

Brihadaranyaka Upanishad Highlights, by Nitya Chaitanya Yati

VOLUME III KHILA KANDA

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The Khila Kanda [Volume III] takes into consideration the plight of the aspirant who lives in a body, has many biologic needs to attend to, and the ways in which he or she is subjected to psychological eddies and whirlpools, going round and round in self-wrought confusion, and, after many years of such plights, facing the throes of death with a sense of dissatisfaction, feeling unworthy and unwanted. The compassionate seers of the Khila Kanda bring us out of our idealistic dreams to sit firm in our earthly home and sort out the facts of life with an acute sense of finding the real under our own feet. They guide us in taking the threads of life into the nimble fingers of our own hands to spin and weave our own fabric of life with a sense of collaboration with the first and continuing universal cause. This act of showing reverence to our given being with a body, resplendent with many a promising possibility, should make us more responsible than ever. (9-10)

We are now at a time when both India and the world at large have to emerge with a new solidarity and a spiritual vision that can enhance the dignity of humankind. (14)

The Khila Kanda does not want to make any concession to accommodate ignorance under any pretext. (20)

The Madhu Kanda and Muni Kanda have familiarized us with the epistemology, methodology and axiology of the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad. The epistemology is to know what is to be known; the axiology is to realize the Self; the methodology is going from the known to the unknown, step by step, building up the general structure of the philosophical vision and filling it systematically with whatever is relevant, applying reasoning which implies dialectical engineering of opposites, fixing conceptual meanings with the aid of symbols and allegories, and arriving at an axiologic

conclusion through an act of self-purification, in which one becomes imperientially identified with intuitive visions which can be the proper foundation of wisdom. (21)

Indian philosophers have a prejudicial antipathy towards the dark (*tamas*), but as a nature modality it is the binding and stabilizing memory tool to retain the past and the present as a useful mode for all future development, transformation or categorization. (34)

The concept of Prajapati comes close to what the Semitic religions call the Creator, Universal Father, or Eternal Benefactor. (35)

This lower self, which usually identifies with the I-consciousness and me-consciousness, raises itself to the higher consciousness through meditation on the Self (atman). The true Upanishadic way does not lie in the disciplines of prayer, supplication or elaborate invocations, but in contemplative pondering which is often called *dhyana*, based on *dharana*. (36)

Our consciousness is subject to the danger of becoming polluted by malevolent ideas. That is why it is said that when the passion for happiness overrides, it is necessary to exercise restraint. (36)

Prajapati is a single functional system producing within it the essentials that are required to be, to grow, to change, to elaborate, to visualize values, and to function for the actualization of values. (39)

*The substance of what we have said so far is that for each one of us there is only one world. That is what we each call “my self.” That world is an actualization of the total creative energy of one’s manifestation, i.e. the *prajapati*. In that, one cluster of attitudes makes one divine, another set of attitudes makes one a human, and

a third set of primitive urges makes one a demon. However ugly those urges are, out of them the most sublime aesthetic sensibility and spiritual wisdom are to be evolved. Looked upon this way, there is no hell outside, no heaven outside, no world outside. All pluralities organically belong to the unity of one's being.

Now we can see how the false fabrication of heaven and its denizens, the earth with its sociopolitical histories, and hell with its wildest screams of fear, cause millions of people everywhere to undergo excruciating pain, shame and misery. All these are manmade hypotheses which have become the most deplorable concepts of theology, religion, science, sociology, political economy, and every kind of belligerency. To clear the board of all such misconceptions we should make a valiant attempt to go through the entire maze of conceptualized beliefs.

A deep psychological analysis is to be made to understand the images we generate inside, the emotional energy source that generates imaginations that can foster sustaining faith in us, the energizing value which is fed into images, and the shifting values that intrinsically belong to the inner dynamism of personality formation. (40-41)

Dharma is the opposite of *brahman*. If *brahman* suggests the generality of universal being, *dharma* implies the specificity of individuation. Each individual being has a governing intrinsic law which makes it what it is. (43)

Life is situational, circumstantial. We are not omniscient beings to know all the pros and cons of every situation. Our conclusions can be erroneous, hasty, and to that extent unjustifiable. It is to this realm of uncertainty and vagueness the occurrence of fate is attributed. Actually there is no fate. Fate is a name for a situation in which the innumerable hidden causes that lead to the

occurrence of a tragedy cannot easily be traced and its cause and effect comprehensively correlated. (43)

Some things are agreeable to society only if they can be covered up. It is demonic, but in such cases the demon wins.... How many people can speak the truth and the whole truth all the time in life if they are part of a family, a clan, a society, a government? The very system itself necessarily makes a person demonic to preserve all diabolic secrets of the family, the home and the clan. *Tamas* is thus publicly denounced and privately adored. (44)

[Speaking of the blood-brain barrier] Even God requires a barrier so his innovations will not fall apart. (44)

The human being is relativism incarnated with a capital R. So the norm for the human is moderation: to be moderately truthful, to be moderately moral, and consequently to be moderately simple also. (44)

When the Upanishad tells us that we should listen to the mantra, make *manana*, and then live it, we should understand that “live it” means to live the normalization. If you go out of your room and walk, the first thing you experience is the air that you breathe, which is continuously flowing to you from far-off time and space. It comes free to all of us and waits to be breathed in by us. This is the first benevolence a person experiences in this world. If you are not cognizant of that factor, something in you is dead, benumbed. You should see how the air that you breathe brings life-giving energy to every cell, how it fills your lungs. Your respiratory system is like a tree with millions of branches on it. When breath comes it is like when the wind blows: every tree sways in the wind, which flutters every leaf. The same happens in our respiratory system where the innumerable little leaf-like things

that make up our respiratory tree all tremble with life. When you are aware of that, you are not a dead person; you are not in the dark; you have a sensibility to know the breath around and within you.

Then you see the sunlight coming and fondling every leaf, every blade of grass. It fills the atmosphere with a very special texture. When you notice such things, the demon in you is raised to a state of compassion. The world is always passionately hugging you. You become com-passionate to the world when you recognize the beauty of it.

