Upanishad*, selfless worships and sacrifices in themselves constitute the most effective way of raising the inner purity and consequently the intellectual potency of an aspirant. Here, in this *Mantra* we have an unequivocal declaration that the very formula OM is Reality, just as the very *Siva Linga* is to a devotee the very *Siva Tathwa* or as we have in our world, the very crown, even when it is without the bald head of any king, is a symbol of might and royalty. Those who doubt this fact would do well to experiment upon a piece of the Indian Tri-colour in the streets of any market-place cursing and stamping it under their feet ! If they are not mobbed by a patriotic crowd, it would be because the insulting action was, perhaps, enacted too late in the night !

A Vedantin is not as is generally believed by the uninitiated crowd, a blasphemer of religion or an iconoclast. That he is

not an idol breaker is clear from the very fact that in his very Bible, the *Upanishads*, we are now reading the worship of a symbol advised and advocated by the all-knowing Godly *Rishis* themselves. If at all there is in India any sect that today dances to the mad tunes of some imaginary fanaticism and goes about condemning idol-worship, they are doing a great injustice to themselves and to the very Science of Self-perfection. As individuals the erring ones may be ignored ; in our understanding, they are victims of their own ignorance of our great *Sruthis*. But, as regards the sect, it shall deserve among the intelligent and the educated as much respect as the social criminals deserve. Beware of them ! Shun them ! Avoid them !!

The Om symbol is not only an idol, representing the Absolute Reality but it also represents the *Relative Reality*. The worshipper or the meditator can meditate upon it as the Supreme or as the relative. And through deep and long meditation, when the meditator comes to discover a personal identity with the very thing the symbol stands for, that is, when he realises his identity with the symbol, he gains the Realm of his Identification. If a meditator has become one with the meditated and if, to him, the symbol is a representation of the *Apara Brahman* (*Hiranyagarbha*), or the Total Mind, he gains that state of existence available in *Brahmaloka*. If, on the other hand, the symbol represents, for a successful meditator, the Supreme Reality, he comes to gain, in stages, a greater inner purification, a deeper power of concentration, and through long ponderings upon the Nature of the Self, he gains in the end, an identity that *Ayam Ahamasmi*, meaning, " this I am ".

" *Obtains verily whatever he desires* ".—In this statement Lord Death is indicating a Truth now accepted as a verified fact supported by observed happenings in life in the world of modern psychology. " *As you think so you become* ", when the thinking comes to gain the necessary potency. In fact, we have only to wish or desire, and our desire or wish must come true !

You may wonder whether the Swami has now gone slightly off his head, since, it must be your experience in life that almost none of your desires has ever come true ! Friends, he has not yet gone mad nor is the *Sruthi* " a mere text-book of mad ravings

of a generation of lunatics". Since the *Sruthi* cannot go wrong this *Sadhu* who is only trying to unfold the significances in these *Mantras* cannot also be wrong. Again, just because there is a *Sruthi*-declaration, "fire is cold", we shall not handle fire carelessly or put a few glowing coal pieces tied in a kerchief on our head and eyes on a summer afternoon. If personal experience is seemingly against the *Sruthi* words, certainly the *Sruthi* text must be taken to mean and hint at some significance deeper than the obvious word meaning.

Why is it then that none of our desires comes to be true ? Let us analyse ourselves.

We are under a delusory idea that thought is an idle, impotent happening, merely within ourselves. In this misconception is the very seed of our *Samsaric* limitations and sorrows. Thought has Godly Powers. As each thought sweeps across the mind, its secret potency rises up in front of us as an agent willing and ready to manifest that thought as a reality around us. This is something like the mysterious *Djinny* in "Alladin and the Wonderful Lamp". Alladin had merely to rub the Lamp and out came the *Djinny* who saluted his master, a ready slave to execute any wish the master might express ; and we know that nothing was impossible for the Lamp's *Djinny*. A thousand-fold powerful magnanimous and adorable is the *Djinny* of the Mind that rises in us, a ready and willing slave, to execute our thought commands.

And yet, Friends, you are still asking the same old question with your blinking eyes, "but Swami aren't you mad ? You are talking just the opposite of what we are experiencing, although the *Djinny* idea is, we admit, quite an entertaining idea of hope."

May be, we may yet discover the cause of our failures, if we are actually failing. As we said before, the adorable spirit of thought, the *Djinny* of the Mind, rises up in front of us as it were, with each desire that whistles through our mental plane ! With the ending of the thought the *Djinny* with faithful anxiety and sincerity, turns upon his heels to sail forth to execute the order given by man's conscious mind. But alas ! Ere the Spirit could take the first step to rush out on his errand another thought wave of desire has risen up in the inner world calling

the *Djinny* back to take more orders ; and at the command of the mind it revolves round upon its heels again to face its master.

Sad indeed is the plight of this Godly agent, the presiding deity of the human mind ! This creature of all-might, and all-power is made, under our own confusing commands and contradictory orders, to stand and whirl like a top, each half of the circle representing a definite command given and the other half showing a definite but vain attempt made by the spirit at its execution ! But the desire power does not allow it any chance at all to fulfil itself !

A mind tossed by contending thoughts or a mind plagued by an eruption of pox-like desires is the mind that is weeping over its own impotency ! If a single-pointed mind can wish for anything to the exclusion of any of her contending thoughts or desires, it shall at once be fulfilled.

Yoga viewed in this sense is a technique of controlling, conserving, preserving and directing the mental dynamism through a chosen channel of application. One who is well versed in this technique and has, therefore, a complete control over his mind is a God upon earth whose wishes become, as they cross their mind, accomplished facts. It is because of our own mad thinking that we are exhausting in vain all our Godly potencies within.

If you start from your home to the office and on your way allow yourselves to be a slave to your own indecisions and thus start walking forward (as the thought of duty calls you office-wards) and backward (when the thoughts of the joys of idle sleep pass through your mind) then, even late at night you shall still be walking, having reached neither the office nor the home ! The only way to reach the office is to maintain the desire to reach the office constantly in the mind and physically working up to it, ignoring, and thus controlling, all other dissimilar thought waves.

So too the accomplishments of our desires. And in fact, all of us shall find that to a large extent what we are today is the product of or a fulfilment of our own desires which have gained the required maturity and potency in us.

If you are only a typist you have only desired with sufficient potency to become only a successful typist. If you can desire

yourself to become the President of this country, with the required consistency of purpose and sincerity of devotion, and maintaining this idea can faithfully work up to it without any contradictory desires reaching your mind to dissipate the mental energies, the Mind's *Djinny* shall carry you ultimately in a flying-carpet, and in Delhi, you shall sit in that august chair—and, perhaps regret its pin-pricks !

We have indulged in rather too long a digression ; but if thereby the pessimistic crowd of suicides who form the majority of our sad, desperate, and degraded generation could regain for themselves a little more of self-confidence and the awareness of their own potencies, that now lie uncultivated and unclaimed within, this *Sadhu* feels that he will be justified in this necessary and deliberate digression.

Thus, if a meditator meditates upon OM with a desire to enjoy the subtler joys of *Brahma Loka* he gains that plane of consciousness ; and if the meditator with single-pointed devotion meditates upon OM, in a Nachiketa-like-spirit of seeking the Ultimate and the Immortal, he shall certainly become ' That '.

एददालम्बनं श्रेष्ठमेतदालम्बनं परम् ।

एतदालम्बनं ज्ञत्वा ब्रह्मलोके महीयते ॥ १७ ॥

Etad alambanam sreshthanu,
etad alambanam param ;
Etad alambanam jnatva,
Brahma loka mahiyate.

(17) Most glorious is this support. This the supreme-most support. He who has realised (known) this support comes to revel in the Brahma-world.

“ *Gyanenaivathu Kaivalyam* ” (by Knowledge alone is liberation), is the fundamental *siddhantha* of all Vedanthins. However severely we may beat the serpent-in-the-rope all through the night, we can never kill it ! But when a beam of light is thrown on the rope and thereby we gain the knowledge of the rope, the serpent shall end instantaneously. Similarly, by the subjective experience of the knowledge absolute alone can we become the Eternal and thus reach the Peak of Perfection

and the end of all successes.

But here the *Upanishad* is advising for the benefit of the less evolved ones a discipline of *Upasana* or worship. And it is the clear declaration of the *Śruti* in this stanza that the successful worshipper reaches the *Brahma Loka*, the State of *Hiranyagarbha*, which of course is not the highest.

In Sanskrit, *Brahma Loka* can be milked to yield two meanings as *Brahma-roopi Loka* (a world of the nature of the Self) or as *Brahmani Loka* (the world of the glorious *Brahmaji*, the Creator). The worshipper (*Upasaka*), through his actions (*Karma*), ensures only his entry into the World of the Creator, while the one who meditates upon the significances suggested by the symbol Om, knowing or realising his own personal identity with that Truth, through this Knowledge (*Gyana*), becomes the Absolute Himself. Thus, in this stanza we may note that Lord Death has hinted at the goal of both *Karma* (Worship) and *Gyana* (Knowledge).

15-17. Briefly Yama says that the Eternal Absolute Reality is fully symbolised in the word "Om".

न जायते म्रियते वा विपश्चित् नायं कुतश्चित् बभूव कश्चित् ।
अजोनित्यः शाश्वतोऽयं पुराणो न हन्यते हन्यमाने शरीरे ॥ १८ ॥

*Na jayate mryate va vipascit,
na ayam kutascit na babhuva kascit ;
Ajo nityah sasvato yam purano
na hanyate hanyamane sarire.*

(18) "The intelligent *Atman* is not born, nor does He die ; He did not spring from anything, and nothing sprang from him ; Unborn, Eternal, Everlasting, Ancient, He is not slain although the body is slain.

Earlier in our discussions we emphasised how the *Kathopanishad Mantras* were evidently an immediate inspiration to Bhagawan Vyasa to crystallise his matured thinking and full-realisation of the Truth, in his own *Upanishad-poem*, the *Shrimad Bhagavat Gita*. You all know how in *Gita* the entire first chapter and portions of the second are spent in providing an inimitable background, similar to the story of Nachiketas in this *Upanishad*, wherein to the presence of an immortal Teacher,

Lord Krishna, a disciple, Sri Arjuna, is brought in an attitude of surrender, devotion and seeking. And in the second chapter of the Divine Song,* sung by the Lord Himself, there is a substantial reproduction of even the very words of the *Mantra* that is now under discussion—(the last line of this *Mantra* is repeated as such).

You must all remember that the pointed question of Nachiketas was to explain to him that which Lord Death had experienced Himself personality, that Eternal Factor which is beyond virtue and vice, which is other than cause and effect and which is other than past or future. During our discussions of the stanza we clearly found that the aspiring Brahmin boy was enquiring after the Nature of the Everwitnessing spark of Awareness, the *Atman* in the body. Lord Death, in answering him, we also found, had first dealt with the Symbol of Truth, OM. Now in this stanza the teacher is directly hinting at the Divine Spark that presides over the matter envelopments constituting our body, mind and intellect.

"*Atman is not born nor does it die*".—All perishable finite things undergo modifications and the entire set of modifications are classified under five headings, namely, birth, growth, disease, decay and death. In this stanza we are told that the Truth Principle gracing our within, is without the first and the last of these pentamorous modifications, i.e., the birth and the death. Naturally, they mean to incorporate within themselves all the other unsaid three modifications also. That which undergoes modifications is a perishable finite quality ; in denying modifications the teacher is hinting at the Eternal Nature of the Soul of man.

We must note here that the word *Vipaschit* is used for *Atman*—and it is no accidental usage or a meaning blown into it due to the circumstances. It comes from the root *Vip*=to quiver or tremble ; hence its adjective *Vip*=inspired ; its noun *Vipas*=inspiration ; so *Vipaschit*=knowing inspiration—born of the experience of the Pure Knowledge.

The soul is unborn ; only the body is born. You must be remembering our preliminary talks when we discussed exhaustively these points in general. And yet, to help you at your

* Chapter II, Sloka 20.

recapitulation we may add here the following.

The pot-maker makes a pot. The pot is born. But the space in the pot being itself eternally one with the outer space is not created or born. The pot may break. That which is made is perishable. But with the breaking of the pot the pot-space is not broken. The unborn pot-space knows no death.

Similarly, the Self or the Truth is never born and naturally never dies. The false ego-centre, through vulgar meditations and ignorant thinking, has moulded out a perishable body-mind-and-intellect equipment in which the all-pervading Eternal Truth seems to be confined. The body equipment might perish, but not the Truth Principle.

And again, the pot-maker did not make a pot and then pour "some space" into the pot ; the pot-maker worked in space and as he moulded the pot he could mould it only with space already inside.

Similarly, the body is born in *Atman*, with *Atman* and this Truth Principle is ever the presiding deity within, and It is without the body during the physical body's birth, growth, decay, disease and death.

With the above ideas in mind the second line of the *Mantra* must now stand out self-explained.

हन्ताचेन्मन्यते हन्तुं हतश्चेन्मन्यते हतम् ।

उभौ तौ न विजानीतो नायं हन्ति न हन्यते ॥ १९ ॥

Hanta cet manyate hantum,
hata cet manyate hatam ;
Ubhau tau na vijanito
na ayam hanti na hanyate.

(19) If the slayer thinks " I slay ", and if the slain thinks, " I am slain ", then both of them do not know well. This slays not nor is this slain.

Again to point out in the *Gita*, a parallel in thought which amounts to almost an actual borrowing, we may notice therein* the above *Mantra* repeated, especially in its second line.

If a murderer feels that by wounding the body, the *Atman*

* Chapter II, Sloka 19. See Swamiji's *Discourses on Gita*.

is killed, or if the murdered comes to despair at his death-bed that his *Atman* is dying, both of them are under a delusory conception that the body is the soul. The stupidity of such thinking becomes more poignantly apparent to us if we were to say that we have broken the space-in-the-cup when we throw the cup down ! !

This *Mantra* reveals itself its meaning to anyone who has carefully followed our discussions upon the previous *Mantras*.

अणोरणीयान् महतो महीयानात्मास्य जन्तोर्निहितो गुहायाम् ।

तमक्रतुः पश्यति वीतशोको धातुप्रसादान्महिमानमात्मनः ॥ २० ॥

Anor anīyan, mahato mahīyan,

Atma asya jantor nihito guhayam ;

Tam akrtuh pasyati vītaśoko,

dhatuh prasadat mahīmanam atmanah.

(20) The *Atman* subtler than the subtle, greater than the great is seated in the heart of each living being. He who is free from willing and wishing with his mind and the senses composed, beholds the majesty of the Self and becomes free from sorrow.

This is one of the much quoted stanzas, a favourite one with all preachers and philosophic writers. In its charming style of brevity the *Mantra* hints at a treasure of suggestions, indicating almost directly the *Atman* which is the Goal of all seekers.

By defining the *Atman* as the smallest of the small, a mere dull intellect might understand that the *Atman* is not yet seen or discovered because the scientific world has not yet constructed a sufficiently powerful microscope ! But to a philosophic mind, cultured in the ways of the *Sastras*, the statement is an ample explanation of the most subtle nature of the *Atma Tattwa*. Had *Sruthi* ended her definition with the above statement alone it would have denied the volume and girth of things and beings any connection with Truth.

This probable misunderstanding is negated by the additional epithet that the *Atman* is also "greater than the greatest". Here the 'great' is meant to cover the entire universe of manifested existence ; and Truth, according to the *Sruthi*, not only pervades,

envelops and penetrates through and through the *Jagat*, but also extends farther than the crores of universes that whirl round in space ! This is endorsed by a similar statement in the *Gita*, made by the Lord Himself, wherein He says, “ *the Jagat formed of the entire manifested worlds spreads itself out in their delusions and disturbances, Oh ! Arjun, only a fraction of my real nature.*” * This means that the remaining vast portion of Truth is yet in its Pure Nature, untouched by the play of duality, created by the mysterious jugglery of the mind, called *Maya*.

Truth is described here as both the tiniest of the tiny and also the biggest of the big. This means that Pure Consciousness is an Eternal, All-pervading-Essence, and that even the minutest space conceivable is pervaded by this great Divine Influence. And after these statements, when a description that It is lodged in the heart of all living beings comes, a Western student becomes baffled, and hence his cry—*Kathopanishad* is a compilation of floating *slokas* that had worn out in their usage even at the time of their compilation ! !

These are but some false evidences to prove anything of this sort about this *Upanishad*. To say that *Katho* is a compilation is to tell a lie. Truth is here expressed as residing in the heart only to indicate the point where the individual, through meditation, ultimately comes to realise It.

The Vedantic *sadhana* of hearing and reflecting culminates in its final fulfilment only through the Godly vocation, to which man alone is heir, namely, meditation. Meditation is the process by which man can rise above from his subjective bondages † and come to the State of Freedom and Joy of a God. And this process by which we can realise the ideal of perfection, Eternal Bliss, indicated by the previous epithet, is hinted at in this stanza.

He who is free from willing and wishing (Akrathu).—In using this qualification to the seeker who is noted for success a lot has been said by *Sruthi* with her suggestive style used in the *Upanishads*. *Akrathu* has been rendered as “desireless” by Sankara ;

* *Bhagavat Gita*, X-42. Refer *Discourses on Gita* by Swamiji.

† The Knots of the Heart : Ignorance (*Avidya*), Desire (*Kama*) and Work (*Karma*).

here it does not mean the impotency born out of an indolence misunderstood as *Vyragya* and a complete inaction and the consequent morbidity glorified in vain as *Viveka* by the misled Hindus. Sankara clearly points out that it is a natural freedom from desires for external sense objects, which dissipate the energies of the seeker and make him unfit for the true life's realisation.

Even the desire for the Supreme may as an anxiety destroy the peace and poise of the personality. In the last stage even this anxiety is renounced when the individual rests in the Supreme—as the Supreme will. Thus by *Akrathu* the means as well as the goal are indicated.

Indeed, the Aryan personality is not satisfied with a mere ideology, however great it may be, if it is not advocated along with a practical system of methods by which one can realise and live that ideology. Free from desires, if one, through long and arduous practices, gains control over one's sense-organs and mind, that sacred one shall come to experience the self-effulgent, eternal, Self. Therefore, in his realisation of his true identity as the *Atman*, he goes beyond the destinies of sorrow and pain, because they are the destinies of the body and the mind only. "As *Atman* I am not the body or the mind-intellect-instrument"; the fatigue of the car is not the fatigue of the owner riding in it and the owner knows full well that he is not his car.

With a view to entertaining you all the Swami may invite you here to a short ramble into the woods of the endless quarrel between non-dualism and dualism. Both of them exist on the authority of the *Sruthis*. Here in the stanza under discussion we have the phrase *Dhathu Prasada* which is interpreted by the dualists as to mean Lord's grace (*Dhathri Prasada*) where *Dhathu* means the supporter, namely, the Creator of the Universe, which is of course the God Principle. Hence, the dualists claim that this *Atma Tatva* can be realised only when the seeker gets the grace and the blessings of the *Dhathr*.

The same epithet is interpreted by the Advaitins as to mean *Dhathu Samprasada*, meaning, "by the purification of the senses and the mind": (*Dhathu*=element). To the non-dualists the outer world of sense objects has an existence only in relation to

their corresponding sense-organs and the synchronising machine of a mind behind them all.

Thus, the same word is explained in two different ways by the two schools of philosophic thinking. Both when viewed independently, or approached intellectually, would seem to overpower us with the strength of their individual arguments and the efficiency of their irresistible logic. Naturally, the lesser folks who have studied these great masters only partially grow fanatical and fight among themselves in support of their beliefs as though they were anointed for that purpose ! But to a true seeker who is walking the path and is trying industriously to live the life Divine, the seeming contradictions in the Philosophies of Madhwa, Ramanuja and Sankara wither away into a perfect understanding of the different standpoints from which each of them is talking to us.

The difficulty arises when the commentators try to discover in the *Upanishads* scriptural sanction for their pet "Doctrine of Grace". The Vedas accept the Doctrine of "*Devtha Preethi*" — the Joy of the Gods at the proper rituals when a true performer invokes the Gods properly. Parallel to this there is no Grace of *Atma* to descend upon something other than itself. Hence, Sankara is indeed well justified in clearly making it *Dhathu Prasada* ; by the purity of the subtle elements in the seeker, viz., the purified intellect and the single-pointed mind. Tranquillity is the atmosphere of Grace required for the blessed Self-communion to take place.

The sum-total of the efforts put into any piece of work slowly rises in its potency until at last when it equates with the quantity of power and dynamism required, the work gets accomplished in a glorious success. So too, in the various efforts put in by a seeker in perfecting himself. These practices add on their share to the total pool until at last the cumulative effect of all the practices becomes a divine power by the blessing of which the final achievement is gained. To us pure Vedantins, living the principles of Vedanta, there can never be any school that opposes us : for, Vedantins' wisdom can bring its light into any problem and resolve it in terms of the Eternal Truth.

आसीनो दूरं व्रजति शयानो याति सर्वतः ।
कस्तं मदामदं देवं मदन्यो ज्ञातुमर्हति ॥ २१ ॥

*Asino duram vrajati,
sayano yati sarvatah ;
Kas tam mada amadam devam,
mad anyo jnatum arhati.*

(21) Sitting he goes far ; lying he goes everywhere. Who else, therefore, save myself is able to comprehend the God who rejoices and rejoices not ?

Deussen says : " Here opposite predicates are ascribed to Brahma in such a manner that they mutually cancel one another, and serve only to illustrate the impossibility of conceiving Brahman by means of an empirical definition." Though in fact the scriptures part, in their futile attempts, to define the Absolute, here these epithets not only do a mutual self-cancellation, but in that very act with voiceless earnestness they indicate a greater truth regarding that *Madmadam Devam* : that " *exhilarated yet sober* " Lord ; that " *energetic yet tranquil* "—Self.

The indescribable *Atma Tattva* when forced to confine Itself to the limited meanings of a finite language, the phrases and sentences employed must get blasted out into a jig-saw-puzzle-like confusing contrariness ! It is only the fittest student, who has the necessary heart and head, that can, through the trellis of the words, peep beyond and actually discover the beauty and the truth that lie beyond ; and this becomes fully successful only when the student gets a chance to listen to discourses upon the *Sruthi Mantras* from a fit master.

" *Sitting he goes far* " :—Pure consciousness that seems to preside over faculties in the body is conceived of here as the *Atman* sitting. But the moment a mental wave vitalised by this Truth in us flies from here to Europe to contemplate upon the sunny land of Italy it seems to meet therein Existence or Consciousness already present there. In this sense, the *Atman* is said to be making travels far into distances though in fact, the Absolute, All-pervading Truth cannot and will not move.

When we say that we are going to the next room it is a clear indication that we are leaving the spot where we are now

and travelling towards a point where now we are not and where we shall be in time. This movement is possible only when the thing is a limited entity. When it is an all-pervading Truth, it actually cannot go anywhere, since there is no spot where it is not already. For example, my right hand cannot move into my right hand, since my right hand is all-pervading in my right hand, no two substances can occupy one and the same place during the same period of time, is a scientific fact known, applauded and appreciated by the modern world. Thus, *Atman* or the Life-Centre is a motionless entity, but seems to be moving only when it is conditioned by the mind and functioning as its manifestations, as thought waves !

The same idea is repeated for purposes of emphasis and clarification in "*Lying he goes everywhere*".*

The second line of the *Mantra* seems to be a quotation from an arrogant monster of incorrigible vanity and egoism, at the peak of an evening's discourse wherein the listeners were patient enough to encourage his vanity by applauses ! ! ! ! "*Who else therefore save me is able to comprehend the God*"—Friends, no such egoism is meant here. If Lord Death were so egoistic He would not have been the Master of Knowledge and self-realisation as He was ; and naturally, not a *Guru* fit for *Sruthi* to bring into her palace as a tutor for her beloved son, Nachiketas.

The Master means to state that one who has gained sufficient control over his mind and intellect, through a sincere discipline of self-control alone can, through the higher meditations on the Nature of Truth, reach the cumulative glory of subjectively experiencing the All-pervading Truth as described in the above pleasant language of contradictions. If the mind is not pure, the Truth realised shall not be the Absolute.

Like a mirror Truth truly reflects the object in front of it ; Mr. Das if he stands in front of his mirror in his bath-towel or in this office dress or in his bridal robe or even in any fancy dress he chooses to wear, the reflection in the mirror reflects faithfully the same Das in the particular form of dress he has worn. An

* Compare these descriptions with those contained in *Isavasyopanishad* 4 and 5.

impure intellect can experience only the sullied Truth !

अशरीरं शरीरेष्वनवस्थेष्ववस्थितम् ।

महान्तं विभुमात्मानं मत्वाधीरो न शोचति ॥ २२ ॥

*Asariram sariresu,
anavasthesva avasthitam ;
Mahantam vibhum atmanam
matva dhiro na socati.*

(22) The wise man, who knows the *Atman* as bodiless, seated firmly in perishable bodies, Great and All-pervading does never grieve.

Our wrong understanding that we are the body-mind-intellect-equipment and that there is no other greater Truth in us at all, is the gurgling source of all the pains and agonies, disease and death, despairs and dejections, hopes and desires that befall us. When in the maturity of discrimination a man with an evolved intellect and mind, like that of Nachiketas, comes to enquire and know, seek and discover for himself the *Atman* within, such a saintly one, at the peak of evolution, dwelling in the Realm of perfection comes to identify himself permanently as that Truth principle, and thereafter, naturally, he shall know no pain or limitation. This idea is explained here in this *Mantra*.

At that man has to do to become God is to renounce totally his ego-centric vanity and the satanic murmurings of his own impure mind of uncontrolled devilry ! Detached from the false, attach yourself to the Truth ! ! Therein lies the true redemption and all successes and achievements.

नायमात्मा प्रवचनेन लभ्यो न मेधया न बहुनाश्रुतेना ।

यमेवैष वृणुते तेन लभ्यस्तस्यैष आत्मा विवृणुते तनुंस्वाम् ॥ २३ ॥

*Na ayam atma pravacanena labhyo,
na medhaya na bahuna srutena ;
Yam eva esa vrunute tena labhyas,
tasya esa atma vivrunute tanum svam.*

(23) This *Atman* cannot be attained by study of Veda nor by intelligence, nor by much hearing. It is gained by him who chooses it alone. To him this *Atman* reveals Its true nature.

Mere book knowledge is no knowledge at all. This is the uniform opinion of all the *Sruthis* known to us. An individual having a fair knowledge of the language technicalities of Sanskrit can discourse endlessly upon the word meanings of the *Sruthi*-texts which in their style adopt the simplest words that language can command. But *Sruthi* denies to such professional “*temple-talkers*” and men of noise and sound any actual blessing that can be gained from the real Knowledge the subjective experience of which is the theme of the *Upanishads*, source of all dynamism, *Atman* and life in us.

There are some ignorant *Pundits* who claim that Self-realisation can be only through an initial memorising of the sacred texts. *Medha* means, the power of the intellect which specially manifests in its retentive capacity. There are some who can repeat from memory all the four Vedas and they are honoured as *Chaturvedies* among *Pundits*. There is a Malabar Brahmin, who is known to this *Sadhu*, who can repeat from memory the entire Bhagavata text with *Sreedhair commentary* ! Many are the Mahatmas who can recapitulate and sing all the *Mantras* in the ten main *Upanishads* often with the texts of the *Sankara Bhashyam*. Admirable though these achievements be in the material plane where we are ready to adore, admire and appreciate the powers of the intellect, the *Sruthi* here pooh-poohs them as a sheer waste and filthy discharge ! A mere memorising of the stanza or even cultivating a capacity to discourse upon the *Mantras* shall not take any individual to the Goal pointed out by the *Sruthi*.

Again, there are some who place an undue importance on merely attending *Sat Sanghs*. Such men are ready to undergo any amount of botheration, undertake any long journey, and however often it needs be only if they can be in a hall where some spiritual discourse is at full swing. And having reached the hall many of them invariably discover a comfortable corner where, in the diffused light, they can gloriously retire and, leaning on a wall or pillar, can silently set their minds to race backwards towards their homes and friends ! Bodily they sit in the *Sat Sangh* but mentally and intellectually they are closed bottles ever revelling in their own poison contents ! !

This Swami is not exaggerating ; there must be at least, half a dozen here who have not heard what we have been just now roaring through this deafening microphone !

