

Brihadaranyaka Upanishad Highlights
compiled by Scott Teitsworth

Nitya Chaitanya Yati's three-volume exegesis of the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad is a daunting read. In an attempt to make this wonderful work more widely appreciated, I have gathered a number of excerpts that convey valuable ideas in their own right. While one cannot avoid being aware that much of value has been necessarily bypassed, it is hoped that this will serve to invite serious seekers of truth to enter either the full study or at least take on a section of it that may address their particular interest. There is a certain coherence that makes the separate entries readable as an extended essay as well.

Indexes are found at the beginning of each Volume's collection of excerpts. For ease of finding the references, sometimes top, middle and bottom are distinguished (t, m, b). Asterisks indicate particular favorites of mine.

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*553-6 mantra on space (II.5.10) is a lovely meditation

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* * *

All-time great quote: Science is to help us avoid the folly of putting our trust in nonsense. (435)

The uncompromising boldness of our conviction makes this commentary vary greatly from all traditional studies which have been guided more by pretentious devotion than critical scrutiny. (xv-xvi)

To appreciate that any philosopher who puts forward a vision of truth cannot be totally wrong and that he has a point of view to justify his philosophy, one needs a unitive vision with an overall epistemology, methodology and axiology. Each school of philosophy can be brought to the appropriate niche to which it belongs in such a scheme of correlation. (xvi)

This is from Sri Aurobindo:

The Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad, at once the most obscure and the profoundest of the Upanishads, offers peculiar difficulties to the modern mind. If its ideas are remote from us, its language is still more remote. Profound, subtle, extraordinarily rich in rare philosophical suggestions and delicate psychology, it has preferred to couch its ideas in a highly figurative and symbolical language, which to its contemporaries, accustomed to this suggestive dialect, must have seemed a noble frame for its riches, but meets us rather as an obscuring veil. To draw aside this curtain, to translate the old Vedic language and figures into the form of contemporary thought prefers to give to its ideas is the sole object of this commentary. (xviii)

Our exploitation began with physical slavery. From that we have now advanced to the slavery of the human mind and passions. Today we are slaves of machines and of many hypostatic beliefs pertaining to financial or monetary concepts. We can say that we have developed samsara to an extent beyond which we cannot go any further. We have seen the far off star by denying the Self which is nearer than even the ego with which one identifies. It is in this context that we want to turn to the direction in which the immortal seers of the world have seen a way for us in integrating ourselves into the truthful foundations of a more dignified human outlook. The direction which we want to explore is not religious revivalism or nationalistic emotionalism.

The Upanishad was not conceived of to bring large masses under the sway of its discipline. It begins with just two people, a seeker and the seeker's counterpart, a seer. The seeker is puzzled by questions. The seer has answers which are absolutely clear. Such being the situation of the Upanishad there has to be a face-to-face relationship and an intensive encounter between the teacher and the taught. It is as if two persons, each with their own physical peculiarities and undeniable personality uniqueness, come as close as possible in order to know each other and for each to know himself or herself by knowing the other. Hence the situation is dialectical.

In a quiet place, far away from the madding crowd, in the aloneness of their search and philosophical vision, they sit with their thoughts gathered into themselves. Favoured by the sublime silence of their souls, they give an invocation of peace. They are not praying to anyone, nor do they postulate a reality other than that to which they totally belong. The first thing that they come to comprehend is the paradox of an inconceivable unity which holds together many conceivable probabilities and possibilities. (1-2)

The student has to sit with each mantra, each *brahmana*, and the special terminology of each chapter for a long time with a lot of inner leisure to soak into the depth of the mystical and philosophical visions of the various sages, scholars, and novices who take part in the dialogues recorded in this Upanishad. (5)

The first reference is to the dawn. The dawn suggests a period of darkness which is coming to a close, to be followed by a period of positive brightness.... It is paralleled by the historical transformation implied in this *brahmana* of the closing of a dark period of India's wisdom teaching which bristled with several ritualistic practices.... They needed drastic correction.... In the actual history of India only Shankara stuck firmly with a daylight philosophy by uncompromisingly denying all private and esoteric benefits of rituals. He favored open and dynamic realization of the

spirit by resorting to dialectical reasoning and pinning one's faith in the profound postulations of the Upanishads. Indian historians of philosophy became very apologetic and tried to hide the glaring truth of this opening *brahmana*... by parading a type of exegesis which is alluded to in the *Isavasya Upanishad* as concealing the face of truth with a golden disk. The Indian pretense to holiness and sacredness is somewhat repugnant to the spirit of this *Upanishad*, which stands by solid truth and remorseless application of reason....

The last but most important transformation we should learn from this *brahmana* is how the individuated aspirant, after living in the dark morass of the *samsara* of relativistic plight in this phenomenal world to the age of fifteen, twenty, thirty, forty or sixty years, finally comes to the end of the dark tunnel of ignorance and emerges into the invigorating dawn [of] the unparalleled wisdom teaching of the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*. (6-7)

Any study has to proceed from the known to the unknown. It is [the transactional] world which keeps us in the dark about many things, and paradoxically it is the same world that is both intriguing and inspiring us to inquire into the truth of it. That inquiry is posed in the form of two questions, "Whence this world?" and "Who am I?" Most of the transactions that take place between us and others in this world are mainly to procure the ends and means of our livelihood. The only philosophically valid transactions in which we can engage are when we try to discover the hidden truth of both the world and our own Self, which can ultimately result in our Self-realization. It is these highly commendable transactions of inquiry which justify our purpose of living on earth as individuated beings. (11)