This morning we saw the wonderful changes in the eastern sky—how the color was changing, how brightness was coming into the dark, and finally how the sun made its appearance behind a cloud. This evening we saw the same sun behind clouds in the western sky, making the same kind of picture with the illumination of the clouds. You need to cultivate your sensibility to notice that the whole world is helping you to make yourself beautiful, to feel beautiful, to see beauty, and to resonate with the spirit that is embracing the whole world.

When we stand on the green lawn, some of us do not even notice that there is grass under our feet. If somebody stands on our toes, it hurts, but this tenacious grass is such that even when we stand on it, it is as if nothing is happening to the very gentle leaves. They continue to be fresh and green. It's a wonder. But to see it, you should have a heart which is mellowed with your humanity. More spirit needs to be put into the darkened aspect of your cognition. Every cognition is followed by a connotation and then affection. If you are not affected by what you see, what you touch, what you feel, what you notice, what is the difference between you and a stone? (46-7)

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Reading a book and enjoying it is good, but reading yourself is more important. The language used to write a book has a grammar and a logic which govern how the words should be arranged to make meaningful sentences. Similarly, when you look at life to discover its grammar and logic, then alone are you participating in the remaking of your being. (47-8)

The Upanishad is not the only book which teaches you how to restructure your spirit. The whole world is teaching us how to restructure our being. (48)

When we see one spirit in all and extend cordiality to it, we allow ourselves to be bound by everyone around. But this should not be done with hypocritical pretense. People in the world around us may be going from organic to plastic, but we should be different. We should take it seriously that although we are born out of dirt, we are growing into beauty that can be more than that of a flower. We should remember that “a thing of beauty can be a joy forever.” We can be the essence of the beauty of humanity, the essence of the beauty of poetry, art, music, meditation. Such should be our attitude. Then alone will we be able to transform ourselves, restructure ourselves. (48)

All living beings have fear, which is the most dominant of all instincts. The first fear is of death. Even microbial beings take precautions not to be destroyed, and the fear of death is very much in the preconscious and unconscious minds of human beings. Modern people who are very sophisticated experience varieties of fear pangs, but they are obliged to hide most of them. This causes the agony of repressed fear. Maintaining the outward façade of calmness creates such a conflict that most people have a built-in schizophrenia. (50)

*Human beings not only hide their fear. They also take precautions to safeguard their security by hoarding food, clothing and other amenities of life, land, and as much money as possible in all forms, like bank deposits, hidden cash, gold and precious stones. From the drive for self-preservation, a counter-instinct that supports fear waxes in the human mind in the form of greed. If happiness breeds desire, greed builds up avarice, hoarding tendencies, and anxiety about threats to one's security symbols. The repressions of the shining ones and the human go to the very grassroots of life, where the demons lie dormant in a person. Therefore the catharsis of rage comes, when the most gentle person will flare up and become an assassin if rubbed the wrong way. (50)

Where do all these seeds of discord as well as concord lie? They are in the heart. Both the demonic spirit and the holy spirit have their coexistence in the heart. Thus a person is fated to always have a tormented mind, torn between piety and cruelty.... No person can hide any thoughts, words or deeds from [their heart]. Therefore the heart is called the spirit-witness (*manasakshi*). In the heart the sense of guilt accumulates and one starts feeling sinful. So one has to seek in one's own heart the redeemer from sins, and befriend the divine which dwells in the heart. (50)

*Although in principle Vedanta is supportive of the idea of the One without a second, in our daily life we always encounter the notion of the many. Therefore there has to be a continuous exercise of the mind to again and again find similitude between the seemingly diverse forms, names and functions. There is a central focal point to which all the pluralities are to be centripetally referred, to give full orientation to our understanding of brahman. This central focus is found in the heart. That is why *prajapati* is identified with the heart. (53-4)

The instruction given to the extreme aspect of individuation, the dark one (*asura*), is to have compassion. The *prajapati* asked the rigid inner defense principle to tame itself. That is called *daya*. One meaning of the word *daya* is ‘yielding’. In traffic, if one lane is about to infringe on another, a sign is displayed which says ‘Yield’. In a situation where you are asking the chief controller of your heart “What should I do?” the answer is *da*, give up your defenses, be compassionate. Give the benefit of the doubt to the other. That gives more emphasis to the person who holds both the transcendent and aesthetic aspects of life’s sublime beauty within, while maintaining vigilance for the safety of the being by policing interpersonal relationships. (55)

In every contemplative discipline, the excesses of two opposites are canceled out to arrive at a neutral normalization as the homeostasis of what originally appear to be uncompromisingly opposite characters. (57)

When you take what you see as it is, that is what we call *yathartha*. Apart from inductive or deductive logic, there is an intuitive assurance which comes from what Bergson and others call entering into a thing and being it. This can be quite confusing

if people use their usual testimonies of truth, such as perception, inference, analogy, residual truth, and contradiction. The mechanical way of thinking and knowing is transcended by the wise person with the acceptance of an intuitive flash of truth. (63)

*Truth is not an entity, and the real is also not an entity. Truth is the comprehensiveness of total understanding, and the real is the unitary summation of whatever is individually encountered. (64)

The emphasis that ensues from this mantra is that those who aspire for a thoroughgoing critical envisioning of the phenomenal world and its ground should necessarily go through a discipline which will cleanse their faculty of cognition and connotation, leaving no residual memory to influence them or prejudice them as they make a case to case evaluation of the merit of life. (64)

We have two versions of truth in our interpretation of life. One is a simple comprehension of the whole truth. The other is a compromised version of it to suit social circumstances. (66)

We are not asked to live truth, we are asked to speak truth. That means truth is a universal idea and not a specific manifestation. (66)

The highest truth has a radical note; it is devoid of compromise. However, in social life, truth is watered down to many degrees of acceptance. In this context we are making a distinction between the all-inclusive truth which is felt in the heart, and the truth that is compromised when the heart is moved by favoritism or personal affection. That is why in law, favoritism is considered as the worst enemy of justice. (66)

Shankara brought in the theory of maya to account for two kinds of universal errors. One is the specific error to which individuals are exposed because of several kinds of weakness: physical, intellectual, moral and spiritual. All these specific possibilities of error are termed *avidya*. Hence from childhood, intense training is needed to enable one to sort out appearance from reality. *Satya*, truth, is enveloped by *mithya*, deluding appearance.

