

Brihadaranyaka Upanishad Highlights, by Nitya Chaitanya Yati

VOLUME II

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The philosopher's main task is... to harmonize duality wherever it tends to bring contradiction. (1)

The Upanishad is called a secret teaching not in the sense of being a social secret but because it does not reveal its meaning to those who have not become qualified to understand the basics of the science of the Absolute (*brahmavidya*). (2)

Brahmavidya is sacred knowledge as well as secret knowledge. It is sacred because it lifts our minds from everything vulgar and profane to enter into what can be called noble and profound. The Upanishad is considered sacred because the study of it will certainly make us noble in our disposition, noble in our understanding, noble in our dedication and noble in our lifestyle. (3)

Up to now you have only been listening; now you enter the discipline of pondering, going deep into this truth and making it your own. Reason brings new certitude. (4)

Yajnavalkya Kanda [i.e. Volume II] is the opportunity for us to make the truth our own and arrive at our own a posteriori conclusions. It is not enough to read the scripture. We have to enter the truth it presents and be it. The teaching of the Madhu Kanda [Volume I] brings us finally to *neti neti* (not this not this), the inconceivable. To enter into it, we need *manana*: not thinking, but resting with what is heard and merging into its essence. (4)

Shankara points to the relevance of Janaka giving a thousand cows and gold for just answering questions. The lesson is that resolving doubts and coming to know the Absolute is many times more valuable than wealth. Wisdom is that which is most rare, not cows, gold, prestige or the success of winning the competition. This example is given to impress upon us that our search is not for social or economic values. Yajnavalkya's rare knowledge is worth far more than any number of cows or amount of gold. (5)

This chapter brings us into intimate relation with the innermost flow of the harmony of reason which interrelates values. The discussions between the seers at the conference deepen the certitude in our consciousness. The impact of the shared search takes us from the intellectual to a wider field of experience: to living our oneness, in beauty and joy. The finality of truth comes not from the head alone but from our knowing with our senses and mind and even intuitive flashes. Each person is aided in listening, pondering over, and living truth by communion with a community of lovers of truth. (5)

The dialogue between Yajnavalkya and his dear wife and student Maitreyi is a perfect example of an Upanishadic context of wisdom teaching. Yajnavalkya asked his wife to sit down and listen to his words of wisdom. This is an appropriate first step in wisdom instruction. Sitting down indicates that the listener is free

from all other obligations of social importance. Only by sitting down can one relax one's mind and give full attention to what is being told by one's teacher. Most people find very little time to give their attention to anything precious. They are on their toes all the time because their mind does not easily settle into a clear perspective of perennial values. They are like elephants who have fallen into a quagmire, always struggling to liberate themselves from impossible situations. (6)

*When a student sits at the feet of a wise teacher, the two of them enter into a bipolar relationship. The establishment of a rapport between the teacher and the taught is very essential. In order to keep their minds in perfect attunement, the student is allowed to ask questions. Any question asked should be relevant to uplifting the mind of the student and fostering a greater interest in wisdom teaching. The teacher is not expected to be an answering machine. He has to make the student think systematically and ask questions critically. Irrelevant questions are not answered, as a way of screening the verbiage of a thoughtless student. After establishing himself or herself in a position of attention, the student has to make sure that their conceptual understanding has within it the exact connotations of the concepts which will make every word of the teacher meaningful and insightful. In the Indian presentation of logic, most modes of arguments include examples to illustrate vague or abstract ideas. The student is expected to decipher the exact significance of each such example. (6)

Ikshvaku literally means 'more bitter than gall'. This is consistent with Ikshvaku's role as a law-enforcing king. Nothing is more bitter to a person than their ego coming into encounter with and being corrected by law. The bitterness of Ikshvaku has an affinity to toxin, and the anti-toxin of Gautama is consistent with the

function of a proper guru. The guru removes the egotistic poison of ignorance from his disciples. (14)

Seeing true justice and upholding it is the most difficult job in the world. (15)

In the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad itself, the mark of self-realization is given as the confidence of fearlessness. (17)

[This part of the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad] is a carefully conceived section in which two divergent tendencies in human beings are harmoniously brought together. The stream of consciousness that effortlessly flows with one's wisdom appreciation and the natural channeling of energy which enables a person to perform actions are unitively blended in the actualization of one's philosophical vision. (20)

If the world hurts, don't kill it: transform it. (20)

Speech can have the cleansing quality of fire to purify one's inner consciousness with its flames of truth. (21)

The purifying fire itself needs purification. The very word with which one can utter truth can also bring an evil effect. (23)

There are three mysteries here. The first is that we do not know what the noumenon is, and yet it manifests. The second is that when the noumenon presents itself as phenomenon, it is so elaborate and variegated with every possible difference in the parts of the manifested that each part stands out as absorbingly enchanting. In the mystery of being fascinated by that, we are not in any mood to make a probe into the original cause. The third is that what has been so clearly presented to our perception and

mental comprehension vanishes into nothing like a will-o-the-wisp. Death or cessation of the manifested happens so abruptly and unexpectedly that we have no clue to find out what veil the manifested has disappeared behind.

The first mystery refers to the projection of the world from the unknown. The second is concerned with the demonstrative data which looks real in all details and is very well choreographed to be the most adorable presentation of the dance of life. The third is the dissolution, which leaves us in the awkward position of someone who is deceived. (25-6)

Ultimately... consciousness propels the life of the organism with the appreciation of cosmological purposiveness. At first this purposiveness is confined to the nourishment of the organism and then to the propagation of the species. Only much later does it come to have a program of the evolution of its own self. Having become tired of always carrying an inertial body like a cage or a shell, the spirit wants to leave not only its terrestrial home but also the greater home of its cosmological life. It becomes a constant dreamer of being liberated from body/mind instrumentality. (29)

Psychic energy has an ascending and descending rhythm which roughly resembles the pattern of a figure of eight. If you draw a line vertically from the base to the apex of the figure, it passes through the middle where the upper and lower arches join. There are three points in the vertical parameter. The very bottom may be called the alpha. The middle is the neutral zero where the self is consistent, not fluctuating. The top symbolizes the omega of life. Energy ascends from the central point to the omega, then starts descending; the ego becomes less and less energetic. From the central point, one's energy moves in the opposite direction, descending to a point of absolute exhaustion at the alpha. Then it enters into the purely subjective realm of mentation, and ascends

with enthusiasm and euphoria until it comes to the omega, a peak experience of individuation. This figure of eight movement of the psyche is regulated by the rhythm of the waxing and waning moon. (29-30)

In empirical experience the intellect has to play a great role in leading consciousness through appropriate paths to be in tune with the central purposiveness of life. Whatever is gathered through dreams, imaginations and poetic experiences is to be revised and restated with the ultimate aim of making the soul free in its onward journey. That is why Yajnavalkya gives two aspects of *udgitha* as the main aid a person has to correct themselves from time to time and make their pursuit of life wisdom-oriented. (31)

This mantra does not yield its result to one who merely hears it or reads it. One has to make an intense probe, sinking into its depth. All symbols used in the mantra are to be deciphered by *manana* and *nididhyasana*....

When a candle burns, it does not know that it is giving light to the world and that its wax is burning away. Most people who live in this world are also like lighted candles or burning lamps. Many people do not know they have a purpose in life and that, unknowingly, they are fulfilling it. A few people are conscientious. They know that they have come to this world to seek perfection every moment. The perfection we speak of is not formal or existential perfection. Apart from these kinds of perfection, there is value achievement. The highest value is the *summum bonum*, which means a person comes to a peak experience of a total expression of beatitude and happiness, which is equally and evenly shared by all who enter into empathy with that person. That is why it is said that no man is an island in this world. (32)

Here sacrifice is not the killing of anything: it is nourishing the world by joyously offering one's physical stamina, emotional sensibility, moral acumen, intellectual prowess, aesthetic talents, spiritual compassion and, above all, the very love which is one's fountain source. (32)

Between the alpha and the omega [of the vertical pole] a wide variety of horizontalization takes place which is directly related to the action one performs. The entire scheme of Vedanta is to show how the One becomes variegated forms with various names, each with a characteristic function. Yet ultimately the One from which everything comes is to be rediscovered as being nameless, formless and actionless. (40-1)

The performance of a sacrifice implies the whole process of one's physical unfolding and exposition to the three regions: the heavens where one's goal is, the atmosphere where one's movement is, and the earth where one has one's foundation. Thus the *rk* [nucleus of all concepts, which elaborates into all speech and its meaning] and the *yajus* [performance, whole process of physical unfolding and exposition] together give a holistic training to the living soul to ultimately find its true domain. (41)

By 'sacrifice' the Upanishad means the redemption of the individuated spirit from its phenomenal bondage. (43)

Every form of spiritual discipline recommended in this Upanishad is to remove the superimposition by *avidya*. (43)

A certain latitude is allowed in stretching a meaning with poetic exaggeration if such a configuration of meaning will foster wider and more insightful understanding of a mystical expression. That

is why we prefer to understand sacrifice as a purificatory process to which one exposes oneself all through life. (43)

When a person is about to apprehend the presence of an object, thing, person or incident, a spontaneous alertness comes within them. It is like the faculty of cognition is called to make certain internal arrangements in order to observe what is presented. This has some resemblance to a group of highly efficient and responsible experts giving their best attention to what is to be observed, what data are to be gathered, how each data is to be scrutinized, what references should be included, what value vision should be most central, how to apply the most appropriate criteria, what conclusion they should come to, and how the central coordination can be briefed about the entire situation of observation, assessment and final recommendation. It is with this kind of cohesive inner coordination that the four psychic organs called *antakarana* contribute to the formation of every word used to record each thought that goes into the resultant stream of consciousness. (48-9)

The internal and external are well-coordinated so one can act as an individual in the external world while experiencing a boundless infinitude of pure consciousness by which the manifoldness of the self can be transcended. (50)

One of the very first factors that comes into the theme of cognition is a faint awareness that something is being presented to the attention of consciousness. Philosophers usually indicate it by reference to an immediate presence which they call 'this'. The first flickering in personal awareness can assume a threatening presence, bringing anxiety, fear, restlessness and a need to probe and question. It can be an unresolved doubt. This aspect of the fourfold psychic organ is called the mind (*manas*). It takes shape

in every person as an impulsive interrogation which functions like spiraling smoke or a whirlpool. It goes round and round the ego, giving more and more discomfort to the I-consciousness. In Sanskrit it is called *cinta*. It has a circulatory, repetitive, very annoying operation which does not come to a state of rest until its suspicion is appeased. This whirlpool or whirlwind-like function gains momentum as it goes on. It burns away much of the stamina of the mind. Still, it cannot go on forever. So nature has given it two modes. One is to surge up centrifugally and cause calamitous revolt against the situation. The other is a centripetal descent into the core, where it is easier to find the pacifying light of the Self. This enables the doubt to subside for a while. (50)

*Generally, when we apply a concept to a percept, we follow the easy path of choosing whatever prejudicial meaning comes to mind. Only after a few instances of coming to a similar context do we realize that the concepts we have already formed are wrong because of prejudicial associations implied in the meanings we have given to the words. This leads us to a critical review of our preformed concepts. They can be corrected only by our associating ourselves with scientifically conceived concepts, properly worded and explained either by knowledgeable people or documents of authority. (51-2)

The grasping impact of words does not merely come from the names borne by individual bodies or psychological relationships or social clichés, but also from the deep psychodynamics of a word, which cause one to have something like an intuitive flash about its meaning. Often this can be misleading, because it strikes a mystical chord more on the emotional side than on that of reason, and thus creates an affinity that can become icon-like. The great fights between the chief religions, especially among fundamentalists, are caused by this strong grip of a meaning

which does not permit any other more charitable or universal interpretation or expression. (52)

The trouble with the senses is that they do not limit themselves to exactly what they perceive. They append memories of previous encounters. Immediate perceptions of sight, hearing and touch bring in such a torrential shower of inferences and ideas of similitude from past memories that the present is quite often blown into such proportions that it can incite a person to have the greatest phantasmagoria or run amuck and do the most atrocious things. (58-9)

Casting shadows and interpreting them is a great preoccupation of the mind. ((59)

In the Indian pantheon of gods, the most incredible concept is that of Ganapati or Ganesha, who is the guardian of the path to the beyond. He also presides over the path of return. The figure of Ganesha has two big ears and two small eyes. The contrast between these organs suggests that there is wisdom in closing one's eyes to the temptations of what is seen in this world and opening one's ears to the words of wisdom which can take one far in the spiritual path of liberation. (61)

Sound comes and binds us with its meaning.... We become prisoners within the shell of a word. But the beauty of a word, the sweetness of its meaning, can also release us from a Gordian knot. When the soul is released from going around and around in the whirlpool of a word's affectivity, it comes to *mukti*, liberation. When it is led by a word to silence or transcendence, that is *atimukti*, complete liberation. (62-3)

If there is no desire, there is no life, no manifestation, no world. Only a person who has lost the sense of reality can say, “Do not desire.” An inferior person desires to have a shack. A superior person desires to build a Taj Mahal. All that we can recommend is the supreme possibility of desire: fashioning your effort to accomplish the highest, the most beautiful, the most profound, which in its essence transcends all calculations of the mediocre. Within the *atigraha* the great secret of liberation can be accomplished. (67)

In the world of attraction and repulsion in which we live, we get into bondage when the hedonistic appreciations of the senses and the mind are mistaken for *ananda*. (76)

The immortality that comes to the soul or the Self is not to be extrapolated into the nature of the psychosomatic system, which is the basis for the spirit to function as a conditioned aspect of *purusha*. When the conditioned aspect of *purusha* is freed [by death] of the bonds of *prakriti* it regains its original state. (82)

The Gita makes a distinction between the *kshara* (perishable) *purusha* and the *akshara* (imperishable) *purusha*. The perishable aspect of *prakriti* is superimposed on *purusha*; when true knowledge prevails, that superimposition can no longer be maintained. The spirit is imperishable but all the phenomenal superimpositions made on it are transient. Even the *akshara* (imperishable) *purusha* has in it only a fragment of the Supreme. That is why the Gita upholds a third *purusha*, *purushottama*. (82)