The subjective depth of all our experiences... takes us again and again from the gross to the subtle, from the perceptual to the conceptual, and from manifoldness to unity. From the point of

view of this philosophy it is this aspect of the Absolute which provides our life with all its worthwhile pursuits.... One of the astounding things that we will soon notice is that the transactional world is a projected aspect of the subjective phenomena, and for every perceptual objectivization in the phenomenal world there is a corresponding subjective reference. (11)

In the present Upanishad all the ritualistic paraphernalia of a horse sacrifice including the regal ownership of the horse is abandoned, and instead we hear the paradoxical statement that the head of the sacrificial horse is the dawn. The unusual presentation of a totally different scenario indicates that the subject to be dealt with in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad is not a ritual at all. (12)

In this very opening sentence we find that the rishi is asking his listeners to shift from the orthodox conventional ritual of worship to a more altruistic, philosophical, and gentle way of settling down to a meditation which is essentially based on universal empathy and the compassion that wells up in the heart of a lover of all beings. (12)

The rishi of the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad makes a clean break from ritualistic disciplines to a contemplative discipline with the simple statement that the head of the sacrificial horse was dawn. He also implies that we are now passing from the dark ages of karma which involved the unclean ritual of killing and causing bloodshed to the raising of our minds to a sublime height of meditation. Thus the head of the sacrificial horse brings us the promise of a new dawn, a new humanistic, or if you like, a more dignified divine resetting of the goal of human life. (13)

In all these metaphors physical entities correspond to mental images. (18)

In Vedanta double allegories are given for the purpose of synthesizing constructs as well as annulling the imagination through an act of desymbolization and reduction. One of the favorite philosophical methods employed in Vedanta is the cancelling out of the pairs of opposites by which the contemplative can come to a neutral silence which is often called samadhi. Samadhi is a state of absorption in which the seer and seen are put together, which in its total effect amounts to nullifying the respective functions of seeing and being seen. (18)

The commentaries on the scriptures have been vitiated by the highly prejudicial interests of the commentators to uphold one school against another school.... The axiology of Vedic rituals points towards heaven (*svarga*). On the other hand, the axiology of Vedanta is liberation (*moksha*) and not heaven. Therefore the ritualistic karma kanda and the contemplative Vedanta are to be reduced to a common wisdom reference before they are related in order to yield any philosophical result. Although Shankara attempted to make philosophy as rational as possible, his own orthodox prejudices prevented him from evolving a full-fledged science of philosophy....

We are not commenting on the Upanishads with any special interest or with the intention of grinding any axe. All through the text of this and other Upanishads we may have to disagree with the pioneers who have otherwise done a great service to the cause of the Upanishads. (22)

In all dialectical counterparts the polarized opposites have a simultaneity in their origin and a binary interaction between them.... The moral of the story is that if we are hopeful and purposive in our programming of life we will be aided by an actively and elaborately reasoning mind that can conceive of devices to equip us to tide over the gaping mouth of death. (25)

On one side we have ever-demanding death, and on the other side the generous shower of grace which comes on the condition that you apply your right reason and make your expected effort. (26)

The rishi of the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad is down to earth in the honesty and integrity of his search. He does not create any phantom who can, like a wizard, order forth creation as we see in the Semitic books....

Without resorting to any cock and bull story, the Indian rishis have succeeded in giving a creation myth. Yes, of course, it is a myth, myth being the deepest wisdom resource preserved in the collective unconscious with its archetypes. Even the tiniest of beings, such as a bacteria or virus, shows in its behavior the archetypal modes of fearing death, fighting it, gathering strength and preserving its identity, to the extent that it can multiply and immortalize itself before its physical mode is dissolved. (29)

Life manifests as a corporeal body called *praja*. As bodies appear and dissolve, it became necessary to think of a manipulator. Hence to Lord of the *praja* was conceived and called *prajapati*. *Prajapati* is not to be looked upon as an outside factor. It is an inner controlling and governing principle and hence is immanent. (32)

On connotation: We can begin with the central focus of our consciousness where we identify our personal self or ego as the center of one system. 'I' or 'I am' marks the center of that system and consists of cognition, connotation and affection. In cognition there is subject and object. Connotation is taking the subjective aspect of what we cognize and then looking into it for attributes which can be mentally pictured. Those attributes are then given to the object. So we properly affix a subjective phenomenon to an objective ground and are affected by it. We have divided our thinking process into logic, ethics and aesthetics. That is, in the volitional aspect, we think, we act and we enjoy. Thinking

becomes one system, doing or the volitional aspect becomes another system and the affective aspect of values becomes the third system. (33)

The first vital need comes as a compulsion to think. Nobody can think without a string of words to reason with.... Thus hunger becomes a generator. It generates words. Thinking is with the conjunction of a word with its meaning. That is an act of union. (36)

The arguments are fashioned out of the everyday occurrences of nature so there is no departure from reality in the presentation of this myth. (38)

Performing sacrifice is giving oneself a discipline of doing effort. (44)