Discriminating between them is not to be just an intellectual exercise. Even animals know by instinct where there is true love and where there is pretentious love. It is not the intellect that discerns here, but the heart. Between spouses, when the slightest aberration comes in the mind of one, the other instinctively feels a separation setting in. In our daily life, this discrimination of truth and untruth is to be exercised in almost all contexts. A lion or tiger or cobra never pretends. It is absolutely truthful in presenting its attitude to the offender. As humans know how to fashion truth, they are the worst of all pretenders. We are cautioned that the scanning of truth should be meticulous, uncompromising and radical. (66-7)

As there is a shadow cast by the light of the Supreme, truth is again and again interfered with by untruth. But one who knows the whole, including the limiting adjuncts, will be able to transcend that which seems to blindfold the individual seeker from time to time. It is not through sensuous perception or mentation that the seer becomes a seer of truth, but only by exercising a contemplative transcendence. (71-2)

*Do not mistake the *deva* for any fanciful angel in some paradise of comic book stories. It's just you—your ability to see, think, formulate words, structure sentences, give to every thing or concept a use, and, at the other end, to give each thing or concept a use, a value, a meaning. Such is the function of the *deva* in you.

You adore what you conceive, and you adore when someone passes to you an image they have perceived or a description of what they have conceived. (75)

The learning process itself is a great study in how right discrimination can be accomplished. What is studied today in modern science both complements and supplements the moral science developed by the great scriptures of the world. It is with such a view that we should integrate modern science with spiritual postulations so that we can make spiritual studies more efficient while enabling scientific studies to keep before them laudable goals for the wellbeing of humanity in particular and the world at large. (96)

We learn by hurting ourselves. (100)

If a cell has to preserve itself from not being destroyed by its own horizontalized life-expansion, it has to divide itself, cut itself into two. That is an act of the one cell sacrificing itself to become two cells. In the entire theme of life we can see one thing being sacrificed to become another thing—to become more. It is by sacrificing the seed one obtains the sprout, roots and trunk of a tree. Sacrifice is a very central theme in the actualization of knowledge. (100)

Indian culture begins with the burnt sacrifice in the homestead. Retrospectively people gratefully look towards their parents and forerunners for their efforts which have provided a heritage of knowledge, health and wealth for the present occupants of the world. (100)

Although fire is opposed to water, fire hides in the evenly mixed molecules of water. When these components leave water, one part

becomes a blazing hydrogen fire and the other a catalyzing oxygen that makes the burning dynamic and perfect. Two main features when fire burns are the light it emits and the heat it conducts. What can we do without our light and without our heat? So fire is our *isvara*. *Isvara* means the lord that oversees, regulates, maneuvers, sustains, and puts into each thing the law of its identity (*dharma*). (104)

Those who have come and gone are more than the living. They are part and parcel of the sod of our planet. They continue with us as the flavor of all previous creations. (106)

This *adhyaya* is essentially for living philosophical truths. So one should take time to ponder over each image and see what is in us, what problem it offers, and how we can get over it. (110)

A consistent question that comes to the human mind, moment after moment, is “What’s next?” There are people who answer this spontaneous innate question satisfactorily to themselves, but most people wait for someone to tell them what’s next, meaning what they should do. A person who cannot ask this pertinent question and answer to their satisfaction is obliged to carry out the wish of another. Naturally there are a few who recognize the importance of freedom. Those who do not have the temperament to be free, but only an attitude of obeying and carrying out errands or commands, become submissive. They become alienated from the freedom which is their birthright. When one submits to another and caters to their wishes, even if they also give orders to others, they always have in mind an idea of what will make the boss happy. In the case of the few who live to be free and who answer their own question about what’s next, they visualize at least a glimpse of the meaning of their life. There are two paths: one is the path of the self-employed, and the other is the path of being

employed by someone else. The self-employed has the light of freedom to decide what's next. One who is employed by another has before them an aggressive call of necessity. Necessity with a capital N. (116-7)

Although our origin is in freedom and immortality, what could be a growing awareness of the most sublime kind, that could be nourishing forever, is truncated at the lower level. Then we lose our path in the dark dungeons of necessity. (117)

The Absolute, *brahman*, does not merely mean that which is big. It means 'the filling' (*purnam*). When a seed is bursting out into life, the sprout that comes and the first root that appears are perfect. Even though it shows only two cotyledons, the nucleus of the tree and the root which penetrates into the earth are the indications of the principle of projection. Ultimately, when leaf after leaf comes and branch after branch spreads out, the tree blossoms and is covered with fruit which is filled with seeds of the same species of tree. There is no stage where what is designed is imperfect. It begins with the seed and comes back to the seed. There is a unity and homogeneity between the primary seed and the ultimate seed. We were given the lesson at the very outset that *brahman* is that which is the origin of things, the functional expression of things, and the final reduction to the thing in itself. (121)

Phenomenological transcendence of ego... is not really a canceling out of the seer and the seen, but an identification of the seen and the seer, so nothing is rejected and nothing is added. (123)

A meditation yields its result only when the subject of meditation and the object of meditation are united in the unification of the

body, senses, mind, intellect and the Self. This is a process by which the inertial, lifeless material with which the body is composed becomes animated. When it is animated, the rigidity of matter is transformed into the flexibility of life. (124)

What is below and what is above, what is locally understood and what is universally known, are to be mentally united. This is the proper foundation for any meditation. What is felt in the heart and what goes beyond the horizon and even beyond the sun and moon—these two are to be coordinated. (129)