If neither study, nor memorising, nor *Sat Sangh* can give us a subjective experience of the Reality, does it mean that Self-realisation is an impossibility ? The *Sruthi Mantra* in its second-half asserts that realisation is possible ; only, that we have to pursue the methods advocated by the *Rishis* with sincerity, faith and consistency. Hence *Sruthi* says that the aspirant who seeks diligently the *Atman*, to him the *Atman* reveals Itself.

The root *Vr* means to choose, to cover. So *Vrinite* means chooses ; and *Vivrite* means uncovers or reveals.

The seeking consists of the slow removal of all the negativities in our physical and psychological make up, such as caste and class prejudices, vanities of being rich or preoccupation with the tragedies of our poverty, the selfishness, egoism, hatreds, jealousies, greeds, and lusts which in their aggregate constitute the barricade that keeps us away from the land of our own Real Neature. The details of this gruesome self-created mistake, by which we have come to sign our own self-chosen exile, are hinted as in the following stanza.

This stanza occurs in *Mundakopanishad* (III-2-3). Refer Swamiji's *Discourses on Mundakopanishad*.

नाविरतो दुश्चरितान् नाशान्तो नासमाहितः ।

नाशान्तमानसो वापि प्रज्ञानेनैवमाप्नुयात् ॥ २४ ॥

Na avirato dushcaritan,
na asanto na asamahitah ;
Na asanta manaso va pi,
prajnanena enam apnuyat.

(24) But he who has not turned away from bad conduct, whose senses are not subdued, whose mind is not concentrated, whose mind is not pacified, can never obtain this *Atman* by knowledge.

This stanza is to be read along with the previous one, since it seems to be a continuation of the ideas expressed in the earlier one where the Eternal Peace and the joy of Perfection that

accrue with the *Darsan* of the *Atman* are denied to those who have merely learnt the texts by heart or to those who can only give long discourses upon them or again to those who are religiously regular only in reaching the halls of such discourses ! !

Here Lord Death continues explaining the inner barricades that we in our ignorance have raised between ourselves and our own Self.

Self-realisation and the consequent Joy of Godhood are denied in this *Mantra* to him (a) who has not turned away from acts of *Adharma*, (b) who has not brought his senses under control, whose mind has not therefore gained any tranquillity to concentrate and (c) who has not found in his mind a peace within itself, because of its thudding palpitations and anxieties regarding the fruits of its actions.

In this *Mantra* we have all the necessary hints by which we can come to intensify our spiritual *Sadhana*. First of all the *Sadhaka* must retire from all his activities which are immoral and unethical. Unless one is well grown in his moral and ethical life no amount of *Japa* or *Tapa*, bell and flower, sandalwood and camphor, temples, churches and mosques can be of any help to him in his spiritual growth. The meaningless cry against the efficiency of religion that we are now so accustomed to hear, is all raised, perhaps by sincere devotees themselves, who are fathers to some twelve children, who will tell any lie (if thereby they can gain even a quarter-anna-coin) and who can taste the sugar in their cup-of-milk better only when they have the added satisfaction of scalding a few ants along with their spoons of sugar. Neither are they self-controlled nor are they honest, nor non-violent ; and our entire religion rests upon the triple-principles of *Brahmacharya*, *Satyam* and *Ahimsa*.

When an individual has lived at least for a time respecting *Dharma* he has the necessary gate pass to the arena of spiritual practices. Then again, to gain the higher worlds of greater perfections the aspirant should learn slowly the art of controlling his sense-organs from their habits of revelling madly and gushing forth ceaselessly into the backwater of sorrow-breeding sense objects. By a pursuit of *Dharmic* actions, an individual comes to limit his activities and when he gains a certain amount of control

over his *Indriyas*, the mind, of its own accord, grows in its potencies to concentrate and to apply itself with greater vigour and efficiency. Even at this stage the seeker will not be fully fit for success if he has not disciplined himself to get completely detached from his mental anxieties for the enjoyment of the fruits of his *Tapascharya* (self-denials and such other methods of subduing the senses).^{*} About this Ranade says : “ Lord Death, in short, means that there are very few, indeed, who are such full-fledged and sincere seekers ! At the same time a fit candidate for Vedanta path is not a fairy one who falls from the sky with the morning dew and who, nestling for a while in the opening buds, falls down with the weight of his own sheer competency ! ! A fit student is pressed out between the diligent urgency felt and the sincerity of pursuit put in ; and how rare are such Press-Houses ! ! ”

It was with this idea in mind that Lord Death was compelled to cry earlier in *Mantra 21* : “ *Who else therefore, save myself, is able to comprehend the God.* ”

यस्य ब्रह्म च क्षात्रं च उभे भवत ओदनः ।

मृत्युर्यस्योपसेचनं क इत्या वेद यत्र सः ॥ २५ ॥

*Yasya Brahma ca kshatram ca
Ubhe Bhavata Odanah ;
Mrttyuryasyopasechanam ka
Itta Veda yatra sah*

(25) Of who, the *Brahmana* and the *Kshatriya* classes are (as it were) but cooked rice and death itself a condiment (or pickle), how can one thus know where that *Atman* is !

(Thus ends the Second Valli of the First Chapter)

The Supreme Reality, which is the Self, sought by the seekers is the presiding Factor that makes possible the worlds of names and forms to exist and function.

Truth envelops all *Jagat*. The inert and Reality's dead shadow can work themselves out only in a medium of Pure

^{*} Refer Swamiji's *Discourses on Mundakopanishad* III-1-8.

Consciousness or Pure Existence. The perceived worlds of names and forms can exist only in Existence. This idea is poetically hinted at in this *Mantra* when it says that even the *Brahmana* and the *Kshatriya* classes, who are considered to be the very best among men (and man is the very roof-and-crown of things), are but mere cooked rice to be swallowed and digested with comfort and ease by the Supreme ! In short, all the manifested world is but a morsel for Him to be digested within a few moments ! And to such a Supreme, even the threatening process of death is but a pickle that adds extra taste to Its appetite !

When such is the might and power of Pure Consciousness in Its Absolute Nature, the trend is that it is rather difficult for ordinary mortals to realise their identity as the *Atman*, unless, of course, they are ready to undergo the earlier explained processes of self-purification and self-perfection.

21-25. *How then realise this Self ; Intellectuality, Scholarship, Erudition, Study, all these by themselves, are in vain. But to the purified, tranquil, collected soul the Supreme Soul is realisable in intimate experience. All others, irrespective of their position or status, are food for death.*

तृतीय वल्ली

SECTION III

*The Parable of the Chariot teaching the Adhyatma Yoga—
yoking of the individual soul with the Supreme Soul.*

ऋतं पिबन्तौ सुकृतस्य लोके गुहां प्रविष्टौ परमे परार्धे ।
छायातपौ ब्रह्मविदो वदन्ति पंचाग्नयो ये च त्रिणाचिकेताः ॥ १ ॥

*Rtam pibantau sukrtasya loke,
guhāṁ pravistau parama parardhe ;
Chaya tapau Brahmavido vadanti,
pancagnayo ye ca trinachiketaḥ.*

(1) The two who enjoy the fruits of their good works being seated in the cavity of the heart, the Seat of the Supreme, the knowers of Brahman call them shadow and light ; as also the performers of the Five-fold Fire and those who have propitiated three times the Nachiketa-Fire.

In this section we have the famous and immortal metaphor of the chariot explaining the *Atman* and the Body. In the chariot sits the driver and the owner. In the body stays the *Paramatman*, the Self, and the *Jivatman*, the Ego, and the entire technique of the *Adhyatma Yoga* is explained.

To introduce these two factors, the *Atma* (Self) and the *Jiva* (Ego), we have here, in the very opening stanza of this *Valli*, a declaration unanimously made by all the realised saints of Knowledge and endorsed by the faithful house-holder *Pundits*. All of them declare that though the body seems to be controlled and directed by these two factors, one of them is but the shadow-replica of the other.

The shadow or reflection has no independent existence of its own. It exists only with reference to the light or the illumined object.

Desire-prompted thoughts rise and fall in waves eternally in their own rhyme and rhythm in the mental lake of an uncultured man-animal. In this mad death-dance of the rumbling thought waves, kicking about their pranks in front of the mind, a

composite shadow forms ever trembling and changing.

The individual in his extrovertness gazing on outwardly views this shadow and identifies himself with it. The shadow represents the (i-ego), the *Samsarin*, who suffers the mortal agonies of his physical pains, mental tortures, intellectual failures, and spiritual bankruptcy. This shadow is called the *Jivatman* and the light that causes it, the I-Ego, the God Principle in us, is called the *Param-atman*.

Rtam—As a noun it is one of the most significant word in the *Vedas* and means a little more than mere 'righteousness'; it is something like "Divine Law" that connects actions and their fruits.

The fruits of actions are enjoyed only by the individual soul (*Jivatma*), the "i-ego". Dual number is here used, instead of the singular; hence, the *Sruthi* statement comes to indicate that both the Supreme Soul and the individual soul are partners in enjoying the fruits of actions. This should not be understood in its literal word meaning, for, *Sruthi* would be thereby contradicting herself her incessant declaration, oft-repeated and always maintained, that the Eternal, All-full *Atman* is neither a doer nor an enjoyer. He alone is the illuminator of all doings and enjoyments.

And yet, there is in the *Mantra* the usage of the dual number when it says, "the two enjoy the fruits of their good works." This difficulty is solved by Sri Sankaracharya in his commentary. He says that the shadow "i-ego" has no existence at all without the presence of the Light principle, the I-Ego, and so, they are coupled together in a general way. Examples of this type of coupling are also seen often in our day-to-day transactions in life. When a crowd of people are moving on, and although there are some among them who have no umbrellas (nor *Khadi*-caps), we, in our general conversations, indicate them all together collectively as the umbrella carriers (the congressmen).

In a similar sense, because of the seeming co-existence of the *Jivatman* and the *Paramatman*, the "false-i" and the Real-I, the delusory enjoyment of the fruits of actions, which is the lot of the *Jivatman*, is coupled with the Witnessing Eternal Light of Intelligence, the *Paramatman*. This is more clearly brought out

in *Mundakopanishad*.*

Both of them are explained here to be seated in the cavity of the heart, where intelligence resides. This idea of the intelligence being in the heart-space has been repeated before so often, that we need not pause here any more to discuss it in detail.

It is interesting to note that *Kathopanishad*, while glorifying the path of meditation, is not against the life of house-holders. They too can gain an insight—a vision of the Real, the Truth.

यः सेतुरीजानानामक्षरं ब्रह्म यत्परम् ।

अभयं तितीर्षतां पारं नाचिकेतं शक्यमहि ॥ २ ॥

Yah setur ijananam,
aksaram Brahma yat param ;
Abhayam titirsatam param,
Nachiketanu shakemahi.

(2) The sacrifice which is the bridge for those who perform sacrifices, and also the highest Immortal Brahman, fearless, and the other shore for those who wish to cross the Ocean of *Samsara*—‘That Nachiketas may we master’.

These two opening stanzas of this section seem to be later interpolations as they individually explain two different themes and in themselves do not seem to possess any direct connection with the discussions that are yet to follow in this chapter. But, however, there is a connection between these two and what is to follow, inasmuch as the *Upanishads*, though a product of a revolt against the ritualistic *Karma*-portion of the *Vedas*, they rise from and have an intimate relation with it.

Sethu (bridge or refuge).—The ‘Nachiketa-Fire’ that was discussed before is described here as a bridge that connects this mortal world of ours with the shores of that immortal life in the heavens. This stanza seems to glorify both the Goals of *Karma* (Worship) and *Gyana* (Knowledge). The first part of the *Mantra* asserts that this Sacred Fire, if performed with sincerity, faith and devotion as prescribed earlier, can lead the Ego-centric-soul to that *realm* of consciousness called the heaven ; and

* Refer Swamiji's *Discourses on Mundakopanishad*, III-1.

the duration of existence in embodiment there being longer than life upon this globe, in a relative sense, it is indeed an immortal life.

In the second part of the *Mantra* there is glorification of the goal reached by a *Gyani* through his meditation upon the Nature of the Soul and its relationship with the Total Soul.

Altogether this reads as a prayer by the master and pupil before commencing the elaborate discussions on the special *Yoga* of knowledge. The last line can be read with subject "That"; or "That Nachiketas";—in the later sense Nachiketas becomes the name or symbol of that, the goal of life.

आत्मानं रथिनं विद्धि शरीरं रथमेव तु ।
बुद्धिं तु सारथिं विद्धि मनः प्रग्रहमेव च ॥ ३ ॥

*Atmanam rathinam viddhi,
sariram ratham eva tu ;
Buddhim tu sarathim viddhi,
manah pragraham eva-ch.*

(3) Know the *Atman* as the Lord of the chariot, the body as the chariot ; know the intellect as the charioteer and the mind again as the reins.

With this stanza we begin the discussion of an analogy, famous in the Hindu philosophical literature, often quoted by authors and orators. Herein we may detect also the exact point in this famous *Upanishad* which probably gave all the fiery inspiration necessary for Sree Vyasa Bhagavan to write his famous *Upanishad*-poem, the *Gita*.

The analogy of the chariot is, as such, most picturesquely depicted in the Divine Song, the *Gita*. Therein we have the picture of a chariot led by the five surging horses with Lord Krishna, the Supreme Intelligence, at the charioteer's box and Arjuna the confused and confounded, sitting in the chariot, as the lord of it. On both sides of the chariot stand the armies of the Kauravas and the Pandavas, drawn up in battle array ready to strike and open their total war.

It is at these tense moments, just before the actual war has started, that we have the setting for the great *Gita*. Arjuna

despaired at the questions of righteousness and the call-of-duty, confused in mind and intellect, falls prostrate at the Lord's feet, imploring of Him light and guidance ; and the Lord half-turning towards Arjuna holding the reins tight and the five steeds steady, " as though smiling ", gives out a summary of the Truth declared in the various *Upanishads*. No wonder then that an artist, as Sree Vyasa was, while trying to express in simpler words the transcendental Truth declarations of the *Upanishads*, has to repeat ten *Mantras* or parts of *Mantras* from this *Upanishad* in the *Gita*. We have already discussed many instances of such borrowings and we shall see later on again many more similar instances.

In the analogy of the chariot, the Self is the master of the chariot ; the pure discriminating intellect is the charioteer, the body of the individual is the chariot, and the reins with which the intellect guides the movements of the body are the mind.

It is also noteworthy here that there is a similar comparison in *Swataswatara Upanishad*—2. 9.

इन्द्रियाणि ह्यानाहुर्विषयांस्तेषु गोचरान् ।

आत्मेन्द्रिय मनोयुक्तं भोक्तेत्याहुर्मनीषिणः ॥ ४ ॥

Indriyani hayan ahur,

visayam tesu gocaran ;

Atma indriya mano-yuktam,

bhokta ity ahur manisinah.

(4) The sense (and the instincts) they say, are the horses, and their roads are the sense-objects. The wise call Him the enjoyer (when He is) united with the body, the senses and the mind.

Continuing the analogy the *Mantra* here explains what the horses in the chariot-picture stand for. The senses are the horses. Without the sense-organs such as the ear, the eyes, the nose, the tongue and the skin the body-chariot cannot move. It is a well-known truth observed in modern psychology that a child born without any of the sense-organs is a dead one. We generally observe that a blind man has invariably an extra power of hearing. Rarely do we find in life an individual who is both blind and deaf. And still more rare are persons (or indeed,

such men are not) who have neither the eyes nor the ears nor the sense of touch. In short, we may have among us an unhappy man who has not one or two sense-organs but rarely, indeed, do we have one living among us who has at once, more than two sense-organs missing in him.

This is not a strange phenomenon. After all, there is a purpose behind our taking up the bodies and coming here to live this mortal existence. The individual ego-centres take their individual embodiments and come to live under a set of circumstances, during fixed periods of time, to EARN the experiences of living that fixed life. The instruments through which we can gain the experiences of the outer world are our five *Indriyas*. If our *Indriyas* are all shut up, the world outside rolls up into nothingness so far as we are concerned. For example, in our deep-sleep state we are not aware of the outer world at all, because, none of our sense-organs functions for us during our sleep-state.

If the eyes are not, the forms are not ; with our ears surely we know we cannot grasp ideas of forms. So too, with every other sense-organ. If the organs were not with us, our birth in this life would have been a mad man's maddening extravagance, purposeless and idle. Lord, the Creator, is no mad man. There is a purpose, definite and sure, in each one's arrival here ; be it a worm or be he a king. Since without the sense-organs the purpose of our embodiment is defeated, the Law sees to it that no child is born with none of the sense-organs, for, in that case, the child would be defeating the purpose of its Creator.

The *Sruti* here says that the horses that draw the body chariot are the sense-organs. The word *Indriyas* collectively means not only the sense-organs, but also the organs of actions and, as such, it would be complete only if we translate the term as organs of sense and instincts. This interpretation is according to the fully developed *Sankhya* and *Vedanta* philosophies. The first clear reference to the ten sense-organs is in *Prasna*,* which is a later composition than the *Kathopanishad*. There is, indeed, a masterly thoroughness in the inimitable expressions of the Hindu scriptures. Though they are so brief in their style, they never

* Please refer Swamiji's *Discourses on Prasnopanishad*, IV-2.

leave any statement half said. When they have discussed the chariot, the rider, the driver and the horses, the picture would not have been complete without the explanation of the road on which the horses are to run. The *Upanishad* says that the sense horses trot on the sense objects ! How ?

The eye can illumine or function only in the realm of form ; that is, we can never come to hear with our eyes ! So too, the ears ; they can perceive only sound ; with the ears we can never come to " see " ! The tongue can walk only the path of taste, and the skin, the road of touch. On the whole, it means that the sense-organs, because of which the body exists, function each only in its own field of objects.

The wise, in the stanza, means the sages and saints, who have realised in their life the Total Perfection, which is God-head and also those who, in declaring their intuitional experiences, have become the authors of the *Upanishads*. They declare that the true entity in us, who seems to experience the joys and sorrows of life, is not the *Atman*, the All-witnessing Intelligence, but the conditioned *Atman*. The Supreme Intelligence as conditioned by the body and mind is the ego-centre (*Jiva*), which seems to enjoy and suffer the passing circumstances of this evanescent life, called the *Samsar*. By thus defining the enjoyer in us the *Sruthi* is definitely making a differentiation between the two entities in us, one, the Truth Principle, the non-doer and the non-enjoyer, and the other, the delusion-created ego-centre (*Jiva*), which is but a reflection of the Supreme Intelligence in the Mental lake.

यस्त्वविज्ञानवान्भवत्युक्तेन मनसा सदा ।

तस्येन्द्रियाण्यवस्थानि दुष्टाश्च इव सारथेः ॥ ५ ॥

Yas tu avijnananan bhavati

ayuktana manasa sada ;

Tasya indriyani avasyani,

dustasasva iva saratheh.

(5) One who is always of unrestrained mind and devoid of right understanding, his sense-organs become uncontrollable like the vicious horses of a charioteer.

Having explained the analogy if the *Sruthi* were not to expose her intentions in making the analogy it would have been an idle indulgence in word-play. In the style of the *Upanishads* brevity is the law, and to use therein even a single alphabet unnecessarily is considered as a great sin. Here, from this *mantra* on we have a team of four stanzas which in their contents express the purpose which was in the mind of the *Sruthi* when She launched out this analogy.

In this *Mantra* an inefficient charioteer allows his reins to be loose, and, naturally, the sturdy steeds run wild and mad as they list, dashing the chariot into bits and wrecking the Lord on the roadside ! In the language of the analogy we are to understand that if we allow an indiscriminate intellect to let our minds loose, then the *Indriyas* (sense-organs) running wild among the sense objects shall wreck the body in sensuous excesses. The implication is that if an individual seeker wants to lead a religious life of perfection and hasten his evolution he has to keep his mind steady with his discriminating intellect, and thus guide the sense horses properly in full restraint and under perfect control. This is hinted at in the following stanza.

यस्तु विज्ञानवान्भवति युक्तेन मनसा सदा ।
तस्येन्द्रियाणि वश्यानि सदश्वा इव सारथेः ॥ ६ ॥

*Yas tu vijñānavan bhavati
yuktena manasa sada ;
Tasya Indriyani vasyani
sadasva eva sarateh.*

(6) But of Him who knows, and has a mind always controlled, the senses are always controllable as the good horses of the driver.

Just as an intelligent driver, by the intelligent manipulations of the reins, guides the horses along the road which the master wants to ride through, so too, an intelligent seeker must, with his pure intellect, keep his mind in restraint and control, and must thus guide his life through the Path of God without allowing the horses to run wild, down the embankments into the muddy fields of reckless pleasures there to break the chariot and end the

ride, in a tragic way—side crash ! !

Such a *Sadhak* controlling the impulses of the mind with the clean discriminative understanding is called one yoked (*Yukta*)—and he is complimented by the wise of the scripture as a *Vignanavan*.

यस्त्वविज्ञानवान्भवत्यमनस्कः सदाशुचिः ।

न स तत्पदमाप्नोति संसारं चाधिगच्छति ॥ ७ ॥

*Yas tu avijnanavan bhavati,
amanaskah sada sucih ;
Na sa tat padam apnoti
samsaram ca adhigacchati.*

(7) And he who is devoid of proper understanding, thoughtless, and always impure, never attains that goal and gets into the round of births and deaths.

With reference to what we have already discussed it must be quite clear that the *Sruthi's* intentions are to make the seeker understand that unless he first of all trains himself to live the day-to-day life intelligently following the codes of morality and ethics he shall not stand any chance of succeeding in the life Divine. *Sruthi* is never tired of repeating at every stage the all-important fact that spiritual practices cannot produce the total effect of perfection or happiness unless the devotee is ready first of all to learn to live a life of truthfulness and perfect self-control.

One who is not constantly bringing his discriminative understanding in curbing the impulses of his mind is one who is unyoked (*Ayukta*) and the wise laugh at his animalism and note him down as an *Avignanavan*.

In modern times we are hearing on all sides especially, among the educated classes, that our sacred religion is empty, hollow and useless ! There are some monstrous, bookwise scholars, who in their puffed-up vanities hurl shameless calumnies against this great religion. This *Sadhu* has met personally some of them, and when cornered to explain why they condemn Hinduism, some of them, at least, seem to come out with a real cause ; they say that they had tried *Bhakthi*, *Karma* and other *Yogas* for

a long time continuously, but that they were not able to enjoy even a trace of the joy and happiness which the *Yogas* promise as a reward. Such desperados, indeed are, in themselves, a sad criticism upon the fall of Hinduism, the Science of Self-perfection.

Even in the Vedic days, when, we all know, the people lived a much more self-controlled life of honesty and goodness, the *Sruthis* were insisting with extra-emphasis upon the need and importance of living a life of perfect self-control for every seeker. And, our poor seekers, living the Broadway-life market dishonesties, black-marketing creeds and corruptions of every kind—if they do some minutes of *Japa*, etc., how can they come to enjoy the blessings of the Absolute Perfection? All his *Kirtans* and *Bhajans*, *Japa* and *Tapa*, temple-going, and Brahmin-feeding are waste of time and money, if the devotee is not prepared to keep his mind always under control and thus ultimately come to control in slow degrees the mad onrush of the sense-organs! This famous fact is hinted at here by the *Sruthi*.

Those who fail to keep up an intelligent self-control upon their own endless sense-demands, not only fail to climb up the ladder of perfection and thus ultimately reach the Supreme God-head (known to us in the scriptures as *Tad-Padam* That State), but also, says the *Sruthi*, slowly fall in the scale of evolution and thus reach the lower states of animal existence. Man, though he is an animal, is considered as the roof-and-crown of beings because of his reasoning capacity. He alone is the one animal who can, at each challenge in life, discriminate between the *Path of Good* and the *Path of the Pleasant*, and firmly make a bid always to stick to the *Path of Good*.

When Man, of his own accord, refuses the blessings of his powers of discrimination, which his intellect is capable of, he is deliberately flouting his privileges as Man. And when one has thus, of his own free will, chosen to be an animal, certainly, Nature shall *bless* him with the sorrows and limitations of the animal beings!! Man alone is the glorious heir to the Supreme Joy rising out of the Knowledge achieved, and therefore, of the lived-Perfections.

It is the lot of the animals "to live to eat", suffer meekly the gruesome burden of voiceless sorrows and live a life of

delusions and empty joys. The *Sruthi* here clearly points out that the men of no self-control not only fail to reach the Supreme State of Joy and Peace, but also fall back into the sorrow pit at the very centre of the whirl of birth and death (*Samsaram chadhi-Gachchathi*).

यस्तु विज्ञानवान्भवति समनस्कः सदाशुचिः ।

स तु तत्पदमाप्नोति यस्माद्भूयो न जायते ॥ ८ ॥

*Yas tu vijñānavan bhavati
samanaskah sada suçih ;
Sa tu tat padam apnoti
yasmad bhūyo na jayate.*

(8) But he who is intelligent, ever-pure and with the mind 'controlled reaches that goal from whence none is born again.

In the previous stanza we were told of the tragic end of a man who does not try to control his sense-appetite, but, like an unintelligent animal, ever lives the life of the sensuous excesses and voluptuous revelries. Had the *Upanishad* left the statement at that, some of us might have come to despair at the feeling that there is no hope of salvation after having been born for once as a man ; for, don't we see around us and is it not our own experience that the sense-demands are very powerful and that they are not urges easy to be ignored or controlled : This stanza shows how logical and complete is the style of the *Rishis* ; and the style represents the men and their head and heart-personalities to us ! !

The stanza under review asserts positively that one who, through steady practice, has come to have a large share of self-control, and therefore is naturally ever-pure, reaches, through degrees of spiritual growth, that state of Perfection, which is Eternal and Immortal and from which the *Yogi*, who has once reached it, never comes back.

Yasmad Bhūyo Na Jayathæ (whence none is born again).—A common doubt that often comes to the early *Sadhakas* as well as to the uninitiated students is being answered here. During life no body can ever remain even for a moment without

action : and actions have reactions : thus, at death there must surely be a fund of reactions yet to be experienced by every ego-centre. And, naturally, the *Jivas* are born again into such embodiments and are placed in such circumstances where they can find the necessary field and the necessary instruments to reap the required reactions. A true devotee, having lived the life of the *Upanishads* and having thus reached the Supreme *Padam* (state) shall not return to this *Samsaric* whirl of birth and death. Why ?

And if man were to come back thus to the realm of Delusions again, what is the use of his having undergone such an amount of struggles, and having practised so much of self-restraint and self-control ? In what way is he then different from the sensuous, vicious, self-indulgent animal man ? This doubt generally dabs the enthusiasm of the *Sadhaka*. Kind *Sruthi* here gives the answer that such an one reaches the Supreme Goal, "from whence none is born again".

The Supreme Goal is the realisation of our identity with the All-Soul, the *Brahman*. With this true identification, the false identifications with the mind-intellect equipment, the ego-sense, totally ends. We cannot have the Knowledge of the rope and the serpent at one and the same time ; so too, we cannot have at once the Knowledge of the Self and the false delusory identifications with matter, called the Ego, which is the *Jiva*. Birth and death belong to the ignorance-created sense of ego ; when the ego has once for ever ended in the Knowledge of our Real Nature, all dreams of birth and death also end ! !

विज्ञानसारथिर्यस्तु मनः प्रग्रहवाञ्छरः ।

सोऽध्वनः पारमाप्नोति तद्विष्णोः परमं पदम् ॥ ९ ॥

*Vignana-sarathir yas tu,
manah pragrahavan narah ;
So'dhvanah param apnoti,
tad Vishnoh paramam padam.*

(9) The man who has Intelligence for his charioteer and Mind as (well-controlled) rein,—he attains the end of the journey, that Supreme Place of Vishnu.

Concluding the analogy portion, the *Sruthi* states in this stanza that the individual who has allowed his *Indriyas* to function under the dictatorial charge of his Pure Intellect alone can reach the Supreme Destination. In our ordinary drives, if the driver be a dead-drunken-fool, it is obvious that we will not reach our place of appointment.

In our life, ordinarily, we are careless, and, under the instructions of an impure intellect, we run amuck among the sense-objects whipped by the lashing strokes of an uncontrolled mind's vicious urges; panting, and exhausted, weary and fatigued, emaciated and weak, the so-called man-of-the-world lives a life of unrest and disappointment, even though he is housed in a palace, clothed in silk and rolling in a feather bed ! None of the material successes and no amount of sense-objects can give such a shattered human personality any taste of the real joy and the Godly peace which are the birthrights of a full-grown man.