The spirit in us expands and includes in it both the celestial and terrestrial elaborations of truth. Something in us reaches out into the eternal and we become familiar with hundreds and thousands of values which are aesthetically magnificent, morally excellent, and philosophically valid, and we make many associations that foster the culture of humanity in a manifold manner. When these surprisingly interminable elaborations come to a person, his or her persona is no longer confined within the limits of a single body. It becomes the enshrined reality of several million other forms of life of which a good number can be identified with the personalities of people who have populated our history and are still living among us as stalwarts of insight and understanding. They are scientists, philosophers, poets, artists, lovers of humanity, and adventurers in spirit. We can stretch our spiritual hands so wide to hold all these wonderful outgrowths as if they are all emanations from us. It is in such a state that the perishing person in us says, "Let me be the imperishable and live the plenum in me—my perfection." (49-50)

To begin with, the undeclared hypothesis is the Absolute. Then, for the convenience of inquiry, the Absolute is conceived of as having a negative undifferentiated aspect and a positive undifferentiated aspect. The undifferentiated nescience is postulated to be beginningless, infinite in its range, and to exist as the unknown and unconscious. The positive undifferentiated aspect of the Absolute is the foundation of science. It is also vast. It has a beginning by which time and space are recognized as existential actualities belonging to the intuitively apprehended reality of truth. The Absolute and its two undifferentiated aspects have no form, name, or action. When nescience and science begin to manifest, they present names, forms, and activities. (55)

Through a series of dynamic conditionings, people are tied down to natural urges and instinctive preferences. In addition to the experiential aspect of aesthetics, there is a transcendent intuitive understanding of higher beauty which prefers ideas instead of objects or things. *Udgitha* is primarily intended to elevate us from the plane of sensory appreciation or mental indulgence. The divine spirit and the dark forces of unrefined nature are constantly at war with each other. This mantra explicates the difference between the liberated state of the wise and the bound state of the ignorant. (57)

People are more equal in their misfortunes than in their fortunes.
(58)

For thousands of years valuable suggestions have been lying buried in these priceless books of India's spiritual heritage, and even the best of minds which were devoted to the study of the secret texts of India did not discover the wisdom mines of India's great heritage. (58)

The Upanishad is not referring to some past idiosyncrasies, but to something of vital importance in our own day. (67)

Trying to purify the mind is like desalinating the ocean. Of course, we can make a few gallons of distilled water out of the ocean. Such is the acquisition of the best of our saints. (72)

Prakriti (nature) is constituted of the three gunas: sattva, rajas and tamas. The two dialectical counterparts are sattva and tamas, and rajas oscillates between the two. (84)

It is the subtle essence of sociobiological negativity that the seers want to purge from the mind of a seeker. Like depth psychologists, they are not mainly observing the words and activities of people, but their concealed urges and dispositions which make them behave in a conceited manner. Only when the subtle tendency to deceive oneself and others is removed from one's value vision does one become freed from the stink that one smells. (93)

Instead of interjecting God into the innermost core of the world, the Isa Upanishad speaks of it as the most overt reality of the perceptual world. If that is so, then in every sound of this world we are expected to hear the word of God, *nada brahman*. Similarly, to every touch we are expected to be thrilled by the touch of the Absolute, *brahma sparsa*. In every form we see we are expected to see a version of the divine presence, *isvara darsana*, and in every taste we get we are expected to taste the blissful elixir of the divine, *amritattva*. In every smell we are expected to get the *punya gandha*, the smell of the purified. (94)

We are not only seeing the form of a thing, but also the implication of the form and the action that ensues from it. The perceptual part of our physical vision becomes immediately complemented with the conceptual correlation that can pull the memory tag of many other connected actions. Thus visual perception is immediately

dragged into a matrix of behavioral patterns which is kaleidoscopically complex. It is for this purpose that our scriptures initiate us into the discipline of closing our physical eyes to the world and going into the spiritual purport of forms and shapes. (94-5)

The real purport of a particular name or word we hear comes when we can meaningfully direct our inner vision to lift our minds from a conditioned reflex into an elevating ideal; thus, the instruction given to us is to listen to the auspicious. (95)

The individual soul's love for the Absolute is like a great attraction. When the fragrance of a flower comes from a distant place on the wind, bees and other insects and birds are all attracted to go in the direction from which the smell comes. Similarly, when a teacher of superior wisdom speaks, the fragrance of the meaning of the words comes like a cloud (*megha vayu*) which leads us. It floats towards the teacher and the aspirant naturally follows the direction of the cloud. (96)

(96-99) is on separate doc, the entirety of 1.3.15 on religion. One bit is:

In the present mantra of the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad we are told that when the ear casts into the wind all inhibitory and obsessional injunctions and prohibitions in favor of the ever-widening meaning of true wisdom, it erases all frontiers and allows the mind to flow in all directions. It also allows words of cheer and bubbling joy to enter into one's mind from all sides when the shutters of the mind are fully thrown open. (98-9)

[The creation myth of the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad] is a myth not in the sense of a fiction but as reason that stems from the deepest core of human consciousness. Human beings have become alienated from [this deepest core] through the centuries of the

development of the human ego. The ego almost obscures the Self of the corporeal world, which is replete with a universal spirit of self-generating knowledge and a purposiveness that is always mounting toward perfection. The ego acts, so to say, as a demonic cloud obliterating the unity of the Self and consequently the unity of the world. (103)

The psychochemistry of the living organism has for its functional scheme of reference a hierarchy of positive values and a hierarchy of negative values. Positive values are structured around the joyous or blissful foundation of the Self, which finds an existential verity in its cognitive ascertainment of the correlation of facts. Its counterpart continues to monitor its position from the seat of death, which eventually undoes every temporary creation back into the negativity of nothingness. This cancellation of everything created is only to regenerate the same on another occasion with a new mode which surprisingly reappears with evolutionary improvements. Such is the science of *brahmavidya* that is presented in this mantra [1.3.17]. (104-5)