There are many kinds of snares that create temptations to remain in a world of karma. They are to be ruthlessly rejected by all those who desire deliverance. People who engage in vicious activities (*apunya karma*) are naturally drawn to action-reaction situations

that maintain their individuation through several births and deaths. *Punya karma* is generally recognized as the merit one has acquired which releases one from the need to further remember personal activity or aspiration or to entertain imaginations about any achievement whatsoever in a world of time and space and relationships with situations of value prompting. A correct understanding of the principles that underlie the course of life and the discipline that releases an individuated person into liberation will always be honored as *punya karma*. All right-thinking people will aspire to reach this high ideal of life, described in scripture as *purushartha*: being endowed with wisdom (*dharma*), the pure means of sustaining life until one comes to liberation (*artha*), the intense desire for the realization of oneself (*kama*) and the ultimate achievement of realization (*moksha*). (93-4)

Now the grip of karma is depicted in the form of the serious problem of being possessed. There is a parallel to this in the Greek myth of Hercules. Zeus became angry with Hercules, so he arranged with the two evil spirits, Echo and Madness, to take possession of Hercules' spirit. As he was returning triumphant from one of his great labors, he passed under a tree in which Madness and Echo were lying in ambush. They came out of the tree and possessed him. The peculiar alliance of Madness and Echo is similar to the case portrayed in this mantra in which the Gandharva is having an affair with a woman with a monkeyish nature. (100)

This eerie story [in 3.3] serves as a good example of how karma can elaborate in many directions and never be brought to an absolute closure.... All these implications work together to give a picture of how confused one can be when possessed by *avidya*. (101)

****As the earlier commentators maintained an exaggerated sense of sacredness and authority regarding everything connected with religious legends, they have not made the meaning of the allegory clear. Thus human weakness has persisted through millennia even in the best minds of India, and in all parts of the world religion blindfolds people through meaningless piety and superstition. Sankara raised his voice against meaningless rituals, yet it is now a pity to see that even his lineage in the different Maths is still meticulously perpetuating and retaining the old superstitions of rituals. Much before Sankara the meaninglessness of ritualistic sacrifice was declared to King Bimbisara by Lord Buddha, who offered himself to be butchered for a sacrifice instead of innocent animals like sheep and goats. What Buddha taught one thousand two hundred years before Sankara is a direct source of inspiration for the ahimsa maintained in Hindu ashrams today. Yet, strangely, the followers of Sankara eulogize him as a veteran rival to Buddha. In fact, Sankara is to be honored as a natural and ethical continuator of the Buddha. (102-3)**

Neither Shankara nor the rishis of the Upanishads found it necessary to postulate a creator to account for the incessant, unbroken chain of cause and effect. (112)

Most people see no difference when they enter a fresh life; they come to the world without consciousness so they do not see the way in. Similarly, they are already unconscious when they step out of life into death, so they do not see the exit either. Thus birth is a deception and death is another deception.

After several such rounds of life in which one gathers heaps and heaps of karma, like the proverbial dreamer who suddenly wakes up, the agent of knowledge, desire, action and enjoyment finally remembers the true Self. Then it is like magic. It is as if there was no time, no space, no body or corporeality, only a

forgetfulness and a remembrance. One comes round full circle and feels happy beyond measure that actually nothing happened. This is the greatest miracle in the world. The first miracle is our forgetfulness. The second miracle is our remembrance. We are not remembering that we have achieved anything; we only remember there is nothing to be remembered. (115-6)

Beyond the limits to which reason can be pressed, there is only the realm of revelation. Questioning the axiom is philosophically untenable.... Going beyond the reasonable can blow one's mind, described here as having one's head fall off. (127)

[Speaking of the sutra or unifying thread] Only when one's knowledge is universal and holistic is one a knower of the Absolute. That knowledge should hold equally true as the normative notion by which experiences are asserted and measured, as well as the knower who is non-differentiated from the pure light of consciousness. While being the perceiver and the act of perception, it should still have a clear and vivid picture of what is known. The actor, enjoyer and knower all function according to their assigned duties, yet the unitive vision of the knower of the Absolute holds them together. (131-2)

Unknowingly we are accepting two superimpositions in [the] conceptualization of 'you' and 'we'. Even when we refer to ourselves or our group as 'we', there is only the Self. The conceptual figure of an ego or an ego-multiple is superimposed on that Self. Secondly, when you say 'you', the reference is our concept of a person which we objectivize and put 'out there' to mark the object. That is equally unwarranted. The first mistake is that the natural, ever-present omniscience of consciousness is fragmented to make a convenient concept of ego. That ego is made into a conceptualized 'I' to act as a principle of cognizance

in the here and now located in the animation of the psychosomatic organism. Thus the very first differentiation between subject and object is a step into ignorance. The one indivisible totality of one's being is alienated so that one can formulate an I-concept which is basically a superimposition. Secondly, one creates a counterpart of one's ego to act as the other and superimposes it on a secondary fragmentation made on the basis of sensory data. (136)

Our initial entry into the frame of reference provided by empirical cognition causes us to forget the genuine reality of the Self. In its place a secondary, shadowy image of the Self is generated and held as an entity separate from an experience of the objectivized other. We are sitting behind a dark veil. The veil is not merely a hindrance of truth, because a kaleidoscope of changing forms and voices incessantly comes from the veil, causing the confusing appearance of a purely imaginary world. (136)

The truth is that the Self is the most public; there is nothing secret about it. It is not away from anyone, even for a split second, whether awake, dreaming or in deep sleep. We should keep this in mind as we read this series of mantras about the Self. (137)

If you make the subject an objectivized version for analysis and observation, the Self is already fabricated into an unverifiable non-Self. Almost all scriptures warn us about this. (137)

*We are conditioned by our focusing on fragments, delimiting the subject in the frame of reference of the time/space continuum and providing every concept with content. Only by unlearning and not pursuing can we arrive at the true import of the Self. That itself is a contradictory statement because there is no coming, no going, no seeking, no realizing. Every attempt brings the opposite effect of making the real unreal, naming the unnamable, visualizing the

invisible, bifurcating the nondual. In these mantras, Yajnavalkya offers us a reorientation to various aspects of the world and the individuated beings in it. (137-8)

*A reasonable person who knows the vast extension of the cosmos cannot possibly compress his or her God enough to be housed in a temple, church or mosque; and he or she would not dare to give any anthropomorphic physical feature or mental framework to the omnipresent *antaryami* of all this. Yet we do have the right to make symbols, signs and codes for the purposes of schematization. It is unfortunate that we so often forget that our map is not the territory. (148-9)

Space also has a psychological implication.... When our personal space is meddled with by unsympathetic people or an impinging neighborhood, we often feel smothered. It is painful, as if we have no breathing or living space. On such occasions we say *dukham*, painful space. When our living horizon widens and we have plenty of smiles, a harmonious neighborhood with loving friends to dance with us, and the sun and moon to join us in our merriment, we call it *sukham*. (149)

In Indian mythology there is an archetypal father and an archetypal mother. The archetypal father is Kasyapa (vision) and the archetypal mother is Aditi (the boundless heaven). These symbolic archetypes are given only to show that all embodied beings operate within the same biological, physiological, physical, biochemical and psychological rules. This gives a guarantee of sorts for the body/mind apparatus in which we live to operate, and assurance that when one such machine wears out, the program will be carried over to another. So the natural wear and tear and disintegration does not bring the program of life to an end until the goal is reached. (154)

Innumerable programs are strung like beads on the thread of time, which can then be actualized so long as we have a congenial environment and our body and mind are fit. But like an iceberg lying immersed in water, only a little of our functional program is known to us at a time. We have in us deposits of urges which can remain dormant, sometimes through several lives. These are called the fragrance of our past, the *vasanas*. Then we have more immediate items at hand, known as the seeds that go into culture. They are collectively called *samskaras*. So between *vasana* and *samskara* our daily program is taken up for operation. (154)

The Indian mind loves to indulge in indirect explanations of everything by bringing in many anthropomorphic forms of imaginations. (155)

In conceptualization the form becomes affective, initiating in the perceiver a chain of reactions which can remain operative for one's whole lifetime, even though after the percept is experienced for a short time the external form goes into darkness. (157-8)

*We are like chroniclers of our own psychochemical and psychobiologic story. Life is purposive. The preservation of the chronicle is to give life a vertical impact which can ultimately transform the individual into the Self, both from the cosmological point of view as well as from a psychological appreciation. (160)

As the Earth rotates, we all change direction every second of our life, which is more than enough to throw us out of gear and make us lose our orientation. Flying at a high speed in space can also be destabilizing to the seat of cognition.... There is nothing to tell us immediately in which direction we are looking. When we are on solid ground, losing the orientation of directions is not very

dangerous. But if we are navigating on the ocean or in the air, we should surely know where we are and in which direction our destination lies.... An ordinary person going about one's daily chores does not suffer from this lack of orientation. However, if we want to live optimally, taking full advantage of where we are in space as well as time, we should have a more careful sense of our orientation in the world. (161-2)

Actually it is not just the terrestrial world, but a cosmic setup that we live in. (162)

In Carl Sagan's book *The Dragons of Eden*, he says that the genetic information deciphered from a single gene and put in black and white is so enormous that it could fill 500 volumes with 500 pages in each book, with each page having 20 lines and each word having six letters. With all these genetic memories put into us, we should be very grateful to the manipulator of our life for saving us from going mad, since no one can predict who will do what in any passing moment. It is to such an inner controller that this mantra [III.7.10] makes obeisance. (164)

There is nothing we can actually do with the stars and moon and yet they fill our heart with great cheer. (165)

******The great poet Rabindranath Tagore said that God does not expect us to thank him for creating the sun, moon and stars, but he certainly expects us to look at the little violet which he thoughtfully put in our garden to smile at us. It is heart-touching that the ancient rishis of the Upanishads wanted to tell us that we should not miss these little details that make our life on earth truly meaningful so that the passing moments can be eternalized in our memory as moments we have really lived. Of course, most people have no time to see how carefully our world is decorated with

innumerable items of beauty and gaiety which can be heard, touched, seen, tasted and smelled. (166)

*Instead of a dingy mind filled with misery, we can make it as vast and brilliant as the starry sky. (167)

To experience this, one has to be away from Wall Street and the profit-loss lamentations of the industrialists and commercial entrepreneurs. God, the inner controller, does not expect from us nuclear bombs and the arsenals we fill with deadly weapons, but that we make festivals of light instead. A bunch of colored balloons given to a child can be more useful than sending a battalion of killers with monstrous weapons to some border area. Upanishad itself means to sit near. Its message is also to ask every one of us to go near where love and beauty are; where music and friendship are. Thus the mantra under consideration is a meditation in itself. (167)

*It is not with any word that we comprehend the Word, but with a total plunge into inexpressible wonder, to which we come with the canceling out of all the contradictions of this eternal paradox. After exhausting all possible complementarities and reciprocities, we come to grapple with the all-out contradictions. This gives us the secret of canceling out opposites to land in the neutral zero from which words recoil and the mind is melted away into oblivion. (171)

Human beings sometimes use their thought forms, articulations, word formations, and sentence structures like the octopus uses its ink, in order to keep themselves secret from the world. (173)

All around us there is a great realm of darkness, which is like an undiscovered treasure world. The call to explore its secrets is felt

in us as our sense of curiosity. Simple curiosity can grow into an irresistible thirst or hunger to know. Among all such desires for knowledge, the most profound is the desire to know oneself. From this it is evident that the greatest secret to oneself is one's own Self. It is zealously guarded only in the sense that ordinary people will not turn away from the attractions of their senses and the appetites of their bodies to look into it. Most people are satisfied to be humored with half-baked knowledge, at best. So they are kept away from all the profound secrets of life by nothing more than their own attitudes. (174)

Brahmavidya, the knowledge of the Self, is not advantageous to those who want to make their social life a success and actualize the charms of this world. The seers who transcend the dualities of life and death see that what is light for the worldly-minded is darkness for the yogi, and what is light for the yogi is darkness for the uninitiated. (174)

Light need not necessarily mean sunlight, moonlight or the light of lamps. It is actually the light of awareness. We are seeing and hearing, and we are impressed by touch, taste and smell. Apart from these fragmented sensations there is an all-comprehensive, all-inclusive assurance of a being in which we totally participate. This is the light we are considering here for meditation. (176)

The great masters of India shared an innermost secret of theirs with the entire world: the idea of cipher. Cipher means zero. Today when we use a zero we take it for granted, but there was a time when nobody thought of or spoke of cipher; nobody conceived it and nobody made any use of it. (178)

*When a child is born into this world, a cipher is replaced with a one. Then another kind of cipher is placed before the child. This

cipher is a coded secret and the child is challenged to decode it. To introduce the cipher or zero, one draws a small circle. As soon as the circle is drawn it becomes a figure. The figure is shown against its ground, and differentiation comes into awareness. Before drawing the zero, there was only one space. Now there are two distinct spaces—an enclosed space within the zero, and an extending space which goes from the periphery of the circle in all directions. (179)

For maintaining the high excellence of life we need several kinds of food: food for the body, food for the mind, food for the soul, and food for our spiritual fulfillment. In all these fields we have to decide what is desirable and what is undesirable. The prana is the main assessor of these qualities, and the quality control begins in the nostrils. (183)

The more we ponder over breath and the benevolence of the element air, we should be inspired to reorganize life to make it more physically healthy, which will certainly promote a new spiritual outlook and insight.... If it is the supreme *akshara*, our indwelling immortal, that has instituted breath in us, we should certainly honor that indweller by revising and reforming our present-day lifestyle. (185)

In [the last mantra] we meditated on the vital breath and the overseeing principle of the unexpended *akshara* that controls it from within. It is only natural that a major expression of the vital breath [speech] is taken as the next psychophysical function for our deep consideration. (185-6)

Until articulation takes place in the organ of speech, the speaker has no idea from what depth a word comes, or who has decided its relevance or its tonal and structural composition before it is

spoken. It remains amorphous in consciousness until it is disturbed by the subtle presence of something which has grown in the unconscious. Thus deep down in us, in the faculty of speech, ideas are born. Only when an idea is formulated into expressive sounds does it become an outgoing blast. The Indian semanticist thinks that every word is like a shot fired from inside, aimed at the target of a listening eardrum. When the word bursts into a meaningful sound, the conceptual ground of the word unfurls and opens up an articulation in the listener's mind, which brings the revelation of meaning. The sounds that go into the word themselves have archetypal affinities, evoking many mythical symbols involved in the sculpting of the word. (186-7)