But, on the other hand, we find a sage or a saint without any of the sense-objects about him, housed under some tree, clothed in rags, rolling on stones, yet withal, supremely happy and divinely peaceful. It becomes evident, if we just open our eyes and observe these two scenes, that the real *Shanti* is not a product to be concocted from a favourable setting of the sense-objects around us. Contentment and inner joy can gurgle up from the bosom of an individual, only if he has trained his mind to function under a well-disciplined self-control. Unless we bring the play of the mind under strict and continuous supervision of an ever-vigilant intellectual discrimination in us, we shall not, during our life, progress steadily towards our life's goal, That—the Temple of Peace. This Supreme Goal is mentioned here as the Place of *Vishnu*. It would be absurd if a student of Vedanta were to understand that the 'Place of *Vishnu*' is the Puranic concept of *Vaikunta*. For purposes of explaining the Scripture, *Vishnu* is to be conceived of as one of the Trinities, but, here, the meaning is, the all-pervading *Vasudeva*', the *Paramatman*.

Discussions on the two "souls"—the individual and the Supreme souls. The relation between them and the means by which the individual may yoke himself to the Supreme and realise his identity

with the Eternal are explained through the parable of the chariot.

इन्द्रियेभ्यः पराह्यर्था अर्थेभ्यश्च परं मनः ।

मनसस्तु परा बुद्धिर्बुद्धेरात्मा महान्परः ॥ १० ॥

*Indriyebhyah para hy artha
arthebhyas ca param manah ;
Manasas-tu para buddhir
buddher atma mahan parah.*

(10) Beyond the senses are the sense-objects ; beyond these objects is the mind ; beyond the mind is the intellect and beyond the intellect is the Great Self.

This and the following *Mantra* together provide the *Sadhaka* with a line of thinking which he could pursue during his deep meditations upon the Immortal and the Eternal Essence which is the core of his existence. Earlier we had already explained that in the language of our philosophical text-books, "beyond" or "within" indicate the comparative subtleties between two or more factors ; subtleties in such cases being measured by the greater pervasiveness of one factor over the other. The *Sruthi* here starts with the grossest manifestation of Truth, and, slowly guiding the student through degrees of greater and greater subtleties, ultimately introduces him into the very realm of the subtlest of the subtle, the *Atman*—that resides in the holy-of-the-holies in us.

This *Mantra* also is clearly echoed in *Gita*.^{*} It is to be carefully noted that the "hierarchy of principles" we see here becomes later on the technical terms in the later *Sankhya* and *Vedanta*. Today when we read this *Mantra* it is not easy to get ourselves free from those later Vedantic implications that came to be associated with those terms.

The meaning of the various portions of this *Mantra*, though clear in themselves, present some obvious difficulties in understanding the opening statement that the sense-objects are subtler than the sense-organs themselves. Modern science explains to us that there is no mechanism conceived of by man in his

^{*} Refer Swamiji's Commentary on *Gita*, (III-46).

laboratories which is as subtle as the sure dictaphone provided in our ears or the ready camera adjustments of our eyes, or for that matter the sensitive equipment in our organs of touch or taste. None of the above has ever been beaten even by the best of the discoveries of man, even during this Era of Science ! Yet, the *Sruthi* dares to declare that "*subtler than the sense-organs are the sense-objects*". It is natural then that the student reading and pondering over this *Mantra* should come to wonder how the "forms" are greater than the "eyes", or the "sounds" greater than the "ears" or the "taste" greater than the "tongue".

This portion of the *Mantra* is explained by teachers to their disciples in the Himalayan valleys very clearly. For example, this very *Sadhu* found it difficult to gulp this statement down, and had to approach his master for extra-explanations. Doubts in philosophy have a knack of exhausting the student at their very first appearance and when the explanations come from a true master, all of a sudden, the student finds himself wondering how the doubts ever arose at all in him when their explanations were so simple and obvious ! !

Were it not for the different "forms" available in the world outside we would not have been able to feel or assert that we have "eyes" ; if the world were to be steeped in silence all would have been deaf ; for, in such a condition the sense-organ "ear" has no justification for or proof of its very existence. In this sense the sense-objects are the very cause for the sense-organs.

It may be more clear, if we take a modern example from our own political life. The President of the Indian Republic, or for that matter, the very Parliament itself would not have any existence, if the Indian *Janata* were not there ! The people of a country is the cause for the State and for the Government of that country. Certainly the total might and power of the State is not to be found in any of the individual Indians ; yet, the *Janata* of the country is the cause for the State in that country.

In this sense the sense-objects are the causes for the sense-organs. Since cause is always subtler than its effects, the *Sruthi* is fully justified in explaining to us that "*beyond the sense-organs lie the fields of sense-objects*" such as form, sound, taste, smell and touch.

Beyond the object is the mind.—The significance is self-evident. Mind is certainly much more subtle than the causes of sense-organs. But for the mind, the sense impulse reported by the sense-organs as they come in contact with the sense-objects would not have been registered and synchronised together to give us the total impression of the objects, as the table, the chair, etc.

Beyond the mind is the intellect.—In our early discussions on the fundamental principles of Vedanta we had discussed the scope and structure of the human mind when we said that the mind was the “receiving-and-despatching clerk” in the inner secretariat. The mind receives impulses sent in by the five sense-organs and synthesises them into one consolidated report, and passes it up to the intellect.

The decisiveness of the intellect is that which finally disposes of the ‘report’; there, the impulses received are checked up with the previous experiences of similar impulses, which are stored away in the memory, and, with reference to and in terms of the past experiences, the present impulses are revalued and correctly classified. The intellect thereupon passes down its judgment, which, in its turn, is, for the necessary execution of orders, pushed back by the mind, to the five sense-organs, who implicitly act as they are required in the outer fields of the sense-objects.

Here, the scheme of the inner Government is so elaborately discussed, only to show the greater importance the intellect has over the mind. The scripture is perfectly justified in making her statement that the intellect is subtler than the mind.

Beyond the intellect is the Great Self.—Naturally so. The Great Self is what we have so far discussed in our earlier lectures as the Total Mind or the Total Intellect, the *Hiranyagarbha*. In our false sense of egoism and delusion-created sense of separateness we presume generally that we think our own thoughts, totally independent of the thoughts of others! We also presume that our thoughts are exclusively our own and nobody need worry about the texture or the quality of our individual secret thought! This is an absurd and false statement worthy to be blabbered only by a thoughtless, uneducated, barbarian!

Nobody can think even a single thought in absolute independence and freedom from the whole.

Let us take an example and try to understand it. Mr. Das returning from his office, takes his tiffin, and lying on an easy-chair in his pyjamas, comes to entertain an idea that he must go to the "pictures". He soon comes to feel that he has a wish to see the "pictures", and that it is his wish. Now friends, do you accept that this clerk after his day's work resting in his verandah is the sole author of this idea? Is he not a product of the thoughts and values of his age (his great grandfather would never have thought of such an idea, since there was no cinema in his time), a slave to the conscious and the unconscious influences that he has been receiving in the society during the week and a victim of the silent murmurings of the innumerable advertisements that he must have seen and the thousands of laudatory statements heard from his friends who applauded this particular "picture"? And however intelligent he may be, he would yet shamelessly declare that, "go to the pictures" was his own independent individual idea which came to him that evening?

In fact, none of us can independently feel or think. We, each of us, live every moment of our life influenced by others; and if we be true in our convictions and noble in our values of life we shall be, to that degree, influencing the total.

The Total Intellect is the concept of the God-principle. Here the "intellect" stands for the entire "inner instrument", *Antahkaran*. It must certainly be obvious to us now that the Total Intellect is certainly subtler than the individual intellect.

महतः परमव्यक्तमव्यक्तात्पुरुषः परः ।

पुरुषान्न परं किञ्चित्सा काष्ठा सा परा गतिः ॥ ११ ॥

Mahatah param avyaktam

avyaktat purushah parah :

Purushan na param kincit

sa kashtha sa para gatih.

(11) Beyond the great (*Mahat*) is the unmanifested (*Avyaktam*). Beyond the *Avyaktam* is the *Purusha*; beyond the *Purusha* there is nothing; that is the end; that is the highest goal.

The total Intellect described in the previous *Mantra* constitutes, as we know, the *Hiranyagarbha*, which is the state of the world as it first emerges out of its very seed condition, as a sprout. We all know that in a fig seed we have, in fact, in an unmanifest condition, the entire tree itself. Under favourable conditions, through the minute holes in the skin of the seed, water is absorbed and the food contents of the seed bloat out and tear the testa and the tegmen which are the coatings of the seed. The radicle and the plumule, fattening themselves upon the ready food stored away in the cotyledons slowly shoot out through the aperture made in the skin of the seed. At this stage the seed is said to be sprouting.

Similarly, the Supreme Truth, the all-pervading Pure Existence, eternally remains in its unsullied State of Perfection. Due to the play of *Maya*, Pure Consciousness starts projecting Itself through various layers of grossness to end ultimately in its manifestation as the *Jagat*. In the analogy of the seed, if the Total Intellect be the condition of the sprout, where manifestation has just started becoming evident, then the condition of the tree in the seed as unmanifest would correspond with the State of *Avyaktha*, stated in the *Mantra*. The *Avyaktha* state is the State of the Unmanifest *Jagat*; something like the condition of each of us in our mother's womb; it may be noted here that *Avyaktham*, *Pradhana*, *Moola-prakrithi*, *Avyakrithi* and *Maya* are synonymous terms.

Beyond Avyaktham is the Purusha.—Subtler than the State called the Unmanifest is the Supreme, Pure Existence, termed in the *Upanishad*, in this *Mantra* as *Purusha*. This is the subtlest of the subtle factors which is the Supreme Goal of all the manifested world.

In our enquiries into the last two *Mantras* we were seeking from the grossest external manifestations of Truth, through layers of greater and greater subtleties, to the supreme point of purity and subtlety, the Truth. We find in degrees that the grossest are the sense-organs and beyond them are the sense-objects. Still subtler is the mind. Beyond the mind is the intellect. Subtler than the intellect is the Total Intellect. Yet subtler is the Unmanifest, and, herein we conclude by declaring,

that the subtler than the Unmanifest, the Supreme Goal of our seeking, is the *Purusha*, the Truth. As logic would have it, it is possible that in this chain of varying degrees of subtlety we may yet come to enquire what is subtler than the *Purusha*. In this case we may tumble down into the logical absurdity known as *Anavastha Dosham* (*Regress ad Infinitum*). To avoid this, and to satisfy fully an enquiring intellect, *Sruthi* here clearly explains, "beyond the *Purusha* there is nothing".

It may yet be wondered at by the seekers whether this *Purusha-tattva* is after all the Supreme Truth, by identifying with which we may reach that state of Supreme Perfection and Peace. In order to allay all such vague doubts, and to rewind all the loose ends into one cord, the scripture, here in this *Mantra*, definitely asserts (*Sat Kastaa*) "that is the end".

एष सर्वेषु भूतेषु गूढोत्मा न प्रकाशते ।

दृश्यते त्वग्रया बुद्ध्या सूक्ष्मया सूक्ष्मदर्शिभिः ॥ १२ ॥

*Esa sarvesu bhutesu,
gudhotma na prakasate ;
Drsyate tvagraya buddhya
sukshmayā suksma-darsibhih.*

(12) This *Atman* is hidden in all beings and does not shine forth, but is seen by subtle Seers through sharp and subtle intellect.

Vedantic Self-realization is not a mere experiencing of the true nature of our divinity alone. To rediscover ourselves to be none other than the God, is not in itself a full realisation accepted by the *Sastras*. No Mahatma's work is ended unless he could feel a perfect *oneness* with all in his own Self. If he were to realize himself to be God and all others as worm-men his realisation is faulty and absurd. The pot-space in getting rid of its false ideas of identity with the pot, shall realise at once its oneness with the entire universal space. Similarly, when a seeker, through patient and constant practices, rids himself of his ego and the ego-bound identification with his body, mind and intellect, he will realise that the sum-total—whole—is Truth alone "which I am, which I am".

In short "*Prathyagatma-Brahma-ikkyā-Gyanam*" (the knowledge of the Oneness of the innermost Self with the Total Self) is the process of the Path of Knowledge. This is amply made self-evident in this *Mantra*. In the previous *Mantra* we had a discussion of the world of the sense-organs, the world of the sense-objects, the world of the mind, the intellect, the Total Mind, and of the Unmanifest ; and before the *mantra* concluded its declarations, it also indicated the supreme-most Factor, the *Purusha*. In this *Mantra*, which immediately follows the previous one, we have the discussion of the "secret Self" that lies concealed in "all beings". The idea implied therein is obviously the oneness of the "inner" individual Self and the "outer" Total Self.

Hidden in all beings.—*Atman*, the very Self of the individual, can never be hidden from us, yet, under the veil of Ignorance and the thick walls of negativities and delusions, the Self seems to be hidden from our ego-centric instruments of cognitions, feelings and understandings, such as the sense-organs, the mind and the intellect. The Self is only as much hidden from us, because of our delusions and the delusion-created ego, as the rope is hidden from us because of our mental delusions and the delusion-created serpent ! !

Just as only those who can approach the "serpent-in-the-dark" with a peaceful mind, in a spirit of enquiry and self-discovery, can rediscover the rope, so too only a seeker of Truth, whose mind has calmed down from its agitations for sense-indulgences and who, therefore, can approach the great Mission of Life in a spirit of enquiry and self-discovery, can come to discover the *Atma-tattwa*, the Source of all life, as himself !

यच्छेद् वाङ्मनसी प्राज्ञस्तद्यच्छेज्ज्ञान आत्मनि ।

ज्ञानमात्मनि महति नियच्छेस्तद्यच्छेच्छान्त आत्मनि ॥ १३ ॥

*Yacched van-manasi prajnas
tad yacchet jnana atmani ;
Jnanam atmani mahati niyacchet
tad yacchet santa atmani.*

(13) Let the wise sink his speech into the mind, the mind into the intellect and the intellect into the Great *Atman* and the Great *Atman* into the Peaceful *Atman*.

The Aryan nature is such that he is not satisfied by a mere philosophical idea, however poetical and utopian it may be ; for, the Aryan is too much of a creature of purpose and practical vision. Unless an idealism is supported by a perfect technique of self-discipline by which the practitioner can come to live as an *experience for himself* all the joys it promises, it is totally rejected and laughed at by the sturdy intellect and courageous mind of the true Aryan ! !

True to this spirit of the country and its people, Indian philosophy is never a mere text-book of stale and fantastic ideas strung together to form a garland to applaud a passing mood of some tumbling generation ! Immediately following an explanation of the Supreme State of Existence there is in the *Mantra* now under discussion, a vivid detailed explanation of the technique by which we can come to realize that State of Perfection indicated by the term *Purusha*.

“*Merge the speech in the mind*”,.—There are some mere Sanskrit-scholar-*Pundits* who take a limited view of the words and come to read into the scriptural text too tight a meaning, and thus ruin the very broad hints on Truth given in the scriptures. The very style of the scripture is to express what she has to say, more with the suggestiveness of the words than with the *literal* word-meaning. More harm than good is done by the mere Sanskrit-scholars trying to play their havoc in the field of the scriptures. With their dry knowledge of words trying to explain the Science of Sciences, which deals with the Absolute, can but be a folly and a disastrous crime.

The scriptural text here is to be understood as indicating at once both the organs-of-knowledge and action by the mere mention of one of them, namely, the speech (*Vak*). “All the organs-of-action and of knowledge have to be brought under perfect control of the mind,” is the advice of the *Sruthi*.

Thereafter the mind is to be sunk into the intellect, meaning, the mental tossings, doubts, desires, emotions, etc., are to be completely brought under the iron grip of the intellect and its

powers of discrimination. The process is continued by lifting our identification with our individual and fixing it up with the Grand-Total Whole. This again is to be sublimated into its fundamental cause, the State of Sleepless Sleep, the *Thuriya Avastha*, transcending which the seeker in his higher meditations reaches the goal of life, there, to eternally recognise himself, in a powerful subjective experience, to be the *Purusha* Himself.

10-13. *Yoga of Meditation discussed fully to show that it gains vitality when it is practised as a Yoga of Communion—a slow and steady withdrawal of our attentions into ourselves, and there making them drive deeper and deeper towards the central Reality, the Self.*

उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्यवरात्रिबोधत ।

क्षुरस्य धारा निशिता दुरत्यया दुर्गं पथस्तत्कवयो वदन्ति ॥ १४ ॥

Uttishta jagrata,

Prapya varan nibodhata ;

Ksurasya dhara nisita duratyaya,

durgam pathas tat kavayo vadanti.

(14) Arise, awake ; having reached the great (teachers) learn (realize that *Atman*). Like the sharp edge of a razor is that path difficult to cross and hard to tread—thus the wise say.

Upanishads are the declarations of Truth, as experienced by the *Upanishad Rishis* in the white-heat of their living meditations. An individual even when he comes to discover an ordinary joy or beauty almost goes mad and strives to explain the experiences to his fellowmen. Thus, we have the sons of bards in every language, besides the various volumes of literature on every branch of knowledge. Instances are not wanting where scientists have almost gone mad, when they suddenly, during their deep study, discovered for themselves one more secret of Nature. Newton, certainly, could not have felt so much the pain of the apple falling on his nose as the joy of his thoughts over a gravitational force that draws everything towards the earth ! Archimedes ran naked, directly from his bath-tub, crying "*Eureka*," "*Eureka*," through the streets of the city, when he discovered for the first time how volumes can be measured by measuring

the water displaced by material objects !

Similarly, when the great *Rishis* of old, in their silent contemplation upon Truth, came to realize the godliness, that is eternally their nature, they roared forth their joy-calls and victory trumpets to their generation in their joy and feeling of the Absolute Perfection. Instances are many in the various *Upaishads*, where the *Rishis* directly call their generation to follow the Path, seeking Truth until each realizes for himself his identity with the Godhead.

Jesus Christ also expresses almost a similar idea when the Lord says : " Strive to enter in at the straight gate, for narrow is the gate and straight is the way that leads to life, and few be they who find it."

Here in the *Mantra* under discussion, we have the world-famous Call of the Spiritual Kingdom . . . the Call of Hope and Glory . . . to man rotting in his dejections and sorrows. This famous call to man to arise and awake has been adopted by Shri Swami Vivekananda as his Mission's emblem. " *Arise, awake* ",—Oh man rotting in the quagmire

Samsar ! Arise, Turn towards the brilliant sunlit land of perfection and walk through the Path shown to us by the *Rishis*. Walk the Path, and reach the glorious summit from where you can experience that your sense of limitations and imperfections, hopes and desires, successes and failures, loves and hatreds, birth and death, were all but a gruesome Midsummer Night's Dream ! ! !

Mere rising from the bed is not at once a total ending of sleep. It is our agreed experience that although we have arisen from our pillows we are not immediately as alert and fully awake to the external world as we would be after a time. Certainly, there is a lot of difference between our sudden rising from the bed and our state of full awakening.

Rude shocks in life such as loss of property, sudden bereavements, disappointments in love and such other causes may temporarily make us realize the falsity of the values lived by us in our day-to-day life of competition and selfishness. Man, under these stresses in life, comes to feel the hollowness of life and, for the time being, comes to entertain, a seemingly healthy

Vyragya ! But this is only a passing mood. In many of us this mood does come at some time or other, but soon it passes off as an impotent impulse. This state of temporary opening of our mind to the hollowness of life as lived by us is here indicated by the word "Arise". At this state the seeker is not fully aware of the very change that has taken place in him. Hence the *Rishis* cry out : "Awake" ; meaning that the one who has under the lash of circumstances come to accomplish the command, "arise", should try his best to come to a fuller realisation of what has actually happened within him in his personality, and thus fully get himself awakened.

This awakening can be effective only when one, who has "arisen", rushes to the feet of a *real Guru* (who is well versed in the scriptures and also well-established in the *Brahmic* consciousness) and learns the *Brahma Vidya*.

Why should we at all have a *Guru* ? This is often asked by almost all the modern educated class of people. But they at once forget, that when even as mechanical an art as typewriting cannot be mastered without an instructor, no one can pursue the Path of Self-Realization without the help of a Master.

Again, the Path is very difficult : "*like the Sharp edge of a razor is that Path.*" Anybody who has at least made even a sportive attempt to live always the Path of Good shall realize how slippery and narrow is the Path ! ! ! A life dedicated to perfect self-control and self-discipline, a life of full awareness and all discrimination is no easy life. A *Sadhu* sitting under a tree may be an "Idler" to a city-bred Insurance agent or a jungle wood-cutter ! ! ! But if only the Insurance agent would try to do what the *Sadhu* is doing even for an hour ! !

The statement that the Path is as risky as the knife edge is made by the *Sruthi* only to emphasise the importance in strictly following the Path, under all *conditions* and *circumstances*. This should not in any sense of the term be misconstrued that the Path is impossibly difficult ; nothing of that sort is it to a true seeker.

Lord Death could claim the statement as His own. But he does not, and, in this, he is not showing off any sense of assumed modesty. In Vedanta, we do not accept any statement made by

anybody "as his own experience" with any credulity !! Imaginations and fancied ideas have no place in Vedanta. We accept only words and statements that have come to us by a long line of teacher-disciple descendants. Hence Lord Death is quoting here the Wise as having made this statement in the ancient days ! (*Kavya Vadanthi*.)

According to the *Rishis* any civilization or culture which precludes the experience and the recognition of the Divinity in man is an existence in continuous sleep and a progress through tumbling falls !

अशब्दमस्पर्शमरूपमव्ययं तथारसं नित्यमगन्धवच्च यत् ।

अनाद्यनन्तं महतः परं धृवं निचाय्य तन्मृत्युमुखात्प्रमुच्यते ॥ १५ ॥

*Asabdham asparsam arupam avyayam,
tatharasam nityam agandhavat ca yat ;
Anady anantam mahatah param dhrivam,
nicayya tau mrtym mukhat pramucyate.*

(15) He, who has known that which is without sound, without touch, without form, without decay, without waste, eternal, without smell, without beginning, without end, beyond the *Mahat* (great) and unchanging, is freed from the jaws of death.

You must be remembering that the burning question which Nachiketas submitted to his master, Lord Death, was, whether there was really an existence after death or not ; Lord Death refuses to give him a direct reply in a parliamentary yes-or-no-style, and thus sceptics and low atheists, not having the intellectual capacity to understand the correct import of the very method of religion and religious teachings, quote such instances and cry that even the greatest of *Gurus* have only succeeded in evading the questions directly asked by the ignorant seekers. But scientifically speaking, the question, though seemingly sincere and correct, is a philosophical absurdity, and no true thinker can afford to answer such a wrong question in terms of a completely scientific language. If Lord Death were to say that there is no life after death he would certainly be telling a lie, since, Pure Existence must eternally exist. If on the other hand

Lord Death were to answer that there was existence after death, again, he would be false ; he would be wrong scientifically, for, in the Realm of Pure Existence there could be no trace of non-existence, and the idea of existence can maintain itself only with reference to its opposite, namely non-existence. It was under a similar awkward situation that Lord Buddha also had to keep mum when his disciples pointedly asked him if there was a God or not.

Though Lord Death is not directly answering his disciple the answer is there in his words for the wise and the intelligent to grasp intuitively.

The *Mantra* under discussion explains the true Nature of the Self in its Absolute State of Perfection, in terms of a language conceived for explaining things and for narrating experiences which are finite and limited. Our concept of the world and the things in it is, as we have already seen, only through the five small peep-holes in our body, constituted by our five sense-organs. What we cognize or experience in our life is explained in terms of the sounds heard, the touches felt, the forms seen, the tastes enjoyed or the smells experienced.

In short, the world constituted of matter is cognized, and the cognition is expressed in terms of the properties of matter. In her attempt to discuss and explain the Abode of the Spirit, *Sruthi* had to point out to us the distant horizon of the world-of-matter and explain to us, "there in the yonder lies the field of Pure Consciousness, the Kingdom of the Spirit".

At the boundaries of the finite world-of-matter all languages stop. Beyond them only the Language of the Soul, silent meditation, is available for the spirit to converse with the spirit. Naturally, *Sruthi* finds no other convenient and scientific style of language to explain the inexplicable, except by employing a language of repeated negations.

Thus, in this *Mantra*, we have the *Atman* explained to us in all its transcendental glory in the language of negation as *Asabda* (without sound), *Asparsa* (without touch), *Arupa* (without form), *Arasa* (without taste) and *Agandha* (without smell). This is the only method available for the Science of Truth to explain itself in terms of a finite language.

In negating the properties of matter such as sound, touch, form, taste and smell, the *Sruthi* is indicating that our sense-organs cannot perceive Truth as such.

Nithyam (eternal).—Because Truth is beyond the comprehension of the sense-organs It is eternal ; for, a pot or a table, or a chair, perceivable by the *Indriyas*, is finite. Thus, in negating for our sense-organs any play in the world of Truth *Sruthi* has already indicated Its eternal nature too.

Anadyantham (without beginning and without end).—Not satisfied with the mere indication of the eternal nature of the Soul by the very language of negation employed, *Sruthi* has already expressed in the first line of the *Mantra* that Truth is eternal (*Nityam*). And in her anxiety to drive home the idea into the mind of the seekers, she almost commits a sin of repetition when she says that Truth is without beginning and without end. When we digest this epithet in a true understanding of the science of *Brahma Vidya* we shall find that without being a mere repetition, it is a well-chosen word to give us a clear idea of everything suggested by it.

That which has an end, meaning, a perishable thing, perishes only to lose its present state of existence ; and in thus perishing it can only go back to the condition of its cause. If a clay pot perishes it can only become mud which is the cause from which it had risen. If a seed ends it can only be to become a tree, which is its immediate cause, or it can decay to become the very elements from which it came. When we say that Mr. Gupta has died or is no more, we only mean that the elements which, for a time, constituted themselves into the " form " of Mr. Gupta are no longer keeping that " form " but have merged with the dust. In the language of physics, " nothing is lost when a candle burns " †

Thus, all finite things end only to go back to the cause from which they had been born. In denying an end to Truth, *Sruthi* is indicating to us that Truth is the Cause of all causes and that it has no cause into which it can go back ; this also means that Truth as such is not the modification of anything. It is the Ultimate. Hence it is also beginningless.

Dhruvam (immutable, changeless).—From the above it must

be quite clear how Pure Consciousness, the Self, in its transcendental nature, is ever changeless.

If such be the plane of Truth, beyond the cognition of the sense-organs, the mind and the intellect, even if it be changeless, eternal, beyond the *Hiranyagarbha* and beginningless and endless, why should a seeker after all seek to establish his identity with it ? Is it not more sure, certain, and profitable to reach the day-to-day market-places to play the sorrowful game of life, and there to strive and struggle, to sweat and toil, to sob and sigh, in between the flashes of laughter and mirth, smile and dance, song and play ?

Sruthi is here explaining why man should seek and ultimately fulfil himself in establishing his true identity with this Supreme State of Perfection. He who has known the State of Eternal Bliss is freed from the jaws of death. There is no doubt, indeed, that no other fear in life is so common to all as *the dread of death*. Here the word "death" is to be understood not in its limited aspect of men and beings breathing their last leaving their forms on the surface of the globe to perish and decay. 'Death' is used here in its widest scope bringing within its embrace all the finiteness in the world of matter.

Thus, the *Mantra* explains to the deluded man that he who can seek constantly and ultimately succeed in establishing his identity with this State of Perfection, to him there is no more a world of finite sense impulses to wreck his perfect joys by bringing stormy sorrows and tumultuous despairs into his bosom.

Nichayya (having known).—This does not mean 'to know Truth' in the sense we know a table or a chair. When the *Mantra* has, in its very first line, negated the sense-organs any play in the World of Truth, it has negated in effect the play of the mind and the intellect also. Here the term "*having known*" only means "experiencing subjectively". Intuitive experience alone is the mode of 'knowing' the Truth Absolute.

14-15. *The spiritual path of meditation taking us from the perceptions of Plurality to the vision of Unity is described as "sharp and thin as a razor's edge". But it leads all determined and sincere seekers beyond Death to the State of Immortality,*

नाचिकेतमुपाख्यानं मृत्युप्रोक्तं सनातनम् ।

उक्त्वा श्रुत्वा च मेधावी ब्रह्मलोके महीयते ॥ १६ ॥

Nachiketam upakhyanam

mṛtyu proktam sanatanam :

Ukṭva śrūṭva ca medhavi

Brahma loka mahiyate.