The more and more one hears about oneself, the more self-love becomes a thirst to hear more about one's own glory. (107)

In the phenomenal world mortality can be transcended only with rebirth. Rebirth can be accomplished only by channelizing energy into a new formation which is to be conceived by ideation. (112)

Communication can come only by articulating words. (112)

From the relativistic logic which brings us to the rational world of pragmatics, we can withdraw into the meditative silence which can purge us of all imagination and establish us in pure consciousness (*stitha prajna*). When there is no distinction between the individual and the Absolute, one is established in the Absolute (*bhramni stithi*). When one is a *bhakta*, in continuous contemplation of one's

real Self, one is no longer a seeker, but a knower (*jnani*). All the dismembered parts are conjoined (*yoga arudha*). The many are replaced by the one (*kevalam*), bringing the state of aloneness (*kaivalya*). One transcends the modalities of nature (*gunatita*) and is no longer caught in the orbital cycle of birth and death. (114)

The world of words can be an articulating currency to carry out the transactions of life. Transactions come with the dynamics of consciousness which accompany the arrangement of words. (116)

While words carry us into the world of relativistic bondage (*samsara*), music has a great efficiency to lift us to sublime heights where we can find our identity with the very origin of this world (*para*). The description for that is called nadayoga. Great musicians of India thought of music as a discipline for Self-realization or God-realization. (121)

All through the day the wakeful person goes from one eventful activity to another. Each leaves its impression in the memory storage. Whatever happens in the wakeful present vanishes from the present to be stacked as memory for the future. Although it is to be utilized for the future, when it recedes into the unconscious its status becomes that of the past. The inner organ where the memory is epitomized like a seed becomes a conditional factor which is saved for the rest of one's life. An action done in the here and now of time and space with the distinctive triad of actor, action, and consequential affectivity, is distilled from the action situation, and the essence remains in the unconscious where it is processed to become a part of the subtle aspect of an individuated person. This is very similar to the culturing of milk by keeping it aside with a curdling culture. Every day an ascending and descending communication takes place between wakeful life and the deep unconscious of the individual. To make it clear and explicit, empirical perception calls to its aid previously stacked memories and utilizes them for cognition, interpretation, and

affective reaction. The net result is then sent back to the unconscious for culturing, where it will remain as a modified aspect of consciousness (*samskara*).

For everything that the senses perceive there has to be a conceptual counterpart which alone can interpret whatever is presented in the field of the wakeful empirical perception. The conceptual field is purely subjective and it deals with mental images. Just as there is constant communication between the wakeful mind and the unconscious, there is also brisk communication between the subjective conceptual imaging and the deep unconscious where the essence of the past is arranged as layers and layers of memories. Processed memories are called *samskaras*. Doubly processed memories or conditionings which have assumed a causal status mainly control the subjective area of concepts, which generates dreams, intuitive insight, poetic effusions and fantasies. (123)

Although the reference to soma juice looks ludicrous it serves the purpose of bringing home the truth that embodied beings are vulnerable to psychogenic illusions. This makes it necessary to be always watchful not to miss the basic and fundamental truth which can get lost in the ever-proliferating variegations that distract us. Losing track of truth not only exposes us to ignorance, but also pushes us unaware into the tragic dead ends of life. Thus this mantra is to be taken as a caution to watch our step as we progress in the path of our inquiry. (126-7)

Naturally we have two major questions: 1. What causes unhappiness and happiness? 2. How can we avoid unhappiness and always remain in happiness?....

In [the] world of action we have encounters with other members of our species and with other species. Because of competition or rivalry in the field of action, we can get hurt or killed. To avoid such contingencies we erect various kinds of defenses and sometimes even give offense to others. Thus on the

whole, one main source of the destruction of our happiness is physical and biological functions. The second source of misery comes from our lack of understanding because of erroneous perceptions, faulty inferences, wrong judgments, and a number of such psychological factors. On the whole we can say that the second source of misery is our mind or psyche. The third source of misery is the vastly complicated world order governed by an unknown power of which we are only a very negligible part. This unknown but holistic source of both life and the lifeless world is commonly called the Divine. (135-6)

Misunderstanding can lead us to the blind alleys of many indefinite presumptions, imaginations, fantasies and surmises. While right understanding leads us to the clarity of distinctive light, a wrong notion can take us astray into darkness. If we enter into darkness we soon lose interest. That is why we spoke of the wrong notion as a dead end. Confusion is confounding. (137)

[end of a long meditation on *jyothis*, brilliance] We open the window and see in the distance the panorama of a lake with hills on the indistinct horizon. Lush green trees are a little closer. It is not just sky, water and trees: it is a loveable panorama, something which an artist would love to paint and immortalize. Thus many things which were yonder are put together, and all these finite things are inseparable from the infinitude of our consciousness. The sun is gone, but we see a frail crescent moon shining amidst shimmering stars. The scientist may say that the moon has no light of its own—what does it matter? The crescent moon is like a growing bud. It is like your own little baby innocently sleeping with its eyes closed. Beyond the moon you see a brilliant star. With your understanding of astronomy you correct yourself and say it is Jupiter. Ancient fairy tales open up in the world of your memories and you come to hear the beautiful stories which your grandmother told you about Jupiter being a god in the sky. Thus fact and fiction lose their edges and a confection of poetic effusion takes

possession of your soul. This is how the rishi presents to you the science of your world being structured through perception which gives depth to your knowledge. (139-40)