The world today is controlled, governed and transformed by ideas which are either spoken out or written and printed for elaborate distribution. This greatest of all powers, which now dominates the destiny of humanity, is both creative and destructive. One who can wield mastery over words to win the heart of one's listeners is the most powerful among people. Consequently nations look for word power. The best thinkers are those who can articulate clearly such words that can reorganize the minds of millions of people. The great masters of the world—rishis, prophets, saviors, messiahs, theoreticians and pioneers of science—have all claimed people's allegiance with word power. (188)

If we take into account all the complications that enter our being through perception differently conceived, we can see how much a true Self has to control our faculties of perception from within, so that we may not become misguided in our individuated existence and go astray from our path of truth. This should make anyone feel deeply beholden to God, who gives you a million occasions to see through your delusions and walk in the path of truth. (192)

The Self does not only bring us into contact with the external world, it can also lead us to retrace our steps from our physicality back into the source of the very spirit which ultimately manifests both as the knower and the knowledge of the field. (194)

The Absolute is in part a sense of wonder, and it can come through all the channels of everything we hear. What is heard from our own heart is the most excellent. What we hear from our heart is called the *anahata*. Anahata is the song of the whole soul, so to say, just as we speak of the music of the spheres. One does not have to go anywhere to listen to it, because it is around the anahata that the whole individuated life is functioning. Nothing is closer to us than the anahata. In the Qur'an it is said that Allah is closer to us than the pulsating organ of our own heart. It is with such an intimate intimation that this mantra [III.7.19] takes us to the core of contemplative life. (194-5)

*One distinction between the Self and matter is in luminosity. The Self or spirit is self-luminous and does not need another agency to illuminate it. Matter, on the other hand, is inertial by nature. It becomes dynamic only when it is animated or acted upon. This world is projected into form and name and motion by the presence of the Self. When you turn on a light and read a book or write a letter or speak to another person, the light is not doing any of your work, but it creates a situation through its illumination so that you can see letters to be read or you can imagine words being written or can have a dialogue with your friend. In all this the light does not act, but simply keeps its close proximity to the object under observation. By its sheer presence the object becomes visible and the subject registers an exact replica with a one-to-one correspondence between object and subject. The correspondence is created by an oscillating light which is at once physical and psychic. The psychophysical phenomenon manifesting from

moment to moment, which relates gross objects outside and subtle ideas inside into the eventualities of awareness, is called mind. Otherwise there is no separate mind existing anywhere. (195-6)

The mind that makes exact observations with clarity and comparisons through a series of inferences can seem to operate randomly, but it all falls into place to make every perception into a comprehensive whole. This is known as gestaltation. (196-7)

That aspect of the intellect which gives us the knowhow of things so that we can perform with dexterity and finish our work in the most desirable manner is *vijnana*. As we are familiar with every detail of what we do, we may think it is our very special contribution. To correct that notion, Yajnavalkya points to the inner controller within, *vijnana*. (200)

The greatest beauty of the Vedanta philosophy is that when it gives us the discipline of total reduction to purify any shade of plurality that goes into the concept of the Absolute, when it seems to be taking us farther from everything visible, audible and tangible to a neutral zero where we get not even a glimpse of anything objective to hold onto, it still allows us to have the maximum immanence of the Absolute. There are Western philosophers who have succeeded in bringing the immanent as close as possible to the transcendent, allowing transcendence to permeate the immanent in the individuated consciousness and the collective consciousness to which we inseparably belong in our empirical moments of wakefulness. In Vedanta there is one difference—when we go into the transcendence of the Absolute, a mystical union automatically comes where the details of the Self get into the most perfect homogeneity so that the inquirer becomes absorbed in the only light that is. Then there is no room for experience. However, the imperiential reality is so total and

unique that the Self is knowing the Self, the Self is enjoying the Self, and the Self is raising the Self. The Self alone is, and the non-Self goes into oblivion. This is what Yajñvalkyā is speaking of when he talks about that which inhabits the intellect (*vijnana*). (200-1)

Once the ego is assured of the exact meaning of the term and its provocative aspect of bringing pain or attractive power, the mind has to convey its message to the motor system and the appropriate organ of action is to be commissioned to react to the recognized object. Once again the responsibility is put on the shoulders of the intellect to decide the course of action. In the meantime, all the suggested possibilities warranted by cognition and connotation [connotation] are presented in the preconscious as universes of desires to be promoted as wishes when it is judicially accepted by the social consciousness, which remains muted in the field of consciousness as irrational fear or as an idealistic inclination arising out of built-up character. The wish is promoted to a will and all physiological preparations are made to supply enough blood to the organs of action with extra oxygen to execute the work with promptness. All this happens within the horizontal quaternion of interrogation, memory, judgment and affectivity. (202)

A vertical arrangement of consciousness has at its bottommost pit the dark chamber of the unconscious into which all the seeded aspects of the wakeful and the dream go for retention. Above this is the preconscious, which monitors the dream. Above it is the main conscious disposition, which is directly in charge of making known to the individual the final interpretation given from moment to moment. (202-3)

In any search for truth there are two normative functions. One is more central to the transactions of the empirical world, where perceptual data are important. Although Indian philosophy, especially Advaita Vedanta, tends to look down upon the phenomenological presentation of the world of names and forms, in the categorization of valid testimony first preference is given to sensory verification of the objects presented, and immediate perception is considered the most striking and acceptable to all in the community. The second is to obtain the highest hallmark of unitive truth, where truth or *satya* is identified with the Self. In the empirical world of transactions we depend mainly on the logical relevancy of reason, and so the function of the intellect is considered to be mainly rational. This is in contrast to the insight that comes as a holistic philosophical vision through intuition.... It is as if we have made our departure from the lower animal world when we left the power of instinctive monitoring of our life for the rational. Thereafter what was mainly sought was the intellectual sharpening of our power to discern truth which supports the pragmatic end of life. (203)

*We have no means to bring intuition at our own will and pleasure. Intuition has to come of its own accord, but a preparatory discipline can be taken by disciplining the mind to make it less and less cluttered by irrelevant information. (203)

Speaking of the subject throughout this *brahmana*, which in every mantra is “your Self, the inner controller, the immortal,” the last mantra, 23, concludes: “That is never seen, but is the Seer. That is never heard, but is the hearer. That is never thought of, but is the Thinker. That is never known, but is the Knower. There is no other seer than that. There is no other hearer than that. There is no other thinker than that. There is no other knower than that. That is

your Self, the inner controller, the immortal. Everything else but that is perishable.” (205)

In Upanishadic lore we come across only three females well established in the wisdom of the Absolute. The Kena Upanishad, which comes from the Sama Veda, narrates an episode about Agni, the presiding god of all rituals, Vayu, the animator of the world of living organisms and unifier of the inert world, and Indra, the controller of the senses and all sensory beings. In the story, they were tested by the Absolute in order to bring them to the humility of wisdom. Brahman came to them as an indiscernible apparition (yaksha) which questioned the magnitude of their prowess and challenged them to move a blade of grass. Agni was unable to burn it, Vayu, the god of wind, failed to lift it or blow it away, and Indra, the king of the gods, failed to destroy it. When the chagrined gods became fearful, in the very place where the indiscernible spirit had been, Uma, the beautiful daughter of the Himalayas, appeared. She taught the gods that the knowledge of wisdom and the prowess of action both belong only to Brahman, the Absolute. This is the first instance of a female revealing the wonder of the Absolute in one of the Upanishads. (207)

*The fact remains that the hidden secrets of these mantras have not been looked into with sufficient care. Three thousand years after Yajnavalkya spoke, the world has changed very much and we are much better equipped to have a more precise envisioning of the Upanishadic truth. That is our compunction to write the present commentary. (220)

*In the body/mind complex of a person there can be many types of sensory, psycho-physical and mental excitement and other disturbances. All these are termed ex-periences. Behind and

beyond all these, there is a knower through which we are aware of the many sensory and mental fluctuations of consciousness that are arising. It presides over the life of all from the moment of birth to the final disappearance of consciousness. It is instrumental in initiating consciousness in the living organism, bringing it to a close, and furthering it in a continuing system. It is not known by the senses, not spoken of to us by another. But intuitively, we all know that it is not only behind the occurrences in our individual life; it is behind the functioning of the sun and moon and starry heavens in the sequential arrangement of day and night. It is in the building up of the body system; it is in the degeneration and regeneration of all organisms. It is the one light which shines without a pause. Both the macrocosmic and the microcosmic functions turn around this hub. It is the dispenser, the regulator, the controller, the knower of all, yet not known to anyone at any time. Such is the Imperishable. (221-2)

The only way we can comprehend the truth about the inner coherence, the innate law which makes things cling together without any glue, not dictated by anyone, is by looking at its manifoldness and inferring its unity. (222)

Mantra III.8.10 reads: Whosoever in the world, O Gargi, without knowing this Imperishable, offers oblations, performs sacrifices and practices austerities, even for many thousands of years, finds all such acts useless and perishable. Whosoever, O Gargi, departs from this world without knowing this Imperishable, is miserable. But one who departs from this world after knowing the Imperishable, O Gargi, is a knower of the Absolute. (224)

The question arises—if a contentless counterpart of a positive action constituted of the incidental [such as sacrifice, gifting, etc.] is to be accepted as meritorious, does this not set a wrong example

of granting non-connotative rituals and imaginary concepts a positive meaning which they do not really have? Does that not promote superstition? (225)

The question is whether the state referred to in the Mundaka Upanishad as being totally cleansed of all conceptual imagination can be achieved or not. (226)

*In the pursuit of knowledge, humanity has been torturing even small children from the day the parents came to possess the babies. Millions of institutions have been built, creating impressive concrete jungles to house academies of authority and status. Religions have made neat arrangements of hierarchies so that each person can look upon their own brothers and feel superior on the one hand and inferior on the other. A kind of intellectual slavery has been established through centuries. As Rousseau said, “Man is born free but is everywhere in chains.” Life is so simple yet people have made it so complicated that even the wisest person today cannot simplify human life. We are attacked by millions of subtle, gross and demonic enemies coming from all around. They are in our bloodstream, muscle cells and brain cells, in our thoughts, beliefs and aspirations.

Yajnavalkya was addressing Gargi probably three thousand years ago, when the world was much simpler. Even at that time he was horrified to see the grotesque institutions and diabolic rituals which the religions and the seekers of knowledge had created, making humanity carry burdens of superstitions, mimicry and absolutely fruitless labor on its shoulders. Yajnavalkya describes them in a simple mantra which, if taken seriously, can help us to cast away our already sickly mind and feel light-hearted. (226-7)

Ever since the human race started crowding into congregates and lamenting about the woes of human existence on earth, “divine”

ones have come amidst them who are very cocksure about where the dead have gone. Clenching their fists, gnashing their teeth, and lamenting the world of the dead, they advise those still on this side what rituals need to be done, what penalties paid, what offerings given, and which deities should be bribed. They have created many mythological stories describing the prowess of the hosts of the gods of Rome, Greece, Egypt, Germany and India, and the spirits of Africa. They have even made devices to appease those gods with the shedding of animal and even human blood in sacrifices. They have shrunk this world into a small place to make room in the human mind for the hells of perdition where brimstone is always leaping forth as inextinguishable fire. They have even been so crafty as to make devils far superior to gods. They did all this in the name of explaining the simplest norms of life, the most obvious secret of life being sustained and death coming naturally when there is no fuel to feed the fire. What they call the Imperishable is only the repetitive principle that accurately expresses itself in the serialization of life. (227)

Purusha alludes to something luminous. It is to be taken as being like the reflection of light on a disturbed surface of water. The fragmented image of the sun or the moon seen in the water is in some way connected with the luminosity of the sun or moon, but when the original moves away the reflection does too. Similarly, the phenomenal organism in which the animation of the Self is temporarily seen appears to be an individual functioning. (232)

What is of interest to us here is that when Vedanta accepts God, Ishvara, it is within the frame of reference of maya, and that is as good as saying there is no God. (234)

Advaita (nondual) philosophy teaches us that what is seemingly two becomes one when we realize the ultimate truth. (239)

The stories of divinity on the whole are to be considered as poetic fantasy. (243)

The best cleanser of life is hot tears. (247)

If the mantras are taken literally, they yield only meager suggestions. If we take them as poetic allegories, metaphors or similes, then we come to a deeper meaning. (255)

One of the fundamentals of Vedanta is that everything in this world is dialectically conceived and operated. Taken individually, no unit has an absolute stand, each is regulated by its relation to something else. This functional relativity, which Vedantins generally call *samsara*, can be seen even in the small world of a cell, in the closing in of a membrane. (257)

When we look at the magnificent arrangement of the conducting electrical system carrying energy to every corner of our body, both known and unknown, and if we see it as a divine device of creation, the physiology of a person can give us as much insight into the divine function as a sacred scripture. (258)

Even when we close our eyes and look inward what we see is not total darkness but the light of awareness. With that light we discern ideas and interpret our perceptions. (266)

The illuminating principle in all aspects of knowledge, whether conscious or unconscious, is called *ananda*. *Ananda* is identical with the meaning of meaning, which can be negatively expressed as *neti neti* and positively complemented as *satyasya satyam*. *Neti neti* is a wholesale denial of everything that can be conceived by the mind and expressed by words. After the sweeping denial of all

concepts with the declaration of *neti neti*, the Upanishad complemented it with the statement *satyasya satyam*. Astonishingly, truth (*satya*) is mentioned as that which is perceived in the here and now. It is highly contradictory and paradoxical to put together *neti neti* and the truth of the perceptible into a single context. The crux of the Vedanta philosophy resides in this mystical contradiction, which comes close to the Tao which cannot be named yet is described as having ten thousand names. (267)

*Many of the Indian writers are sexually repressed people, and they do not think of any subject other than sex when they want to connote love or desire. There is nothing wrong in sexual love, but that is not the whole game. Wives and husbands are devoted to each other because of marital love. Parents love their children, teachers love their students, and students love their parents and teachers in return. The prompting dynamic behind all activity is the desire (*kama*) to accomplish. So there is nothing inappropriate in saying that the natural abode of one who lives from moment to moment is in the house of desire. One's heart is with what one holds most dear. (271)