(16) 'The intelligent one having heard and repeated this ancient story of Nachiketas told by Death, is glorified, in the world of *Brahman*.

In the 16th and 17th *Mantras* with which the first chapter of *Kathopanishad* ends we have a brief statement glorifying the very *Upanishad*. Such statements of eulogy are very frequent in the style of the scriptures and according to Shri Sankara these statements are often pronounced with a view to encouraging the seekers to study and follow the path.

It is noteworthy that Shri Sankaracharya in his commentary points out that *Brahma Loka* can have two interpretations : it can be either " the world of the Creator " meaning the *Hiranyagarbha* State (*Brahma Loka*), or it can be the world of the Self-effulgent Brahman (*Brahmarupi Loka*, where *Loka* means *Prakasaroopa*). In short, if an intelligent one, who has a large share of retentive capacity and has memorised the first three *Vallis* of this *Upanishad*, were to repeat these *Mantras* often in the presence of others, and thus contribute to the dissemination of them, he shall come to enjoy the transcendental joys of the *Brahma Loka*. And if we were to accept the other interpretation of Shri Sankara we shall have to twist a lot the meaning of the words 'hears' and 'repeats' ; for wherein, "hearing" and "repeating" should mean hearing the Truth from a perfect Master and repeating it through one's own reflections and meditations until at last one becomes a full *Gyani*. Then such a great soul shall come to enjoy this *Brahmaroopi Loka* ; for, "the knower of Brahman becomes Brahman", is a famous scriptural declaration.

य इमं परमं गुह्यं श्रावयुद् ब्रह्मसंसदि ।

प्रयतः श्राद्धकाले वा तदानन्त्याय कल्पते तदानन्त्याय कल्पत इति

॥ १७ ॥

*Ya imam paramam gūhyam
 sravayud brahma-sanisadi,
 prayatah sraddha kale va
 tad anantyaaya kalpate,
 tad anantyaaya kalpata iti.*

(17) Whoever with devotion recites before an assembly of Brahmins or at the time of *Sraddha* of forefathers, this highest secret, obtains thereby immortality, obtains immortality.

(Thus ends the Third Valli of the First Chapter)

Anantyaaya Kalpathe (obtains immortality).— This statement should not be confused by the student of Vedanta to mean what it directly says. Immortality cannot be gained by merely reading some text-books, however great they may be in the presence of any assembly. Knowledge alone is the cure for ignorance ; light alone can end darkness. The vital experience lived through *Samadhi* that one is, in one's real *Svarūpa*, of the nature of the Self, alone can end the delusion-created ego-centric false-identifications. It is only with the end of the ego, can we end the dream-sorrows of *Samsar* and end for ever the endless whirl of births. Here immortality means only relative immortality which is the lot of the denizens of the heavens. Compared with the quick visitations of death in the plane of the mortal the long periods of life extending over thousands of years and enjoyed by the enjoyers of heaven, the heavenly life can be favourably expressed as immortal.

With this glorification of *Brahma Vidya* the first half of the *Upanishad* ends. It is the style of the *Upanishads* to repeat the last portion of the last *Mantra* in each chapter to indicate the end of the chapter. Thus we have here a repetition of the last two phrases to indicate the close of the chapter.

Thus in this chapter we have an elaborate scene of a fit student for Vedanta ; Nachiketas, approaching a great and perfect Master of *Brahma Vidya*, Lord Death, with a burning doubt for elucidation. The chapter also contains some crisp statements in which the scriptural answer to the transcendental question has been very briefly hinted at, with, as it were, many dots-and-dashes in between. The next chapter constituting in

itself the entire second part of the *Upanishad*, gives us in detail the philosophical expositions on the Nature of the Self.

16-17. There are critics who believe that here the *Upanishad* ended and these two stanzas give the result of its recital. But this chapter raised some points as to the nature of the Self, the meaning of Yoga, etc. Hence the second chapter.

ॐ सह नावतु सह नौ भुनक्तु सह वीर्यं करवावहै ।

तेजस्वि नावधीतमस्तु मा विद्विषावहै ॥

ॐ शान्तिः ! शान्तिः !! शान्तिः !!!

Om Saha Navavathu

Saha Now Bhunakthu

Saha Veeryamkaravavahai

Thejaswinavadheeth amasthu

Maa Vidwishavahai

Om Shanthihi ! Shanthihi !! Shanthihi !!!

Let Him protect us both. May He Bless us with the bliss of Knowledge, Let us exert together. May we not hate (quarrel with each other).

OM PEACE ! PEACE !! PEACE !!!

This "Peace-invocation" repeated here to enquire into the style of the *Upanishad* and the findings of their research have pointed out, they say, to a fairly conclusive idea that the *Kathopanishad*, as originally conceived, has concluded with the first chapter. Some of the arguments are :—

- (i) At the end of the first chapter (*Valli III*) we have a declaration of benefits (*Phala Sruthi*). Generally these are enumerated at the close of a book, at the final end.
- (ii) There are practically no quotations in the first chapter: the entire ideas and expressions have the freshness of an inspired first-hand declaration : and we have noted from place to place where, how and in what way does *Kathopanishad* subscribe new thoughts and initiates new traditions.
- (iii) The first chapter has the rhythm of a wilful literary

plan ; while the second is comparatively loose, rambling, and in some places the arrested flow jerks itself into a forced movement—in all such places it gives us first the feeling that they are all “after-thoughts” and soon we almost get convinced that not only are these interpolations at places, but even the entire chapter is a later addition no doubt, by a lesser genius.

- (iv) In the second chapter we meet with many quotations some of them repetitions from the earlier chapter itself !
- (v) In contents also there are signs, pointing to the same conclusions. In the first chapter some questions raised have been answered—perhaps in the mystic language of that age. The second chapter opens up new problems and tries to solve them. No doubt the second is helpful in places to realise fully the implications and significances of the first chapter and its crisp declarations. But the second chapter does not contribute any new ideas ; it serves as a resourceful and helpful appendix to the first. Rather hastily composed, as the appendix itself, it raises new problems and it does not pause to answer them.

Due to these above versions they seem to conclude that the second chapter is an ‘after-thought’ and that the *Upanishad* proper ends with the *Shantipat* we are now discussing.

As seekers, trying to understand the Goal and walk the path, we need not pause to condemn or to applaud these scholarly conclusions. We shall study the next chapter, and make use of it in understanding the main *Upanishadic* ideas.

द्वितीयोऽध्यायः

CHAPTER II

चतुर्थी वल्ली

SECTION IV

The call for Inner Vision, leading to the recognition and attainment of Unity.

पराञ्चि खानिव्यतृणात् स्वयम्भूस्तस्मात् पराङ् पश्यति नान्तरात्मन् ।
कश्चिद् धीरः प्रत्यगात्मानमैक्ष दावृत्तचक्षुरमृतत्वमिच्छन् ॥ १ ॥

*Parañci khani vyatnat svayambhū
tasmāt paraṁ paśyati na antaratman ;
Kascid dhīraḥ pratyagatmānam aikṣad
āvṛtta cakṣur amṛtatvam icchan.*

(1) The Self-existent (*Brahma*) created the senses with outgoing tendencies ; therefore, man beholds the external universe and not the internal Self (*Atman*). But some wise men with eyes averted (with his senses turned away) from sensual objects, desirous of Immortality, sees the *Atman* within.

Being the opening stanza of the second part of this *Upanishad* we find herein not only an explanation of the sorrows and limitations of the *Samsaric* world, but also hints on the path trodden by the wise in getting out of this world-of-tears.

No religion in the world is without its conception of an all-powerful Controller and Director in all forms of life, who is Himself the Creator. This God-principle is conceived of, by all known prophets and sages, as Self-born. The *Sruthi* here is repeating this universal concept of God.

God, the Creator, has created the sense-organs with a powerful tendency to go outward into the lustful fields of their own individual sense-objects. Our ears can detect and listen to even the whispering songs of some distant bird, chirping on the branch of a tree, through trucks, even in the busiest market centre ! Our eyes can detect what our ears cannot hear ; a gross

example of this can be had in modern clubs where one understands what two friends are whispering between themselves, by merely watching the movement of their lips ! Thus, all our sense-organs ever keep on galloping outward towards their objects, but never can they be turned inward to listen, see, smell, taste or touch what is happening within the body !

This portion of the text has been more often than not completely misunderstood both by casual readers and studious scholars. Sankara's commentary has been always the sanction for the misinterpretation. Sankara no doubt has interpreted it rightly as *Parameswara* "pierced the senses", meaning Lord "cursed the senses". This is misconstrued as disrespect of a philosophy towards the external world. No such implication has been even distantly echoed here. It only says that to those who are practising the higher *Yoga* of meditation, the sense-organs are a curse, inasmuch as they refuse to be easily turned within. And without taking, at least once, an inward plunge it is impossible for the *Indriyas* to cognise the Divinity which is the substratum everywhere for all objects.

Therefore, that the Lord cursed the sense-organs is not to be understood literally ; else the entire chapter would be advising a negative *Yoga* of suppression and not a positive *Dharma Yoga* of intelligent control and wise direction of our faculties towards self-perfection.

And yet there are a rare few, who in themselves represent those who stand on the last landing-ground on the stairs of evolution, and who, wishing to reach the very roof-of-existence, control their sense-organs and thus turn their entire attention into their own within, where they hope to discover the Well-of-knowledge, and Source-of-all-life, the Self. Unless a seeker has come to feel an irresistible urge to know the Nature of the Self and to experience as the Self the fullness of life, he will not find in himself the required sense of introvertedness nor the required amount of moral courage, intellectual conviction, mental heroism, psychological guts and spiritual nerve to dam the outward flow of his *Indriyas* and thus send the stream of attention in him back again to its very source, the *Atman*. Indeed, such full-blown men are rare in any generation.

In the Upanishadic literature, if we accept the majority view that *Kathopanishad* is one of the earliest of the Hindu scriptures, we may say that the terms *Prathyagatman* and *Antaratman* are used here for the first time in our ancient *Rishis'* Philosophy.

It is evident how Lord Death has in this beautiful stanza summarised the causes for the disease of death and also prescribes the specific for its remedy. No wonder then if there is no other stanza in all our scriptures which is so often quoted from platforms, from pulpits, in courts and in temples.

पराचः कामाननुयन्ति बालास्ते मृत्योर्यन्ति विततस्य पाशम् ।
अथ वीरा अमृतत्वं विदित्वा ध्रुवमध्रुवेष्विह न प्रार्थयन्ते ॥ २ ॥

*Paracala kamau anuyanti balas
te mrtyor yanti vitatasya pasam ;
Atha dhira amrtatvam viditva
dhruram adhruvesu iha na prarthayante.*

(2) The ignorant (child-like) pursue the external pleasures (and so) they fall into the snares of the widespread death. But the wise do not desire (anything) in this world, having known what is eternally immortal in the midst of all non-eternals.

The forgetfulness of our real divine nature is Ignorance. This Ignorance (*Avidya*) manifests itself in the mental plane as desires. Prompted by these desires the mind whips the sense-organs to run their errands in the world of their objects which together are called by us as the *Karmas* or the actions. It is the "Ignorance" in the Plane of the Spirit that gets transformed into "desires" in the mental plane which itself is again expressed as "actions" in the outer world-of-objects. Ignorance, desire and action ; these three are technically termed in Vedanta as the knots of the Heart (*Hridayagranthi*). It is this set of knots that causes the actions, and man, in order to reap the results of his actions, is compelled to take various new forms and independent lives, in varied circumstances of uncertain joys and endless sorrows.

In these two *Mantras* we have a clear indication of two great

obstacles that stand in our way to the realisation of the Self : (1) the natural tendency of the sense-organs to run outward eloping with the entire wealth of attention that man is capable of and (2) the desire for enjoyments of the objects of this world and the next.

The majority belongs to this type of existence. They are, viewed from the highest standards of spiritual perfection, mere children in their growth and evolution. They fail to recognise the possibility of an existence greater in scope and diviner in contents, where the sense-organs stop their rambling into the pits-of-sorrow, wherein they generally revel as an ordinary man, living in his day-to-day delusions. Indeed, it is only too true when the *Sruthis* classify such men as mere children.

Haunted by desires and goaded by the mind, the sense-organs vainly trot on the paths of their objects, seeking for a perfect joy, which is continuous and unbroken. Man can be satisfied only with the eternal. Finiteness always despairs man. Seeking the Infinite, in our ignorance, we exhaust ourselves among the sense-objects. Tired and weary, fatigued and exhausted with the futile hunt, each of us falls prostrate soon to breathe our last ! Hence, *Sruthi* declares that such childish men who have not come to an adult's discrimination, will fall ultimately into the fruits of delusions, the widespread snares of death (finiteness).

Against these men of childhood, *Sruthi* contrasts the wise men who live a life of sleepless discrimination and Knowledge. The wise maintain a vigilant discrimination between the Real and the unreal, the True and the false. They naturally escape from the suicidal urges of a deluded mind. They do not covet the unstable, the perishable, the finite sense-objects, for they want nothing but the Immortal and the Infinite.

Since the inner enemies are the ignorance, desire and action, the wise through an intelligent control of their actions earn for themselves a state of desirelessness, and since desires are manifestations of the deep-seated Ignorance, in the state of desirelessness there is naturally an end of all ignorance. When ignorance is ended, desire and action, which are but the same ignorance in different forms, are also ended. With the end of ignorance, Knowledge comes to shine forth. *Avidya* is ended in *Gyan*.

And such *Gyanis* are here termed as the wise. Such men are those who, as Blake expresses in *Auguries of Innocence*, tried successfully:

“ To see a world in a grain of sand,
And a heaven in a wild flower ;
Hold infinity in the palm of your hand,
And eternity in an hour.”

They naturally would never yearn for the fleeting sense-objects of the world for their own sake, as any ordinary deluded *Samsarin* ; also at the same time they will not detest anything, because to them everything is but the glorious manifestation of the Divine Self.

1—2. *Desire promoted means normal vision is turned outward thirsting to acquire, striving to possess and hoping to enjoy. But the wise turns his vision inward and experiences the Eternal Essence in the bewildering finitude.*

येन रूपं रसं गन्धं शब्दान् स्पर्शाश्च मेथुनान् ।

एतेनैव विजानाति किमत्र परिशिष्यते ॥ एतद् वै तत् ॥ ३ ॥

*Yena rupam rasam gandham
sabdān sparsāns-ca matthuman ;
Etena eva vijanati
kim atra parisisyate : Etad vai tat.*

(3) That *Atman* by which man cognizes form, taste, smell, sounds and the sexual joys . . . what is there unknowable to that *Atman* in this world ? This is verily that (*Atman* thou hast wanted to know).

This *Mantra* must be quite clear to those of you who would read and ponder over the *Kenopanishad*. In fact this *Mantra* is a summary of the entire line of arguments raised in *Kenopanishad* and the conclusions reached therein.

We found in *Kenopanishad* that the instrument eye, in itself, is not competent to cognize the external objects. If the eyes were to see of their own accord, then if I were to pluck out my eyes and place them on the table they should be able to continue seeing things by themselves ; this we know is absurd. Again, a dead man whose eye balls are intact, even though he is

staring on with open eyes, we, from our practical knowledge of life, know for certain that the open eyes of the dead see nothing. From the above it is amply clear that the human eye is only an instrument to see and that it is to be used by a Seer within.

For a close analogy we shall take the case of a telescope in use. A telescope by itself can observe no movement of the planets ! It is the observer behind the eye-piece of the telescope who watches the heavens through the instrument. Similarly, the human organs-of-knowledge are only instruments through which smell, sound, taste, form and touch impulses can be received by an intelligent entity that rules the within and makes use of these five instruments.

That *power* within each one of us, that is the seer behind our eyes, the listener behind our ears, the smeller behind the nose, the taster in the tongue, and the feeler in the skin, is the Soul of man, the *Atman*, the Self.

This conclusion, already arrived at in *Kenopanishad*, is now inimitably summarised in this *Mantra* by Lord Death, when he says " that is *Atman* by which man cognizes form, taste, smell, sounds and sexual joy ".

Maithunan (sense enjoyments).—The use of the word in its plural must necessarily give us the hint that it is not the sexual pleasure alone that is meant but it covers up all enjoyments that we receive from the external world through our instruments of sense-knowledge.

Atman being thus the vital intelligence that presides over all the sense instruments, since all our knowledge regarding the world of objects is only through the reports of these five great agents, it is quite appropriate to state that there is nothing unknowable for that *Atman* in this world. Again, we shall find, later on in the same *Upanishad* that the Supreme Reality is by nature Knowledge Absolute.

We may here conveniently remember that the eager seeker in Nachiketas reached the doors of his preceptor, Lord Death, raising a question or doubt as to " what is that which is beyond *Dharma* and *Adharma*, beyond the cause and effect and beyond the past and the future ". That question is being now directly answered. The Life Centre in us that controls and directs all

our physical, mental and intellectual activities is the Divine Spark of Truth, the Self. It being Eternal and Infinite in Its nature, It must necessarily be beyond the comprehension of language to definite It as such. So then, conforming Himself to the method-of-the Upanishads, Lord Death through the activities of the dead inert matter envelopments around us is pointing out to a 'vital and dynamic Presence of Divinity which is in us. Thereafter He explains to Nachiketas that "*this is verily that*"—.

In our ordinary life we indicate objects with the pronouns "this" and "that", when one is nearer to us than the other; the nearer one is always indicated by the pronoun "this". When we say "that" chair and "this" pen, it clearly shows that the chair is far away and the pen is nearer to us. Again, the pen becomes farther removed from us when it is compared with our own shirt; thus we say "that" pen and "this" shirt, similarly, we may use expressions as "that" body and "this" mind; "that" mind and "this" intellect, etc., within ourselves, when we compare our own body with our own mind, and our own mind with our own intellect. Naturally, it becomes evident that the Self, which is the core of ourselves being the most intimate part in us, is rightly indicated by the term "this".

Kimatra-parisisyate.—"What else remains here?" Comparing the various available renderings of this line and the interpretations upon it, we must conclude that Sankara's is the best and the most appropriate. "What, is that there in this world, remains unknowable by the Self," meaning, nothing remains as unknown, where the pure knowledge is realized in *Gyan* there are no objects to be known.

Here the *Upanishad* says, "*this is that*" : meaning the individual-Self is the Supreme Self. Besides this Vedantic interpretation of the oneness of the individual-Self and the Total Self, we may here, accepting the dramatic background of the *Upanishad*, explain the passage as "that is the *Atman* thou hast wanted to know"—about which even Gods are puzzled.

स्वप्नान्तं जागरितान्तं चोभौ येनानुपश्यति ।

महान्तं विभुमात्मानं मत्वा धीरो न शोचति ॥ ४ ॥

*Svapnantam jagaritantam
 ca ubhau yena anupasyati ;
 Mahantam vibhram atmanant
 matva dhiro na socati.*

(4) The wise, when he knows *that*, by which he perceives all objects in dream or in waking, is the great omnipresent *Atman*, grieves no more.

Here Lord Death is slightly elaborating upon the greatest significance and the practical application in life of the Knowledge of *Atman* in us. In these days of scepticism and lustful madness for profits and material hoardings the educated class of Hindus all over the country ask sarcastically "of what use is this wonderful Knowledge of *Atman* which the Vedanta preaches? Can it set us on our progress? Can it cure the poverty in the world or bring about universal peace and joy?"

Though one is tempted to curse this generation for its unintelligent approach to religion we must at once admit that there was, probably, never in the history of the world a generation born so sensitive as ours, and so sincerely seeking to establish communal peace and universal brotherhood, as ourselves.

Here, in the stanza, we have a sufficiently broad hint as to the mental state, the physical condition and the intellectual attitude of a seeker who has come to grasp this true great Knowledge and fix his own identity with the Real Factor, Pure Consciousness, that lies in him.

We already found in the previous *Mantra* that the world of the waking state, experienced through our five senses of knowledge, is made possible, only because of the Vital Intelligence, the Life Force, that presides in our body.

If life were not in any particular body, however great and noble that *Mahatma* might have been, however intelligent the Scientist, however emotional the poet, however great a genius the painter, none of them would any more function, when once the life has ceased to preside over the body! Thus, we have already found out that the intelligent entity, the *Atman*, is the illuminator of our awareness of the waking-state-world during the periods of our wakeful existence.

There could be none who had not yet experienced what a

dream is. Now, supposing, you take up a book in hand ; how do you read it ? Is not the presence of some light necessary for the illumination of the letters and words in the book, so that you may read ? Supposing it were night, you might read in the moonlight ; in the dark fortnight by starlight ; in a cloudy starless pitch darkness you may bring the light of fire to light up the letters. In short, without some sort of light we cannot see objects. Yet ; we will ' see ' our daily dreams. The dream-world certainly exists only within ourselves ; and since we ' see ' them, and they are objects, we surely must needs have some sort of a light to illumine for us the inner objects in your mental region. Lord Death explains that the dream-world is also illumined for us by the Light of the same Divine Intelligence that presides in us as our Real Nature.

One and the same Consciousness illumines for us not only the world of our waking state but it also lights up for us the experiences of our dream-state.

The goal of life, the highest achievement of man, is to get himself completely detached from his false identifications with his body, mind and intellect, and come to rediscover himself to be nothing other than that Divine Spark, which is the director and controller of all the activities, manifested in Its outer envelopments !

Mahantham Vibhum (Great, Omnipresent).—In the final experience of God-consciousness the perfected one establishes his identity with his soul and thereby at once realises his own nature as great and omnipresent ; for, we have already found that the individual Self is the Supreme Self.

Having realised this Factor, this Truth, the realised saint grieves no more (*Na Sochati*). Sense of limitation is the mother of desires in the human heart, desires raise the storm clouds of whistling thoughts to shriek through a noisy bosom, and drive the sense-organs to gallop out into the muddy mesh work of sense-objects. In the hustle and tussle to achieve a satisfaction in each of our desires we strive and struggle and in the end find ourselves in a vale of tears. Even when the desires are fulfilled we, alas ! discover that the joy of success we expected to enjoy is not there !! When the desires are not fulfilled, in tearful

disappointments, men grieve and sigh, make their life a burning avenue of wretchedness. Thus, desires ultimately give us nothing but sorrow whether they are fulfilled or not.

Desire, we found, can rise only when there is a sense of imperfection in us. Soon after a full dinner, at least for some time, even the worst of gluttons will not desire for something to eat ; for the time being there is no lack of food within him. Soon after a couple of hours he may desire for some light tiffin ! Here he has started feeling a sense of incompleteness, hence the desire.

When a perfect human being who has ended all his misunderstandings about himself and has come to the Knowledge that he is the Supreme Awareness in himself, he, in his Absolute sense of Perfection, shall desire no more for anything that the world of the sense-objects can give. Such a perfected one is a God-man upon earth. This is the Goal pointed out by the greatest of all religions known to man, Hinduism. The Religion of Vedanta calls upon man to rediscover himself to be nothing short of God Himself. And when a mortal has fully realised and come to live continuously the God-consciousness, him, certainly, no sorrows can approach.

If there be but a generation of such Supermen, will it not most satisfactorily solve all our problems : political, economic, cultural and religious ? In fact even when a man has just begun to live the Life of the Spirit, all the above-mentioned problems of life will recede as though at the waving of magic wand ! Is there anything, then, more practical than the Religion of Vedanta ?

य इमं मध्वदं वेद आत्मानं जीवमन्तिकात् ।

ईशानं भूतभव्यस्य न ततो विजुगुप्सतः ॥ एतद् वै तत् ॥ ५ ॥

Ya imam madhvadam Veda

atmanam jivam antikat ;

Isanam bhuta-bhavyasya

na tato vijugupsatah : Etad vai tat.

(5) He who knows this *Atman*, the enjoyer of honey, the sustainer of life and the lord of the past and the future, as very near . . . , he fears no more thereafter. This is verily That.

Not only does such a perfected one go beyond the source of sobs and tears, but shall, says this *Mantra*, reach the Domain of Fearlessness.

Madhwadam (the enjoyer of honey).—Honey here stands for the good fruits of meritorious acts performed by the ego-centric *Jivas*. The *Atman*, Pure Consciousness, is said to be here the eater of honey ; meaning that He is the enjoyer of all the good luck that accrues to one as a result of noble acts of kindness, mercy and love, performed in earlier states of existence.

This statement, in fact, if understood literally, would go against the grains of the very philosophy of Vedanta, as *Atman* is neither an enjoyer nor a doer. In case we accept the *Atman* to be an enjoyer, in Pure Consciousness which is One-without-a-second, how can there be the 'enjoyed' and the 'enjoying' separate from the eternal Enjoyer ?

Atman is the Intelligence that illumines for us both the acts of commissions and omissions, meritorious or otherwise. It is again the Light Principle that illumines for us both our joys and sorrows. The sun may illumine equally a scene of murder at one place and a scene of a great *Yagna* at another place ; but the sun never gets defiled by the blood nor purified by the *Mantras*. Similarly, the *Atma-Chaitanya* is only a Witnessing Light of Pure Intelligence lending Its consciousness to all awareful acts committed by the ego-centric vainful *Jiva* during its self-forgetful delusory transactions in life.

3-5. *The Self is here indicated as the Principle of Knowledge because of which all knowledge of perceptions and experiences is possible. Knowing, meaning, realising this Self, the knower escapes all fears.*

यः पूर्वं तपसोजातमद्भ्यः पूर्वमजायत ।

गुहां प्रविश्य तिष्ठन्तं यो भूतेभिर्द्युपश्यत एतद् वै तत् ॥ ६ ॥

Yah purvam tapaso jatam

adbhyah purvam ajayata :

Guham pravisya tisthantam

yo bhutebhir vyapasyata : Etad vai tat.

(6) Who beholds him seated within the five elements, him who is born of *Tapas* of (Brahma Ji), who was created before the waters, who entered the Cave of the Heart and dwells there (he verily sees *Brahman*). This is verily that (*Brahman*) which thou hast asked for.

The theory of creation is a knotty problem in the Upanishadic literature. Modern book-grazers and hasty students of the *Upanishads* come to the fantastic conclusion that intuitive understanding is not true, since these sacred books have self-contradicting theories to explain the how and whence of the worlds' creation. No two *Upanishads* concur among themselves as regards the details of the processes in which creation had taken place. Each *Upanishad* explains to us in its own inimitable style a method and a process ; each of them in itself has a charm of its own and can give the student a convincing explanation quite satisfactorily, till the same student comes to read and understand a totally different process expounded by another *Upanishad*.

The *Upanishad Rishis* in their firm understanding of the Truth could not take the problem of creation with any seriousness at all. They knew, in their wisdom, that this manifested world of names and forms is but a delusion created by the human mind. The world has only as much reality as our dreams have. But the *Rishis* knew at once that to the seeker who had approached them, steeped as he was in the impressions created by his own delusions, in his early stages, the world is absolutely real. Each student is to be delicately and softly raised to the higher realms of knowledge from the state in which he finds himself at the time of his approach to the *Guru*.

Again, no two students are of the same temperament, culture, attitude or aptitude. The teacher learns the nature of each student through patient and close observations and classifies him according to his temperament.

But there the *Upanishad* calls the *Atman* as an enjoyer of the fruits of the good acts, only in its conditioned aspect. We have already found that the body-mind-intellect-equipment in itself has no life of its own, it being made up of mere dead matter. It is the spirit in us that lends to these coverings a simulacrum of life.

To make this point clearer let us take an example. The glass

bulb or the filament has no capacity in itself to illumine objects in a dark room. But when a required quantity of electricity is allowed to flow through the same filament, the bulb gains a special capacity to illumine the objects of the room. In fact electricity as such does not illumine the room ; it is the glowing filament in the bulb that gives us the light. Yet, don't we in our transactions say that the room is lit by electricity ? It is exactly in a similar way we have here the statement that *Atman* is the enjoyer of the fruits of actions ; *Atman* as conditioned by the mind, intellect, and body, is actually what is meant here.