For an aspirant it is absolutely necessary to hold in one's mind the philosophically valid meaning instead of the conventional popular meaning. In our transactions what we call truth is nothing more than empirical appearance. The popular saying, "call a spade a spade" is advising us to believe in what we see. Philosophically that attitude is not valid.... In one way we can say that what is true for the empiricist is false for the Vedantin, and for that matter to any idealist. For a transactionalist or an instrumentalist, knowledge is a descriptive statement of appearance, but to a critical philosopher knowledge is the cause and effect relationship between reality and its appearance. What the transactionalist says is one sided: it does not go beyond the veil of appearance. (141)

[immediately following the above] A greater confusion has come regarding the concept of *amritam* or *anandam*. In India there is a legend which describes *amritam* as a certain drink that was obtained from the milk ocean which could transform mortals into immortals. This story is taken at face value and many people think that *amritam* is a sort of sweet elixir. Similarly, uncritical people do not make any distinctions between pleasures and fundamental values. They think of *sukha* and *ananda* as the same. These kinds of verbal errors are to be corrected before we fully acquaint ourselves with the three terms which pertain to our discussion: *sat*, *jyotis* and *amritam*. These three terms occur in many forms in almost all Upanishads. (142)

The immortal aspect of *pranava* is the inaudible, effortless, and final merger into the undisturbed *para*. It is in this sense that *amritam* comes and not, as people glibly say, through an excess of pleasure which they call bliss. In Upanishadic literature no word

has done more harm than bliss. Most people think that getting into samadhi is like taking a sweet beverage. (142-3)

The continuous contemplation recommended in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad is an assignment that will take a sincere aspirant (*sadhaka*) to a discipline and self-study that is sure to become all-absorbing. Only with a sound insight into the essence of the major Upanishads can one accomplish this task to the satisfaction of one's best conscience. Indeed, this path suggested by the Upanishads has nothing to rival it. With full determination one should enter into the path of *brahman*. Then alone can one think of oneself as a *brahmachari*. The four requirements suggested in this mantra are to hold to truth, to have comprehensive knowledge, to have continuous disciplining of oneself, and to walk forever in the path of the Absolute (*brahmacharya*). (144)

The Absolute has changing aspects and unchanging aspects, visible aspects as well as invisible aspects. It has programs that can be rationally apprehended and it has an inner reality which is like a closed secret. Our body, sense organs, and conscious mind belong to the changing, perishing, and relativistic aspects of life. We understand part of our lives and we are expected to carry out our assignments of which we have a fairly good notion. Many things are done for us most appropriately without our ever being taken into the intelligence that meticulously cares for our holistic needs. There is a space which we can conveniently limit to apportion in it the amenities of life. There is another space which is neither physical, nor biological, nor even psychological. It is capable of bringing the far off very close to us and taking the near by very far from us. It is like a divine hand that is secretly carrying us around in it for the good of all. There is a time which we can program and plan according to our priorities. There is another time which cuts into our lives like an overseeing parental care, changing our

schedules and bringing priorities of which we have little knowledge. (144-5)

In 145-52 Nitya offers a poetic meditation on a major climax of the Upanishad, the mantra “asato ma sat gamaya, tamaso ma jyotir gamaya, mrityor ma amritam gamaya.”

Ultimately realization comes that the kingdom of the Self is where sovereignty resides. The Self and the non-Self are only the riddles of life. In fact, there is only one shining principle, one world of values, one breathing reality, and to that we surrender everything. (150)

What is important is not the very many items that constitute a situation, but the ingenuity that relates every fragment into a whole which truly represents existence (*sat*), the brilliant glow of manifestation (*jyotis*), and the continuity of the renewed spirit of immortality (*amritam*). (152)

Through wrong discipline or no discipline a person is likely to accumulate in their value appreciation and behavior patterns a number of defective and evil tendencies that can conceal the original innocence, truthfulness, and adorable nature of one’s Self. Its place can be taken by something dangerous, antisocial, and evil, amounting to total distortion of truth. So there has to be a method by which the accretions that disfigure the original Self can be destroyed and the clarity of the Self can be totally reclaimed. Only if this is done can one arrive at one’s own original state of purity.... That original form is called *purusha*.

In this mantra the rishi suggests two important facts about our self: 1) The form in which a grown up person sees themselves is not their truthful form. It is a falsified and distorted identification. That means the truth of being (*sat*) is veiled by an untrue identification (*asat*). 2) There is a possibility of regaining one’s original and true state by purifying whatever distortion came

into one's being, with its structural defects and malfunctioning. The rest of the Upanishad is devoted to the accomplishment of these major corrections of the individual and socio-cultural changes to which one is subject. (156-7)

In the present study two exact halves of one person are relegated one to become a male and the other a female. This theory has the merit that it was not conceived with any male chauvinistic prejudice. No superiority is attributed to one gender to rule the other. This theory has another merit too: neither half has any claim to perfection. The male is as incomplete as the female. That fact instills in each one a craving to be united with the other half for completion. As this is a very naturalistic theory, no puritanical moralism is attributed to the sexual origin of progeny. It is only a sacred act for male and female to cohabit to bring forth their children. (160)

That which transforms into the world itself is the potential basis for manifestation and all its transformations. (164)