Every form of existence is to be presented in awareness as knowledge, and every knowledge and its existence should be shown to contribute to an infallible meaning. Meaning implies value and its relevancy, and the inevitability of a certain result ensuing from a certain cause or a certain configuration of coordinates which can contribute to an achievement of a certain purpose. All purposes are intended to lift a person from distress and establish one in comfort, satisfaction, fulfillment and perfect harmony. All these are covered by the word *ananda*. (131-2)

Every individual thing in this world has its innate dharma, its propensity to unfold, to actualize, to serve a purpose. Therefore dharma always implies action.... There is no dharma that can be separated from karma. Dharma is the seed and karma is its germinating process. (132 & 133)

******The first goal presented in the earlier Vedic lore was seeking pleasures of an immortal, that is, going to heaven. Hence the first definition of a brahmana was one who performs *yajna* [sacrifice] to go to heaven (*svarga*). This tendency of the Veda was later corrected by Vedanta. The main revaluation came through the ten major Upanishads. The meaning of the actualization of dharma

changed from precipitating happiness to being unified with the total basis of dharma, which is none other than *brahman*. In all scriptures which promise the release from karma, the method used by earlier Vedic rituals of sacrifice is employed with a revised pragmatics. The earlier vision that the purpose of a *jiva* [person] is to become immortal was revised. The ultimate motivation came to be knowing what one truly is. In true knowledge there is no becoming; there is only the re-cognition of being. (133)

[Speaking of karma] A bunch of threads put together will automatically get entangled. Only by untying all the knots can you bring the threads to their original non-tangled state. Similarly, when an eddy is generated in the unlimited and omnipresent knowledge, the notion of the “this” and the “here and now” become entangled. The entangling comes because energy functions in a certain mode. The same energy is used for disentangling. Prana is the cause of bondage and prana is also the means of gaining release from bondage. (133-4)

*You cannot disentangle yourself from your karma without knowing [its] binding and unbinding tendencies.... Books like the Bhagavad Gita assure us that all karmas leading to bondage can be burnt away with the flames of knowledge (*vidya*). Thus, meditating on [prana as sacrifice] is a process by which all conditionings which came into this body/mind matrix are to be deconditioned by careful scrutiny. Everything colored is to be decolored. That which has become complicated is to be reduced to its simple basis. The Gita recommends dexterity in action as a means to be established in yoga. (134)

The actual performances of ritualistic sacrifices such as the horse sacrifice, which had a political intention, a social maneuvering, a psychological significance, and a detailed working out in the

physical world, are to be reversed. Instead of the propitiation of icons, the implied symbols are to be reflected on. Instead of the ego having three distinct roles of the knower, the doer and the enjoyer, action becomes complementary to knowledge through unitive discipline. All through the text we are advised that we should achieve the Absolute by making true action complementary to true knowledge. The Khila Kanda [Volume III] is to give us a practical orientation in the discipline of union for integral life. (134-5)

The entire Upanishad is worked out as an elaborate science of the Absolute which can be accepted without any dogma by anyone, anywhere in the world.... Each person's life is considered to be a sacrifice. (135)

On hearing the word 'sacrifice' those who are familiar with old texts will think of tragic pictures of innocent animals butchered and burned in the leaping flames of a sacrificial pit. We have to forget the ancient connotation of sacrifice and revalue it as the continuous process of making and remaking this universe so that all shades of its imperfections are corrected and new possibilities proclaimed.... A sacrificial fire is an instrument to bring about transformation. The fire is too crude an agent to handle the subtleties of life, so the rishi asks us to see fire as a less tangible, less gross, and highly poetic intentional creativity hiding in everything, which we can locate in our person as our breath. (138)

If you know yourself, you know the world. In another Upanishad we are told that to know water all that is needed is a cup of water—one does not have to empty the contents of the seven seas to familiarize oneself with the principle of water. To know the nature of iron, you need only to study a pair of scissors, you do not have to examine all the iron ore in the world. A ring of gold

can tell you all about gold. Even so, by looking at the function of your breath, you will also know how the cosmos is created and maintained. (138-9)

Every concept is a confection of the form, name and functional properties of what is seen. (143)

We are now brought to a comprehensive vision of life in spite of all the individual differences of everything we come across. Every person we relate with, every word we speak, every action we do, is likely to bring disharmony, separateness, and a negative attitude. With a little care we can change this gloomy aspect of life and make everybody happy and in turn share the happiness of all. There is a single principle of truth in all of us. In all life forms there is the same life. In every formulated being there is a chemistry of unification. We start seeing not just persons with names and relations with values, but the joy of recognizing unity. *Sama* means equal. When your knowledge, passions, and propensities to act have all equalized you are in a state of equipoise. (144)

When you are reasonable, you are with the Absolute. Then your mark is wisdom. If you are not deluded, you are one with the Absolute. Your patience is experiencing the divine. The certitude that comes naturally to you, your calmness, your ability to live with pleasure and pain, becoming and non-becoming, security as well as insecurity, all assure you that you are one with the Absolute. As there is nothing alien to you, naturally you become non-hurting, well balanced; your contentment shows how there is nothing extraneous to you. Like a candle burning with an unflickering flame, you can burn for others because you are benevolence. You are not elated when fame comes and you are not depressed if you are exposed to shame. All the great ones, the

law givers, are so close to you, they are eternally present in your loving mind. You act like the Absolute when you are led by the fundamental principles of life. (145)

[The paragraph beginning on the bottom of page 149 does a clever thing that might be overlooked, examining words in relation to the varnas, the castes:]

We need words to think, to meditate, to speak, to proclaim truth, to instruct, to explicate, to illustrate, to pray, or to exhort. A seer needs to employ words in the attempt to relate human beings to God and to establish God in the human mind. We need words to caution, to prohibit, to ban, to command, and to judge merit. That is what a ruler of people does. We need words to bargain, to impress and influence others, and create interest in communicable values. That is how a trader employs words. The executive who is weighed down by duties uses words to learn the needs of all in order to carry out the daily chores. He uses words to appeal, supplicate, and even to lament his grievances. (149-50)

[The opening sentence on the universal values of words could apply especially to a *sannyasin*. Then in turn we have the seer (*brahmin*), the ruler (*kshatriya*), the trader (*vaishya*) and the executive of duties (*sudra*).]