All manipulations in time and space are to be conceived intelligently; hence a person's guiding light comes from the mind. (271)

In perception we do not actually hear, see, touch, taste or smell anything. We only read certain signs and codes, epitomized forms of mental images. What we claim to have perceived was not really the totality of those objects. Then what enabled us to discern them? In this mantra it says that when darkness prevails and you have nothing but ignorance before you, you are not responding to sound, light, heat or cold, roughness or softness, or pain or

pleasure. Then you use your faculties which are not conditioned by any sensory stimulation: your mind and intellect. (284)

What mirror does your mind look into? It looks into the collective consciousness, which is the basis for the acceptance of the empirical validity of the ontological world. (286)

The opposite of ananda is becoming valueless, defunct, useless, trash, dirt or garbage. (288)

[*Dakshina*] has been very wrongly defined by previous commentators as the remuneration given to priests. There cannot be anything more vulgar than thinking of *dakshina* as a payment given to priests.... What is discovered through contemplative discipline in the deepest core of one's intelligence and intuition is to be held sacred by one's heart, which always treasures one's dearest values. That is why Jesus said, "Your heart is where your treasure is." *Dakshina* is continuous attention given to a chosen precious value, and not a gift or present given to a priest. It has many beautiful implied meanings which have been overlooked by previous commentators. (304)

Only when the mind and the heart stand together is one's life breath in unison with one's will. (304)

People try to spend their whole lives studying the concepts of right and wrong, truth and falsehood, and the philosophy of wisdom, yet they fail to relate properly with their spouses, children or brothers and sisters who work with them in the same social environment. (307)

In the course of a dialogue only a truly wise person can concentrate with full attention on the path that leads to the

Supreme Reality. Others will be carried away by the rhetoric of the dialogue. (312)

In [Indian] philosophical disputations, strict rules are kept. Scholars discuss higher wisdom only with another scholar of proper erudition. If the counterpart is found to be insufficiently intelligent to proceed with meaningful discussion, the dialogue is given up. (312)

The ultimate stand of this Upanishad is that the Self is the imperishable (*akshara*), which holds within it the all-controlling, all-governing principle of overlordship (*isvara*). When the inner principle of manifestation operates, its causal principle spreads out in the phenomenal world. When the phenomenal is withdrawn, it is as if nothing has taken shape. This is true of both individual manifestation and the manifestation of the universe. This is the secret which Yajnavalkya here reveals. (320)

Adhyaya IV

*The Upanishad is a record of the right way to present the sacred and secret teachings of the Absolute to aspirants who are eager to bring an end to all their sorrows born of exposure to the phenomenal world, and who are seeking the right path to obtain the ultimate aim of spiritual life, which is none other than realizing their true Self.

In the first volume (*Madhu Kanda*) the student was given a chance to listen to the profound teachings of the sruti. This volume, (*Muni Kanda*) is a series of presentations of the dialectical method of critical examination. In a dialectical situation there is an anterior critic (*purva pakshin*) and a posterior moderator who ultimately carries every argument to the conclusive finality of a flawless understanding. (321)

What is most central to this teaching [about reincarnation and immortality] is that it is not an individual person who is being born or who is dying. It is God that talks a body and it is the same God who leaves it. Therefore birth and rebirth are not of human beings but of God. (324)

In this chapter Janaka plays the role of anterior critic (*purvapakshin*) and Yajnavalkya that of posterior critic (*siddhanti*). Typically, the *siddhanti* is a person of perfect wisdom who provides the complementary half of the inquiry into truth initiated by the anterior critic. Although the role of the anterior critic seems to be that of generating an open gestalt, the final view of the *siddhanti* comes as a consequence of the anterior critic's questions. They prompt a deeper investigation into the secrets of brahmavidya and provide the occasion for the revelation of what is hitherto unknown. Plato has described this dialectical method in the Republic as the coping stone on which the wisdom of philosophy is tested. (326)

[In mantra IV.1.2 King Janaka asks] "What is *prajna*, O Yajnavalkya?"

"It is the organ of speech, Your Majesty.," said Yajnavalkya. "Through the organ of speech alone, Your Majesty, are known the Rig Veda, the Yajur Veda, the Sama Veda, the Atharva Veda, history, mythology, the arts, the Upanishads, verses, aphorisms, explanations, commentaries, the results of sacrifices, of offering oblations, of giving food and drink, this world, the next world, and all beings.

"The organ of speech, Your Majesty, is the supreme Brahman. The organ of speech never deserts one who, knowing this, meditates upon it; all beings eagerly approach such a one and, being a god, he merges with the gods." (328-9)

One special point to be highlighted here is the negative qualification of endearment (*priyata*) made by Yajnavalkya when he points out that it can cause one to perform sacrifices for one for whom they should not be performed and accept gifts from one from whom they should not be accepted. The wisdom of immortality is interlaced with the nescience of mortality. Ritualistic performances of sacrifices are prompted by nescience: thinking that one can thereby acquire material wealth and extend the term of life in the physical body. People waste so much effort because of these suppositions. (339-40)

The true guru or instructor which shares the light of wisdom is none other than the imperishable *akshara*, which is everywhere and nowhere and is the only reality. Thus, for a priest or preceptor to receive a fee for the acts he performs or the instructions he gives is a shameful act. Yet the institutions of the world are maintained by this malpractice, which makes every religion a financial corporation based on fear. In this arena, chivalry is very much admired. In their love for martyrdom, people rush to kill and be killed, not knowing that the greed, lust and covetousness involved is not what should be dear to them. (340)

Vedantic teachers always see cosmological phenomena as symbolic elaborations of the one spiritual truth which they call *brahman*. Space (*akasha*) is the representative phenomenal experience that can help us to know the Absolute through the testimony of comparison. Unlike the other four elements, it has no material reality, although one cannot deny that it is included in our existential experience. Space has to be thought of as part of the phenomenal world because you cannot conceive of any phenomenon without the frame of reference of the time/space continuum. (344)

Just as the sun is seen as an enlightening device, the soul is seen as a sun that shines in the firmament of consciousness. (345)

Sometimes Vedanta is so misunderstood, even by great philosophers of Indian origin. They claim the Hindu view of life is established on romantic ideals. This is not true. Like Bishop Berkeley, the Vedantin also believes *esse est percipi*, perceiving is seeing truth. Anything irrefutable in public experience should have a truthful ground. There can be mistakes about the details, but there should be a basis for an experience, even a hallucinatory one. That is why Ramanuja says that when you see a snake in a rope and shudder, there is enough snake there to make you afraid but not enough to kill you. (345-6)

Indian philosophy accepts truth (*sat*). Only as a further elaboration do they say *cit*. *Cit* is not the starting point. However subtle is the value implied in it as *ananda*, *sat*-ness, being truthful, is to be present to the individual consciousness for one to find endearingness in truth. (346)

The mind has no specific characteristic of its own except an ever-abiding doubt. (354)

The very first thing that mind does is to find its orientation.... The greatest function of the mind [is] making a permanent replica of whatever has been experienced for future reference. This is more so when the appreciation of it is strong. Value factors can be on the plus side and equally so on the minus side. You remember what pleases you the most and you love to go back to it. You never forget what pains you and you are always cautious to avoid it. (355)

Satyakama Jabala was fully enlightened on Brahman by four teachers who were non-human. This is a clever device to teach the student that one's guru need not be a man with all the human faculties. (357)

In addition to knowledge, a student needs a human teacher to help properly develop the mind with putting first things first and last things last. Then there is order. That is why the mind sought orientation to begin with. (357)

We have to bracket the most mundane of the world and the highest spiritual sublimity in order to consider the realization of the Absolute. (357)

*Some scholars and translators of both East and West translate *ananda* as bliss, which is not appropriate.... Ananda provides the ground for all value appreciations. That is what is referred to in this mantra by Yajnavalkya as the theme for meditation. (358-9)

In a guru-disciple relationship a crucial day comes when the student should openly admit the superior wisdom of the teacher and surrender their ego, allowing the guru to reside on the throne of their heart and rule from within. (365)

*As educational training and socialization in our present age is more or less of a conventional nature, the child is exposed to good and evil without being given personal attention. When a person comes to the prime of youth, they are pushed into the world of competition where they have to struggle to find a niche in which an acceptable form of social life can be conducted until the person withers out. Many people fail to find their appropriate placement in life. People become so individualistic that nobody has time to watch, advise, or correct another. Consequently, when most

people come to old age, they are confused, worn out, and exhausted of talents. As the family ties are no longer maintained, old age has now become a curse.

It is out of such a chaotic condition a person has to rise with a sense of responsibility to pull themselves out of the mire and make themselves worthy of being born as a human being. One has to seriously ask: Where am I? What have I known? Is my knowledge good enough to complete the rest of my life in dignity and wisdom? How do I find fulfillment of it? (365-6)

The Eastern approach to ultimate truth is different from the Western approach to empirical truth. The search for the ultimate starts when one has finished scanning empirical facts and has come to the conclusion: *neti neti*, “not this not this.” After arriving at this conclusion, the physical world and the ontological body are not what one studies. In the Western approach, the movement is from a part to the whole truth with piecemeal annexations, as Bertrand Russell puts it. We surmise what the cause could be by examining the effects.

In the Bhagavad Gita it is said that in the search the origin is unknown, the final end is unknown, and only the middle is known. What is known is empirical. It belongs to the gross world of objectivity, the viscous world of continuous transformation, the thermal world of transfiguration, and the vital world of sublimating the gross and the subtle into a more primeval causal factor. Thus the themes confronted with and available for observation, analysis and categorization are boundless. The origin vanishes into oblivion, where the remote past and the immediate past are equally inaccessible, and the future is fed into expectation and imaginations which are not conducive for any objective or analytical study.

The Indian method is to begin with the first cause, which is intuitively seen in the unfoldment of time and space and in the

transformation of mass which generates the changing bodies in the stream of historical awareness. As the present is what is accessible to the truth-seeker, it is tentatively accepted as a beginning. (371)

This section contains the basic indications for a study of the thousandfold derangements which disrupt both the wakeful and dream states and the perfecting of the science of yoga to overcome them—a study that would be very useful for humanity. For this, we should know the relationship between spirit as the Word or logos, and the endless proliferation which comes from it. By deeply burrowing into the noematic core of the spirit, we can stick onto a discipline which will keep our pursuit from going into a labyrinth of confusion and darkness. (372)

As nature is basically always in motion, causing transfigurations, the first step is steadying and stabilizing one's being and physical form through an establishment which is at once physical, psychological and mental [rational]. This the yogis call *asana*. The multifarious influences of a feverish environment that can haunt a person are forestalled so that the growth from the central nucleus of life is attuned with the cosmic energy which is received in one's body and mind as *prana*. The morbidity of nature that has gone into one's structure is vitalized and the life force is verticalized with an aspiration to rise higher and higher. Therefore the yogic disciplines of *pranayama* and *asana* are followed by *pratyahara*, weaning oneself away from striking roots in the mundane, and raising oneself to higher levels with more subtle energies. By formulating notions instead of feeding oneself with environmental information, more and more intimacy is built between the spark of the spirit in one's animated individuation and the higher spirit. This is called *dharana*.

By transcending objective meditation with subjective meditation, one comes to a consciousness into which one can go

and come out and go into again, as a matter of course. Then the compulsion to return to the biological and psychological familiarity with the body/mind complex is reduced. One feels at home with the state which was described earlier as *neti neti*. In spiritual discipline this is called burning your bridges behind you. When there are still seeds which can sprout as urges which stimulate a return to physical consciousness, it is *sabija samadhi*. When all such seeds are gone, it is called *nirbija samadhi*. As a preliminary step to this stabilization, one should know what one's Self is in the empirical and ontological world. That is why the aspirant is given insight into the physical and physiological self before being led into the mental and spiritual dimensions of the Self. (373-4)

According to Vedanta philosophy, the Self or *atman* in its purest and ultimate sense is the same as *brahman*. It is described as rock-like, and it is never affected by anything. The same Self is also compared to the ever-radiating sun. Unlike the sun which radiates light, the Self is radiant with consciousness through and through. Like light rays animating earthly bodies such as a speck or an organism or a thinking substance in conscious beings, the independent Self has many phenomenal aspects which depend on it. (376)

The relation between the Self and the bodies illuminated by it is said to have three characteristics. When the Self is pure and unpolluted consciousness, it is called *cit*. When it illuminates this world, the effulgence which is circumscribed by its exposure to a conditioned ground is called *chaitanya*. When the animation of the Self affects and transforms a body to be a carrier of the dictates of consciousness, it is called *cetana*. Thus *cetana*, *chaitanya* and *cit* come in an ascending gradation. (376)

When perception is established, one's own self-consciousness transforms to have a similitude with what is perceived. It becomes a presentative image of what is looked at. From the central focus of consciousness to the origin of perception and back to the perceiver, the psychic conveyor of the notion of perception oscillates at a great speed. So the still picture of the object becomes animated as an object with matter. The viewer or looker is stimulated to interact with the external object. As there is constant movement of the same light between the subject and the object, the subjective configuration of the image is superimposed on the object, while the subjective consciousness becomes more precise and representative. (377)

The world is irrefutable, the subject is irrefutable, and that irrefutability marks the existential verity of consciousness, *asti*. The wakeful empirical light is a sensual encounter that brings the idea of the irrefutability of a phenomenal truth, *bhati*. As there is perfect correspondence between the existence of the *bhanasraya* and the experience of *bhati*, *bhati* is considered as belonging to the existential realm. The Self, which is now reduced to a local recognition of modulating consciousness, gains a dimension of affectivity, *priya*. *Asti* (existence). *bhati* (subsistence), and *priya* (affection) is a common psychological experience to which all living beings are subjected. (377)

Whenever Yajnavalkya presents a doctrine or a statement of truth, he is very considerate of the commonsense point of view. He is not in a hurry to go into mysteries or allegories of mythological or mystical import. He always begins by calling a spade a spade. Only after presenting the common person's experience in everyday life does he direct us to deeper and deeper implications of the spirit. (381-2)

We are today better placed than earlier commentators to use descriptive psychology as an aid to make our philosophical judgment more precise, accurate and valid from the point of view of common experience. (383)