One who realises his *Atman* "*henceforward fears no more*". Where there is *Raga* (attachment) there *Bhaya* (fear) and *Krodha* (anger) co-exist. When, as we have seen in the last *Mantra*, a perfected soul has reached the State of Desirelessness he has no more attachments with any particular objects of the world, and, naturally, there cannot be in him any sense of fear. He has in his true wisdom realised the shadow-nothingness of his dream-body, and so does not fear even death which to him is only an escape from his own self-created body cocoon ! ! He has no attachments even with his body. He is perfectly above all body consciousness. *This verily is that Brahman, which thou hast asked for.*

The great *Rishis* explain to each type, a particular Myth-explanation for the Myth-world ! The authors of the *Upanishads* were not in the least serious about their explanations of a non-existent world. Whatever be the explanation given and processes elaborated, to explain the creation of the world, each master had to lead the student ultimately to a State of Pure Consciousness, viewed from the Absolute Nature of which the creation had actually never taken place, except in the deluded *Jiva's* own mind ! !

If we were to explain the fallacy of the snake-in-the-rope we too would adopt an explanation according to the condition of the bitten, and shall modify our own explanations when the victim of the "snake-bite" changes to be another individual of a different temperament and belonging to a different class of culture.

In this *Mantra* we have just some hasty cross-references to

the processes of creation which have been much more elaborately dealt with in other *Upanishads*.

Brahman of the Supreme Reality in the (*Samasti*) macrocosmic aspect is *Hiranyagarbha* and in the (*Vyasthi*) microcosmic aspect is the *Jiva*. He who knows *Brahman* through both these aspects is a true Knower of Reality.

Adbhya Poorvan (prior to waters).—The *Hiranyagarbha* or the Total Mind was born prior to the “five elements”. Here water stands for all the “five elements”; *Akasha* (space) is a grosser manifestation risen up from the Total Mind.

Tapasah (by penance or of knowledge).—There are passages in the different *Upanishads* where the processes of creation are explained; one of them is “the Supreme willed Himself to be many and many came or became”.^{*} It is this theory that is echoed in this *Mantra*.

In short, the *Mantra* says that a seeker finally realises the Supreme Reality, the Eternal Factor, both in the microcosm and in the macrocosm (*Vyashti* and *Samashti*). *Brahman* appears as *Jiva* through the conditioning of *Avidya* and as *Hiranyagarbha* through the conditioning of *Maya*.

When the conditionings drop off the *Hiranyagarbha* and *Jiva*, they become identical with the transcendental *Brahman*. “This is verily that”, which you had enquired for.

या प्राणेन संभवत्य दितिर्देवतामयी ।

गुहां प्रविश्य तिष्ठन्तीं या भूतेभिर्व्यजायत ॥ एतद् वै तत् ॥ ७ ॥

Ya pranena sambhavati,

aditir devatamayi ;

Guham pravisya tisthantim

ya bhutebhir vyajayata : Etad vai tat.

(7) (Him) who is born along with *Prana* in the form of all *Devas*, who, entering into the heart, abides therein, and who was born with the elements. (He who knows *Him* verily knows *Brahman*.) This is indeed That.

Here the word *Prana* stands for *Hiranyagarbha* thus the

^{*} Refer Swamiji's *Discourses on Taittiriya Upanishad*—Ch. II-6.

meaning would be he who is born in the form of *Prana* or as *Hiranyagarbha*.

Devatha-mayec (in the form of Gods ; the Soul of the Gods). Here *Devata* (Gods) stands for the presiding deities of the sense-organs. The *Pranas* (Vital Airs) are the life-essence in the perception powers of the *Indriyas*.

Aditi (one who eats, the eater).—*Hiranyagarbha* is called here as *Aditi* because he is the sole enjoyer of the whole universe, as he is the microcosmic life or the cosmic *Prana* or the cosmic intelligence. All the joys enjoyed by every living form are a joy registered in and lived in the Cosmic Mind or the Total Mind.

This is verily that Brahman (which thou hast asked for).

अरण्योनिहितो जातवेदा गर्भं इव सुभृतो गर्भिणीभिः ।

दिवे दिवे ईड्यो जागृवद्भिर्हविष्मद्भिर्मनुष्येभिरग्निः ॥ एतद् वै तत्

॥ ८ ॥

Aranyor nihito jataveda

garbha iva subhrito garbhinibhihi ;

Dive dive irdyo jagrvadbhir

havisadbhir manusyebhir agnih : Etad vai tat.

(8) As the foetus is well preserved by the pregnant woman, the fire, that is lodged within two pieces of wood, is worshipped daily (both) by men who are 'awake' and by those who offer oblations. This is indeed That.

The *Brahman* of the *Gyani* and the Fire of the house-holders are the same in the sense that all worship reaches the same Source-of-all-blessings, the Supreme.

In Vedic sacrifices, fire is lit not from any glowing coal or from any other scientific contrivance, as a cigarette-lighter or a match-box. The auspicious fire is generated for installation in sacrifices by rubbing two pieces of wood together. Generally it is done by revolving a cylindrical piece of wood in a wooden cuphole scooped out in another piece of wood. The rod is pressed into the hole by one *Rithwic* and another Brahmin with a piece of string, wound round the vertical rod, makes it revolve continuously in its wooden cup. The wooden piece with

which the revolving rod is pressed down is called the *Uttararani* and the lower wooden block is called the *Adhararani*.

In the *Adhararani* near the edge of the cup is placed some cotton. The wood pieces rubbing against each other generate heat by friction and it is sufficient to set fire to the cotton pieces. This fire is then tended in the *havan-kund*. The fire, when once lit, is never allowed to die off but is very carefully nourished and kept ablaze all through the sacrifice until the conclusion of it in the *Pooranahuti* (total oblation). The motherly tenderness, devotion and care with which the *Rithwics* preserve the fire is beautifully brought out by comparing it with the foetus preserved in the womb of a pregnant woman.

The same *Brahmana* who is worshipped by sages in the heart through meditation is worshipped by house-holders as *Agni* (fire) through sacrifices.

The seekers worshipped the Supreme through meditation upon the significances of OM. The house-holders worshipped the same Reality that is present in the core of its own manifestation, the Fire. Worship being an act in the gross plane-of-sense-objects it needs some prop which for the sage is provided in the symbol OM, and for the house-holder in his symbol, the Fire. If the names and forms in OM and Fire are removed, the Pure Existence, which is the Absolute Truth, that forms the foundations for both the props, becomes the same. Hence, the *Upanishad* says that the Truth which is worshipped by the sage and the house-holder is one and the same ; and *this is verily that which thou hast asked for.*

यतश्चोदेति सूर्यो अस्तं यत्र च गच्छति ।

तं देवाः सर्वे अर्पितास्तदु नात्येति कश्चन ॥ एतद् वै तत् ॥ ९ ॥

Yatas-ca udeti suryoh

astam yatra ca gacchati ;

Tam devah sarve arpitah

tadu na atyeti kascana : Etad vai tat.

(9) And That, from which the Sun rises, and in which it sets, on that, all the *Devatas* depend and no one goes beyond. This is indeed That.

All finite things have been observed to have a beginning and an end. Transient beings are born, and everything that is born must necessarily die out after a period of time. Modern astronomers also have come to the same conclusion that the Sun, the moon and the stars, including this globe of ours, are things born and so they will at different periods of time disappear.

Long before our modern astronomers started their game, in the dim dawn of the history of Modern man, known today to the European thinkers, the Aryan Masters had built a heaven on the Gangetic Plains and developed themselves into a generation of supreme human culture and Godly civilization. Their greatest achievement in thought left to us for study is the Science of all Sciences, the *Brahma Vidya*, as discussed in the *Upanishads*. The *Rishis* of the *Upanishads* here declare that the vital Truth from which the Sun had risen at the time of its manifestation and the Factor into which it would merge when it withdraws its manifestation, is the State of Pure Existence, which is nothing but a homogeneous mass of Pure Consciousness. Here, the word Sun is a representative noun, indicating in itself the entire world of finite objects.

On that Eternal Absolute, the State of Pure Existence, depend all the *Devas*. The word *Devas* here does not mean the denizens of the heavens, the Godly creatures. It only means the five Fundamental Elements. They are called *Devas* because they are considered in Vedanta as the presiding deities of the five sense-organs. The modern college-educated children of ignorance in their incorrigible vanities of wisdom (*Vigyan*), might easily laugh at this idea of presiding deities in our sense-organs. This kind of blasphemy we hear of now-a-days so often that it would be worthwhile for us to go into the question for a moment and see if there is any justification for such a belief.

Here Chinmaya may confess that he was the greatest blasphemer of all such statements in our scriptures ! When ignorance strides forth to act and play the part of wisdom such atrocities must necessarily come to be enacted ! ! Our European readers need not feel aghast at these strong expressions. These expressions can be exaggerations only to those of us who have forgotten how the Christian world persecuted and killed the

greatest thinker and astronomer of the times, when he discovered and declared that the Sun is stationary and that it is the earth that moves . . . a statement against the then Biblical declarations !

Let us try to understand the import of the statement made by the *Upanishad* in the light of the scientific discoveries of our own times. The sense-organ, ear, is declared to be presided over by *Akasha* (space). Our modern scientists will admit that sound can be created and conveyed only in space ; if there were no space, no sound would have been generated or conveyed. The world that lies beyond the concept of space known to all of us is the world of sleep, where, certainly sound has no entry. Viewed thus what is wrong if the great masters of the *Upanishad* had declared that the " ear is presided over by Space ".

In a dark room for all our struggles to " see ", we shall see nothing but darkness. When the room is lit we see the objects. Thus, in the presence of the objects, the eyes cannot see them except when they are blessed by the principle of light. In short, only in a medium of light can the instrument eye function, except in negligible darkness too ! ! ! Such being the case what is wrong if the *Rishis* of the *Upanishads*, in the language of their era, describe the instrument eye to be presided over by the visible source of all light, the Sun ?

Thus, when approached in a spirit of sympathetic understanding, research and discovery, we shall find, clothed in the frocks of Vedic frills and ancient ribbons, there reveals eternally the deathless Eve of Truth who is for all times and for all people ! If the modern educated Hindus reach the doors of their own scripture only to laugh at and to ridicule it, let them remember that they are laughing at their own ignorance and lack of understanding.

Thus the *Mantra* clearly declares that all the Five Great Elements depend entirely upon the Supreme Self, the Pure Existence. The deities of the five sense-organs, " the Gods ", depend upon the Supreme Reality, the Pure Consciousness, as the spokes of a wheel upon the hub. But for the central hub, we all know for certain, that the different spokes can neither maintain themselves nor function effectively in strengthening

the wheel !

This truth, which is the substratum for the Fundamental Elements, is that which you have been asking for.

6-9. *Shows that the One Lord who entered the human heart as the Self, is also the Universal Self, from which all creation has sprung.*

यदेवेह तदमुत्र यदमुत्र तदन्विह ।

मृत्योः स मृत्युमाप्नोति य इह नानेव पश्यति ॥ १० ॥

*Yad eva iha tad amutra,
yadamutra tad anv iha ;
Mrtyoh sa mrtyum apnoti,
ya iha nana iva pasyati.*

(10) What is even here (visible as the world) the same is there (invisible as *Brahman*) ; and what is there, the same is here. He proceeds from death to death who beholds here difference (between *Brahman* and the world).

All the different waves are but the ocean ; the ocean alone is. Whether it be at its head, or at its length or at its tail the real substance behind the serpent-in-the-rope is always the reality of the rope alone. In fact the waves are nothing but the ocean ; the serpent is nothing but the rope. The mirage is nothing but the desert ! !

In this sense the *Mantra* is here kindly explaining to us that in fact there is no difference between the Supreme Reality and the essential Reality behind the world of delusory names and forms. Where there is no Truth there cannot be a manifested world of objects. What we see behind all the seeming delusions is the eternal, all-pervading Truth. The story may be a tragedy, a comedy or musical extravaganza, but whatever be the theme and quality of the film displayed, the audience can have for themselves a continuous idea of the story only when the play of light and shade is supported by an unchanging spotless screen ; where there is no screen there no story can possibly be depicted.

In short, the knower of the Self, after his supreme moment of life, the moment of illumination, cannot visualise the world

without a dynamic awareness of the Truth Principle that ever supports and governs it. After his gaining the Knowledge, His vision changes, and thereafter, even the most heinous crime is to that God-man only a manifestation of the All-pervading Self. He neither condemns nor extols any action. To him all actions are false ; but at once they are to him, solid reminders of the Central Truth.

The uninitiated youth may find this statement rather too thick to swallow down. We shall try to grasp its serious inner import through a vivid example. Don't we find doting fathers glorifying their children as the most ideal kids that had ever come to live on the surface of this globe, even when they have proved themselves to be urchins of the worst type : mischievous, unruly and uncultured ? If we observe these fathers more minutely we shall find them to be intelligent critics of all the children ! Similarly, a God-man, having had once the glorious vision of the All-pervading Beauty, attains the Eternal perfection of the Self. Thereafter even in the midst of sorrows and pains he experiences but the Self's joys and bliss ! !

To the realised saint, in his transcendental vision, *whatever is here that is there, what is there the same is here.* If the statement be yet beyond the grasp of your understanding it is only because the statement relates itself to standpoint which is too high even for your mind and intellect to soar up in their fat grossness.

After all why should one try to gain this Supreme Vision of Oneness ? Of what benefit is it for the mortal ? These and similar questions might rise up in the mind of the unprepared and the uninitiated.

The *Sruthi* kindly answers all such possible doubts in the minds of her students. She says that he who has not achieved this great grand Mission of life and has not come to have a free *Darsan* of the Eternal Presence everywhere and at all times, such a wretch, grovelling in the world of plurality, shall fall repeatedly into the whirl of births and deaths.

The hint is that he who has come to experience the State of Oneness, which is the State of Godhood, shall never more slip back into the endless wheel of *Samsaric* pains and continue the agonising shuttle-race between repeated births and deaths.

मनसैवेदमाप्तव्यं नैह नानास्ति किञ्चन ।

मृत्योः स मृत्युं गच्छति य इह नानेव पश्यति ॥ ११ ॥

*Manasa eva idam aptavyam,
naiha nana asti kincana ;
Mṛtyoh sa mṛtyum gacchati,
ya iha nana iva paśyati.*

(11) By mind alone could this (*Brahman*) be obtained ; then there is no difference here at all. He goes from death to death who sees any difference here.

As we have seen earlier the Aryans' practical mind is not satisfied by a mere statement of an ideology however wonderful and great it may be. No philosophy is acceptable to the Hindu, unless it also contains " a way of living " by which he can realise the ideals glorified by that philosophy. Satisfying this inner urge, essential to the Aryan character and national temperament, the *Upanishad* immediately after Her statement of a philosophical truth, as explained in the previous *Mantra*, hastens to give Her disciples the Path by which they can realise this Vision of Truth. Mind alone is the vehicle for God-realisation. This statement of the *Sruthi* may seem to contradict the previous assertions that the Self is realised on transcending the mind and the intellect.

This is no contradiction. When she says that mind is the only vehicle, she only means that the mind is to be trained through its controlled and regulated application to minimise its activities to a zero, when it dies off itself. The process of " mind annihilation " is to be achieved not through a *murder* but through a *suicide* ! In fact, however great the master be, and however powerful the scripture be, they cannot bring about the final ending of the mind unless the seeker is ready to end it himself and by his own efforts.

By mind alone could this be obtained.—Meditation is the process by which the mind soaring over the summit of spiritual enquiries loses itself into nothingness. Like the mythological bird, Phoenix, which, singing its death-song, falls down to die in a mass of fire, the mind, out of its own ashes, rises up to a new

faculty called intuition, which is the instrument with which the seeker ultimately cognizes the Self. When the mind has thus ended, through meditation, and the Self has become fully aware of Itself, then *there is no difference here at all.*

For purposes of certainty and emphasis of assertion *Sruthi* is here repeating dire consequences which one will have to face if one were not smart enough to walk the *Path of Truth* and fully succeed in reaching the Goal of Life in this very birth. "He shall," promises the *Sruthi*, "*go from death to death who sees differences here.*"

All beings are in truth but the One, and the failure to experience the Unity, in this diversity, is death.

अंगुष्ठमात्रः पुरुषो मध्य आत्मनि तिष्ठति ।

ईशानो भूतभव्यस्य न ततो विजुगुप्सते ॥ एतद् वै तत् ॥ १२ ॥

Angustha-matraḥ puruṣo

madhya atmani tiṣṭhati :

Isāno bhūta-bhavyasya

na tato vijugupsate : Etad vai tat.

(12) The person (*Puruṣa*) of the size of a thumb, resides in the middle of the body, as Lord of the past and the future, hence-forward (after knowing Him) fears no more. This is indeed That.

The *Sruthi* declares that a human life fully flowers itself into an adorable success only when the individual comes to rediscover himself to be the all ; and this achievement can be effected only through a control and a perfect sublimation of the mind. Mind has an existence only when it entertains its natural tossings, doubts and emotions. If thoughts do not arise in the mental plane, *that itself is the "state of no mind"*. In order to reach this "state of mindlessness" the *Yogi* is advised not only to practise a life of self-restraint and self-control, study and retirement, but also to bring the newly released energy, of his mind, to a single-pointed application at a given point for purposes of developing its powers of concentration.

In the case of those who walk the *Path of Bhakti* (devotion), they have the natural prop for meditation and concentration in

Name and Form of their beloved Lord. In the case of the *Hathayogin*, he has the *Kundalini Shakti* (the Serpent Power). For the *Karma-Yogin*, similarly, there is the constant remembrance of his all dedication to the Lord of the Universe, *Sree Narayan*. It is only for the rare few who come to tread the rocky uphill *Path of Knowledge* that we find it difficult to provide them with an intellectually feasible prop to fix their mental attention and develop their secret powers of high concentration.

No doubt the *Sruthi* texts are in themselves the Vedantic students' ultimate prop in his meditation. But before he can launch himself into the philosophical contemplations upon the nature of the Divine Spark, the Self in himself, he must first of all have a powerful and high degree of concentration to apply himself. This early training for the development of his powers of concentration is achieved by him through the process now discussed by the *Sruthi* in this *Mantra*. Kind *Sruthi* advises the Vedantic students to meditate upon the *Purusha* who dwells in the centre of the heart and who is of the size of one's own thumb.

To limit the all-pervading Truth to the form of the thumb and to locate It within the limitations of a circumscribed space, as the human heart, is indeed a blasphemy ! But the *Sruthi* permits herself even to stoop down to such a crime against herself, only to provide her children with something to lean upon and learn to step out on their first few steps in walking the Halls of Wisdom.

The second line is a repetition from Section 4, *Mantra 5* of the same *Upanishad* and for commentary please refer back.

अंगुष्ठमात्रः पुरुषो ज्योतिरिवाधूमकः ।

ईशानो भूतभव्यस्य स एवाद्य स उ श्वः ॥ एतद् वै तत् ॥ १३ ॥

Angustha-matraḥ puruṣo

jyotir-iva adhumakah ;

Isano bhūta-bhavyasya

sa eva adya sa u śvaḥ : Etad vai tat.

(13) That person, of the size of a thumb, is like flame without smoke, Lord of the past and future. He alone is even today, and will be verily tomorrow. This is verily That.

That *Purusha* or *Atman* of the size of the thumb who is perceived by the meditator in his heart as Light or *Jyothi*, exists immutably through all times : past, present and future. He exists in all living beings now, and He will certainly be existing in all forms tomorrow also.

Some *Sadhakas* taking this line very literally start imagining "a thumb-like flame" as though burning bright within their bosom and meditate long upon it. Personally, this *Sadhu* had known an individual who had been imagining this "light" for the past twenty-three years, and who, recently approached the *Swami* with a very sad and melancholy face to complain of his "spiritual fall", since he is not having now-a-days the *Darsan* of his *Atman* ! !

Friends, this is only one instance of the desperation of a foolish *Sadhaka* who had come to believe that his imagination created delusory-flame-dream is his *Atman* ! It is dangerous certainly to try to walk the Path of Knowledge without continuous study of the scriptures and constant *Satsang* with real *Mahatmas* ; we mean, not the palm-reading, star-gazing, herb-selling-*Mahatmas* that flock the city streets of our unhappy land now-a-days ! Let them be courted by the ignorant multitude that hustle out of the universities of India ! But to a true seeker of Truth and to an intelligent follower of Religion, such *Mahatmas* are more ochre-clothed-criminals poisoning the very atmosphere of this sacred Land of the *Rishis*. When we shall have a Government, intelligent enough to feed the country better and provide its people with sufficient work, we shall have these redmonsters wiped out from our market scene. Till then we must learn to endure what cannot be cured.

The thumb-like *Jyothi*, recommended by the great *Rishis*, is only to provide the meditator with a prop to develop his concentration during the early stages of his practices. The stone idol of Shiva is not in itself Shri Parameshwar ; similarly, the *Jyothi* is but an idol for the Vedantin to meditate upon during his practices and it is NOT THE *Atman*. If an idol is unfortunately stolen away from a temple it doesn't mean that God has been stolen away !

When a *Sadhaka* has developed his power of concentration

he enters, by degrees, into the higher stages of meditation advised by the *Sruthi*, in the various *Upanishads*, and he ultimately comes to realize his own identity with his own *Atman*, the Light-Power-Wisdom-Source within himself.

12-13. *The self, for purposes of meditation for an early seeker, is described as a "thumb-sized person" dwelling in the heart.*

यथोदकं दुर्गे वृष्टं पर्वतेषु विधावति ।

एवं धर्मान् पृथक् पश्यन् तानेवानुविधावति ॥ १४ ॥

Yatha udakam durge vrstam

parvatesu vidhavati ;

Evam dharman prthak pasyan

tan-eva anuvividhavati.

(14) As water, when rained on a mountain-ridge, runs down the rocks scattering on all sides, so does he, who beholds the objects as different, run after them only (at all times).

Here we are again face to face with one of the celebrated *Mantras* of this *Upanishad* which is often quoted by writers and orators.

The human mind is in fact a great dynamo of superhuman energies and Godly powers. Yet we find that the ordinary human being is a slave and a servant of his own mind rather than a master of it. In a way we may say that a similar tragedy has happened to man in the outer world too, especially in our Machine Age. The engines conceived of by man to work for him, have now become the very tyrants and iron-hearted masters at whose ever revolving wheels, man is today a helpless slave.

This tragedy in the within has come to pass because man, in his delusions and ignorance, has lost his capacity to control the promptings of his heart and the lustful surgings of his mind. The supreme wisdom and power which is in man gets scattered and flows in a thousand dripping rivulets down the Mount of Ignorance to get itself lost in its downward transit. This is indicated here in this *Mantra* by the beautiful analogy of water that has rained on the top of a rocky mountain. If only we could conserve the total waterfall on the top of the hill with a powerful

and well-engineered dam and direct the flow of the water through one single determined channel we could get out of it a lot of useful work. Similarly, if man could through his discrimination, control wasteful flow of energy, conserve it and direct it intelligently into the positive channels of right living and high thinking, he could easily get out of this very same inner equipment, the power and glory of a God upon earth.

But man will not and cannot bless himself unless and until he slowly learns to remove his ignorance of his own Real Nature with the sacred Knowledge gained through a personal experience of his own eternal Godliness.

यथोदकं शुद्धे शुद्धमासिक्तं तादृगेव भवति ।

एवं मुनेर्विजानत आत्मा भवति गौतम ॥ १५ ॥

*Yatah udakam suddhe suddham
asiktam tadrg (eva) bhavati ;
Evam muner vijanata
atma bhavati Gautama.*

(15) As pure water poured into pure water becomes the same only, so the *Atman* of the thinker who knows this, becomes, O'Gautama.

(Thus ends the Fourth Valli of the Second Chapter.)

This concluding *Mantra* of the fourth section reasserts the oneness of the Divine Presence in man and the Totality of Divinity that pervades everywhere. Man *minus* his ego is God ; God *plus* ego is man. Annihilation of the ego-sense in us is the becoming of God. When we totally detach ourselves from our misunderstandings and false values of a delusory life with the Knowledge of the True and the Eternal, the ego evaporates away ; leaving behind only the Absolute Truth, in all its purity and grandeur.

At this moment the individual realises his own Real Nature as Pure Consciousness. With this Self-realisation he experiences his oneness with the All-pervading and Immortal Truth. When pure water is poured into pure water there can only be pure water alone. Similarly in realizing oneself to be the Eternal Factor, one at once realises his own oneness with the One that

alone is the One. The individual-Self is the Supreme Self.

In fact even after such clear declarations, if we must misunderstand the true import of the *Sruthi* and cry down the *Vedas* as full of contradictions and vague statements we must be the most unsympathetic readers and the most dull-witted students of our Bible.

Long years of utter neglect of scriptural studies and the lack of proper teachers for the educated classes have undermined the *Saṁathana* culture. These have, to an extent, succeeded in distorting, if not destroying, the Hindu culture especially among the rich and the upper middle classes.

The above tragedies have made of us today what we are : a nation of Hindus where rarely we meet a true Hindu ! ! Even the best of them dread to read, and try to understand their own Bible, the *Upanishad*.

Upanishads are the very documents revealing the greatest scientific discoveries man had ever made of life and the values of life. Without the *Upanishads* Hinduism is not a religion at all ! !

14-15. *The perfect identity of the Individual Self with the Universal Self is emphasised through metaphors. Perception of this Unity leads to the One which is beyond Death.*

पञ्चमी वल्ली

SECTION V

The Inner Soul . . . immanent yet transcendent.

पुरमेकादशद्वार मजस्यावक्रचेतसः ।

अनुष्ठाय न शोचति विमुक्तश्च विमुच्यते ॥ एतद् वै तत् ॥ १ ॥

Puram ekadasa-dvaram

ajasya avakra-cetasah ;

Anustaya na socati

vimuktas-ca vimucyate : Etad vai tat.

(1) The city of the unborn (*Brahman*) whose knowledge is permanent, has eleven gates. Adoring Him, one does not grieve and liberated (from all bonds of ignorance), he becomes free. This verily is That.

Puramekadasadvaram (City with Eleven Gates).—The body with its eleven opening-gates is meant here by the 'city'. We have altogether seven openings in the head, three openings in the trunk and the eleventh one is the subtle aperture called the *Brahma-randhra* at the crown of the head, famous in the *Yoga-sastra*.

The comparison of the body with a city is quite appropriate inasmuch as we have gates, gate-keepers, their controllers, a palace and a king, under whose orders all the servants carry out their appointed duties very systematically and very regularly, both in a city as well as in the body. The sense-organ-openings are the gates ; the presiding deities are the gate-keepers ; the mind, the controller ; and *Purusha*, the King.

Anushtaya (having meditated upon).—He who meditates upon the Lord of the Heart constantly gets rid of his Ignorance and ignorance-created ego-sense and realizes the True Nature of the Self. Thereafter, naturally, he grieves not, being liberated from all bonds of ignorance and becoming free from the trammels of birth and death.

This is "that" which Nachiketas had asked of his *Guru* Lord Death, to explain.

हंसः शुचिषद् वस्तुरन्तरीक्षसद् होता वेदिषतिथिदरोणसत् ।
 नृषद् वरसदृतसद् व्योमसदब्जा गोजा ऋतजा अद्रिजा ऋतं बृहत्

॥ २ ॥

*Hamsah sucisad vastur antariksa-sad,
 hota vedi-sad atithir durona-sat ;
 Nr-sad vara-sad rta-sad vyoma-sad,
 ab-ja go-ja rta-ja adrija rtam-brhat.*

(2) As Hamsa (Sun) He dwells in heaven ; as Vayu (air) He dwells in the sky ; as fire He dwells on the Earth ; as guest He dwells in a house ; He dwells in man, in the Gods, in the Sacrifice (truth), in the sky. He is born in the waters, He is born in the sky. He is born in the sacrifice, He is born on the mountains ; He is true a . . . t.

The *Purusha* who has been explained, in the last *Mantras*, as residing in the human body is now explained in its wider aspect as the Lordly one who presides over all the functions in every form. The stanza gives us a very melodious list of living organisms and forms in the universe.

Abja (born in water).—In the form of conch, mother-of-pearl, shell, fish, insects, in short all aquatic animals and insects.

Gojah (born of the earth).—In the form of corn, grain, plants, trees, etc.

Adrijah (born of mountains).—In the form of rivers, springs, rivulets, etc.

ऊर्ध्वं प्राणमुन्नयत्यपानं प्रत्यगस्यति ।
 मध्ये वामनमासीनं विश्वे देवा उपासते ॥ ३ ॥

*Urdhvam pranam unnayati,
 apanam pratyagasyati ;
 Madhye vamanam asinam
 visve deva upasate.*

(3) He (*Brahman*) sends the *Prana* up and throws the *Apana* down. That Adorable One, seated in the Centre, all *Devas* Worship.