Just as the cells of our body reciprocally participate in a corporation without giving up their autonomy or sovereignty, individuals are also members of the human corporation. Our mutual complementarity and reciprocation implies our belongingness to a general good. A person cannot find their individual identity and supreme value in the *summum bonum* of another. We live in bodies which have mass, extension and theoretical impenetrability. So each person's spatial beingness is lived in their allotted temporal life situation, and one has to fill the

natural niche to which they belong. Finding one's natural niche is the same as finding one's *svadharma*. (155)

*The *svadharma* that comes in intrapersonal relationship can give one a sense of personal fulfillment and spiritual enlightenment. This will often be thwarted by interpersonal relationships of social or familial moorings. This can be our major challenge—to extricate ourselves from bondage. Worldly sentiments can ambush an individual with the display of many tacit contracts which demand loyalty. Thus *brahmavidya*, the science of living in absolute freedom, is often defeated by *dharma shastra*. That is why Krishna says in the Gita (XVIII, 66): “Abandoning all duties, come to me, the one, for refuge; I shall absolve you from all sins; do not despair.” (155)

*This work is not meant to be a code of ethics, and is to be kept free from degenerating into a mere *dharma shastra* (textbook on right conduct) or *smriti* (remembered application of heard wisdom) which would belong more to the side of action rather than to understanding. The present work is devoted mainly to Self-realization, and should be free from the social and obligatory aspects of morality. Therefore the author contents himself with broad generalizations which have more of a wisdom interest than one of social action. (157)

Although, considered in detail, tastes might differ, basic satisfactions depend on items that are alike. (157)

Desires can cause conflict when treated unilaterally and horizontally, but are resolved into the harmony of unity when both the counterparts of the relational situation are brought together through correct Self-knowledge. (158)

This way of confronting the problem of evil, which puzzles theologians and philosophers equally, is the prerogative of the dialectical, as against the merely rational approach. Steeped in scientific or unilateral rationalism, modern philosophers in the West have forfeited their more ancient heritage of wisdom. (158)

The ambivalent aspects of the same Self can be conceived unitively or dualistically, the former resolving conflict and the latter accentuating it. (159)

Because of this natural flux of life, it is almost impossible for one to behave in such a way that all members of one's family will always be pleased with what one does.... If a person's action or life-interest is not in tune with the interests of their parents or brothers or sisters, there will be a torrential flow of tears. Being tied to each one of them with familial loyalty, the person can be pushed to their wit's end. One may become obliged to swallow one's bitter disappointment while conceding to the irrational sentiment of a father or mother or brother or sister. It is in this context that brahman is said to be looked upon as a saving factor, *kshattra*, which can come and redeem the victim of samsara. (160-61)

There is a conventional way of knowing Vedantic terms which is of little use to anyone. The symbol *AUM*, either written in calligraphy or pronounced by a teacher, has been so eulogized and exaggerated that most people are carried away by the imagined significance of the visual or auditory expression of the *pranava*. This practice in India is nothing short of idolatry. When a teacher tries to explain the all-embracing truth, he uses the word *satya*. To give a comprehensive idea of the all-inclusiveness of truth it is termed *tat*. Not knowing the specific psychological function of a certain pronounced sound which acts on our hearing faculty, many

people think that the term *tat* or *sat* gives them a total insight into *brahman* or truth. (171)

It is only by determination of what is untrue that one comes to truth.... We are so in tune with the demands of our body identity that we cannot get out of it to look for the one truth which is everywhere. (172)

When we sit to meditate on *aum tat savitur varenyam*, we should not call to mind the image of the sun in the sky, or anything that has a name or form. Anything which is presented to the mind formally or nominally is an *adhyasa*. Only when all *adhyasas* are transcended can one come to the pure essence, which is *satya*. It is not through any drill or exercise of repeated chanting that we can get over the hurdles placed before us by the conceptualizing of the mind. So in one sense, all religious rituals are deceptive in their dynamics.... Religion itself has become the greatest snare to stop a person from the vertical ascent of spiritual pursuit. (172, 174)

The Gayatri mantra makes a special appeal: *bhargo devasya dhimahi*. The shining aspects of our physical reality are the senses, called the devas. The conceptual dross that has gone into them is to be burnt away. *Bharga* has two meanings. One is the all-filling transparency of vision which transcends space, time, mass and motion. The other is the total burning away of the irrelevant. Only when all the aspects of the *antakarana*—that is, the interrogative mind, memory recall, rationalizing intellect, and the affective ego—are gotten over, do we receive the senses in their most pure forms. Thereafter they are not sense organs at all: we are one with the Self. Meditation commences only from there. (172-3)

A professional teacher can never be a real teacher [guru]. (174)

For a lay person, this world is as one sees it. The world does not drop off or melt away or get dissolved on realizing brahman. It will continue like our shadow follows us when we walk in the sun. But one can come to know how to discern the shadow from the Self. Then one sees the totality of truth in this very here and now. (174)

As long as one is still in the body, there is a possibility for the compelling aspect of previous conditioning to make the intellect a tool in the hands of the ego, and one again becomes a victim of avidya (ignorance). (174)

This mantra makes a pointed reference to the three Vedas: Rig, Yajus and Saman. It says that one who understands the second foot of the Gayatri is making a wholehearted appeal to the shining principles to take full possession of the faculty of knowledge and fill it with the great vigor of light and knowledge. Consequently, one will become a recipient of all that is taught in the three Vedas. Unfortunately, people make a fetish of the Vedas and of propitiating the symbolic figures of the deities eulogized in the Veda, such as Agni, Varuna, Mitra, Asvini, Indra, Visvadeva, Sarasvati, and Ushas, the Cow. Usually very little care is given to understand what these names suggest. It goes to the credit of the rishi Aurobindo in our own days that attention has been focused on deciphering the symbols represented by these names in the Vedas.