It is essential to keep our communication lines open all the time. Without communication, our existence cannot continue, our knowledge cannot be increased, our happiness cannot be perfected. We need instruction to know clearly who we are, whence this world, and more precisely about relationships and values. Relationships are elaborated when you are at a crossroads.... The word is the magical formula by which your being gets into continuous relationship with the scheme of your becoming and the actualization of that scheme from moment to moment. (390)

The galaxy is much greater than several solar systems put together, but the idea of it can sit in the folds of your brain, occupying almost no space. Even when you first come to know an idea, there has to be an innate ground to mirror that idea. In a sense you are already truth, knowledge and the infinite. It is the elaboration of it that is implied in your birth, transformation, growth and evolution.... We can enlarge the sky of our consciousness to enrich our psyche from moment to moment. The secret is the word. (390-1)

Only contemplative observation of a deep and continuous nature can unravel the paradoxical situation of pure spirit seeping into the inertia of physical matter and the physical matter becoming a fit medium for spirit to articulate. (393)

When the throb of semiosis becomes stilled and ideas do not flow into word images, both thinking and communicative articulation

become silent. In a similar way, all the sensory functions can also go into oblivion. It is like the personal aspect of the individuated self ceases to function. Only for the short span of time that the physiological, neurological and psychological apparatus of the individuated person is not exposed to the awareness of subjective-objective interaction is the spirit of the individuated self experienced. (393-4)

A deeper strata or basis of pure consciousness is to be assumed which makes it possible for the individuated consciousness to function relatively independently of the psychophysical matrix to which each person is held organically intact. (394)

When the phenomenal world, having a plurality of names, forms and functional activities, is to be causally related to the one undifferentiated Self, a critic may consider it a faulty vision and conceive of the implied logic as being eclectic and heterogeneous. [Yet] it is certainly necessary to relate all parts of the whole to an immanent homogeneity. (395)

What is received in a flash of intuition cannot be presented in a discussion to produce the same flash of intuition in another. It has to be separated out item by item, and each has to be defined and explained. This is a limitation to which every philosopher is exposed time and again. (395)

*Comparisons are not always between identical replicas. One often has to face a paradox or an enigma which causes a stumbling block in achieving a unitive vision. That is why, to understand the interrelationship of dialectical counterparts, four main features are looked into: 1) contradiction; 2) complementarity; 3) reciprocity; and 4) cancelling out of opposites. (395)

At the peak of Self-realization, the central truth does not stand out as an objective counterpart of the Self. Instead, it is like a diffused light merging into the totality or a dewdrop dissolving in the infinitude of a fathomless ocean. (395)

In the ultimate analysis there is only knowledge. In the life of human beings knowledge comes simultaneously as a functional impression and a functional expression. Through our long familiarity with academic literature and verbal teaching given to us by professional teachers, we have come to make a dichotomy of knowledge and action. Further, the various spiritual programs associated with the search for the Self, listening to the description of the Self, and pondering on the Self, are all done in a contemplative setting where the body is kept as still as possible and the mind is withdrawn from the imperative necessities of biological, biophysical and psychological incidents. As a result, we have generated a rather unreal picture of the Self... Academic philosophy can at best give us only an image of the Self, which can be cleverly clothed in many aphoristic definitions and their elucidation. (395-6)

There is no division between life, its functional potency, and its course of action. (396)

Only a fragmentary aspect of the *atman* [Self] is brought to deliberation and conscious function in the biologic progress of life. That is why the Self on the whole remains an untold story. (397)

It is absolutely necessary to understand the Self as a process of becoming within the framework of being. (398)

In a general sense, we can say that the Self is a universal principle implied in the triple aspects of knowing, doing and experiencing all the details of the proliferation which time draws out of the primordial causal principle. (402)

‘The beginning’ is a metaphorical instrument of elucidation, a mathematical tool which can wield a world of names and forms within the time/space continuum. It necessarily means that there is a universal pre-existence of the all-encompassing being in which all the teleological plans for the elaboration of cause and effect already exist as possibilities. (403)

Just as light has shadow which plays the critical role of making the fragmented light a major aid for illumination, the negative counterpart of *purusha* is nature in its eternally coexisting vivification and functional variation. Thus the *purusha* is the manifested plurality of the unmanifested unity. (404)

Keeping all this in mind, we get a picture of *purusha* as universal, totally independent, revealed by its own light, yet becoming more and more possessed of dependent and conditional factors. Thereafter the organism can be looked upon as an independent unit, while it is essentially only a dependent extension of *vijnanatma*. Through deeper probe and continuous meditation the student should perfect the model of *jiva*, which is none other than himself or herself, and experience the Self as presenting the entire world of awareness within and without. (406)

The Brihadaranyaka Upanishad is a total textbook of the science of the Absolute (*brahmavidya*). The only reason for one to choose to study this text is to become fully informed about the Absolute in principle and to realize and actualize one’s individual incorporation into the holistic reality of the Self. (409)

As *buddhi* [intellect] is committed to serve the integrity of the Self, the ego is not allowed to interrupt the judgment and volition recommended by the intellect. If the light of the Self is the monarch, the intellect is only the minister to advise it. (410)

*Of course, it is difficult to extricate oneself from the world of obligations and transactional situations. So we are advised to take into account each desire that pops up from our imaginations and dismiss it as of no value and no consequence. We should learn how to silence the mind by not applying the mind to anything. The mind is self-created. If we look at a thing, the mind becomes like that; if we speak of anything, the mind becomes like that; if we desire anything, the mind becomes like that. It is entirely in our power to drop item after item by not deliberating on things which will concoct an imaginary mind out of nothing. If we resort to that natural peace which belongs to us, the mind becomes serene, the happiness that comes will not distract us, and our mood will be one of equipoise and beatitude. (414-5)

“That very person, on being born or assuming a body, is conjoined with evils, and on dying or leaving the body, discards those evils.”
[mantra IV.3.8]

This mantra looks very simple. It can be contrasted with the theories of birth and death given in various religions. To those who are afraid of death, the suggestion given here will bring a great sense of relief. Instead of a monstrous God waiting to summon the dead on a crucial day to settle their accounts, the Upanishad totally leaves out the interference of God in human life. The individual soul is its own maker and its own dissolver. (415)

*In the Oriental religions, especially Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism, there is a total absence of a divine judge decreeing the fate of human beings in terms of good and evil. Instead, the awards of karma are reaped individually by each person; God is not responsible for a person's virtue or evil. In Advaita Vedanta, the whole theme is relegated to the phenomenality of truth, and hence neither sin or its punishment are treated with the serious attention that is given only to *brahman* or *atman* as the absolute truth. (422)

According to the Upanishadic theory, a certain moral superiority can be progressively achieved through several lives. It says that spiritual efforts with continued progress do not come to a sheer loss with death. This theory gives its believers the advantage of optimism that the purification, perfection and finality of life can be achieved through a long process of self-discipline.... The Indian theory resonates with the materialists' and scientists' views of continuation through transformation. (425-6)

No percept is impressive without being interpreted, for the time being, with its conceptual dimensions. Thus, even in the transactional world of the wakeful, the objectivity of experience is limited and conditioned by concepts formulated out of previous impressions and evaluations made on the basis of attraction and repulsion. One major specialty of a person's transactional interaction with specific objects is a common sharing with other individuals in whom faculties of a similar nature are also invested. From the very first moment of our birth to the termination of consciousness in a body we have our personal experience of subject-object duality to compare and contrast, share, and compete with the similar sensations and mentations of others. (427)

In the Mandukya Upanishad we read that *atma* itself is *brahman*, and it is said to be of four limbs. These four limbs are considered to be: 1) the monitoring self in the wakeful, transactional state (*visvaatma*); 2) a self-luminous principle which substitutes its light for external stimuli to support subjective consciousness, including dreams (*taijasa*); 3) indistinct consciousness which remains latent in the unconscious without formulation, as well as being the stuff that manifests into all experienceable forms and names (*prajna*); and 4) the last of which is said to be *turiya*. (429)

Shankara says that dream is a conjunctive experience.... He says that if there is a hinterland between two villages, it is not looked upon as a third village. Similarly, between wakeful consciousness and the deep unconscious, there is a hinterland where memory of the wakeful and the creative imagination of dream remain interlinked. (431)

The Self is not aided by any external agent to shed all its vicissitudes and come back to its own purity. When the Self shines forth to itself without clinging to any form or name or eventful function, it is its own intrinsic reality, *svayamjyotis*. (433)

Although individuated beings are totally at a loss to comprehend their inner controller, the inner controller has every iota of the world in its purview. So one cannot complain that the Absolute is unconcerned with anyone or anything. The concern of the inner controller can be vividly seen in the details of the structure and function of any bit that constitutes this world. In short, this is a Self-created world in which the Self is in its deepest silence the unknown Absolute and in its peripheral diversity a functioning truth here and now from which we are not different. This is what Kant describes with wonder as “the starry heavens above and the moral world below.” (440)

The study [of emancipation] deserves two special kinds of focusing, one on what is obvious to everyone as the phenomenal world in time and space, with name and form and action related to enjoyment and suffering.... The other focus is on the true being of the Self identified with the Absolute, which cannot be objectivized in any manner. (446-7)

The spirit dwelling in the body needs to free itself from the contingencies of the body. However, the spirit cannot leave the body totally to itself. The body can only be maintained if it is given at least the minimum psychophysical energy that comes from the prana. So the otherwise shining principle of the individuated self continues to sustain the homestead of the body with vital energy while it wanders free in the sky of consciousness. (449)

Through centuries of human civilization, human beings have gained the efficiency to revert the individuated self into the timeless, spaceless transcendence of the soul or *atman* through the science and art of yoga or union of the peripheral with the center. Thus the immortal indweller proves itself to be an immeasurable benevolence, and not a capricious God who rejoices in the pains and miseries of his creatures. (450)

Does one come to Self-realization if one dreams so? Or, when one wakes up, does one remain with whatever foolish knowledge one had, unaffected by the dream of realization? (456)

*Islam and Christianity put great emphasis on a God that witnesses whatever a person does in transactional life. Those actions become binding on the individual who will be called to account for every item on the final day of judgment. The Gita, on

the other hand, very clearly states that the Supreme Lord (*isvara*) is not concerned about one's acts of omission nor one's meritorious or sinful acts. There is no need to carry in our minds the dead weight of the fear of compensating for our karma. The laughter we laugh in our dreams is quite valid. The tears we shed were generated only by our own ignorance. (458)

Further, after the dream experience, a moment of pause is given for us to be in a pure state of suspended mentation. This is a further assurance that nothing in this world is so totally binding on us that we can't experience freedom. This prompts Janaka to ask for another instruction which can assure him of his emancipation rather than compelling him to take time to revise and mend every action or thought that he had been obliged to have in the wakeful. (458)

Instead of using this method [psychoanalysis] to clear a patient's whole stream of consciousness of the filth it has been carrying, Indian spiritual *sadhana* and the therapy recommended by Ayurveda ask you to bury your past and never think of it. You are free to open a new chapter of your life at this very moment, and you don't have to retain your loyalty to things which have happened in your past.

Freud's theory of going through the darkness and filth of one's life probably came from his Jewish background of an angry God wanting to impose penalties for every sin one has committed. The Upanishadic theory, on the other hand, treats the problems of the past as an error in your reason. Even if a person believed that two and two make three or five during all his past lives, it takes only one moment to know that two and two make four. You don't have to pay any penalty for your past mistakes. Hence in the Gita we read that virtue can come to a person in a split second. (458-9)

Existence, subsistence and the meaning of subsistence [saccidananda] are all causes. Existence is the material cause of whatever is. Subsistence is the efficient cause, which transforms the material cause into its unfoldment. The meaning or objective of knowledge or subsistence is the final cause. (470)

In the course of your life, your whole body, your sense organs, organs of action, conditioned states, pain-pleasure remembrance, and attraction and repulsion are all the environment of your spirit. Like dust clinging to pure white linen and indetectably patching it with Rorschach-blot type figures, these factors meddle with your thoughts, ideas and beliefs. They can make you think of yourself as an evil person, a sinner, an unintelligent person. Pricked by self-pity, you walk into the path of darkness.

If you see clearly that nothing of your environment is part of your being, then you will come to the conclusion: “I am the Absolute, I am the pure, I have such clarity that the world is only reflecting in me and never touches my crystal-clear self.” Then you are free, and you are inching towards perfection every moment. (476)

The implication of the present mantra is that in [the deep sleep] state the individual person is freed of all obligations to father, mother, world, shining ones, Vedas, etc. But, when one wakes up, one again holds oneself in bondage to these very important factors which have structured one’s personality and consciousness of duty.... The small span of transcendence and thereby even emancipation from bondage which the individuated person tastes in deep sleep falls to pieces. All these have great relevancy and value [only] in wakeful life. (482)

When the form is not present, the name is also discredited. If neither name nor form are seen as valid, all other phenomenal

considerations also become discredited.... We can see how this entire mantra gives us a basic scheme of ego-transcendence. Without ego-transcendence, one cannot arrive at the absolutist notion of the incomparable. (483)

Robert Oppenheimer [in *Science and the Common Understanding*, Oxford University Press, London, 1954, pp. 42-43] very humorously states our paradoxical knowledge: "If we ask, for instance, whether the position of the electron remains the same, we must say 'no'; if we ask whether the electron's position changes with time, we must say 'no'; if we ask whether the electron is at rest, we must say 'no'; if we ask whether it is in motion, we must say 'no'." So it is and it is not. The same is attributed to consciousness—it is conscious and unconscious. Between the range of the plus and minus there are many possibilities. (490-1)

We think that all [we observe] comes to us through perception. This is not so. Every act of perception needs to be complemented with other testimonies of knowledge, such as inference, comparison, and the recognition of certain things which are absent. We even improve upon partial perceptions by adding what is not immediately available. (493)

Unless the multidimensional implications of a perception interact with our inner urges, the world looks hollow and uninteresting. When such boredom increases, even the sense organs which are physically operative can be withdrawn. Perception can bring a certain spiritual intimacy as well as apathy or aversion. We experience alternating modes between boredom and interest. This fact can be analyzed in terms of the existential verity of the world with which we come into confrontation. Our value expectations operate as a dynamic to interpret every sign and symbol into

exciting themes of one or other field of interest, such as the aesthetics or the ethical challenges of this world. (493)

The existential factor, which almost wholly belongs to the concreteness of the world outside, the irrefutability of its morbidity, consistency of shapes and forms that are clearly categorized—all these constitute the theme of the object. At the subjective level there is a search for value, which considers the uses of things, and the dynamics of ideas and relationships. These two poles of living situations can be recognized as existential and axiological. The existential factor gives a vivid ontological and empirical presentation of the layout, the contours and depths of a given experience. The significance of each item in one's personal life generates out of the well-marked points of interest a possible program to be charted. For that one needs knowledge of things outside as well as of one's talents, abilities and limits. This we seek through a process of study and understanding. This brings us to descriptive psychology, in which we use devices such as surveying the field, observing factors implied in a delimited area, and tracing the relationship of these factors. Thus the epistemology of our search arises from our need to know what kind of a world we have to deal with.