If the Life-Centre, the *Atman*, were not within a body it is obvious that that body will not continue to breathe. Naturally, the *Mantra* becomes clear when it says that He, the *Atman* or

Purusha, is the one who maintains the flow of the different vital airs through our body and maintains it alive and active till its death.

There are five principal kinds of vital energy, because of which the physical body functions. They are known by different names according to the function they perform, although they altogether constitute the One and the same Principle of Existence. The five principal kinds of *Pranas* are called (1) *Prana*, when the cosmic power manifests through the work of the lungs and the respiratory organs ; (2) *Apana*, when it works in the colon and bladders ; (3) *Samana*, when it works through the digestive system ; (4) *Udana*, when it works through the larynx and produces voice and (5) *Vyana*, when it expresses itself through the blood circulation in the body. Thus, it is carefully to be noted that *Prana* is not merely breath. *Prana* is the vital Energy, and breath is only one of its various manifestations.

Devah (Gods).—We have already explained this term in a previous *Mantra* where we clearly concluded that the word Gods does not represent the inhabitants of the heavenly regions, but the Five Great Elements which are the deities of the five organs-of-knowledge in man. Here it only shows that the sense-organs can function only in the blessings of the *Purusha* and so, naturally, the *Upanishad* in its language says that all the *Devas* meaning the sense-organs worship the one seated in the Centre.

अस्य विस्त्रुसमानस्य शरीरस्थस्य देहिनः ।

देहाद् विमुच्यमानस्य किमत्र परिशिष्यते ॥ एतद् वै तत् ॥ ४ ॥

Asya visruṣṭa samānasya

śarīrasthasya dehinaḥ ;

Dehād vimucyamanasya

kiṁ atra parisishyate : Etad vai tat.

(4) When this *Atman*, who dwells in the body, departs from the body, what remains then : This verily is That.

The *Atman*, upon whom all the *Indriyas* depend and who is the controller and director of all the vital airs, is the king of this

City of Eleven Gates, our body. Just as when the beloved king leaves the capital permanently to stay in a different chosen capital, all his subject people follow the king into the new capital, so too, when the *Atman* departs from a body, all the activities of that physical body seemingly depart with the *Atman*.

When once the Lord quits the body, however great the man might have been, while living, his body starts to decay and perish until ultimately it reaches the dust from which the materials of the body had come.

Kimatra Parisishyate (what remains then ?).—When the *Atman* has departed from the body what remains in the body ? With this question *Sruthi* confronts us with the sacred Truth that there remains practically nothing upon which we may glorify that empty shell, the dead body ! !

न प्राणेन नापानेन मर्त्यो जीवति कश्चन ।
इतरेण तु जीवन्ति यस्मिन्नेता वुपाश्रितौ ॥ ५ ॥

*Na pranena na apanena
martyo jivati kascana ;
Itarena tu jivanti
yasminn etau upasritau.*

(5) Not by *Prana*, not by *Apana* does any mortal live ; but it is by some other, on which these two depend, that men live.

One who has followed the commentaries, and therefore the *Mantras* so far, should not find any difficulty at all in understanding the direct statement of the *Sruthi* when she says that a man lives not because his body-mind-intellect-equipment is functioning well when the *Pranas* function, but that all signs of life's activities met with in a living man, depend upon the glorious touch of the Self in him. The *Pranas* function only when life resides in the body.

Though the meaning of the stanza is clear and direct, the philosophical implications in the statement of the *Sruthi* are rather new to the early students in the study of the Hindu *Sastras*.

The parts constituting an assemblage are in themselves not

free. They constitute together and maintain themselves as such, only for the benefit of somebody else, who is not himself a part of the assembly. For example, let us take the case of a house. The walls, the rafters, the beams, the tiles, etc., are all necessary parts which constitute together the house. The house is not built for the walls, nor for the rafters, nor for the beams. They all together form an entire whole only for the sake of the Master of the house. Mr. Dass, the owner of the house, has all the freedom to walk in or walk out of his house at his own sweet will ; not so, the bricks that constitute the walls !

Similarly, the *Indriyas*, the limbs of the body, the mind and intellect are all parts of the body-assembly which exists only for the same of the *Purusha* in it. The body in itself has no freedom to act as it lists, while the *Purusha* can walk out of the body in all freedom at the time of death. When once Mr. Dass had discarded his house, in time, it perishes in ruins ; when the *Atman* leaves the body, the body perishes. The Source of Life is not the *Pranas* ; the *Pranas* end and perish themselves, when the *Atman*, the Source of Life, discards its temple, the body.

In the shastric-terminology, they say that all actions—physical, mental and intellectual—are *Prana-Virthis*.

हन्त त इदं प्रवक्ष्यामि गुह्यं ब्रह्म सनातनम् ।

यथा च मरणं प्राप्य आत्मा भवति गौतम ॥ ६ ॥

Hanta ta idam pravakshyami
guhyan Brahman sanatanam ;
Yatha ca maranam prapya
atma bhavati Gautama.

(6) Well then, O Gautama, I will explain the mysterious and ancient *Brahman*, and also what happens to the soul after Death.

All that Lord Death has so far said seems to be but an introduction to enter the subject proper, *viz.*, “ *what happens to the soul after death* ” !! Lord Death here kindly informs Nachiketas that he will be now initiated into the knowledge of what happens to the *Jiva* when it has once experienced the process of Death in

its delusions. And surely, we shall never have a better reporter than Lord Death Himself to explain to us " what happens to the Soul " after the body has become cold and inert in the icy embrace of Death !

Atma (ego-centre).—In the *Upanishad Mantras* we often meet with the use of the word *Atman* to indicate sometimes the body, sometimes the mind, sometimes intellect and, yet at other times, the mind and mind-conditioned, Pure Consciousness, the *Jiva*. Here, in this particular *Mantra*, the word *Atman* is used to indicate the ego-centre and not the Self. For, if we were to assume that the word literally means its own special connotation it would mean that the *Mantra* here is contradicting the very philosophy of the *Upanishads*. Nothing ever happens to Pure Consciousness, the Truth. When Pure Consciousness presides over the functions of this body, with reference to the body, it is said to be the ' individual Soul ', just as the all-pervading space with reference to the four walls of a room is said to be the ' room space '.

In fact, the infinite space can never be conditioned or limited by the walls, which themselves stand in space. Similarly, Consciousness or Knowledge is homogeneous and one without-a-second. When the body perishes, the Divine Spark, or the Life-Centre, that presided over the body while it lived, undergoes no change but eternally remains the same. The death and the consequent departure from the dead body *at the time of death*, and the feeling of having entered a new form *at the time of birth*, are both the delusory ideas of the ego-centre.

The Supreme Self-reflected in the mind-intellect is, we have already seen, the *Jiva* or the ego. This ego-idea leaves its ideas of ' i-ness ' and ' my-ness ' with the dead body, and after an uncertain interval of existence without a body, each ego-centre comes to develop its sense of ownership and possession with another body-form.

Thus, when Lord Death says that He will explain " what happens to the *Atman* after death " He certainly means to explain to us what happens to the *Jiva* with all its vanities of ' i-ness ' and attachments of ' my-ness ', when it leaves one body to perish and enters the womb to take up another birth.

योनिमन्ये प्रपद्यन्ते शरीरत्वाय देहिनः ।

स्थाणुमन्येऽनुसंयन्ति यथा कर्म यथा श्रुतम् ॥ ७ ॥

*Yonim anye prapadyante
sariratvaya dehinah ;
Sthanum anye anusamyanti
yatha karma yatha shrutam.*

(7) Some souls enter the womb to have a body, others to the plants, just according to their work and according to their knowledge.

Sthanu means 'immovable' ; hence, it may mean either the vegetable kingdom or it may also mean the inert world of stones and slabs. It is often claimed in an unwarranted optimism that a being having been born once into the human form will not, whatever be the atrocities he might commit during his lifetime, go down so much in the ladder of evolution as to reach the bottom-most level of mere stones ! There are even spiritual preceptors who also support this optimistic view to encourage their disciples, and emphatically assert that, having once come to take the incarnation as man, that individual will not, *on any score*, degrade himself into such a low level as that of the animal life or will ever come to exist as the inert rocks. This false optimism is smothered here by the opening statement of the *Upanishad* in this *Mantra*.

In the 6th *Mantra* of the 1st *Valli* (Section) we had already a clear indication of the Law of *Karma* and the Doctrine of Reincarnation, when Nachiketas stated, *like corn the mortals decay and like corn they are born again*. In this *Mantra* also the *Sruthi* speaks, definitely, supporting the Law of *Karma* and the Doctrine of Reincarnation.

The ego-centre, after the death of the body, remains intact in the form of "an idea" until it comes again to fix the relationship with another form. That which helps the "floating-ego" to choose its next rendezvous is the sum-total of the reappings it has to make with the "new form" in the new field of things and circumstances. Indeed, there is no philosophical concept so tight in logic and so true in reason as the Law of *Karma* which is a special blessing enjoyed only by the Hindu community. Unfor-

tunately, as a result of our criminal neglect of the study of our own scriptures if we have come to read in the Law of *Karma* only a repetition of the sapless philosophy of the Law of Destiny, it is, indeed, not the fault of the *Upanishad*-seers. If properly understood, Law of *Karma* gives into our individual hands the privilege and the might to carve out our own destinies to be lived by us in the days to come.*

Yatha Karma (according to Karma).—According to the quality of the actions performed in the past we shall have a future existence in a form and in a set of circumstances necessary to reap the required quality of reactions in the form of experiences.

Yatha Srutham (according to knowledge).—The future lives are dependent not only upon the actions committed in the past but also by the degree of the Knowledge of the Reality we have gained in and through our living their reactions. Refer for amplification *Brihadaranyakopanishad*, 12-2-13.

यः एष सुप्तेषु जागर्ति कामं कामं पुरुषो निर्मिमाणः ।

तदेवशुक्रं तद् ब्रह्म तदेवामृतमुच्यते ॥

तस्मिन्लोकाः श्रिताः सर्वे तद् नृत्येति कश्चन ॥ एतद् वै तत् ॥ ८ ॥

Ya esa suptesu jagarti

Kamam kamam puruso nirminanah ;

Tad eva sukram tad Brahma,

tad eva amrtam ucyate,

Tasmin lokah sritah sarve,

tad u na-atyeti kascana : Etad vai tat.

(8) The *Purusha* who remains awake, shaping (all sorts of) objects of desires (into dreams) even while we sleep,—verily, that is the pure, the *Brahman*, and that is also called the Immortal. In *That* rests all the world and none can transcend *That*. This verily is *That* (which you asked for).

The waking-state-world of sense-objects and their cognition are not possible without the presence of Pure Intelligence within the body. So too, we have already found that the dream-world would not have been available for our experience had it not been again lit up by the very same Intelligence. In the deep-sleep-state too the Intelligence continuously illuminates for us

* Cf. Swamiji's *Discourses on Kenopanishad*.

the idea of "I do not know". Thus, Pure Intelligence, the Self, ever remains as a Witness of the three states. It is neither awake, nor does It ever dream, nor does It ever sleep !! In Its presence, the three different states play the relay race.

During the *Kenopanishad* discussions we had made this point amply clear with the analogy of a street lamp. The light of the street lamp illuminates everything that comes into its pool-of-light. It may illumine at one time a honey-mooning couple singing and dancing in their new-found joys of physical companionship ; at another moment it may light up a drunken party laughing and dancing in their intoxication ; and yet, at another moment, it may light up a mournful procession of a sad funeral pyre. In all the three cases *the light of the street lamp* is neither happy as the honey-moon couple nor drunk as the revellers, nor sad and sorrowful as the bereaved in the funeral procession !!

Similarly, the Intelligence, that reigns within us, illuminates for us the world of the waking-state, the world of the dream-state and that of sleep-state, without Itself ever undergoing any of these experiences.

Lord Death is now trying to point out to his disciple, Nachiketas, what the Self is, through a consideration, and in terms of the experiences known to the student during his present existence in the world of ignorance. A school-master knows that the best way to start teaching a student addition or subtraction is not by directly making the child play with the numerical figures, but to make him understand the idea of addition through familiar objects. Thus it is very well known that a school-master always takes examples from the child's own life ; "supposing you have ten mangoes" starts the master, "and your friend has five mangoes ; how many mangoes are there with both between you and him ?" This question is asked by the master not for the purpose of keeping the mango-accounts but to make the child understand the greater principles of arithmetic through what are already familiar to the child. Similarly, the *Upanishad* texts always adopt the method of raising a seeker into the Highest Realms by explaining to him the Truth Absolute in which he is well versed at the moment of his approach to the feet of his teacher.

No human can be unaware of the three planes of conscious-

ness through which he daily passes ; namely, the waking-state, the dream-state, and the deep-sleep-state. If now a teacher approaches us and explains to us that there is one constant Illuminating Factor, in the presence of which alone the experiences of the three planes of consciousness become real and cognizable for us, it must necessarily be easy for us to feel for ourselves intuitively this Factor, the Eternal Self.

Since the Self is not polluted by our criminal intentions, low lustful desires, jealousies and selfishness of our life (just as the street light is untouched by the varied scenes it comes to illuminate), the *Atman*, as the sole Witnessing Factor, is indeed ever *Sukram* (pure).

The rest of the words in the *Mantra* stand explained by themselves, to all those who have followed our detailed commentary so far.

1-8. *The Lord of the City-of-Body is also the immanent Lord of the world. He is Eternal Brahman as well as the Atman. He is subject to transmigration determined by the Gyana and Karma of the equipments through which He expresses Himself.*

अग्निर्यथैको भुवनं प्रविष्टो रूपं रूपं प्रतिरूपो बभूव ।

एकस्तथा सर्वभूतान्तरात्मा रूपं रूपं प्रतिरूपो बहिश्च ॥ ९ ॥

*Agnir yatha eko bhuvanam pravisto
rupam rupam pratirupo babhuva ;
Ekas tatha sarva-bhuta antaratma,
rupam rupam pratirupo bahis-ca.*

(9) As the one Fire, after it has entered the world, though one, takes different forms according to the thing it burns, so does the Eternal *Atman*, of all living beings, though one, takes a form according to the form He enters and is (in itself) outside all forms also.

Of the 108 accepted *Upanishads*, there is none so melodiously poetical (for its mellifluous words, its rhyme and rhythm and for the exquisite poetic ideas and pictures) as *Kathopanishad* is. It would be a safe commentary to say that *Kathopanishad* is a touch-stone for both poetry and philosophy in Sanskrit literature. In no other language in the world have we such magnanimous

flights of human thoughts expressed in such breathless poetry ! !
In *Kathopanishad* we have a love-kindling arbour where poetry courts successfully her paramour, philosophy ! !

The *Mantra* under discussion is an ample evidence to prove the truth of our previous statements.

The same coloured fluid in a flat bottle would look long and in a flask it would look as though spherical. Because of the different shapes we cannot label down the same fluid differently. Similarly, the dynamic Life-Centre remaining the same, It illuminates different forms. The forms are different but the spiritual substance is universally the same.

The electric current that passes through a fan, a bulb, a refrigerator and a heater is certainly the same, although, because of difference in the instruments through which it passes, it manifests itself differently as air, light, cold, heat, etc. The *Atma-tattwa*, similarly, remains the same, in spite of the different make-up of the different minds that It comes to function through. Its manifestations are of different forms. Thus, it is that *you are not me, nor am I you*, because my mind is constituted differently from yours. Yet our *Atman* is the same.

Bahischa (beyond also).—Pure Consciousness, the All-pervading Truth, certainly presides over every form, vitalising every cell in them, “but”, adds the *Sruthi* “Truth is not limited to cover *only* the area or extent occupied by the manifested life !”

Life in the millions of universes put together is but, according to the Lord's own words in the *Gita*, only a fraction of the Divine Total ! This is indicated by the *Sruthi* here by emphasizing that Absolute Truth not only pervades every visible form and invisible world, but also transcends them all. In short, the Supreme Reality is at once immanent and transcendent.

वायुर्यथैको भुवनं प्रविष्टो रूपं रूपं प्रतिरूपो बभूव ।

एकस्तथा सर्वभूतान्तरात्मा रूपं रूपं प्रतिरूपो बहिश्च ॥ १० ॥

Vayur yatha eko bhuvanam pravisto,
rupam rupam pratirupo babhuva ;
Ekas tatha sarva-bhuta antaratma,
rupam rupam pratirupo bahis-ca.

(10) As the one Air, after it has entered the world, though one, takes different forms, according to whatever it enters, so the internal *Atman* of all living beings, though One, assumes forms, according to whatever He enters, and is outside all forms (also).

Here is another beautiful comparison to explain the same oneness of Truth that was indicated in the previous *Mantra*. Instead of Fire, Lord Death is explaining the same Truth with the example of *Vayu*. Whether it be a horse, a donkey or a man, a creeper or a fig tree, all live upon the same vital air, oxygen. Similarly, whatever be the name and shape of the objects in the universe that we may cognise, they are all presided over by the same Non-dual Truth Essence.

Since this stanza is a close repetition of the previous one, given out by the *Sruthi* for purposes of emphasis, we satisfy ourselves with just hinting at the beauty contents of it.

सूर्यो यथा सर्वलोकस्य चक्षुर्न लिप्यते चाक्षुषैर्बाह्यदोषैः ।

एकस्तथा सर्वभूतान्तरात्मा न लिप्यते लोक दुःखेन बाह्यः ॥ ११ ॥

*Suryo yatha sarva-lokasya caksur
na lipyate caksusair bahya-dosaih ;
Eka tatha sarva-bhuta antaratma
na lipyate loka duhkena bahyah.*

(11) As the Sun, the Eye of the whole world, is not contaminated by the defects of the external eye, so being the Innermost Essence in all beings, *Atman* is not contaminated by the external sorrows of the world.

Sarva-lokasya Chakshuh (the Eye of Whole World).—Without the light energy provided by the Sun we would not have been able to make use of our eyes in discriminating the various forms and colours of the sense-objects in the world. Nor would we have moon to provide us with moonlight at least during the bright fortnights, if the sun were not there to lend its light to the moon to reflect ! Apart from all these, and probably built upon a thorough knowledge of the science of light, the ancient *Rishis* of the *Upanishads* have declared even in the Vedic period that the Sun is the presiding deity of the sense-organ, the eye. Thus, it is most appropriate to term the Sun

as the Eye of the Universe.

The light of the Sun illumines equally all the objects in all conditions of health and decay. Whether the sunlight illumines a scene of meritorious sacrifice or a dire scene of calculated villainy, the sunlight, as such, does not get either blessed or condemned by the qualities of the various scenes it illumines.

Similarly, the *Atman* is not tainted by the miseries of the world, arising from the *Kama* and *Karma* of the ego-centric individuals living the delusions of their own ignorance. All sorrows are created by our unrestrained desires and our attempts in the world of sense-objects to fulfil our desires through passion-motivated, self-willed-actions (*Kama karmodbhavam Duhkham*).

Whatever be the condition of the ghost-in-the-post, the post is not in the least affected ; whatever be the threatening aspects of the snake-in-the-rope, the rope is not in any way affected ; in whatever condition be the surface of the mirage-water, the desert is not at all affected ! ! Similarly, whatever be the condition of the world and our experiences of it, in our present embodiment, the Truth, which is the substratum for the delusion-created world-myth, is not in the least affected.

There are mainly two schools of thought among the Hindu philosophers as they try to explain the relative status of Truth and the World. Some claim that the Supreme Reality modified Itself to become this world ; as the milk gets modified to become curd. *Vedantins* condemn this point of view since it is faulty according to their line of argument. They condemn this theory on the score that if the Supreme Reality were to suffer Itself to undergo a modification, just as the milk is no more in the curd, the Supreme will have to end Itself to become the World which is naturally absurd. Again, the *Vedantins* argue that if the world is a modification (*parinam*) of the Supreme Reality then according to the *Parinamavadins* the Supreme is available for change and that which undergoes change cannot be Eternal, but must necessarily fall within the boundaries of finiteness. Thus, if the *Parinamavada* is accepted, the Supreme Reality Itself becomes a finite perishable quantity ! !

On the other hand, the *Vedantins* view the creation as a superimposition upon Truth, caused by the jugglery of the

mind, termed as *Maya*. This argument of the *Vedantins* is termed as the *Vivartavada*. Here, the Supreme undergoes no change at all but ever remains in its Eternal purity and Immortal grandeur ; the rope undergoes no change, nor gains for itself even a drop of venom when a traveller in the dusk misunderstands it to be a snake ! !

The *Mauṛa* under discussion seems to support wholeheartedly Shri Sankara's standpoint. Anyway the " Theory of Modification " stands blasted in the presence of the more brilliant and satisfying " Theory of Superimposition " in explaining the Real and the unreal.

9-11. *He is the Inner-Self of all beings. This Antaratman—like air and fire—is immanent "enwrapped in every form". He is also at once transcendental : none can fully describe him. Like Sun, He, while illuminating all, is not touched by the imperfections of any.*

एको वशी सर्वभूतान्तरात्मा एकं रूपं बहुधा यः करोति ।

तमात्मस्थं येऽनुपश्यन्ति धीरास्तेषां सुखं शाश्वतं नेतरेषाम् ॥ १२ ॥

*Eko vasi sarva-bhuta antaratma,
ekam rupam bahudha yah karoṭhi ;
Tam-atma-stham ye anupasyanti dhīras
tesaṁ sukham śasvatam na-ītaresam.*

(12) (That) One (Supreme) Ruler, the soul of all beings, who makes His one form manifold . . . those wise men, who perceive Him as existing in their own Self, to them belongs Eternal Happiness, and to none else.

The self-arrogating ego-centres viewing out of themselves through the shattering instruments of their mind and intellect, observe everywhere nothing more sacred than an eternal variety of endless plurality. Consequently, they suffer all the pains of life, their own self-created problems of life. The mind-and-intellect-equipment has a prism-effect when the undivided beam of the Self's Light passes through it ! The intelligence seemingly encased within the body can reach the outer world of sense-objects and cognize them only through the co-ordinating agent, the mind. But the wise, transcending the limitations of both their mind and intellect, learn to look out through their faculty

called intuition. Intuitively viewed, Truth alone is the experience available at all places, and at all times !

The Self is the source of the Light which, at the interception of the mental prism, seemingly disperses Itself into the variegated band of the innumerable names and forms, which constitute the *jagat*. The Yogi in his discriminating wisdom, successfully withdraws his mind's delusory hob-nobbing with its own ignorance-created plurality, and in the moments of his deep meditations, his Awareness comes to be aware of Itself as the Self.

Our Consciousness becoming conscious of Itself, the Pure Consciousness, as the Self, is the moment of Self-Realisation or *Ishwar-darshan*. In order to enjoy this moment of Supreme Bliss and Wisdom, the individual must necessarily be a highly evolved soul (*Dhirah*). Such ones alone can come to enjoy Eternal Bliss. That theirs alone is the experience of continued, unbroken and infinite joy is indicated here by the *Sruthi*. She says that only such wise men who have come to realise their Self, are the real men of bliss and not others. The worldly men who are engrossed in external objects and who are not endowed with discrimination are debarred by this statement to have ever a chance of enjoying Infinite Bliss through sense-objects.

नित्योऽनित्यानां चेतनश्चेतनानामेको बहूनां यो विदधाति कामान् ।
तमात्मस्थं येऽनुपश्यन्ति धीरास्तेषां शान्तिः शाम्भती नेतरेषाम् ॥१३॥

*Nityo ' nityanam cetanas cetananam,
eko bahunani yo vidadhati kamani ;
Tam atmaस्थam ye ' nupasyanti dhiras
tesam santih sasvati na-tiaretam.*

(13) He, the Eternal among non-eternals, the Intelligence in the intelligent, who, though one, fulfils the desires of many . . . those wise men who perceive Him as dwelling in their own Self, to them belongs Eternal Peace and to none else.

The method of assertion and denial adopted by the *Sruthi* in the previous *Mantra* is again repeated here when she reasserts, *to them belongs the Eternal Peace and to none else*.

What is to be realised in us as the Self is discussed here and

in the discussion we are provided with enough material to understand intuitively the very Nature of the Soul—which, you will remember, was the pointed query of the Brahmin seeker to his Master, Lord Death. We may say that in no *Mantra* in the entire scriptural literature of the Hindus is there a passage to equal the *Mantra* under discussion in its completeness and directness of statement touching almost all the important factors, that language can express regarding the Nature of the Soul !

The world is a flux ; a constant change of appearances, a transient play of names and forms. Even our very physical form is constantly changing hour by hour, through all the years of its existence. The medical science of the modern world declares that the constitution of every human body changes completely, as it were, once in every seven years ; at every moment old cells are dying away and are being replaced by new ones. We come in contact with men and circumstances, and moment to moment we are ever-changing in our physical habits, mental make-up, intellectual ideas and spiritual values. Nobody can stop the process of growth.

If this constant change were to give us the idea of a continuity there must be some constant denominator that is ever constant. In the picture-house the ever-changing play of light and shade thrown out from the films gives the audience a sense of continuity because of the constant factor, the screen behind it ; without the screen the audience would have seen no story at all ! Waves, ripples, bubbles, froth and foam can all have their eternal dance to give us the idea of a continuous surge only when there is the constant, unchanging, placid, depths of the oceans beneath them. The delusory ideas of a snake, a rod, a crack-in-the earth are all possible only when there is the unchanging truth behind all, the rope.

Similarly, no world of flux could be possible without a base that is unchangeable and unchanging; no river can flow without a bed !

Chetaa-schetanamat (Intelligence in the intelligent).—Again, if a piece of iron burns your fingers you know that the iron has no heat of its own and so must have borrowed it from fire. Similarly, if the body-mind-intellect-equipment, which is itself

nothing but matter, shows at moments an intelligence almost divine, we can easily presume that it has earned its intelligence from the Self, which is of the nature of Pure Intelligence.

Vidadhati kaman (who fulfils the desire of man).—Here again the *Law of Karma* is obviously hinted at in a broad statement that the Self or the Supreme Consciousness is the power behind the *Law of Karma*, according to which each individual comes to live his allotted share of experiences in his individual life.

The one who is thus Eternal and of the nature of Pure Intelligence and who is the Force behind the immutable *Law of Karma*, is not a mere transcendental Vitality-Divine who reigns somewhere in heavens like the mortal king or the president of a country dwelling in the capital far away from the villages along the frontiers !! *Vedanta* is the highest achievement of man's wisdom.

The Truth declarations of the *Rishis* represent in themselves the superhuman daring with which they must have plunged into the very womb of life to scoop it and discover for themselves the palpitating soul of one's own life, the True Seat of all activities, the Permanent and Eternal Factor, behind the ever-changing madness, which, in its continuity, gives the solid delusion called the *Jagat*.

Naturally, there have never been and there shall never be a text-book more sacred and noble as the Bible of the Hindus, the *Upanishads*. If some undeveloped and unintelligent foreign intruders have raised the cry of calumny against these *Mantras* as "blabberings of a humanity in childhood", etc., we in our greater understanding shall only repeat what Christ said when he was condemned by a foolish generation, "Lord, forgive them ; they know not what they do".

तदेतदिति मन्यन्ते अनिर्देश्यं परं सुखम् ।

कथं नु तद्विजानीयां किमु भति विभाति वा ॥ १४ ॥

Tad etad iti manyante

anirdesyam paramam sukham ;

Katham nu tad vijaniyam,

kim u bhati vibhati va.

(14) They (the sages) perceive that indescribable, Highest Bliss as " This is 'That' How shall I know That ? Does it shine (of Itself) or does it shine by another light ? "

This *Mantra* can be considered as a question raised by Lord Death Himself, only to be answered by himself in the next *Mantra*. But, personally, Chinmaya would like to understand it as a sincere question raised by the supreme student of Vedanta in Nachiketas.

In a previous stanza Lord Death had already explained that the Self is beyond the sense-perceptions or the mind's cognitions or the intellect's determinations, yet, in the last two stanzas, Lord Death was dilating upon the sure and permanent joys of those who come to " behold the Self ". Naturally, the intelligent students feel confused. Again, in the first half of the very same *Mantra*, Lord Death asserts that the men of discrimination during their deep meditations come to the divine achievement of realising the All-pervading Truth intimately in a subjective experience as ' *This is That* '.