Although knowledge is one and is not broken anywhere, the cognizing consciousness jumps to one corner and calls itself the knower and then shifts to another corner and converts the knowledge into a phenomenon which the knower is outside of.... So long as we converge to a point (idam), we are doomed to know only the trifle. Only when a total identity is established between the entire faculty that is knowing and the entire object that is being known does the Self become a unitive reality out of which time and space, name and form, the actor and the action, the enjoyer and the enjoyed, are all instantaneously manifested. (172)

1.4.8 is another nice meditation on the mantra of 1.3.28 (173-5)

All sentient beings have for their counterparts necessities which can be equated with hunger, pain and sorrow, and obstacles

arising out of their ignorance as well as out of the inadequate proficiency they have received from their personal nature, or Nature at large. It is as if a person with intelligence, sensibility, and desire to surmount obstacles is looking helplessly at a seemingly insurmountable wall of a prison. The world is the prison and the living being is the prisoner in it. If one finds a pickaxe, hammer, hatchet or spade, one will surely pick it up and start dismantling the powerful wall that brings despair. If we are not that fortunate, and find that our actions cannot be turned against our misfortune, the next best thing is to use our ability to articulate against it. We may try all kinds of words, such as prayer, abuse, cajoling and appeals; we will try to pressurize those around us to join in the fight against the impediments. Before one attains any degree of success with one's words, one has to retire into the secret core of one's own Self with thoughts such as: "Where am I? How did I come to such a helpless chaos? How can I generate a spark of hope? How can I understand the thoughts and inner visions of other people? What values of friendship can I establish with others? How can we work together as comrades in arms and liberate ourselves?" Such being our nature, we come to the conclusion that whatever is to be achieved in this world should begin with thoughts. Only when there is something corresponding to our thoughts in the behavior of other people and the material world in which we are placed can we make a dent in it. Thus the superiority of thought is glorified in our hearts. That is how we set out to achieve our freedom. (175-76)

We have seen in this Upanishad that everything began with the first being thinking about a new possibility. (176)

Using prana, thought was transformed into word. Investing words with depth of meaning and tonality of music, the first being came to possess the power of changing the world by envisioning more and more values. It gained insight into the texture of social life and became a law unto itself and a lawgiver to others. Having come so

far, it came to know one thing for sure: that it is with thought and imagination that one can transform oneself into the qualities which one's thoughts and imaginations have. (176)

The god referred to here is none other than our awareness, our consciousness, or what we may call the mind which is not cluttered with any relativistic notion, but which flows in all directions as the never-ending vastness of space and time and formations that are like the internal details of the grandest picture which has ever been envisaged. It is an Upanishadic style to call it a *deva*. The English word 'god' is very inappropriate here because the term *deva* connotes only the agent of illumination or the self-founded awareness which while seeing itself also cognizes whatever constitutes its vision. (180)

We have affectivity in every sense organ. Our minds correlate our senses and coordinate our thoughts and feelings. We are assailed with the duality of pain and pleasure. Consequently we are distracted by the pettiness of our senses, and we stumble on every sensation. The possibility of a unitive vision of the total, irrespective of time and space, mood or clime, is a far cry. Because of partial illumination and because of the appearance of what has conditioned us partially belongs to the gloomy darkness of negativity, countless millions of people lose the chance to have any identity with something which is generally grand and beautiful. (181)

The god is that bright faculty within us which gives commands to our bodily selves. It makes us obliged to carry out commands to make ourselves fit to be social beings or errand runners for the countless millions of stimuli that bombard our bodies and minds from all directions.... In the infrastructure of existence in a socially fabricated world, the animal-like person who implicitly obeys the commands of society is appreciated for his defects, his faults, his handicaps, and even for his stupidity. A

slave master will shower praises on the slave who tirelessly labors for him. If a slave becomes wise enough to see the intention of the master and refuses to be exploited, he will be condemned.

Similarly, when a wise person is about to become established in the world of total understanding, a number of obstacles arise. That person will be subjected to various forms of inadequacy. Such is the world of *samsara*, which abounds in subnormal or abnormal people who are always heading towards misery. Only if we know such traps are in the world will we be able to go beyond our limitations to become truly wise and have a clear vision of truth. (181-82)

Pages 184-5 contain nice descriptions of the six qualities of the Brahmin. 182-96 covers the castes in context.

Dharma holds within it a program or calendar, so to say, of evolutionary expansion, like a seed which contains the epitomization of all aspects of the growth which will unfold in the course of time. Dharma is also a dynamic power which furthers the growth from one stage to another. It is as if dharma is the soul force of any living entity. Hence it is instinctively connected with the karma or action performance of every individuated being. (190)

A brahmachari is one who is very much bent on meditating on the unity of all beings in the transcendence of the Absolute. (200)

When a person desires reasonable acquisitions and does not get them there is dissatisfaction in their mind. Life feels incomplete. The Upanishad finds this a convenient context to wean a wise person away from gross desires by converting those desires into symbols of contemplation. Hence the Upanishad says one's completeness can as well be conceived of by thinking of one's mind as one's self, speech as one's mate, vital force as one's progeny, the eye as one's human wealth, and the ear as one's divine wealth. (201)

The contemplative power latent in one's intelligence (*medha*) becomes pale and ineffective through disuse. (204)

The kinds of food are: nourishment in general, the relationship with cosmic energies, the lively interests fed by the transactions of the waking state, the subjective richness of the dream state, the regenerating quiet of deep sleep that frees the senses and the mind from externalities to return to the waking and the dream states with fresh vigor and clarity. Food is an aid for a being to conduct itself in its period of existence. (204)