The same question also sends our search into another tangent, when we bring together the epistemological aspect of our experience with the value sources, which can change the entire theme into one of absorbing interest. That is the axiology of our search. In interrelating these two, we place ourselves in an uncharted area. We can act clearly only if we have norms that pinpoint the significance of each aspect and the meaning of their relationship. This is the methodological aspect, which makes a middle ground between what we see and what we want to make out of it, between what we are and what we want to be. This

knowledge is not mere passive information that comes to us. It has an action element of programming our life.

All this commotion is only in the outer zone, where our inner forces are thrust to the periphery of our awareness. This is what is termed the horizontality of life. (493-4)

*Below these programs of the stimulus-response field of biologic, sociologic and politico-economic interest, sits one's true being, which is not limited in any bodily sense. It can easily surmount space consciousness, time consciousness, social obligations, and the very presence of an external world and an inner world of reactions. There are side-steppings from the active before we sink into the action-transcending core of our consciousness. Many things seriously attempted in the programming of the surface mind afterwards look meaningless and uninteresting. Then it looks as if a person is without any specific body identity, social identity, time sense or space sense. The ripples, waves, storms and typhoons that occur on the ocean surface are not in the depth. There is only crystal clear water. In such a state there is no special center. What has assumed shape vanishes like a salt doll submerged in the ocean. Individuation vanishes. It is in this that the Self is to be recognized. In that state, the Self that gathers into momentums of experiencing things remains like a light burning with an unflickering flame. This is not the ego. The ego is a spark that can come from it at a surface level. All such sparks of consciousness are called back, to be in a state of at-one-ment. (494)

The person wanting to ruminate on these mantras has to abandon all positive attempts of deliberation and allow the primary nature of being to manifest. When there is total silence, there is no movement, no duality, no sound; there is also no base to support any thing or any conceptualization. Thus we have to begin with a blank, a *sunyata*, nothingness. But we are waiting for something

to happen. That means in the being there is a latent possibility. We don't generate or create that possibility. Like light arising out of darkness, sound arising out of silence, or life emerging from the unknown, when awareness comes it is not simple awareness. Awareness generates out of it that which is to be an object of awareness. (496)

*More and more inner serenity can be acquired with deliberation with an attitude of compassion, *karuna*. Passion is that which agitates the system. But compassion is keeping oneself at the level of the universal passion, which is like the even flow of a stream. The water that is constantly flowing in a river always seems to be the same. Similarly, in the compassionate person there is no rise and fall in mood and there are no upheavals or conflicts. It is a gentle flow of evenness. This gives to the existing serenity an innate joyousness, called *mudita*. When compassion is complemented with *mudita*, one gains an abiding awareness of one's beingness. This is the *prajna*, the state of pure consciousness. (497)

This is akin to the final teachings of Vedanta that the Self alone is. The discipline of Vedanta begins with *nitya anitya vastu viveka*: being established in seeing, against what is impermanent, what is eternal and not transient. Disturbances and distractions of pain and excessive pleasure are allowed to go by themselves. One gains more and more intense conviction that the Self alone is. The mind ceases to have the problem of being dissuaded by the non-Self. The core consciousness is established as the only light that guides us and the very foundation of our life. That naturally segregates the individual from the forces of dualism or plurality, and one feels that bondage has become less and less, and almost nil. Without effort and without struggle, one feels established. There

is a cessation of all duality of knowledge and action, such as a seer seeing or a knower knowing. (497-8)

The transference from an undisciplined life to a disciplined life happens by maintaining one's poise in one's continuous search and pursuit of the word wisdom given by *sruti*. Only then do we realize how simple is the path of the spirit and how easy it is to drop all the hang-ups generated by misunderstanding and prejudice. Of course, this leads us to another state of consciousness. It is as if we have come to terms with ourselves and the self is established in the Self. This is the beautiful transformation suggested here. (498)

To an ordinary person the term *avidya* can be misleading. One may interpret it as pure ignorance or as what is opposed to science: nescience. That idea is misleading. *Avidya* is a major mechanism of individuation.... In that state, the Self assumes the role of the subject, and the object of awareness looks different from subjective consciousness. When such a state is established, there is the other. (501-2)

[In the deep sleep state] all specific impressions in consciousness of everything from a blade of grass to the concept of a creator, received during successive wakeful and dream experiences, are given up. This glorious state is greater than all the ritualistic actions done in propitiation of conceptual gods. Then an other is not seen, an other is not heard, an other is not known. This is like the absolute wealth which cannot be equated with any of its qualities. All other acquisitions of wealth are to be treated as artificial.... One can never come to this highest state of the Self through ritualistic actions, through any device or gimmick. This is one's true state. Deep sleep is the supreme ananda, which is not comparable to any state of joy that is conceived, because it is

eternal. It is by a fragment of this ananda that all individuated beings somehow cling to life. (504)

In *Atmopadesa Satakam*, Narayana Guru asks a pertinent question: “What is that knowledge which comes merely by repeating a phrase over and over again like a parrot?” He answers that true knowledge will not come by itself. It is to be deeply pondered over, aspired for, and, with vigilance, seen and owned. (507)

We need to learn how to walk through the tangled bush of phenomenality without being scathed by its poisonous thorns. For that we need the discriminative knowledge of truth and falsehood, the momentary and the lasting, the relative and the absolute. (508)

The Samkhyans call the spirit *purusha*. Although *purusha* is often translated as though it means a male person, it really means that which lives in a city-like device, with many gates for going in and out. *Puri* means a city. One who lives in a city is a citizen; *purusha* is a citizen living in a city of the body, which has water, fresh air, lighting equipment, and apart from that, an incomprehensible stuff of consciousness which has a fragment of awareness, an area of indistinct dreams, and a depth. (510)

*Having heard of this highest state a wisdom seeker can reach, Janaka says to Yajnavalkya, “I give you a thousand cows,” meaning, “I shall give you even myself just to know there is a liberation beyond.” On hearing this, Yajnavalkya becomes afraid. Although Janaka is only asking questions, Yajnavalkya has no doubt in his mind that the Emperor knows even the last word in wisdom. He is only using Yajnavalkya as a philosopher’s touchstone. Janaka has only one intention – to enable all the esoteric wisdom of the Upanishad to be thrown open to the

world so that all can be benefited by it. In spite of this most chivalrous attempt of the king, it remained a secret for another three thousand years. Now it is our turn to declare it to the world. (513)

Shankara calls our attention to the metaphor given earlier of a great fish swimming in the river, sometimes touching the right bank and sometimes the left bank. This mysterious fish represents one's own psyche, both in its specific movements and in its cosmic program which is not revealed to us. This can refer to our immediate dreams in which we unexpectedly go into new situations, in some of which we find rejoicing and in others great peril. Who conducts the fish or dream psyche into such situations? We do not know. Only one thing is evident. This adventurous fish is none than the deep moving person within all of us, which seems very detached. If it is frightened, it is only for a little while. If it rejoices, that too is only for a little while. It goes on with its program. (516)

Dreams are the language of the spirit, telling each of us, day and night, in the wakeful state and the dream state, where we have reached so far, and what terrible burdens we are carrying with us, and encouraging us to look for means by which we can get rid of our loads. (519)

A person who dies surrounded by children, grandchildren, and even great-grandchildren, is like the evening sun giving off the glow of the last rays of dusk. The fully satisfied person, one who is without any desires, with all obligations carried out, full of gratitude, adored by all, can have a gentle termination of prana. The last pulsation goes into silence. Certain vital breaths hover over such a one while there is a beautiful withdrawal. One chapter of life on earth comes to a close. (522)

*The Indian concept of sin is very different from the Semitic concept. Whereas in Semitic scriptures we often hear the complaint of human beings living in sin, in Indian scriptures we hear of them living in ignorance. An ignorant person is sure to do certain erroneous things inadvertently. Vested interests and selfishness are part of ignorance. One thinks one is all by oneself and all others are separate beings. Many misdeeds are therefore done to gratify one's passions. All these come from ignorance of one's true identity. (524)

For most errors, the person who commits them straightaway suffers the consequences. Hence there is no need for punishment to be imposed from outside. All inadvertent faults are excusable. They are rectified by the consequences of the mistake itself. There is no need to give a second punishment. But those who deliberately offend environmental elements and engage in misdeeds that bring pain and distress to others will be asked to pay penalties so that they may reconsider their own deeds and get a clear notion of the norm of ethics that will ensure future moral correction. (525)

If the crime is too heinous, the king or government may decide to sever that person's relationship with society. Even that is to be considered as being like the amputation of a leg by a surgeon who is trying to save the life of a patient suffering from diabetic ulceration. A correction can be drastic but can be tempered with compassion. When left to nature, this happens to all of us. Every disease is a compassionate call of nature to the body owner to reform one's way of living. (525)

A dying person is seeking another fertile ground where the karma of this life can be tucked into new instruments of volition in which

the continuation will be without a hitch. From the phenomenal side of life, others witness changes in the dying person. They report a closing down of faculties. In some sense they are like people unable to catch up with the presence of the sun beyond the wall of the horizon. They grieve the loss of the dead person who has disappeared from them. (532)

It is said that from the citadel of the heart the imperishable rays of the Self, bearing the mark of the richness of the knowing self, leaves the seat of the ego to ascend into its vastness. For that purpose, two of the most subtle essences of the eternal being of the phenomenal are received, the unlimited space of akasha and the energy flow of prana. (534)

In all departing ones does the self experience unhindered freedom in everything? That is not likely. For most, life here on earth was a combat, a struggle. Every lesson learned was through anguish and pain, hard labor, and there are the marks, stains and scars left behind by the bruises of a lifetime. Even though a great leveling is made [at death] of pain and pleasure, bitterness and sweetness, the essence of the record is in the person. So, in the otherwise free and unhindered self, there is a delimited potential that can reassert the contemplated reactions of the past to make new forms of worldly designs once they are regenerated in a new body. Then, once again, the ananda splits into pleasure and pain and the vijnana reasserts as paramartha and yathartha. Yathartha in turn causes its shadow, ayathartha. These are the great bundles which the dying person is carrying with him.

What nourishment does this pilgrim to the other life carry with it? There is no physical body needing to be sustained with food and drink, but the pilot of life has many assignments: to locate the new parents and to gather the essentials needed to make a new life. Hence, the lingatma needs to be aided with proper

discernment of dharma and adharma, truth and untruth, virtue and sin. This cannot be achieved at the very last moment of life. So, we have homework to do from the time of coming into the body until we have to leave it—by sitting at the feet of knowledgeable masters, reading scriptures of worth, spending hours in meditation and prayer, withholding ourselves from many illusions of the world, from many traps and snares which evil forces bring to us. Those who fail, even when given a lifetime, will be in anguish and bewilderment. It is like one who goes up to graduation being sent back to nursery school to learn all the lessons over again from the beginning. (534-535)

Word notes to the above:

vijnana - the essence of the perfection of talents in which a person is engaged all through life. (525)

paramartha – absolute truth (502)

yathartha – the possibility of generic error (502)

lingatma – During the wakeful, dream, deep sleep and transcendental states, a liaison continues between the body system and the peripheral electromagnetic field in which it is secured. The recording of the day to day memory of the impact of cognition, conation and affection, and the evolution of conceptualization which has due access to the variegated motor functions performed are perfectly coordinated with the lingatma, that part of the self which keeps a journal of a person's life in terms of perennial value. (532) (linga = causal; atma = self)

If the person's *lingatma* [see 532 above] has earmarked potentials in it to be worked out, there is a minimum requirement between leaving this world and catching on to the next. This is a feat like that of a trapeze artist in a circus. In anticipation of being caught by her partner on a higher ladder, she swings higher and higher on her trapeze and finally lets go of it, to float for a few seconds in midair before being pulled up as if by grace. It is that crucial part

of departure and reaching forward that is being discussed here.
(542-3)

Shankara says that exactly where *samsara* is, *brahman* is also.
(545)

To understand what Shankara says about *samsara* and *brahman*, we have to sit very quiet with his statement: “Where the phenomenal is, there *brahman* is.” For a while, the statement will not make any sense to one who is undisciplined in the field of contemplative science as opposed to physical or empirical science. Shankara also says, “The immanent is the transcendent.” As you sit there as a person, breathing your vital energy, and struggling to understand the setup in which you are caught, you may wonder how you can be transcendent. The state in which you think you exist is the immanent. Once you accept the immanent in you, then you have to consider all the chunks of it that have been disappearing from the whole like chimera, sometimes reorganizing in a flash and sometimes eluding you, leaving you in oblivion. That will give you a vision of the transcendent. Shankara says, “This *atma* which is in the operational world of relativism, that itself is *brahman*, that itself is the transcendent.” (546)

The person of *samsara* is mostly worried about the physical needs of life, such as hunger or thirst, shelter or protection from the environment, while the contemplative person, immersed in their deepest thoughts, is to be understood as a person who is free from any such immediate needs. When a person is shaking with anger, fumbling for words, face red as the sun, and brandishing weapons, then we say they are mad: anger has so possessed them that they are a personified form of madness. On the other hand, a person totally free of needs, whose consciousness spreads evenly beyond the horizon of any delimited field of consciousness, with nothing

disturbing the peace of the softest of vibrations—such a one is like awareness shining forth by itself. They are called *vijnanamaya*, meaning that their knowledge has assumed the specific quality of not being torn by doubts, of having a confirmed certitude. When the vertical joy of transcendence and the horizontal blending of existence are synchronized in the harmony of pure knowledge, like a well-woven linen in which the threads harmoniously hold each other, that is called *vijnanamaya*. (546)