Tad etad iti (This is That).— Truth is not perceived or felt or determined. Perception, feeling and determination are the functions of the sense-organs, the mind and the intellect respectively ; and these three can function only in the plane of plurality, the world of sense-objects, thoughts and ideas. When the intelligent sage has successfully withdrawn all his ideas of identification with these three, at the moment (when he has thus completely transcended himself beyond the painful limitations of these three) he comes to realise that, what he has till now been seeking, was the nearest factor in him, his own Self ! !

At this moment the disciple is raising his doubt which is marked by his own understanding of the philosophical discourses so far given by his master. When the sense-organs, the mind and the intellect are flouted and transcended, Nachiketas asks what exactly would be the nature of the instrument used and the individual who used the instrument in realising the Self as " *This is That* " ? Even those of you who can at least come to appreciate at this moment of our discussion the entire implications in the doubt of Nachiketas, can be considered to have thoroughly and well followed all the discussions made by the

Sruthi so far.

We have already shown, in a previous discussion, how, in order to cognise and understand an object, we need the help of light. We then also found that for perceiving the gross light of the physical world, and in seeing the subtler objects of the mind, such as thoughts, etc., we have the Light of Intelligence. So far, Nachiketas also seems to have understood well. But, when Lord Death says that the Vedantic seer transcending the regions of his mind and intellect comes to "*Behold the Self*" the *Brahman* child feels confused ! !

Kimubhathi (does it shine).—A lamp is seen because of its own light, as opposed to the dull objects which get their light borrowed from a lamp (*Vibhati Va* or does it shine by another light ?).

In the philosophy of Vedanta the question is answered by the great masters very vividly. It is a case of the Self becoming aware of Itself. When the meditator has successfully hushed the mind and the intellect, in the throbbing silence within, his Awareness becomes conscious of Itself. This is a state of intuitive experience and not a physical cognition. It is to show this intimate "Self-Awareness of the Self" that we have, in the inimitable language and style of the scripture, the expression, "*this is that*".

The Self, being itself the Light of Wisdom, needs no other light to light itself; when the clouds have moved away, the Sun, that comes out from behind the screening clouds, needs no other torch to make us see him, he being in the nature of nothing but a mass of light. Similarly, when the veiling disturbances of the mind and the intellect, caused by our own ignorance of the Self, are stopped, the *Atman*, in Its own Self-Effulgence comes out to shine forth in all glory. Intelligence needs no other intelligence to light Itself.

In the next *Mantra* we have the answer to the question raised in this stanza.

12-14. *The Supreme Eternal Truth revels within as the Inner Self, and the wise realising It in his heart attains enduring peace and bliss. How is such a vision possible : Self is all Knowledge and as such to reach It is to know It—experience it.*

न तत्र सूर्यो भाति न चन्द्रतारकं नेमा विद्युतो भान्ति कुतोऽयमग्निः ।
तमेव भान्तमनुभाति सर्वं तस्य भास । सर्वमिदं विभाति ॥ १५ ॥

*Na tatra suryo bhati, na candra-tarakam,
na-ima vidyuto bhanti, kuto 'yam agnih ;
Tam-eva bhantam anubhati sarvam,
tasya bhasa, sarvam idam vibhati.*

(15) The Sun does not shine there, nor does the moon, nor do the stars, nor the lightnings shine and much less this fire. When He shines, everything shines after him ; by His light, all these shine.

(Here ends Chapter Two, Section Five.)

Even today, long after we have forgotten our own great Bible, the *Upanishads*, we are hearing this *Mantra* almost every day repeated in all temples and *pujas*, since no ritual is generally concluded without chanting this *Mantra* soon after the common and well-known "*Arathi*". None of the devotees, or the *Pundits*, has ever come to really understand the message of this stanza, except probably some, who have a surface knowledge of its mere word-meaning ! Our religion has become hollow and without any significance to us because of our unintelligent way of living our religion. A mere parrot-like repetition of stanzas, in a language unknown to us, without seeking to understand its meaning, in itself will not and cannot give benefit at all. There are some *Karmakandins* and orthodox monsters who claim all powers to mantras and kirtans merely repeated, even if the one repeating them knows not their meaning nor understands their significances ! Chinmaya cannot subscribe to this false, unintelligent, hypocritical nonsense. Were it true, why not applaud a gramophone box for the beauty of the song it had sung or pat the shoulders of your radio-box congratulating it for the talk it has relayed to you ?

Tatra (There).—Lord Death is indicating here the Realm of the Self which is the Land of the Knowledge Absolute. In that Plane of Divine God-consciousness there is no need for another agent of light to illumine it. All the sources of physical light are denied in the Realm of Truth with this *Mantra*, wherein

Lord Death says that there is neither the sun nor the moon nor the stars nor the lightning ; and as such *where can be the light of fire* : In short, there is in Light no other light other than Itself. In the sun, there is no need for a torch to illumine it ! !

Anubhati (shines after).—Truth is the substratum for all the seeming activities of life. Where life is extinct, the activities of the sense-organs, mind and intellect are also at an end. And when these three entities in man have folded themselves up, and as it were rolled out, to that individual there is no more the sun, the moon, the lightning, or the light of fire. So long as life is in him, he recognises all the sources of light in the physical world. Naturally, it is philosophically evident, and logically it can be maintained that the Giver of All-light (for the sun and other sources of light) is none other than the Intelligence of the intellect, the Self. Hence, Lord Death says that all shines after It. *By Its light all these shine.*

Now that we know the real significance of the stanza, it must be possible for each of us to think for ourselves the voiceless depth of self-evident suggestiveness, in ordering this *Mantra* to be repeated at the close of every Hindu ritual and sacred religious ceremony. The importance of this stanza is again emphasized in the fact that the same stanza has been repeated in two more of the ten important *Upanishads* ! Thus we have this *Mantra* in *Mundakopanishad*, II-2-10 and *Swethaswatara Upanishad*, VI, 14. Though, in slightly different words, we have the same transcendental idea that the Self is the source of all light, hinted at in the *Bhagawat Gita*.*

15. Shows how Self is existence principle that lends to every other object their existing illumination. So no other "light" can illumine the Light, in all lights.

* Ch. 15, Sl. 6.

SECTION VI

The Path of Adhyatma Yoga further Elaborated

ऊर्ध्वमूलोज्वाक्शाख एषोऽश्वत्थः सनातनः ।
तदेवशुक्लं तद् ब्रह्म तदेवामृतमुच्यते तस्मिन्लोकाः श्रिताः सर्वे ।
तदुनात्येति कश्चन ॥ एतद् वै तत् ॥ १ ॥

Urdhva-mulo ' vak-sakha

eso ' svattah sanatanah ;

Tad-eva sukrtam tad Brahma

tad-eva-amrtam ucyate

Tasmin-lokah sritah sarve,

tad-una atyeti kascana : Etad vai tat.

(1) This is the ancient *Asvatha*-tree whose roots are above and whose branches (spread) below. That is verily the pure, that is *Brahman*, and that is also called the Immortal. In that rest all the worlds, and none can transcend it. Verily this is That.

All those who have at least a scrappy knowledge of Sanskrit are advised to get hold of a copy of Shri Sankara's commentary upon this *Mantra* ; it is a piece of joy. Even the great philosopher Shri Sankaracharya was seemingly carried away into the realm of pure poetry and literature at the beauty of the deep suggestions contained in the above *Mantra*.

Just as the sweet scent of the night-flower wafting towards us can give us an idea of not only the presence of the night-queen-shrub but also the roots that sustain the plant, so too, the *Śruti* from an observation of the finite world of names and forms wants to deduce "the root of it all" that lies in a region concealed from our superficial observations. Thus, in order to point out an unseen cause for the seen and experienced effects, the scripture is here bringing out a beautiful comparison of the universe projected out from the Reality in the form of an *Asvatha*-tree (*Peepal* tree). It is also relevant here to remember that in describing the same fig-tree, Lord Vyasa also has devoted three

entire stanzas in the opening of the XV Chapter in his master piece, *Shri Bhagavat Gita*.

Sankaracharya, in his commentary, also provides us with a reason why the *Samsar* has been compared to a tree by the *Sruthi* ; in Sanskrit the word ' *Vriksha* ' means a tree ' because it is felled ' (*Vrischanath*).

Commonly known to the majority there is no tree, which is so extensive in growth, sturdy in build, and long in its duration of life as the *Peepal*, and the *Sruthi* could not have thought of another tree equally appropriate, to compare it with the world of plurality. Generally, the professional writers of cheap bazaar notes led away by the literal word meaning, explain the tree of *Samsar* as having its roots above and the branches hanging down. This is absurd and even the *Sruthi* statements cannot make any *Aswatha*-tree to do a *Sirasasan* however much misguided artists may try with their colours to represent this misreading of the *Sruthi* texts by Sanskrit *Pundits* ! Sankara has very pointedly hinted at this misunderstanding.

Urdhwa Moola (roots up).—The word *Urdhwa* here does not mean " up " in the sense of geometrical " up " but it is used to indicate the idea of " reverence ". Thus, of the many parts of the Tree of *Samsar* the root is much more sacred and hence *Urdhwa* ; the Tree of *Samsar* has its roots sucking out its sap from the " *Vishnoho Paramam Padam* " (the Supreme place of *Vishnu*—the All-pervading *Atman*).

Again, there can be yet another reason why *Sruthi* has chosen this *Peepal*-tree for her purposes of representing *Samsar*. The very word *Aswatha* can be liquidated in Sanskrit into three component parts meaning thereby " that which will not be tomorrow " (*swa* means tomorrow in Sanskrit). *Samsar* is a word that indicates the world of the finite-objects, where death and destruction are the constant happenings ; no simpler word would have more completely and so effectively indicated the world of perishable objects as the *Aswatha*.

In spite of our repeated efforts at finding for them sufficient reasons to generate their appreciation of this gem of poetry and philosophy, our educated Hindu brethren, in their hardened prejudices against the style and contents of the *Upanishads* might

yet find some difficulty in understanding it. Chinmaya may here try to give for them yet another example.

Have you not seen, in your history text-books, charts representing the line of descendants of the various ruling families ? Each of them starts with a great grandsire and then branches out into sons and daughters, who, in their turn, again spread out into an array of grandsons and grand-daughters *ad infinitum*. Don't these printed charts look like a tree with its root up ! ! And they are literally called in English as the charts of *family-trees* ! If our modern historians, in their matter-of-fact and unpoetic approach to data, can come to use such a poetic idea of a family-tree, would you not, if not in sympathy, at least in an intellectual understanding give the *Rishis of the Upanishads* the benefit of the doubt ?

In short, the *Upanishad* wants us to understand only the simple fact that the finite world, the *Aswatha*, is itself rooted in Truth and maintains itself from the nourishments drawn from the Absolute Truth. The *Samsar* is a "tree", mainly because it can be cut down and removed once and for ever with the firm axe of discrimination (*viveka*). Refer *Gita*, XV, 3.

यदिदं किञ्च जगत् सर्वं प्राण एजति निःसृतम् ।

महद्भयं वज्रमुद्यतं य एतद् विदुरमृतास्ते भवन्ति ॥ २ ॥

*Yad idam kinca jagat sarvam
prana-ejati nihsrtam ;
Mahad bhayan vajram udyatan,
yaye-tad vidur amrtas te bhavanti.*

(2) This whole universe evolved from the *Brahman*, move (vibrates) in the *Prana* (in the highest *Brahman*). That *Brahman* is a great terror, like an uplifted thunderbolt. Those who know this become immortal.

The same idea described in the previous *Mantra* is brought into a greater relief in this stanza in a more direct and scientific language. Perhaps, *Sruthi* Herself realises that in the crowded details of her analogy of the *Aswatha*-tree, the student may be apt to overlook the deep significance contained in it : "that the entire tree is rooted in and is maintained by the world

of Truth."

Pran (or *Pranā*).—It may be interpreted as nominative (*Prathama*) or as the vii case (*saptami*), it may be interpreted as, "the whole universe arose from *Brahman* and moves in *Prana*", or as "the *Prana* being present (*Pranā sati*) the whole universe comes out of Him and vibrates in Him".

Prana means here the *Brahman*, and this Eternal Reality is the One Source from which the world of appearances has emerged out, in which it is existing and into which at the end of time it shall merge back.

Ejathi (vibrates).—Creation and the worlds created are considered by many of the Indian Philosophers as so many "stresses" in the Infinite. Modern science in the west has also come to a similar conclusion that the world of matter is entirely constituted of energy-Units moving at a terrific speed in their eternal vibrations. When an atom was split, the physicists could mechanically discover that it was constituted of the electrons and protons, moving at a high velocity around and about a central motionless neutron. They also found out, that, if by some method they could change the frequency of vibration of the energy-particles in the electronic vibrations in an element, they could change one element into another ! If the atoms are nothing but energy particles vibrating, and matter is nothing but a mass of molecules, then matter is nothing but energy vibrating ! !

Now then, it cannot be much of a difficulty for the modern Hindu to accept the statement of this *Mantra* that "creation is a motion, a vibration of energy" and that it is possible for the vibration to maintain itself only if there is a motionless and non-vibrating medium, the Absolute Reality. Constant change can certainly give us the delusion of a form ; only there must be a constant medium, for the changes to play in or at least a constant axis upon which they can play. Thus, when a lit up Joss-stick (*Agarbathi*) is rotated fast round the same axis we can detect the Joss-stick maintaining itself in the form of a golden circle. The golden circle has no existence except in the consistency of change at the glowing tip. Similarly, constant vibration of energy in a medium of Absolute Energy, and maintaining itself within the

field of a constant axis gives us the ocean of sense-objects made up of things and beings.

To be sure, this idea seemingly discovered only recently, must have been the common knowledge among the *Aryans* of the Vedic period ; else, *Śruthi* would not have felt satisfied herself by merely mentioning the whole universe vibrates in *Prana*.

Mahadbhayam (a great terror).—Nothing in the universe happens haphazardly. Nature moves in rhythm. There is an immutable law that governs the movement of the stars, planets, etc. There is a constancy in the working of all the laws of nature. Everything is scheduled to happen according to some strict commands ; as though there is very severe law-maker and a strict maintainer of these laws ! In this sense, the scripture states here, that the finite world of names and forms seems to exist and function, so diligently and readily as though the Master of the Laws is standing right behind it with a raised whip ! !

The *Mantra*, on the whole, indicates that the source of all manifestations is not an inert non-existence (as some of the Buddhistic schools of philosophers believe and try to maintain) but that the ultimate source of all lives is an active and dynamic existence, which, in its nature, is Pure Intelligence Itself.

Those who know this highest *Brahman*, the Source of All Life, the substratum for the eternal play of change, to be the Vital Factor in themselves, they shall attain Immortality !

भयादस्याग्निस्तपति भयात्तपति सूर्यः ।

भयादिन्द्रश्च वायुश्च मृत्युर्धावति पञ्चमः ॥ ३ ॥

Bhayad asya agnis tapati,
bhayat tapati suryah ;
Bhayad indras-ca vayus-ca
mrtiyur dhavati pancamah.

(3) For fear of Him the Fire-burns ; for fear of Him shines the Sun ; for fear of Him do *Indra*, *Vayu* and Death, the fifth, proceed (with their respective functions).

If *Brahman*, the Supreme Reality, were not there, not only to declare, by Its Will, the law of existence but also to control and govern it, and thus ultimately ensure its smooth functioning, we would not have had, to be sure, such a systematic and scientific consistency in the laws of Nature. Had it not been for this eternal fear for the supreme authority of the Transcendental Reality, we could not have had any science text-books ; as for that matter, life itself would have been impossible. For example, supposing fire chooses to take a holiday from its nature and thus prove itself to be cold, the milk over the oven would probably remain colder than when it was put on the fire even after hours of waiting ! No life would have been possible, then, in the sense of a systematic and continuous living, for, the planets could then, at their will, stray away from their appointed paths in the heavens ! ! Almost as frequently as we are having motor accidents, train-collisions and plane-crashes in these days in our ill-organized world, we could have had collisions between stars and between planets !

But on the other hand, we are seeing that the universe is running smoothly and harmoniously in a perfect, orderly manner. Sun, Fire, *Indra*, *Vayu* and Death are all working with a beautiful team spirit.

This idea that nature strictly keeps herself within the word and spirit of the Eternal Law due to her fear of the Supreme, is repeated with almost the same vigour if not in the same words in *Taittareya Upanishad*.*

Panchamah (fifth).—Death is considered the fifth in the direct numerical order. Previously the *Mantra* has already enumerated four different names as Fire, Sun, *Indra* and *Vayu*. So, naturally, Death is the fifth.

1-3. *The famous comparison of the world with the Peepal-Tree. The roots are the Brahman—the unseen nourisher and sustainer of the Phenomenal world.*

इह चेदशकद् बोद्धुं प्राक् शरीरस्य विलसः ।

ततः सर्गेषु लोकेषु शरीरत्वाय कल्पते ॥ ४ ॥

* Refer Swamiji's *Discourses on Taittareya Upanishad*, II-8-1.

*Eha cedasakad bodddhum
 prak sarirasya visrasah ;
 Tatah sargesu lokesu
 sariratvaya kalpate.*

(4) If here (in this life) one is able to comprehend Him (*Brahman*) before the death of the body, he will be liberated from the bondage of the world ; if one is not able to comprehend Him, then he has to take a body again in the worlds of creation.

Ignorance can be ended only with Knowledge : ignorance and knowledge cannot remain together at one place at the same period of time. Knowledge ends in Ignorance, as light ends in darkness.

The ignorance of our Real identity has made us identify ourselves with the mind, intellect, and body delusions and this is the start for our ego-centric life of pains and limitations. There is no other achievement, more sacred and glorious which a human seeker can achieve within the duration of his existence as man, than the realisation of his Real Identity with the Unlimited, Eternal, Absolute Self.

One identifying oneself with the Self during one's life-time here, gains the Eternal *Padavi* of deathless perfections. Having realized this Real Nature, there cannot be, for such an individual, any more of the pains of birth and death. After having woken up from the dream, one need not run to the side-board to snatch his rifle to shoot down the tiger that hunted him down in his dream ! After a dream-ride when the dreamer wakes up he need not run out to take his dream horse to water ! Having woken up from the dream of the ego-centric agonies into the waking state of the knowledge of the Self, the God-man will not and need no more repeat the to-and-fro-swinging between the arcs of birth and death.

If an individual fails to realize the Eternal Nature of his Self during his life-time, he, after departing from his present manifestation will have to take up yet another form and come back to this wretched plane of limitations and finiteness. This is true, because, the ego-sense can ultimately end, we have found, only at the final shifting of our present identifications with our

body, mind and intellect to a real understanding, born of first-hand experience of the True Nature of our Eternal Selfhood, which is the Source of all Life in us. As long as an individual has not come to have this subjective realisation of the Self, so long his ego-sense persists, so much so, when the 'i-ness' and 'my-ness' in him drop off their present physical body, they remain intact together as an "idea-ego" which in time, associates itself with another form maintaining and developing its egoness with that chosen form.

Sruthi here kindly warns all sincere seekers to strive hard in realising this final Mission of Life which takes the individual from the mortal levels to the heights of Eternal Perfection. This Supreme Goal is the final fulfilment of the struggle of evolution. Man alone is the sacred creature who has been endowed with the necessary equipments of a sensitive mind, a high reasoning capacity, with a judicious and trained application of which, he can deliberately hasten his own evolution. In Nature no other creature has this divine freedom to speed up its own evolution.

यथादर्शे तथात्मनि यथा स्वप्ने तथा पितृलोके ।

यथाप्सु परीव ददृशे तथा गन्धर्वलोके च्छायातपयोरिव ब्रह्मलोके

॥ ५ ॥

*Yatha (a) darśe tatha (a) tmani,
yatha svapne tatha pitrloke ;
Yatha 'psu pari-iva dadrse,
tatha Gandharva-loke,
Chhaya-tapayor-iva Brahma-loke.*

(5) As in a mirror, so (*Brahman* can be clearly seen) here within one's own Self ; as in dreams so in the world of the forefathers ; as in water, so in the world of the *Gandharvas* ; as in light and shade, so in the world of *Brahman*.

In the previous *Mantra* we have been advised that in our life the greatest achievement would be that of realising our own Real Nature. Now in this *Mantra* Lord Death is trying to explain to his disciple, Nachiketas, how realisation of the Self in the human existence is much more sacred, compared with the possibilities of realisation in the other different planes of existence.

As men, we are living in a plane of consciousness, where we have certain kinds of experiences which we gain through our sense-organs, mind and intellect, when they react with the available external world of sense-objects. Just as our experiences of the waking-state-world are not the same as our experiences in our dream-world, so too, there can be other planes of consciousness wherein different degrees of experiences can be our lot. Thus, we have the *Pitrloka* (the world of the manes) where the individual has only the mind-and-intellect-equipment and not the physical body. Naturally, the experiences gained by the subtle-body must be different from our own experiences here, inasmuch as the body with its demands, cravings, pains and joys will colour our experiences to give us on the whole a totally different life. Similarly, the experiences in the world of the *Gandharvas* (divine nymphs, instinctively clever in music, dance and such other allied arts) and in the plane of consciousness called the *Hiranyagarbha* or the *Brahma Loka* (the Total Mind), must each be totally different from those in all the other worlds. Here, *Sruthi* is trying to give the comparative clarity with which the Absolute Knowledge can be reached by the seekers in the different planes of existence.

Yathadarshae (as in a mirror).— Man, living the life of the mortal, in this world alone can, through the required special practices, come to gain the clearest concept of the Absolute Knowledge. Transcending his mind and intellect intuitively a seeker comes, face to face, with the Truth, the Self or the *Atman*. At this stage, there is a natural pause for all the thinking students to raise a serious doubt. When one's mind and intellect have been transcended, how can there be an ego, who can come face to face with the Centre of all our Lives to recognise it? True, the question is quite intelligent, logical and to the mark. This question has been answered here in the simple-looking comparison with the reflection in a mirror.

Friends, mirror-gazing must be quite familiar to every one of you, as no day can pass, in this era of daily shaving, without your looking into a mirror. But probably, you have never tried to analyse the exact moment of your understanding your reflection. Let this *Sadhu* try to help you.

Supposing, for a moment, that you are standing in front of a mirror. Now, seeing your reflection in the mirror what do you exactly understand ? If, for example, your reflection showed that it needs a shaving badly, would you then start shaving the 'reflection' in the mirror or would you do it on your own face ? That is, though you are looking out into the reflection in the mirror, you are in fact understanding not the reflection but yourself.

Similarly, when the mind and the intellect have been transcended in the last moments of the white-heat of meditation, the individual ego, peeping over its own limitations, as it were, comes face to face with the Eternal Self and when thus, the highly evolved ego, comes to reflect the Light of the Eternal Knowledge, the reflection merges itself *in-a-process-of-knowing*, to become one with the Self. Seeing the reflection we do not actually come to know so much the reflection as, through it, we come to understand the source of the reflection, our own face.

If once we have grasped this point clearly in all its pregnant import, we shall easily understand the other comparisons, used in explaining the different degrees of clarity, with which a seeker can realise his own Self, in the different planes of conscious existence.

All those who have been regularly following so far the *Yagna* discourses are sure to understand the depth of the significances in the comparisons *as in dream so in the world of the forefathers* and *as in water so in the world of Gandharvas*. Chintmaya does not wish to commit the sin of repetition.

Chhayatapayoriva (as in light and shade).—In *Brahma Loka*, the *Śruti* explains, the Knowledge of the Self can be certainly most clear, as clear as black-letters would be against a white background ! In fact, *Śruti* is unequivocally emphatic in her assertion that Self-realisation in the World of the Cosmic Mind is the clearest. But we should not forget that this Plane of Consciousness is very difficult to be reached, for, this is the lot given to such ego-centres who have come to gain the required merits through a synthetic *Yoga* of both *Karma* and *Upasana* (worship and meditation). The one, having reached the *Brahma Loka*, according to the scriptures, remains there enjoying for

long the subtlest joys of that world, until at last, ultimately, guided by the Creator Himself, he attains Immortality, when that Plane of Consciousness gets folded back into the Absolute, during the periodical *pralayas* (deluge). This process of Self-realisation is termed as *Krama Mukthi* (liberation by stages) in the Vedantic text-books.

1-5. *Through knowledge of Self man is lifted to the highest. The Self being our own Nature, this realisation can happen at any stage of existence. But it is never so complete and consummate as here and now ; in the human form in this world.*

इन्द्रियाणां पृथग्भावं मुदयास्तमयौ च यत् ।

पृथक् उत्पद्यमानानां मत्वा धीरो न शोचति ॥ ६ ॥

*Indriyanam prthag-bhavam,
udayastamayan ca yat ;
Prthag-utpadyamananam,
matva dhiro na socati.*

(6) A wise man,—having understood, that the senses separately produced are distinct from the *Atman* and also their rising and setting,—grieves no more.

One who has read the previous *Mantra* and has thoroughly understood its significances shall surely ask the question, “ why, after all, should one try to realize the Eternal Self in the human life ? ” The answer is given by *Sruthi Bhagwati* in this *Mantra*.

The sense-organs are distinctly separate from Eternal and Changeless Truth that resides in us. The senses are separate from the *Atman* because they are effects produced out of certain causes, while the *Atman* is the very uncaused Cause. Again, the five different sense-organs are each different, not only in themselves, but in their very original causes ; the five fundamental elements.

Not only they are in themselves thus different, and arise from different causes, but also they are eternally changing as they re-act from moment to moment differently with the different objects that come in contact with them ! In the waking-state they are all quite receptive and available for their individual expressions ; while the moment the individual is asleep, the

capacity of his sense-organs to re-act with their objects, fold themselves up into a state of dormancy (*Udayasthamyow*, rising and setting) and the folded up abilities and capacities in the *Indriyas* seem to manifest themselves all at once, the moment the individual wakes up from his sleep ! !

A wise discriminating man, differentiating between the Eternal Factor, the *Atman*, and the ever-changing play of passing expressions in his *Indriyas*, comes to grieve no more. All our sorrows in life are due to our lending ourselves to the misunderstanding that we are the ego-centres and thereby becoming ourselves victims to all our mental demands, intellectual assertions, and sense-appetites. In the right knowledge of our total independence from the winding chains of these limitations, we shall reach a state of existence, where sorrow or grief has no meaning. The State of Perfect Bliss, eternally untouched by sorrow, is the *Padavi* (status) that *Sruthi* promises to one, who dares follow the Razor Path of Knowledge and realises the Self in this very birth, as she called upon us to do in the previous two *Mantras*. That a Self-realized soul would eternally be beyond all sorrows is an oft-repeated statement in our sacred scriptural literature. “*Tare-thi Shoka-Mathmavith*” (the knower of the Self goes beyond the shores of sorrow) says another *Upanishad*.

इन्द्रियेभ्यः परं मनो मनसः सत्त्वमुत्तमम् ।

सत्त्वादधि महानात्मा महतोऽव्यक्तमुत्तमम् ॥ ७ ॥

Indriyebhyah param mano,
manasah sattvam uttamam ;
Sattvad adhi mahan atma,
mahato ' vyaktam uttamam.

अव्यक्तात् तु परः पुरुषो व्यापकोऽलिङ्ग एव च ।

यं ज्ञात्वा मुच्यते जन्तुरमृतत्वं च गच्छति ॥ ८ ॥

Avyaktat-tu parah puruso,
vyapako ' linga eva ca ;
Yam jnatva mucyate jantur,
amrtatvam ca gacchati.

(7) Beyond the senses is the mind, beyond the mind is the intellect, beyond the intellect is the Great *Atman*. Superior to the Great *Atman* is the unmanifest.

(8) And verily beyond the unmanifest is the all-pervading *Purusha* devoid of all distinctive marks, knowing whom, the creature (the knower) is emancipated and he attains immortality.

These two *Mantras* are taken together because we had already commented exhaustively on all the points raised in the first part of the second stanza. As we had in Valli III,* here again the *Mantra* is only repeating what had already been said regarding the ascending spiral that takes us from the grossest to the subtlest Principle in us.

The *Purusha* or the subtlest of the subtle Factor in us, is explained here as *Vyapaka* (all-pervading) and *Alinga* (without distinctive characteristics, properties, etc.).

Atman being the subtlest of the subtle, we have discussed before, it must necessarily be an all-pervading *Tattva*.

In the Sanskrit logicians' vocabulary the word *Linga* has a particular connotation, a scientific import and is used in philosophical discussions only at such places where the philosopher wants to point out its scientific meaning. Much of our knowledge is made out of our capacity to infer. Almost all our knowledge of things not yet seen, is derived through the source of knowledge called inference. When there is a lot of smoke rising from a point in the distant range of hills we, from our point of observation, infer that there is fire on the hill. The sign or the distinctive mark, *viz.*, smoke, observing which, we come to the definite conclusion of the things is called the *Linga* in the logicians' terminology.