The entire theme of the Veda is ciphering and deciphering. Many ciphers that have been given to us still remain closed books. That necessitated this section of the Upanishad, called Khila Kanda, which makes an appeal to all intelligent and responsible people of the world to revise and restate their heritage of cultural and spiritual wisdom. Khila means the barren, untouched and uncharted world of possibility. Thus any person who turns to the

Khila Khanda of the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad is assigned a duty which will benefit all blessed people who are endowed with pure intelligence to decipher the paradoxes and enigmas of life, and at the same time, to be deeply devoted to the Cause beyond causes. The message of this mantra is that the Supreme is in love with every part of itself, and every part has to reciprocate that love by furthering the message of the Vedas, which can bring one to the silence of wonder that washes away the bitterness of the phenomenon which is superimposed on the noumenon. (183-4)

Although the Brihadaranyaka teaches its votaries to transcend all fruition of one's karma, the Vedic tradition is also continued in the Upanishad, which mentions what one gains after the performance of a certain action or after acquiring knowledge of a certain kind. When we look into all the forms of sacrifice which are given to a particular presiding deity, there is an expectation that every karma should bear fruit. The propitiation of the deity is followed by requests or prayers, and there is an expectation that the deity who is propitiated will reciprocate with blessings. Thus there is a contract model implied in all Vedic rituals. Even when we go on from Veda to Vedanta, a ghost of the contract can still be seen. (186)

After seeing the world with ten thousand names and ten thousand forms and ten thousand special functions of each, one turns one's mind to the source of this magic. It lies in the homogeneity of the outer light, which creates the phantom of visual images outside, and the inner light of the Self, which, in response to the outer magic, creates the countermagic of superimposing on itself the world identity. The phenomenality of the world is effaced by a general exercise of identifying the sun beyond and the sun that shines as one's own consciousness. Narayana Guru [in Atmo, verse 2] points to the outer sky where the sun shines and to an

inner sky of consciousness where the Self is continuously transforming itself into everything visible, everything audible, and everything functional. Reclaiming one's unitive vision from the plethora of pluralism is the challenge every student of Vedanta has to face. (187-8)

Hiranyagarbha... symbolizes the island of hope to which we come in the ocean of desolation. Everything is dark, and in the middle of that darkness there is a spark of light. That spark, however meager, is more meaningful than the infinitude of the blindness caused by darkness and chaos. Hence it is to be treated as the little pearl of priceless worth. Its light beckons to the hopeless to become hopeful. The ideas of God, the savior, the grace-giving fountain-source of life, and of all such epithets come from the envisioning of a spark of hope. (190)

In spite of the similarity between the causal consciousness of the third state (*sushupti*) and the fourth (*turiya*), *turiya* is not a state but the only truth and foundation on which the other three states are manifesting. We pass on from causal consciousness to transcendence, which is not consciousness or awareness but the ultimate basis of all. As one has to make a breakthrough of the empirically conditioned state, normally a person does not recognize transcendence. Only in the phenomenology explained by Husserl, Heidegger and Jaspers is this problem properly met by seeing the unity of transcendence in immanence, and immanence in transcendence. (196)

There is a common element in transcendence and immanence. The homogeneity of that which gives the ability to make existence subsistential, and remove the plurality of subsistential existence is ananda. Both the sun that illuminates and the Self that witnesses

the illumined are to be reduced to ananda to understand the fourth *pada* (*turiya*). (197)

The sattva element of nature is reflecting the pure state of the Self. It is not the Self; it is only the reflection of the Self in the sattva aspect of nature. (197)

When we think of our outgoing consciousness and the sublime consciousness that is being absorbed into the Self, each one has different kinds of freedom. One is the freedom to go by one's own will into the electromagnetic field of being, subjected to the continuous push and pull of psychosomatic urges. By our own free will, we barter our freedom forever. The other is losing our identity in the freedom of pure Being. In spite of the polemics between the outer and the inner, both are necessary and complementary to arrive at the final step of transcendence of the outwardly conditioned world and the inwardly conditioned states of mind. (201)

In the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad everything is self-manifested. Therefore there is no separate Creator or Isvara. Isvara is a function of the totality, by its intrinsic nature of benevolence. (207)

The second model [of Darsanamala] that Narayana Guru gives is to think in terms of the continuation of life from seeds or genes which have come from a family tree. People are happy when they have innate talents and are able to live a successful life in society. Many mourn that they came from seeds of an inferior quality. They want to think that they are lost people who have been crippled even from the level of genes. They are not thinking of God: they are thinking of fate, a crazy superpower planning a destiny for all, and fashioning beings to go through predetermined paths of little joy

and much misery. They think that once life is initiated in a body/mind complex there is no return and the destined path is to be tread. This gives the impression that life on earth is an imprisonment arranged by the caprice of an unknown overseer. (213)

We have to choose between the duality of appearance, and reality. (214)

The rishi of the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad believes that the vital breath was in this world even before the first gene came into being. It was not a caprice of the wind. It was not a caprice of the wind that the dust particles whirled to make the first formation of a smoke-like nebula to initiate the creation of the universe. Whatever these particles were, there had to be a moving force, a vehicular conveyance, with a definite purpose to arrange the microscopic foundation as much in a star as in a living cell.