Mind (*manas*) is the link between the unconscious which veils the Self and the sensory energy that is flowing in from all sides to generate the changing patterns of consciousness. That which was never known before, or came up to a certain point of manifestation, becomes a self-sustaining consciousness aided by perceptual awareness on one side and conceptual depth on the other. Then we call it mind, *manas*. This is described by Shankara as *tanmaya*, the pure consciousness of the Self that is ready to identify with any name and form presented with specific shape and color. Then mind is like something half-rooted in the Self and emanating into both the inner awareness and outer consciousness. (547)

If a person cultivates a contemplative disposition and does not rush into a tragic death, they get a chance to review their past. Actions which do not have the person's full moral consent can be effaced so that the ultimate carrier from one life to the next can be rid of the heaviness of past deeds. There is a last-minute correction and sorting out, so that on its onward journey the *linga sarira*, the subtle body, need take only what is essential to improve the person's life and disposition. Just as in modern days, students who have not done well in their examinations get a chance to improve by taking the test over, a person who has not lived well gets a last-minute grace to improve because it is the

Divine which conducts one to another assigned post and restructures life again. (548)

*In the Upanishadic context, punishment for one's errors and rewards for one's merits are not considered to come from God. It is the person alone who is the responsible master of their destiny. What is left to God is only to give the aspirant adequate support for noble thoughts and aspirations. If one does not aspire for the right step forward, it is one's own fault. (549)

The self is not a thing; it is the ground for potentials. When potentials do not reverberate or replicate any aspect of the *antakarana* (mind, memory, volition and attraction-repulsion) in the self, the cycle of its birth and death also comes to a close. (550)

This height of attention is highly approved of by everyone; the world always admires a person with a singled-out interest. It is the love of approval, of excellence, of outwitting others that stops us from seeing the whole.... The other possibility is to merge in to the total, the whole, and to have no differentiating particulars. This theme is not in the interest of the world lovers. Truth obscures the world and the world obliterates truth. (553)

*On its own, this world is neither good nor bad. It is good to one who sees it as good, and bad to one who makes it bad. People are bound by relativistic notions of one person being very dear and another being despicable. When one takes upon oneself endless activities with the thought, "I am doing this as a selfless person to make my mother, son, daughter, husband, happy," and at the same time cannot find time or opportunity to extend the same love to another in the neighborhood, instead being full of hatred and revulsion, one is living in contradiction. What such a person

understands as Self and non-Self are only imaginations. One consoles oneself that one is spiritual because one is beneficial to some people. That is not real knowledge of the Self. (557)

In the awareness of the Self, there is no discontinuity, no difference of “I am” and “it is.” It is like a flood that overflows the riverbanks to fill all the wells and lakes, not showing any preference to one over the other. There is no other. *Samsara* deludes one with preferences, ostracisms, alienations. Either one knows the Self and is one with the only Self that envelops all, or one is ignorant and has never known the Self. Then one has only theories and imaginations. Only a person who does not desire any modification or change or transformation is in tune with the Absolute. One who thinks “I have yet to perfect myself; I have yet to get rid of my sin; I have to accumulate more merit,” is self-deluded. (557-8)

What is most fundamental in an individuated person is motivation. When the consciousness functions, it is only normal for the stream of consciousness to flow from where it is to where it is not. That flow is called *vikshipta*, a specific motivation that acts as a dynamic pointing out the goal toward which cognition is to be directed.

In this discipline, the seeker does not aspire for any reward in this world or the next. This is possible only when from inside all conceptual details of the individual and individuated personality are taken away from the hook of body consciousness. Many activities are performed even without the agency of a doer and enjoyer. The faculty of knowing, when passively seen, is bereft of any intense sense of motivation. This freedom from motivation is... to be accompanied by the desire to have an intimate contact with the totality of being. (562)

*The third desire to become free from [after progeny and wealth, for a renunciate] is that of wanting to hold fast to the society to which one belongs. Humans are essentially gregarious beings who live together. They feel comfortable only when their presence is valued and actions approved. Wanting to be part of one's own society is aspiring for the small when you can aspire to the total. (563)

What is death? The non-Self is opposed to life. When you develop a hankering for the pleasures you expect to get from the non-Self such as love objects, you are allowing part of your self to be afflicted by the darkness and ignorance of the non-Self. That is one way of embracing death. When you withdraw your desire from anything which prevents you from ennobling the Self or being at one with the Self, you are opting to put the Self in the position of the non-Self. Inside you will grow bright and more in resonance with the Self. To that extent you transcend death. You need not force any mechanical renunciation upon yourself. While living in the body, the senses are like handmaids to you and the mind is like a trustworthy friend. Thus it is to your advantage to live physically and have enough opportunities to be a silent witness of your organism functioning as if it knows what it is and what is going on.

Both life and mind are simple if we do not complicate them. A river does not need to take extra care to flow over any land where it chances to be and ultimately reach the ocean. A river reaching its natural destination, the ocean, is symbolically the same as the self arriving at the Supreme or Absolute. (564)

If, in your poetic exuberance, you put on many festoons and make yourself so artificial that you are giving too much thought to body and mind, you give up most of the freedom of the person living in your body. (564)

*The word ‘all’ is important. It is another term for the Absolute, *brahman*. When we shift from English vocabulary to Sanskrit words, some kind of strangeness or awe makes us less sure of our ability or faith in doing our best. The true spirit of life becomes somehow hampered by a religious sense of awe. We are given all environmental facilities and the faculties of our organism so that we can carry out the purpose of our lives. It is hard to hold oneself in the preserve of the chalice of this body and feel alienated from others. On the other hand, if we allow ourselves to flow in all directions and get into natural harmony with others, that is already a sign of realization. Every moment should be a moment of living an exquisite value. Then that moment becomes real. When we allow habitual functioning with not much of our consciousness in it, we allow the unreal to percolate into our given moments. We have to understand the Vedantic concept of going into the purity of the Self or the Absolute as being something which comes as a natural consequence of living one’s general interest. (564-5)

One who has transcended worldly obligations can remain passively seeing all that is in and around them. There is no need for them to take active steps to wring life out of their body or pretend to be an alien to those who are familiar to them. It is in that state we say that the realized person has become a *sarvabhutatma*. (565)

People speak of controlling the mind. It is like a person obsessed with a sense of sin getting into an encounter with an imaginary Satan and claiming they are gaining an edge over Satan. There is neither Satan nor sin if one does not make them with one’s imagination. With your imagination you can make the whole world satanic and your whole life a torment for you and others. (565-6)

Most human descriptions of experience are protolinguistically presented by the experiencer as a diagram. In the present case, this compulsive conditioning of our sensory/motor system and mind is drastically revised. Instead of being glued onto colors or diagrammatic patterns, one makes the flight of the alone to the Alone. Plotinus had an almost perfect vision of this. Liberation also means being free from all clichés of reference. (568-9)

The reference in this mantra to a knower of the Absolute is not to be taken in the sense of a person who has done meritorious action. Only a person who transcends both merit and sin is qualified to transcend the threefold states of consciousness. According to Sankara we will make a grievous epistemological error if we say that meritorious acts bring a person to realization. Dharma (virtuous acts) and adharma (vicious acts) are both to be transcended. In the eighteenth chapter of the Gita, Krishna specifically points to this possibility and says: “Discard all restrictive dharmas and come to me, the abandon of the Absolute.” (569)

The body is “a perilous and perplexing place” for the Self to reside. (573)

The concept of original sin is not accepted in principle in the Upanishad. But by virtue of the fact that the beginningless and endless infinite Self becomes circumlimited with ignorance whenever a body and other accessories of an organism are received by the Self reflected in *prakriti*, one has to say that there is something like original sin in the Upanishad also. It is not a vicarious transfer of sin but a defect in the placement of the part with regard to the whole. (574)

Patanjali's Yoga Sutra identifies empirical clarity as one of the major obstructions to realization, of turning from presentative phenomena to the real. We trust our senses so much that we believe if we see. Seeing and recognizing is *vidya*. But we forget that our recognition is based on the similarity between what we see now and a memory of something we have seen previously. When a concept has already been formed in the mind of the individual, it asserts itself even when there is only a partial semblance of it in the presented data. (575)

*No physicist has ever seen an atom, much less a subatomic particle. But, like religious people who make icons, the physicist has also made conventional models of atoms and particles. Any person who has gone to school and studied the model of the atom cannot be dissuaded from that mental picture. In this way even scientific knowledge becomes a matter of belief. The Upanishad sweeps away all images born of mind. That is why a true Vedantin can never be a religious person. (575)

The human ego is like a medium out of which one can fashion commendable patterns as well as incoherent ideas. As a result, a person with a mind that has sense impressions registered in it which are colored with likes and dislikes is tempted to apply all the previous memories and preferences to current experiences. Patanjali thinks it is this so-called scientific certitude that stops a person from going into transcendence. (575)

You have to talk endlessly to another person so each of you can understand how the other sees the world before you can come to an agreement. That shows that your mind is the central focus of your consciousness, filled with an image of the world fashioned by you out of your preferences and rejections, your love and hatred, your sense of beauty and ugliness. You have created your

own bondage, the compunction of your own obligations, the fascinations which bind you to the world. And only you can release yourself from that. (576)

When we are told about a guru who can enlighten us on our path to spiritual realization, the guru is to be understood not just as someone in an embodied human form. Any dispelling of darkness at any stage is the mark of a guru. (581)

No guru gives initiation immediately to a student, nor do gurus give notes as in a school or college class. A bipolarity is to be established between the disciple and the physical person of the guru. Even though the body is only an adjunct of a realized person, some sort of osmotic interchange of light is made possible through such physical nearness, where the disciple can learn the discipline of behavioral perfection by watching the activities of the guru. This is called *guruseva*, bringing a person as close as possible to the physical existence of a wise person. By rendering service, the devotee gets a chance to restructure their life to be in tune with that of a wise person. (581)

The second aspect of a guru is that of symbolizing the word, the word that transforms itself into light and life. This brings the disciple not only to listen to the word of the guru but also to remember it and ponder over it even in the physical absence of the guru. In the course of listening for a long time, the disciple comes to know that all words are directed towards the discrimination of right and wrong, the Self and the non-Self. The disciple is slowly weaned away from all meaningless gossip. Inside and outside become filled with the vision of the guru's experiential certitude. The disciple sees the guru sitting in silence, unconcerned with anyone or anything around, yet the silence seems to have an inner profundity. Finally, the guru is seen in a state of being oblivious to

all, yet beaming with an inner peace and light. Without any word, the guru is still teaching the profound truth of union with the Absolute. (581)

Before realization, when a person thinks “I am,” they are not experiencing the Self. That ‘I’ is only the central focus of the mind where the ego manifests. Then the reference is to the non-Self and not to the Self. If a person sits in front of an enlightened sage and does service to them without seeing the immutable, the eternal, the one without a second, in the guru, one is not seeing the guru but only an embodied person who is conventionally venerated by other as guru. Again the reference is to the non-Self and not the Self. (582)

*Even when a person continuously becomes emotionally disturbed about being away from God, putting themselves in a hypnosis by constant prayer, and claiming to have visions of God, it is not God but only a glorified exaltation of their ignorance, which they mistake for a vision of God. Wherever there is a subject-object relationship, the Self remains incomprehensible, guru remains incomprehensible, and God remains incomprehensible. Where one sees God truly, one sees one’s guru and the Self also truly, because these are only of nominal distinction. (582)

A person who lives in this world [alone] pictures the superior as above and the inferior as below. It is only a human prejudice or shortcoming. (582)

*As we are used to accomplishing things and obtaining desirable ends by our actions, we entertain the false impression that for the self to become *brahman* there has to be some kind of process by which the part can evolve into the whole. Mantras seventeen and

eighteen [of IV.4] remind us this is not so. We are always the whole. All that we need to do is forget the false notion that we are anything other than *brahman*. Realization is not accomplished by a forward march but by a regressive dissolution. Up to the last moment you have a choice to skip the whole process of samsara merely by accepting the fact that you are the Absolute. (583)

Even in the guru-disciple relationship, the ultimate stage is when the disciple no longer sees themselves as a disciple—guru and disciple have become the same in wisdom, Then the duality of guru and disciple vanishes. It is at that point that realization of the Self comes with the assurance that there is no return to the world of becoming. (583-4)

Going deep into the essence of understanding... is *manana*. The contemplative is not reasoning, not thinking, but entering a thing and being it in an intuitive flash. When you are about to die, you don't have time for long drawn-out reasoning. In a split second your whole being is to be brought to what you have probably shared with your guru—a moment of merging in the unifying spirit. However transient that moment is, it is enough to link you to your own greater reality, the Self. (588)

Mantra IV.1.22, in part: Yajnavalkya is speaking: “That great birthless Self, which is identified with the intellect and is amidst the organs, lies in the *akasha* within the heart. It is the controller of all, the lord of all, the ruler of all. It does not become greater by good deeds nor worse by evil deeds.... This Self is that which has been described as ‘not this, not this’. It is imperceptible, for it is not perceived; undecaying, for it never decays; unattached, for it is never attached; unfettered. It never feels pain and never suffers injury. The sage is never overcome by these two thoughts: ‘I did an evil deed for this’ and ‘I did a good deed for this’. He

overcomes both. Things done or not done do not afflict him.”
(590-1)

The purport of such a study [is]: We come to this world with our body and accessories such as the circulatory system, digestive system, central nervous system, metabolic functions, etc. All these are meant to keep the body functioning to the end. But the actual purpose of the instruments is to help the individual go from one intention to another. The accomplishment of an intention enables the individuated organism to have a persona, which is like an essence. With the attainment of a flawless knowledge, the person learns how to put every limb into action and use all the talents given to them. They get an insight into actions that can bear fruit for the good of all. Nourishment, vital breath and mentation are all for the purpose of making a person adequate to the pursuit of life.... Insight grows to be like a beacon which guides one's life.
(591-2)

When a person is outwardly oriented and the accompanying pleasures of action are considered valuable, *vijnana* gives priority to desire (*kama*), action (*karma*), and conditioned knowledge (*avidya*). All these bind a person to the here and now. There is little chance of such a person heeding an indication that there is a beyond, an infinitude. One should know that what is here and now is the finite, while infinitude is everywhere and always. Only when a person's inner vision is open to what is always and everywhere is the self qualified to be revered as great and birthless. (592)

If we rip open the brain, spinal cord and central nervous system, we will not see anywhere any depth or secret world, but while sitting in one place we can bring into our imagination what can be termed as the beginning of the beginning and the ultimate of the

ultimate. Even without going beyond the horizon which limits our eyes, we can send our thoughts to infinity. Physically we are imprisoned in a cranium which is hardly ten inches in diameter, yet within it the entire history of the world is epitomized. If you are a globetrotter and have seen the seven continents, they are all neatly arranged in your memory. Referring to this, the Chandogya Upanishad says that in the center of your heart there is a space where you can contemplatively see all of the here and now. Without dislodging that you can also see the infinitude of the beyond and what you are yet to experience. This is the greatest mystery of the Self.