With this knowledge of the exact connotation of the word, we can now easily understand the import of the scripture when She says that the *Purusha* is devoid of any *Linga*. It means that there are no properties or qualities or such other indicative signs by which we can directly perceive, and, therefore, come to recognise the Self in us.

He who realises this Self, through a subjective experiencing, not only gets liberated from the shackles of mortal limitations,

* *Ibid.*, III—10.

but also the *Sruthi* asserts, most surely, reaches the Deathless State of Eternal Existence. "*Brahmavith Brahmaiva Bhavathi*" (knower of *Brahman* becomes *Brahman*), is the incessant declaration of all *Sruthis*.

6-8. In this inward pilgrimage the seeker crosses the senses and instincts, mind, reason, the great Soul, the unmanifest to reach the innermost essence—the *Purusha*—the Self. This ends the liberating vision, the attainment of Immortality.

न सन्दृशे तिष्ठति रूपमस्य न चक्षुषा पश्यति कश्चनेनम् ।

हृदामनीषा मनसाभिकल्पतो य एतद् विदुरमृतास्ते भवन्ति ॥ ९ ॥

*Na sandrse tisthati rupamasya,
na chakshusa pasyati kascana enam ;
Hrda manisa manasabhiklpt:,
ya etad vidur amrtas te bhavanti.*

(9) His form is not to be seen. No one beholds Him with the eye. By controlling the mind, by the intellect and by incessant meditation He is revealed. Those who know This (*Brahman*) become immortal ones.

That the Self is beyond the fields of the sense-organs and the mind and the intellect has by now been very often repeated by the *Sruthi* in different *Mantras*. If none of these instruments of cognition, feeling and understanding is available for the seeker in realising the Supreme, the ill-informed aspirant is apt to feel despaired and may throw up all his attempts to live the Life Divine, saying that the goal promised by the *Sruthis* is an impossibility. Hence, this *Mantra* is explaining to us the last leap with which the seeker, during his meditation, crosses over the frontiers of his mind and intellect and reaches the Land of Truth.

Na Chakshushah Pashyati (None can see Him with the eyes).—Here the word eye is a representative word (*Upalakshana*) which in its true meaning in the *Mantra* indicates all the sense-organs. The *Upanishad* is here clearly and pointedly making the daring statement that God will not present Himself to his devotees, for them to "see" Him with their naked limited sense-organs of vision. All visions are delusory hallucinations of the mind, however satisfying and gloriously divine they may

seem to be.

The only method by which a seeker can realise his Self is through the faculty of intuition which is now lying dormant in man's intellect. The intellect resides, according to the poetic *Sruthi*, in the cave-of-the-heart, and from its glorious seat of activities, controls the workings of the mind. When the mind is silent, the intellect gains an inner peace. An intellect, thus, in complete peace itself dies away or disappears leaving behind, a newly born potency in us called intuition. It is with this intuition that a seeker comes to realise his Self. Intuition is nothing but "the capacity to know the knowledge". And knowing the Self is but the Self becoming aware of Itself.

For purposes of emphasis *Sruthi* is again repeating that the one who has, during his sojourn here, come to rediscover himself to be nothing other than the Pure Consciousness, presiding in him as his own Self, shall himself become Immortal, and thus get away from the whirl of births and deaths.

यदा पंचावतिष्ठन्ते ज्ञानानि मनसा सह ।

बुद्धिश्च न विचेष्टते तामाहुः परमां गतिम् ॥ १० ॥

*Yada panca-avatisthante
jnanani manasa saha ;
Buddhis-ca na vicestate
tani ahuh paramam gatim.*

(10) When the five organs of knowledge are at rest together with the mind, and when the intellect ceases functioning (becomes calm) that they call the highest state.

Here we have the clearest exposition as far as language and intellect can go, of that State of Eternal Auspiciousness experienced, when the soul meets the Soul (*Samadhi*). When the five sense-organs are perfectly controlled, naturally, the mind is devoid of almost ninety per cent. of its activities. What little field, the mind has now, to get itself agitated in, is constituted of its stored away memories and self-created imaginations. When even these agitations are controlled, we reach the state explained in the *Mantra*, the state when the sense-organs are at rest along with

the mind. Even this is not sufficient. For, at this state, the intellect will be throbbing, though of course it will be very feeble, with its own ideas and ideals. The *Upanishad* wants us to reach a state where the sense-organs, the mind and the intellect are all at rest. And this state is defined by the *Sruthi* as the State of vitally experiencing the Supreme Absolute Reality, the Self.

"As a matter of fact have we not, almost everyone of us, experienced a state, wherein our sense-organs, mind and intellect are not at play? In sleep we all know that neither our *Indriyas* nor our *Manas* nor our *Buddhi* comes to interfere with our peaceful rest with their endless death dances; then, are we not experiencing the Reality during all the occasions when we are plunged in deep sleep? If the condition of sleep be the condition of Reality, is the *Upanishad* asking us to be nothing more than idlers, sleeping round the clock all the days of our lives?" thus ask the sceptics.

Such and other similar questions would rise up in the mind of the uninitiated when they superficially read the *Mantra* now under discussion—entirely in itself. In fact this *Mantra* has no independent existence without the total knowledge we had so far acquired from the learned discourses of Lord Death. We must read this stanza specially in the light of the previous one.

There is a lot of difference between sleep and the state of Self meeting the Self. The condition of *Samadhi* is often explained to us as something very near sleep, because living as we are in a very gross plane of consciousness, the God-men of the *Upanishad* could not explain to us their transcendental experiences, but in terms of our own world of limited experiences. The nearest state, they could find, which man is enjoying and which can be favourably compared with the state of *Samadhi* is sleep, in the sense, while we are sleeping our sense-organs, mind and intellect are at rest. *The comparison is only so far as it explains this common similarity.*

During moments of God-consciousness, the individual transcends his mind and intellect, to reach the Land of the Eternal Consciousness, while a man in sleep has only folded up his mind, intellect and sense-organs, for the time being, and finds himself reaching the dark Land of the Unconsciousness! The

one in sleep is drowned in the darkness of ignorance ; the one in *Samadhi* is in the sunshine of Knowledge. The sleeper is a slave in a negative living, while the knower is a master in a positive existence. These ideas are hinted at in the unwritten space between the above two stanzas.

In order to delve deep into our own bosom and light up the match of intuition, so that it may flare up and blow off the veiling walls of mental and intellectual disturbances, and thus finally reveal the Self unto the Self, what exactly is the process to be pursued ? This question is answered in the following *Mantra*.

तां योगमिति मन्यन्ते स्थिरामिन्द्रियधारणम् ।

अप्रमत्तस्तदा भवति योगो हि प्रभवत्ययौ ॥ ११ ॥

Tam yogam iti manyante,
sthiram indriya-dharanam ;
Apramattas tada bhavati,
yogo hi prabhavapyayau.

(11) The firm control of the senses they regard as *Yoga*. Then the *Yogin* becomes free from all the vagaries of the mind ; for the *Yoga* is acquired and lost.

The method of practice, pursued by a Vedantic student, in order to develop his intuitive power and with that to come to realise ultimately his own Self and thus become immortal is being explained here. The process of self-development and self-perfection is *Yoga* ; if truly practised, *Yoga* promises us its goal to be God-hood. Here, the scripture clearly exclaims that *Yoga* means, in its practical application, *the firm control of the sense-organs*. A certain amount of sense control comes as a matter of habit to one who has come to live the discrete rules of decent life ; such an individual will not like the barbarian in him to walk out of his form, to abscond or to seduce, although his mind may get tempted by the charms of his neighbour !

An individual is helped much in his self-control, no doubt, if the spirit of his age is one that follows the *Dharmas*. If we are finding today a greater dose of barbarianism and cruelties

among our children who are coming out of the universities, than it was among our forefathers of a couple of generations back, we know for certain the source for the low negativities among the modern educated class. These children, innocent victims of the spirit of the Age, are not to be condemned at all for the life of sensations they are seeking or the voluptuous excesses they are tempted to enjoy ! If they are to be condemned, much more shall we condemn ourselves, for, certainly, we have, through our own commissions and omissions, contributed much to the poisonous spirit of the present. Flouting truth and breaking the codes of morality and ethics in conscious acts of our own arrogance, we have allowed the Spirit of our times to fall so low from its ideal peak to reach the lowest depths of today's desperations.

Fortunately, in the Vedic Period they maintained a strict code of the *Dharmas*. *Sanathanadharma* was the Spirit of that Age ; and the descendants for a long time, till the recent present, have been, by a superfine system of communal living and through an ordered and rigid system of social values, trying to keep up the spirit of *Sanathanadharma*. If there is yet a greater dose of individual inner joy experienced by the millions in our Indian villages, in spite of their poverty, starvation, death and disease, we have only to thank the ever-blessing time-tested system of happy living called the *Sanathanadharma*. Compared with a modern citizen in the greatest of our cities, New York, we can definitely say that mentally speaking, the poor Indian ryot, is any day enjoying a greater share of inward peace and joy than his American brother. *Shanti* is the product of contentment and not the ghastly child born of sensuous flirtations with sense-objects.

Apologies for this digression. The amount of sense control a man comes to enjoy, therefore, depends much upon the Spirit of the very Age he is living in. In the penultimate state of self-development the individual gains more and more control over his sense-organs through his practice of self-control. Certainly, the final and total control, over the *Indriyas*, comes only from the moment of full realisation of the Self (" *Param Drishtwa Nivarthathae* ").

Yoga, to a student of *Vedantha*, starts with and is continued in self-control. To him the extreme development of his powers of concentration through a successful achievement in the control of his sense-organs is the greatest of *Tapas* (*Eikagryam Paramam Tapah*).

Control of the sense-organs does not merely mean the mere negative idea of taking our sense-organs away from their sense-objects. This is only half the battle. Success can be achieved in self-control only when our minds are fixed firmly in steady concentration and meditation upon the *Atman*.

At this time of his self-evolution, the *Yogin* becomes careful and does not allow his mind to fall back into its usual ruts of sensuous thinking. For, a true student of *Vedanta* knows full well that unless he is very careful, the control gained over his senses, might at any time, get lost in the severe temptations of passing moments ; especially so when the *Yogin* lives in the same accustomed plane of sense-objects. *Sruthi* kindly warns, in her own words, how easy it is even for the highly developed students of *Yoga* to get themselves lost, in the midst of their own successes, if even for a moment they become careless. Indeed, the *Path of Knowledge*, dangerous but the shortest, is a *Razor Path* wherein a slip means total annihilation.

नैव वाचा न मनसा प्राप्तुं शक्यो न चक्षुषा ।

अस्तीति ब्रुवतोऽन्यत्र कथं तदुपलभ्यते ॥ १२ ॥

*Na-eva vaca na manasa
praptum sakyo na caksusa ;
Asti-iti bruvato 'nyatra
katham tad upalabhyate.*

(12) The Self cannot be reached by speech, by mind, or by the eye. How can it be realised otherwise than from those who say, "He is" ?

The *Atman* is the controller of the entire mechanism of life. Just as a driver, while driving the car, cannot get himself run over by the same car, so also the sense-organs, mind, and intellect functioning because of the Life Centre behind them cannot turn themselves upon the very *Atman* and know Him as one of the

objects of their cognition, feeling or understanding !

Naturally, Lord Death here in his exclamations conveys to his dear disciple the accepted belief in *Vedanta* that there is no other source of knowing the existence of the *Atman*, than the sacred Divine words of the scriptural declarations (*Sabdha Pramanam*) and their living symbols, the realised saints. Whatever arguments you may bring out in favour of the existence of the One *Atman* in all living forms, there can be equally efficient, intellectual and metaphysical arguments to meet and completely floor down the arguments of a Seer and prove just the opposite—the non-existence of the *Atman* ! No amount of metaphysical arguments can help a seeker to reach the Absolute Truth. Every seeker will have to start his own pilgrimage with his indomitable courage and faith in the words of his Master.

अस्त्येवोपलब्धव्यस्तत्त्वभावेन चोभयोः ।

अस्त्येवोपलब्धस्य तत्त्वभावः प्रसीदति ॥ १३ ॥

*Asti-iti-eva upalabdhasya,
tattva-bhavana ca ubhayoh ;
Asti-iti-eva upalabdhasya
tattva-bhavaḥ prasidati.*

(13) He should be known to exist as Be (*Asti*) and also as He really is. Of these two to him, who knows Him to exist, His true nature becomes manifest.

Though the stanza will read as a riddle to the not-well-initiated, it is a direct statement to all those who know the *Sastra* ; and this *Sadhu* is sure that all of you in this *Yagnashala* are today really full blown Vedantins to whom this passage must be automatically clear.

The *Atma-chaitanya* can be realised either as conditioned in Its manifestations, or in Itself and as such without any of Its attributes and therefore as a Pure Witness of all the states of consciousness. At many places during His discourses Lord Death had already pointed out to Nachiketas that a meditator meditating upon the symbol of Truth, OM, considering it to represent the lower *Brahman*, shall attain the joys of the *Hiranya-*

garbha ; and if, on the other hand, one meditates upon OM as a symbol of the attributeless, Pure Consciousness, the practitioner fulfils his meditations and actually realises in him the Absolute and the All-pervading Reality. Sree Sankara in his commentary comments upon this stanza in the true spirit of the very text-book.

Many of you might find, if you are following the Ramkrishna Math edition or the Yoga Vedanta Forest University Publication of Rishikesh, that both of them had felt almost an unnecessary urge to find a defect in Sree Sankara's commentary ! ! We, however, find it difficult to accept this amendment which they have suggested.

Sree Sankara comments upon this *Mantra* and says that the *Śruti* is here warning the seekers against meditating upon Truth as manifested with attributes, and that she is vigorously advocating the meditation upon the Absolute Truth, unmanifest and attributeless.

According to the above text-books, Sankara's commentary falls short of the mark and that a closer hit would have been gained by directly explaining the *Mantra* to hint at a warning that the meditator should meditate upon Truth as Existence (*Asi*) and not as Non-existence (*Nasti*) . . . as some of the Buddhistic schools of philosophers maintain along with a section of the Indian Logicians (*Naiyyaikas*).

He who realises the *Atman* as the very Essence of Existence, has realised the *Atman*. In thus realising, the successful seeker in his meditation comes to contact himself with a plane of consciousness, wherein, he realises the Source of all Life to be Pure Existence alone. "Existence-in-Itself" is a term used to differentiate the existence of a thing from the existence as such. "Existence of a thing" is well known to us ; but here the existence is known in its qualified or conditioned state.

Truth is the subjective knowledge of Existence as such to be the very nature of the knowledge Absolute. The pure state of 'being' (*Kevala Asthitwa Bhava*) is declared in the *Upanishads* as the essence of the Self-realisation-moment. He who reaches this state of Knowledge reaches the Supreme Goal of life and rises from the seat of meditation, not as the very same mortal who went to it, but as a God-man upon earth.

9-13. This vision of the Self is not an outward possessing (gaining) but an inward discovery (realising). The senses and the mind withdrawn from their objects, the reason ends its striving, at that moment, when all our powers are thus held in tranquil control, we completely turn within and realise the Self in us.

यदा सर्वे प्रमुच्यन्ते कामा येऽस्य हृदि श्रिताः ।
अथ मर्त्योऽमृतो भवत्यत्र ब्रह्म समश्नुते ॥ १४ ॥

*Yada sarve pramucyante
kama ye 'sya hr̥di sritah ;
Atha martyo 'mr̥to bhavati
atra Brahma samashnute.*

(14) When all the desires that dwell in the heart are destroyed, then the mortal becomes immortal, and he attains *Brahman* even here.

The State of Desirelessness is the State of *Kaivalya* or Illumination. That state can be reached even while the individual lives his life within his mortal form. Here, *Sruthi* is amply clear in her support of the Adwaitin's claim that man can realise Godhood in this very birth and reach the state called *Jivan Mukti*. We have already discussed during our lectures of *Kenopanishad* that there is a school of thinkers who believe that the final state of realisation can come only in the very last moments of life and that after realisation the body falls off ; this school believes only what is technically termed as the *Videhamukthi* (liberation after death).

यदा सर्वे प्रभिद्यन्ते हृदयस्येह ग्रन्थयः ।
अथ मर्त्योऽमृतो भवत्येतावदनुशासनम् ॥ १५ ॥

*Yada sarve prabhidhyante
hr̥dayasya iha granthayah ;
Atha martyo 'mr̥to bhavati
etavad anusasanam.*

(15) When all the Knots of the heart are severed here on earth, then the mortal becomes immortal, so far is the instruction (of all *Vedanta*).

This stanza is a continuation of the idea given out in the previous *Mantra*.

Hridayagrandhi (the knots of the Heart).—This is a philosophical concept entertained by the Vedantins. According to them the *Avidya* (nescience), meaning, the self-forgetfulness of man of his own true Eternal Nature, is the cause of all his continued delusions and superimpositions. In the darkness we misunderstand a piece of rope to be a snake ; the serpent is here risen from our “ not understanding the true nature of the rope ”. And now once having seen the serpent we continue super-imposing upon it a length, a height, a girth, a hood and such other attributes of the non-existent serpent. Similarly, man not recognising his Real Nature (in the ignorance of his True Nature) gets agitated with *Kama* (desire) and these very desires in their attempts to fulfil themselves among the world-of-sense-objects become the *Karma* (action) ! Thus, *Avidya* in the Spiritual plane is itself the ‘ desires ’ in the mental plane, which, again, are themselves modified into ‘ actions ’ in the outer world-of-objects. “ Every action has its reaction ”, and thus, in order to reap the reactions, the ego-centres escape from their present forms through the back-doors of death, only to re-enter in newer forms through the front gates of birth !

The bonds of *Avidya* (nescience), *Kama* (desire), and *Karma* (action) are together called the Knots of the Heart in Vedantic philosophy.

When a human being during his life-time breaks asunder these bonds, he in fact, ends his ignorance. Ignorance can be ended only with Knowledge. Thus, the Knots of the Heart are broken down at the dawn of Knowledge ; liberation comes with Knowledge (*Gyananewatu Kaivalyam*).

For purposes of emphasis *Sruthi* herein, again reasserts the view of *Jivan Mukti* advocated by Sree Sankara and his followers. Man becomes God-upon-earth, in his Perfection of Knowledge, gained through his own self-efforts, during his life-time, even while living, within his own flesh and bones.

14-15. Thus all knots of the heart are broken asunder, and the seeker desiring out the Self, rediscovers the Self not in him but the Self that is his entire and only Nature.

शतं चैका च हृदयस्य नाड्यस्तासां मूर्धानमभिनिःसृतेका ।
तयोध्वर्वायन्नमृतत्वमेति विष्वङ्द्वन्या उत्क्रमणे भवन्ति ॥ १६ ॥

*Satam ca eka ca hrdayasya nadyas
tasam murdhanam abhinistat eka ;
Taya urdhvam ayan amrtatvam eti
visvam anya utkramane bhavanti.*

(16) Hundred and one are the nerves of the heart ; of them one penetrates the crown of the head. Going upwards through it, man attains immortality ; but others lead (the departed) differently.

At this stage of your knowledge of Indian philosophy you all may find it not too easy to follow the meaning of this *Mantra*, which is one of the rock bottom foundation in the philosophy of Yoga. A much more detailed analysis of the spiritual body encased within our physical form is supplied to us by some of the other *Upanishads*. In the Vedic Age probably there was wide currency for this knowledge that Lord Death is here only hinting at the particular creed in a passing statement. Chinmaya feels that it would not be adding anything to your total understanding of this *Upanishad* by a cumbersome and exhaustive explanation of this *Mantra*.

However, we may touch upon the problem. The subtle spiritual body is believed to be constituted of some 101 subtle nerves which the surgeon's scalpel shall never dissect nor his eyes ever see ! Of them, the most important is the *Shushumna*, which runs parallel to the back-bone all along its length and penetrating the top-bone, called the Apex, extends itself upto the centre of the human crown. The sensitiveness of the top centre portion of the crown can be very well experienced by ourselves ! Especially in a new-born child one can feel the heart-beat very regularly at that place.

Whatever may be its physiological explanation and relative position as far as you, the seekers in the *Path of Knowledge*, are concerned, it is sufficient to know that the ego-centre of a meditator, who has realised during his life the *Apara Brahman* (Relative Truth), at the time of his death, escapes through the *Shushumna* and crossing distinct regions of experiences reaches

Brahma Loka from where, ultimately at the end of *Kalpa*, with the dissolution of that world of experience, it reaches the Supreme State of Realisation.

As for the one, who had realised the Eternal, All-pervading Truth in its attributeless pure essence, even while living in the body form, becomes a *Jivan Mukta*. To such a *Gyani* even the *Sruthi* denies all passage of journey (*Na Tasya Parana Utkramathi*). By knowing *Brahman* he becomes *Brahman*. Such a complete and total liberation is called *Kaivalya Mukti*.

अंगुष्ठमात्रः पुरुषोऽन्तरात्मा सदा जनानां हृदये सन्निविष्टः ।
तं स्वच्छरीरात् प्रवृहेन्मुञ्जादिवेणीकां धैर्येण ।
तं विद्याच्छक्रममृतं तं विद्याच्छक्रममृतमिति ॥ १७ ॥

Angustha-matraḥ puruṣo 'ntaratma,
sada jananam hrdaye sannivistah ;
Tam svat sarirat pravreth
munjad-iva isikam dhairyaena ;
Tam vidyat sukram amrtam
tam vidyat sukram amrtam-iti.

(17) The *Purusha* of the size of a thumb, the Inner Self, is always seated in the heart of all living beings ; one should draw Him out from one's own body with steadiness, as one draws the pith (stalk) from a reed ; one should know Him as Pure and Immortal.

We have already discussed in the earlier *Mantras* the concept of the Supreme Reality as a mere presence, " in the shape of one's own thumb ", residing in the centre of one's heart. We noted there that the size and shape have been given to the Self to facilitate our meditations, during the earlier stages of the *Path of Dhyan*. In fact the *Atman* is formless although here Self is described as having a shape and a form. This is only for the purpose of providing the seekers with a prop for their mind at meditation to concentrate upon.

It is quite appropriate that Lord Death should conclude his Upanishadic declarations to his disciple, Nachiketas, with a direct call upon him to continue his meditations and discriminate

the Real Divine presence in the centre of the centre, from the unreal concentric coating for matter, which the Spirit has seemingly put on to play its game of hide-and-seek ! Beyond the five *Koshas* (sheaths) lies the Spirit.

The analogy employed here (to show how through discrimination one reaches the Final State of Self-cognising the Self) is, true to the style of the *Upanishads*, most emphatic and voluminously Self-expressive. Nachiketas, and through Nachiketas the entire world of seekers, is advised to extricate the element of Absolute Consciousness, the Pure *Chit* Essence, from the delusory consciousness of the body, by continuous and deep practices of discrimination and meditation.

That, during meditation, one should not, in the least, strain oneself, is so vividly brought out by the analogy of “*drawing out the Pith from the reed*” ; the reed itself is the most delicate of plants, and its stalk is more so ; and to draw out this flimsy and subtle pith from its outer envelopments constituted of the stalks of the leaves themselves, is a delicate act, which needs a softness of touch, a measured and practised application of force, and a subtle silky deftness in handling the entire process ! !

Pure Consciousness, that is the Controller and the Director of all physical, mental and intellectual activities in a human being is the Soul or the *Atman*. The *Upanishad* concludes with the repeated assertion that we must know Him to be pure and immortal.

He is ‘pure’, in the sense that impurities of the mind as *Kama* (desires), *Krodah* (anger), *Lobha* (avarice), etc., are not in him. He is ‘immortal’, inasmuch as He is the Eternal Unborn Truth, All-pervading and the Uncaused Cause of all effects seen in His manifestations ! !

मृत्युप्रोक्तां नचिकेतोऽप्य लब्ध्वा विद्यामेतां योगविधिं च कृत्स्नम् ।

ब्रह्मप्राप्तो विरजोऽभूद् विमृत्युरन्योऽप्येवं यो विदध्यात्ममेव ॥ १८ ॥

Mṛtyu-proktaṁ Naciketo' tha labdhva,
vidyaṁ etaṁ yoga-vidhīm-ca kṛtsnam ;
Brahma-prāpto virajo' bhūd vimṛtyur,
anyo' py evaṁ yo vid adhyatmaṁ eva.

(18) Nachiketas, having been so instructed by Death in this knowledge and in the whole process of *Yoga*, became free from all impurities and death, and attained *Brahman* ; and so will he too attain who knows thus the Inner Self.

(Thus ends the Sixth Valli of the Second Chapter)

The previous stanza with its repetition in its last line and the particle ' *Ithi* ' had already given us the indication that the *Upanishad* had ended. This *Mantra* can therefore be only interpreted as the words of *Sruthi Bhagawati herself*. Nachiketas, after listening to the entire Upanishadic advices of his Master, and having acquired a thorough knowledge of the technique (*Yoga Vidhi*) of Self-perfection by which he can come to experience the Absolute Perfection as his own Real Nature, retired to a quiet retreat, where he, practising the *Brahma Vidya* came to be pure in mind and intellect, and through the processes of higher meditations, realised his Self.

Virajati (free from *Rajas* or sin, free from impurities ; free from vice and virtue).—The *Gyana Sadhana* consists in controlling the flow of the sense-organs towards their sense-objects, by a powerful application of the powers of discrimination and severe mental discipline. The mind is thus redeemed, in slow and steady stages, from its dross such as egoistic vanities, selfish self-centered passions and desires, attachments, lusts, greeds, etc., and by applying such a controlled and purified mind to dwell at a limited chosen form or idea, its powers of concentration are developed. Lastly, these newly developed powers of continued concentration, are applied, with greater intensity for delving deep beneath the delusory five-matter-envelopments of the spirit to contact the Self, which is of nature, Pure Consciousness, Eternal and Absolute.

If one seeker at the period of the Vedic era had realised the Self in him, through the blessings of such a Super-divine master as Lord Death, to many of us, it may seem to be a historical accident and not a sure achievement for all seekers at all times. To check-mate this possible doubt in her readers, *Sruthi* herein emphatically asserts, " *So will he too attain who knows thus the inner Self*". Even today, he who can fulfil in himself all the necessary qualifications, explained so vividly in this *Upanishad*,

and then practise the entire technique of *Brahma Vidya*, as diligently as Nachiketas did, he, too, can realise the Self and become one with Truth A God-man upon earth.

16-18. Some concluding remarks of which 16 and 17 definitely read as later additions.

ॐ सहनाववतु । सह नौ भुनक्तु । सह वीर्यं करवावहै ।

तेजस्वि नावधीतमस्तु । मा विद्विषावहै ॥

ॐ शान्तिः । शान्तिः ॥ शान्तिः ॥

Om Saha Navavathu ;

Saha Nau Bhunakthu ;

Saha Viryam Karavavahai ;

Tejasvi Nav Adhitam Astu ;

Ma Vidvisavahai.

(Om Shantihi ! Shantihi !! Shantihi !!!)

(Iti Kathopanishad Samaptah)

Let Him protect us both. May He Bless us with the Bliss of Knowledge. Let us exert together. May what we study be well studied. May we not hate (quarrel with each other).

OM PEACE ! PEACE !! PEACE !!!

This Peace-verse gives us an idea of the team spirit in which the teacher and the taught approached the business of teaching and learning. How far removed is it from the modern relationship between the teacher and the taught !

Today the teacher reaches the desk only to pull through his 'job' and the students seem to be there to put in only their compulsory period of attendance ! To the teacher the taught has become an unavoidable and gruesome botheration : to the taught, the teachers are thorns in the otherwise-soft-flower-bed of their college days ! !

In *Brahma Vidya* no progress is possible without the active co-operation of the teacher and equally sincere co-operation of the taught. Hence, the special prayer "*May we never quarrel with each other*". This prayer seems to be specially imperative

in the study of the scripture where the chances for wasteful and useless arguments are so many that they can lead us into the meshes of ruinous misunderstanding, ununderstanding and non-understanding of the *Sruthi* at every step.

Each day the teacher and the pupil started and ended their lessons chanting this stanza of peace. Even today wherever the *Sruthi* is taught this practice is strictly followed.

“HARI OM TAT SAT”