The wind in Sanskrit is called vayu. The definition of vayu is that which moves and makes other things move. This is a little different from the Aristotelian concept of God as the Unmoved Mover. What is unmoving in the wind is not the molecules of the air, but its eternal law of vitalizing everything. As such, we have to think of the motion of the vital breath from the very start, the first cause. (220-1)

It is heartening to find a plethora of evidence presented to us with the expansion of the frontiers of physics, chemistry and biology, and the linking of these positive physical sciences with the elusive function of consciousness, which is a direct offspring of the vital breath. (222)

All that happens between mating couples is not known to their conscious minds. When the seminal fluid is released from the

testes, what carries the sperm to the ovum? What is waiting at the doors of the ovum to decide the winner, and honor it by giving entry into the ovum? Although prana is the passenger in the sperm, the throwing out of the sperm from the male body is conducted successfully by apana, and the reception at the other end is arranged by the female prana, which keeps the door open for friendly visitors. From there on her prana nurtures the fertilized egg to become a fetus and then a child. Prana plays a very vital role in this orchestral function. (223)

In this Adhyaya, we begin with the vital breath as such, because its various evolutes have already been explained, such as the word, (*uktha*); the creative urge (*yajus*); the exaltation of results (*saman*); and the protective power (*kshattra*). These are like the offspring of the vital breath (*prana*). (224)

General textbooks of physics, chemistry, botany, biology, arithmetic, geometry and algebra, astrophysics and astronomy, medicine and theories of psychology, instructions in teaching, and chronicles kept of the past are all *vedas* which have made humanity very prosperous. (236)

From a single incident, even an imaginary incident, we can reach out to a situation of life where relationship lends itself to a synthesis, a confection, out of which comes something greater than one person—compassion, love. (239)

The Upanishads are perhaps the only sacred books of spiritual import which ask their votaries to meditate on procreation. In all other religions the very idea of sex is taboo, and it is much linked with the concept of sin and guilt feelings. An eminent Indian who was even considered a philosopher-statesman once wrote that the Indian way of life was that of an idealist. Far from that, the

Upanishads are squarely placed on realism, with one difference. It is realism tending to become absolutism which also necessarily permits the relativistic contingencies of life. (240)

A soulful advocacy for renunciation comes in the Upanishads like Brihadaranyaka, Isavasya, Kena, Mundaka, Mandukya, Prasna and Katha. These Upanishads glorify the fiery free life of the renunciate who has burnt all his bridges and soars high into the heaven of sublimity, not to enjoy paradise, but to stand face to face with truth and get totally lost in it. But such a steep ascent can be achieved by only very few seekers of the Self. Hence the rishis were willing to make concessions, taking into consideration that even the most ascetic of rishis have to breathe and accept at least enough food and water and protection from heat and cold to sustain life. Considering the multitudes that are drawn to the world of the senses and the compelling force of nature in each embodied being, they decided not to tear themselves away from the entirety of nature. Even when they curb their passionate urges and decide not to run after the hedonistic pleasures of the world, they also retain their wit to amuse themselves with the shadow play of this world. They hold three jewels tightly to their bosom: compassion (*karuna*), cheerfulness (*mundita*), and wisdom-insight (*prajna*). (240-1)

The best corporation in the universe is a corporeal body. (242)

The world depends on the statements of honest persons who have earned acceptance as reliable authorities. The word of such a person gains the testimony of *sabda*, which is often equated with the word or logos. The propounder of truth is honored as a seer or rishi. A rishi is one whose mind attains a high degree of clarity which can reflect in it even the subtlest truths which belong to the Self. The rishi's statement of truth is not the mechanical

description of a cold-blooded logician: it has the warmth of a poet's vision. Hence the rishi is called a poet, and the universal Self or soul which has projected into this world is itself described as a self-expression, like the exaltation of a poet. It is no wonder that every thoughtful person wants to make their eyes as clear as the sun so they can see the deeper truth which naked eyes cannot see. (250)

A seer has a greater claim for befriending the world than one who just speaks. Every science springs from the vision of a poetic genius. What is seen in physics, when looked at from another angle, will become the truth of chemistry, and from still another angle, one sees the wonder of the biologic foundation. These are the greater magnitudes of seeing. But one who does not go into these depths will swear by what he or she superficially sees only as a form imprinted in the brain through an electromagnetic process of the gray matter of the visual area. In that case the chance factor of coming across a fragment of truth can make a person conceited, forgetting that the laws of the world are ever operating and it took millions of years for the human mind to attain a certain transparency to mirror the knowledge by which life itself is carved out of the phenomenal world. (250)

The wisdom that is taught by great masters is often repeated by congregates, to students, and in public places. Yet words of wisdom fly over our heads, without our giving attention to them. We are hard of hearing not only physically but also psychologically. That is why in the Vedanta philosophy, two great behavioral qualifications to walk in the path of truth are *sraddha* and *vairagya*. *Sraddha* is listening with one hundred percent attention, and *vairagya* is not getting stuck or attached to anything that evokes sentiment. (252-3)

Nobody disputes that a book is a physical object, but the effect it has on one who reads its contents can bring about so many changes in a person that their meaning of life can be totally changed and their pursuit turned in an altogether different tangent. (260)

Even a thoroughgoing rationalist has no defense against habits, reflexes, prejudices, appetites, passions and emotions. (261)

The ultimate aim of the Upanishad is to teach that life is a holistic reality in which there is a central core which alone gives unity to all the general and special functions of the various faculties. (262)

The *devas* and *asuras* are presented as the balancing counterparts in the human personality. (279)

The highest of all sacrifices is the everlasting sacrifice of dharma. Our inferior or selfish feelings and passions are the true beasts which should be sacrificed and thereby transformed. (284-5)

The culminating conclusion of the Upanishad is that rote learning or parrot-like recitation of the Vedas and Upanishads will not lead us anywhere unless we live what we have understood. Thus the whole Upanishad is our *asvamedha*—our sacrificing of all tendencies to exaggerate. (288)

To solve a problem in modern science, first a postulation is made. The verity of the postulation is proved by experimentation. Experiments are in-depth observations. The corresponding method used in the Upanishads is analogy (*upamana*). The valid testimony behind analogy is the infallible truth of the *sruti*. The *sruti* is an a priori book of wisdom in which a person is given a formula which can be taken for deep pondering. To aid the pondering, examples are given. The votary of the Upanishad places his or her trust in

the infallibility of the sruti. At the same time he or she is given full freedom to investigate its truth, not as a disbeliever or as an agnostic, but as one who is willing to go into all the details of the formula given.