In that world, boundless, beginningless and endless, you remain as a monarch of all you survey. Everything is accessible to you; you have control over it like an emperor. To this world of yours which you have in the sky of your heart, nothing is added or taken away by your doing or not doing. By identifying with that world, you can understand how one single law is operating in countless millions of details without endangering its unity at any time. (592)

The *purusha* is not just an indwelling being: on all sides it makes communication lines and builds bridges so that interpersonal relationships can be harmoniously conducted. (593)

No one is an exact replica of another. There are quantitative and qualitative variations that make every individual unique. Each individual is their own paramount sovereign. The right that one enjoys, the prerogative that one aspires for, are also the birthright of every individuated being. (593)

To live one's own sovereignty with honor and dignity, one has to give the same reverence to the sovereignty of another. (593-4)

*The time span of human life, from infancy to old age, needs special value orientation, so it is generally marked into four parts; the period of learning, the period of earning, the period of furthering the culture of the race, and the period of gracefully withdrawing into oblivion. These are called *ashramas*. (594)

The learning period is called *brahmacharya*. That is the timespan in which each organism comes to know how its instrumentation can be used profitably so that the personal factor can be fully unfolded. The scheme that is implied in it is *dharma*. No action is possible without the release of a potential that can bring about an effect which is conducive to the welfare of the organism's life. Thus *dharma* is the foundation of the goal, the motivation, the coordination of several intrinsic movements that can bring forth a meaningful effect, and a repository in which all these can lie waiting for each potential service. It is the same for every living organism, but it is of course most profound and proficient when it comes to the human organism. The human race has developed that part of the unfoldment as the science of learning and the art of disciplining a growing organism. Hence, *brahmacharya* is considered as the training ground for the soul to excel in its abilities. (594)

[Mantra IV.1.23, in part; Yajnavalkya is speaking]: One should know the nature of That alone. Knowing it, one is not affected by evil action. It neither increases nor decreases through work. Therefore, one who knows it as such becomes self-controlled, serene, withdrawn into oneself, patient, and collected; one sees the Self in one's own self; one sees all as the Self. (600)

Janaka's response to Yajnavalkya's confirmation that what matters is not any social acclaim but the truth a person lives, veritably proves that he is worthy of Yajnavalkya's declaration

[that he is a true knower of brahman]. He does not become elated with the praise given to him. He continues in his usual state of mind. He was always willing to give away his treasures to any wise teacher, particularly Yajnavalkya. Spontaneously he says, “Venerable sir, I give you the empire of Videha and myself, too, with it, to wait upon you.” The Emperor is not only renouncing the Empire, he is also offering his personal service to Yajnavalkya as a humble disciple, a devotee. To a knower of brahman, the highest and the least are the same. He is fully convinced that the act of renouncing his kingdom and his status as the king to assume the role of a servant will never make him any less than what he is. (601)

*We have already seen what the Upanishad regards as wealth. It is not to be taken in the conventional sense of having land, property such as cows, or gold. This very body/mind/spirit, so beautifully structured, so efficient, the best of all instruments to carry out the function of whatever one desires—that itself is the greatest wealth. When Janaka says, “I give myself to you to wait upon you,” that is the greatest of all gifts. It is the dedication of oneself to the Supreme. He does not mark that dedication with an expectation of any return for it, the very ability to dedicate is itself the greatest reward one can possibly get. There is no self-defeatism in this highest form of renunciation. (601)

From the beginning of the world to this day, a great fear has been burning like a destructive conflagration. It is none other than the hunger which haunts all living beings with corporeal bodies. We are not just speaking of the hunger of the stomach and the food needed to appease it. Every need categorically demands a supply to efface that particular need. Just as food appeases physical hunger, necessity is met by the resolving of necessity. (602)

This universe did not commence from God or religion. If you need to postulate a primal cause for the origin of the world, it is necessity with a capital N. The presence of Necessity always creates a situation of restlessness or uneasiness. The ground of anything cannot remain stable when it is continuously bombarded by forms of Necessity. Consequently, space has to eat emptiness, air has to eat space, fire has to eat air, water has to eat fire, earth has to eat water. The result is a steady evolution of ever-changing organisms coming to life on this planet. (603)

*As we move from the first phase of Necessity to the several processes of consummation, we come to the ever-expanding pluralities of effects. Again and again, as a whole and in several parts, the world is exposed in crises which destroy previously structured orders and arrangements. There is a recurring need to reorganize and restructure each part that is disrupted by the cataclysms. Consequently, even in the materiality of this world, fresh needs arise. They have to be met by laws which enable the broken parts to become more well-established structures. That is progress in the path of evolution. (603)

*The first educator of all living beings is hunger. The knowledge of appeasing hunger is the living being's first applied wisdom. Hence the soul or Self is defined as that which hungers for food. The word *atma* is derived from the root *ad*, meaning "to eat." So *atma* is that which eats. (604)

*There have to be alternating periods of confrontation and relaxation. When confrontation is followed by a harmonious period of relaxation, past pain and distress are testimonies to one's ability to cross over them. Life becomes a matter of pride when we have lived it courageously, adequately, and made every passing moment a reality. When we retrospectively look at our

lives, we may see that they are beautiful, progressively lived in growing satisfaction, or we may feel shame that we have not been attentive to the needs from moment to moment which have weakened us and made us wretched because of our irresponsibility. If we know how to accomplish harmony in life, we will know that we are the artificers of our lives. (605)

*The Upanishad teaches us this great lesson of adequacy so that we won't fritter away our energies and live mostly in expectation, wanting environments to come to us and helpers to rally around us. People fall into dungeons of depression caused by their own self-pity, which is a maximum case of inadequacy. Therefore our motto has to be, "Be adequate always." (606)

In the Indian vision of life, this adequacy is called *artha*. *Artha* is the means to accomplish and the correct meaning to give to one's life. One who has the means to live has a sense of security. One who knows the meaning of life is fully convinced that one's life is secure. (606)

Just as coffee is made with ground coffee beans, sugar, milk and water, heated into a solution, our consciousness, which is like pure water, is mixed with the poisonous coffee powder of memories, the sugar of libidinal urges, and the whitener of pretensions. (607)

The cumulative potentials of one's action, karma, of the present life, and the impact of the genetic possibilities and potentials brought over from the karma of a previous life, can all remain intact in the causal consciousness of deep sleep, like dirt lying low in the depth of a pond or lake. So one has to rake up the sediments of one's karma lying deep in one's unconscious and go through a process of... cleansing of the deepest dynamics of the person's individuated life. (610)

For this we are directed to constantly return to the basic wisdom teachings and to maintain intimate relationship with masters who have insight into one's repressed and suppressed *vasanas*. Only then are we doing our best to complement what is done by our *atman* to be perfect in the wakeful, in the dream, and in the deep sleep. This is a subject never properly dealt with by any of the educational programs instituted in academic courses. (610)

The Absolute is to be meditated upon as the one existential foundation of the substantial essence of all, and the one universal dynamics. (611)

Even an intense course of study in humanities or science will not give us ultimate liberation. We have to be initiated into the secret ways of familiarizing ourselves with our bodies, minds, social belongingness, moral worth, and ultimately with the lessons that can sunder all chains of bondage. It is very rare to find a teacher of true erudition whose problems are fully solved who can transfer wisdom to us. Millions of people come to this world and go to their grave not knowing why they have come nor where they are going. They have not found any meaning in life. A fortunate few become aware of the need to have guidance in life and, with proper discipline, find their senses, mind, and bodily faculties helpful aids to go through the labyrinth and finally come out fully emancipated. (612-3)

*In the Bhagavad Gita it is said that there are five factors needed to make any endeavor fruitful. One should have a proper foundation so that one knows how to coordinate the psychophysical equipment to achieve the highest purpose of life. In Sanskrit this is called *adhishthana*, the foundation. On the biophysical side, the *adhishthana* comes from a well-programmed

genetic code. This has a complementary aspect which one brings with oneself as a result of how one lived purposively in several previous lives. If one has an excellent body/mind complex and proper disposition to live correctly, then one needs the correct instruments to implement an enthusiastically conducted search for truth. Thirdly, one should have the good fortune of being placed in an environment which is conducive to finding the inspiration at the right time, continuous prompting from fellow human beings, and the feasibility of working out a healthy life. Fourth, in the course of growth one should be able to develop a normative notion of the right values, which can be properly discerned and well-executed so that success will be guaranteed. Finally, there is an unknown factor in our life which we may vaguely recognize as God. There should be the grace of God or the benevolence of the ever-abiding chance, which can be equated to the Tao. (613)

Preparing oneself for the highest truth requires someone to wake us up even in our childhood days and show us how to enter into a path which will ultimately lead us to our total freedom.

Unfortunately, those who are expected to do such a service to the child are often themselves in the grip of confusion and agony, and they live listlessly. Thus childhood, adolescence, and sometimes even youth are spent frittering away one's energy. There is very little chance of knowing that there is a higher path of life. (613)

*The body is subject to innumerable conditionings, both in its voluntary system and in its autonomous system. All conditioned states give rise to pathologic compulsions. To be relieved of compulsion there has to be another innate disposition, called *vairagya*. *Vairagya* is finding one's integrity with only that set of values which will promote one to one's highest emancipation of liberation. But human sentiment is such that many relativistic pressures are upon us and we may not find courage to clip off

attachments in life which are glorified by romantic idealism. As we walk towards our goal there are many bridges behind us which are to be burnt down without regret. We have to struggle to get into a neutral zero which is the only safe ground where we are not pulled either to the left or the right. To find our equipoise through neutrality, an attitude of detachment is to be worked out as a discipline. This is difficult because we are prone to suppress our natural inclinations out of fear of being censored by others. Suppression brings distraction and morbidity in one's lifestyle. In the name of disciplines like chastity, purity, and detachment, if one exaggerates the importance of one over the other, a psychological state of depression can come and defeat all proper and normal intentions. (614)

*If somehow one finds one's center and a sure path, one is sure to be conscious of one's worth in the community. In the earnest desire to be helpful to others, one may give oneself into the hands of those who have vested interests. Becoming a tool for vested interests, one may accrue name and fame and certain comforts of life, but that can become a greater evil than depression. The path of a person who seeks liberation for all time is of a lone sojourner. One has to walk alone as a law unto oneself. (614)

*The final chapter of life is the hard lesson of befriending disease and welcoming death. Disciplined people are mostly successful in liberating their last breath consciously, with a sense of dedication and an attitude of bidding farewell to the world where they were through several births. Even if one fails to find such a solemn closing of one's chapter on earth, one should consider disease as a friend which has conveniently come to conduct the self-liberated person in the body into his or her higher path. One should maintain one's serenity to see how death is claiming one faculty after another, until the last spark is doused in silence. (614)

This brahmana begins with a narrative of the relationship of Yajnavalkya with two wives who have different attitudes in life. The reader is likely to misunderstand the presentation of Katyayani given in this brahmana. It states that Maitreyi is conversant with the knowledge of brahman, while Katyayani has an essentially feminine outlook. The term ‘feminine outlook’ is to be properly interpreted. Basically there is no masculine outlook or feminine outlook. The Isavasya Upanishad says there are only two ways to approach the Absolute. One is seeing *isa* in every speck of the changing world and moving freely, without desiring anything. That can be said to be the masculine outlook, in contrast to what is here called the feminine outlook.

But the Upanishad rishi knew that only rarely does one come across a person who can see the Absolute in even a speck. So, as an alternative, he said that those who find that way difficult and who feel obliged to be householders, should decide to live one hundred years, carrying out all the duties which naturally come with that lifestyle. This is the ‘feminine outlook’. It is clear that this is not a woman’s outlook; it is the outlook of a responsible family person, whether male or female. Historically, the male wandered freely and the woman was taking care of feeding, grooming, and bringing up the children at home. Hence the main brunt of family responsibility was and even now is on the woman. That is the source of the cliché, the feminine outlook.

In our own era it is a shame that we entertain such ideas about half the population, so the mantra is better restated as “Maitreyi was conversant with contemplative discipline to gain Self-realization, and Katyayani had a socially-responsible mind which, as a personal sacrifice, she was holding for the welfare of the world, which included the welfare of her own family.” So we should not think of Katyayani as inferior to Maitreyi. Further, we can say that Yajnavalkya, who married twice and had children

born of his loins, equally had a feminine outlook or a sense of responsibility as a householder. He is only now going to shake that attitude from his life by taking another mode of life, that of a sannyasin. (618)

Everything given in this book is to be taken as a literal exposition of the world which is inseparable from the Spirit. At the same time, there are many hidden suggestions in almost every word in this Upanishad which point to a fundamental secret which a true aspirant should take as a guideline for gaining emancipation. (619)

*It is the Self that is to be seen, heard, meditated upon and realized. A person in the path of *brahmavidya* first comes to know about the Self from their teacher. What is heard is the exposition of the a priori teachings given in the scripture. After hearing it, the truth of what one has heard is fully brought out by engaging oneself in a positive dialogue with one's teacher. One has to apply one's own sympathetic and critical mind so the intention of the teachings can be fully appreciated and stabilized in one's life. (625)

In Indian spiritual science there are three imperatives: scriptural testimony, total resonance with infallible logic, and the proof of the truth in everyday life. (625)

Most people think that the philosophy of Vedanta slights the manifested and is indifferent to the phenomenal world. That is not so. Every particle of earth becomes even more precious than the pearl of priceless worth because it epitomizes the supreme *brahman*. (635)

We will close simply by saying that brahman is self-born; salutations to *brahman*. (638)