Usually birth is postulated as the antecedent of death. In the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad these events are reversed. Death is spoken of as a primeval condition from which life emerges as a reciprocating and contradictory factor. (208)

All four aspects of the Absolute can be seen in *brahmanas* one and two. They are: 1) the paradoxical emergence of contradictory potencies such as death and life; 2) reciprocity, such as of the demand of death which is met by the provision of life; 3) complementarity of life involving death and death involving life; and 4) the cancelling out of opposites which brings a neutral zero in which there is absolute unity. (208)

Death was presented first as an inevitable fear generated by hunger. The negativity of hunger was met with the promise of food by the golden egg (*hiranyagarbha*). This symbolized the polarity of a thesis and antithesis, the thesis being the yolk of the egg and the antithesis being the persistent hunger of the nucleus that is eager to transform into its adult perfection.

The hunger in the egg and the provision of food in the form of the yolk represent the functional continuity of the world order. Thus in the very heart of the Absolute there is a lurking paradox of both knowledge and ignorance. The seeming contradiction and

conflict between the opposites is not essentially a theme of destruction. Rather it implies a transformation of potentials into a greater actuality. It spells out the cancellation of opposites and the reciprocal fulfillment of counterparts. In this presentation not only was there no allusion to a divinity, but the transient nature of phenomenal manifestation was also made explicit. (208)

Prajapati literally means the presiding deity of individuation. (208)

The first kind of food that is made by the *prajapati* for himself is the interest that is being generated when a person is in a transactional situation. (212)

The world is woven out of the meaning content of words. The mind is none other than the atmosphere in which everything is posited, where it is influenced by already existing factors and transformed into the consciousness of the individual. (213)

With the breath we are respiring, we are always reaching toward the next moment, the next possibility, the next word. This most primary formation of ideas comes in the mind as a stream of consciousness. Just as several water particles hold on to each other and through their mutual cohesion the flow of the stream is made possible, the many unitary ideas which pop up in the mind as conceptual word symbols cling together because of the relationship and affinity between them. (213-4)

Veda is essentially a revelation of the Ultimate Truth in all its aspects.... *Veda* is total revelation of truth, and therefore it is called nonsuggestive. There is no duality between the revealer of truth and the truth that is revealed.... Persons are disqualified from revealing *veda* because of the ego coloration of their minds. (215)

In the popular literature of legends and myths, the world of the shining ones resembles the Christian and the Islamic concepts of

heaven, where so-called angels, cherubim and other mythical beings like houris are said to exist. In the Upanishadic context such notions are considered spurious and superstitious. Thus we have to establish within us a critically examined concept of the spirit so that we will not fall in the traps of religious charlatans. From the point of view of modern science, the area of monitoring consciousness, which is increasingly being identified in the hypothalamus, the cerebral cortex and the limbic system, is closer to the concept of the spirit than the heaven of religious mythology. The shining principle is the firsthand, on-the-spot scrutinizing of all incoming stimuli. The interpretation of the stimulus with critical screening is the function of the *deva*, both in the mass of the physical body of a living organism and in the cosmic body constituted of the galactic system. (217-8)

The word is formed from the unmanifested aspect of the Supreme (*para*) out of which the nucleus of an ideation assumes the word energy to present itself through the preconscious into the conscious mind as what is called the articulated word. (221)

One of the greatest wonders of wakeful life and dream life is that the concept can play a unifying role between the subject and the object.... What is to be known is transformed into an entity that can be transacted with. (223)

In this mantra we are taken to the greatest subtleties of creation in which the biologic principle initiates its onward manifestation from the desires born of the incipient memories which come to the spirit which is going to be embodied. The desire of that spirit is spoken of here as the unconscious generating itself into the monitoring of the pre-conscious mind. That is the desire to be. What exactly it desires to be is formulated by the mind with the incipient memories of the past (*vasanas*) as its building material.... It is in opposition to the inertial (*tamas*) which abounds in nature. Yet *tejas* has to sculpt out of *tamas* the very form that it aspires to

become: the inertial consciousness is made plastic and flexible to assume forms. (224)

A concept is a finished form of circumscribed consciousness that presents itself to the subtle mind as a counterpart of a perceivable object. To perceive, the mind has to go one step farther and relay its cognitive or perceiving energy to fill the molds of the sense organs. When energy of cognition associates itself with the electrical impulses of the hearing faculty, sound forms are generated. When tactual energy is channeled into a conceptual form, it becomes a special experience of touch. When energy is channeled into the conceptual mode of visual forms, a clear picture of visual perception happens. It is the same for the functions of tasting and smelling. This is a process of descending dialectics from the causal to the subtle and the subtle to the gross. (224)

Just as a physical light illuminates a physical object, the word has a luminosity which reveals its meaning. Thus the light of the word is the substantiality which stands for the object in the viewer's mind and reveals the form. This is also true of the other aspects of revelation of sensory properties. (227-8)

What consciousness is to the body the sun is to the skies. (230)

The mind is a coordinating principle which functions totally even when the stimulus is partial. (233)

In our empirical cognitive role [there are] two possibilities. One is to think only of the relative or the specific. This limits the world. It also limits the role of the perceiver. The other possibility is to think of the universal whole to which all individuated experiences belong. From the finite we have a way of extending out perceptual interest into a universal world of which part is objectively understood and the rest conceptually appended. If the latter is our

choice, our world becomes infinite and our role also changes from that of finite perceivers into infinite perceivers. (235)

Truth cannot be the most covetable supreme value unless it is also expressive of love. So far he [Prajapati, the first] had only been the knower knowing knowledge. But he also needed to be the lover loving love. (238) (A nice section follows this.)