Even if the inquiry does not give immediate results or conviction of the truth of what is said, the disciplined aspirant (*sadhaka*) is not in any haste to arrive at negative conclusions. Rather, if one does not arrive at a conclusive proof immediately, one makes oneself a fully restrained seeker without any break. This persistence is the tapas of the disciplined inquirer. Tapas is intensifying one's deep probe, anticipating all the while that at least certain positive signals will come to encourage one on one's path. Thus *svadhyaya* and tapas go hand in hand. *Svadhyaya* is self- study; tapas is intensifying one's search.

An illustration is only an indication and not a statement of facts. So it is advised that no allegory is to be pressed too far. In every descriptive illustration there will be only a few relevant points of correlation. When one comes to the tether end of a specific search, the student is advised to suspend judgment and further purify himself or herself so that no taint of ego will cast its shadow on the path of their search. This mantra presents a frame of reference which guides the student to look for a one-to-one correspondence between the details of a burnt sacrifice and a cosmic ensemble. It is mainly given to take the mind of the aspirant out of narrow parochial and relativistic contexts which cannot yield higher wisdom. (314-15)

Praja is that which has within it the law of being, the law of fecundity, the law of propagation, the law of proliferation. So Prajapati is to be understood as an eternal cause, continuously projecting innumerable possibilities of which some become immediate probabilities, and a selected few probabilities become actualized. (360)

The *udgitha* is the first experimental theme recognized by life forms by which they recognize that they are in the plight of having the real in them mutilated again and again in the process of the adaptation of the organized matter of the physical body in which life is imprisoned. All prayers are primarily meted out to one's own agonized self. The one who gives the prayer is also the one who listens to it and struggles to find a way out. The eternal game is the natural evolution of mute nature and a counter evolution that comes from the light of reason which is ignited in the problem-solving individuation. However cruel it looks, every form of life is left to itself to make its own multiplication of cells and self-delivery from the mesh of nature. If you watch how a mosquito comes out of its larvae or a colorful butterfly emerges out of its pupa, you can see how hard it is to transform oneself and take to a new life, spreading one's wings in freedom. (379-80)

In all three Semitic religions, God has his supreme rival, the deluder of the human mind: the Devil in the Jewish literature, Satan in Christianity, and Iblis in Islam. These are not metaphysical concepts. There is an anthropomorphic personalization of the agent who deludes man into sin as well as the one who redeems man from the evil to which he is led by the negative relativistic deluder.

In absolute contrast to such an anthropomorphic concept of bondage, the Upanishad presents the natural duality that exists between conditional knowledge and unconditional knowledge. According to the Upanishadic concept, individuation comes along with the corporeal organization which is at the alpha point of the circumlimitation of a mirrored aspect of the spirit. Hence the entire concept of bondage and redemption is figured out in the phenomenal frame of reference. Individuation is considered to be the borrowing of the physical instrumentation by the spirit to

experience the unlimited possibilities which can occur as a result of the graded commingling of knowledge and ignorance, comparable to the several shades with which light and darkness can proportionately relate with each other. (410-11)

We have many technologically conceived devices to enhance the correct functioning of our faculties of knowledge, locomotion and extension. When these function mechanically, wear and tear causes us to discard the old and get improved devices without much remorse. Similarly, a thoughtful person does not grieve or feel remorse or regret about leaving one psychosomatic system provided by nature and getting another. Just as birth is a well-designed way to come to the world scene, death is an equally ingenious method of getting out of it. The life-giving and life-preserving laws of the organism also function meticulously to squeeze the life out of a living body. (424)

Yajnavalkya establishes that, as soon as it occurs, life correlates itself with tendencies which are detailed by religions as sins. With death, that tendency is overcome. This categorical recognition of sin as a phenomenon only pertaining to one life term dismisses a possible day of ultimate judgment and relegation of the individuated self to hell or heaven. This is the greatest contribution of Vedanta to humanity. We read “That very person, on being born or assuming a body, is conjoined with evils and on dying or leaving the body, discards those evils.” (IV.3.8) Even people outside the Semitic religions entertain the thought that sin is a phenomenon which is vicariously continued through generation after generation. It is this belief that the present mantra rules out.

Where there is no body, there are no sense organs. Where there is no sensation or sense data, there is no mind also. *Anna* (food), *prana* (vital breath) and *manas* (mind) all belong to nature

and are governed and controlled by nature modalities. Extrapolating the mind into a non-physical, non-sensory world of abstraction is only a product of imagination. From wrong premises, most religions build up an imaginary world and threaten believers about the consequences of their actions as if they are deeply painted on the soul of a person. In Judaism, Christianity and Islam, the belief in a Day of Judgment is a cardinal article of faith. The votaries of these religions think that only such a belief will deter a person from indulging in evil. This is like adults trying to discipline innocent children by telling them stories of imaginary ghosts and goblins to tame them and make their minds submissive to the dictates of their elders. The havoc such a wrong faith does to a person, in principle as well as in practice, inflicts a deep mental injury on individuals which makes their bruised minds bleed with anxiety and pain all their lives. (425-6)

The seeker and the seer are on the same path. All the same they are not the same kind of beneficiaries of wisdom. The seer has solved age-old riddles in his or her heart. The seeker again and again gets lost on the slippery pathway to certitude. The quality of life is decided by how happy you are, how consistently you are happy, and how you are established in that happiness. Those who lack this excellence are always haunted by the questions: "What next? Where should I turn? Who can I approach? How can it be accomplished? How can I know that what I seek is truly what I need or what I want?" From the examples of those who have gone before us, we discover that in most cases those who have succeeded had someone to guide them, someone to hold their hand with compassion. The successful have been led to the sanctuary of satisfaction where there is no longer any remorse or sense of inadequacy. The masters who lead the seekers are called preceptors of wisdom. (433)

The body is a perilous and perplexing place. IV.4.13 (437)

In India, tradition allows a disciple to complement the writings of his guru by supplementing the guru's writing with what the guru should have said but did not say. Secondly, the disciple has the permission of tradition to rephrase the argument of his guru if the latter's words do not properly serve to establish and arrive at the conclusion intended by the guru. (440)