The altering phases of the moon show how in a lifetime one undergoes several ups and downs, physically and psychically, in health and in wealth. As human beings are essentially dependent on the world, they have to regulate their expectations in terms of the world order. Failure, distress and darkness are to be normally expected. These are not permanent because they can be followed by success, rejoicing and hope. The primordial model of manifestation wanted to have a counterpart and an offspring. These roles were fulfilled by knowledge, effort, and specific modes of creative operation. Such being the very foundation of individuated life, we can naturally expect the offspring to continue in the way in which the primordial being began. Life on earth is thus cyclically repetitive. (240)

In Vedic India ritualistic killing was allowed by scriptures, but it is specifically mentioned in this mantra [1.5.14] that even on the authority of scripture, no living being should be hurt. This continues the theme of the Upanishad which began with denouncing animal sacrifice by referring to a horse sacrifice in which there was no horse, no benefit motivation, no priest and no killing. From this we should understand that the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad marks the beginning of a new epoch which is obviously more noble and more profoundly spiritual in its philosophical outlook. (240-1)

The materiality of the body... is so infused with the brilliance and articulating intelligence of the spirit that instead of the concept

of the spirit dwelling in a physical body, we have the concept of a psychosomatic instrumentation. (244-5)

The *pitriloka* is not to be seen as the world of the dead. It is the world of memory where dynamic conceptualization goes on and full justice is given to the psychosomatic processing (*samskaras*) being received from moment to moment in the course of life. (245)

What is passed on to us as a mythical metaphor or ideogram holds within it a scheme of unitive understanding.... The mystic language of the Upanishad is to be rendered into the tongue of modern man. The *lingua mystica* is to be presented as *lingua scientifique*. (246)

The meaning of a person's life is called *purushartha*. In this context, "meaning" is the goal that one seeks. The ultimate goal of life is liberation. In Indian philosophy the four prime goals or meanings are: the intrinsic law of life (*dharma*); the instrumentation or aid to carry out the unfoldment of *dharma* (*artha*); the dynamic direction of energy for the achievement of one's desire or motivation (*kama*); and total liberation from all obligatory bondages that are impressed as colorations or conditionings acquired in the course of life (*moksha*). All these are considered to be the benefit one gets by assuming a body and living in this world. (248)

One's progeny is none other than oneself. (249)

If water is not surrounded by any limiting obstruction, it easily flows in all directions. Fire also spreads wherever it is not prevented. Similarly a person who has good will to others is not obstructed. The compassion of such a person is boundless. He or she does not prefer one to another. Such a person becomes a recipient of the grace of the divine. From the earth he or she

receives the unshakable firmness of truth and is conveyed to the eternal realms of truth by fire, gaining intuitive insight. When these graces are given to one, truth spontaneously sits in one's organ of speech. Effortlessly one speaks truth and nothing obstructs one's transparency of vision. When he or she speaks, even if others do not see the truth or relevance of what is said, it comes to pass. Such a person has no discord and wishes only good to others. His or her words will only benefit others. Thus such a person becomes a friend of the world. (250)

The vitality of the world is not affected by the withering of a particular tree or the perishing of an individual person or a particular animal, bird or insect. It has an ongoing program of substituting new forms of life for the perished ones. In spite of the recurring death that is cyclically devastating to this or that fragment of life or the individual that faces pain and pleasure, birth and death, it is not to be considered as a tragedy to which the universal soul (*sarvatma*) is exposed. (253)

In the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, God is not a primeval deity who creates the world but an all-permeating purposive design which slowly gains its ontological testimony. (265)

The seers of the Upanishad give primacy to the mind by imagining it to be a spirit principle which from the outset became the primordial problem-solving device. (260)

Like the actual moon which draws its light from the sun, the heart draws its inspiration from the information data derived from cerebration and the cognizing faculty of the intellect to make images for the future. The imagination of the heart is called *kalpana*, which is connected with *kalpa*, the Indian concept of time.... A mental image may live only for a few moments, but it marks the beginning and end of a period of time. That event happens in a spatial location. Thus human beings become

continuous observers of the universe both in its macro aspect as well as its micro aspect. (262)

In the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, God is not a primeval deity who creates the world but an all-permeating purposive design which slowly gains its ontological testimony. (265)

Suppose we take every word from the Oxford Dictionary or Webster's Dictionary and hide them away, along with their connotations and the objects to which those connotations refer. Then what will happen to the world we know? It will be completely demolished. And yet we think of the word only as an auditory vibration that brushes against the drums of our ears or as written characters that make blemishes on paper.

The word is more than a caricature.... (268)

Like the prodigal son of the Bible, we have traveled far away from the source of our clear light and we struggle endlessly, unable to cross the smokescreen back into the source from where the odyssey began. The return to the origin is itself realization, but we have made such a plethora of images through the transformations of the non-Self that we are weighed down to a state of debility like that of the prodigal son, who was compelled to eat the refuse fed to the pigs he tended. This mantra comes to us as an eye opener, showing the terrific tragedy to which every living person is exposed. It is from here we have to chart a route for our return to the original. (268)

In the Western world, the object is given preference over the idea. Science is always said to be objective. In India, the idea is given primacy over its objectification or crystallization. Before and actual child is born of its parents, the child's father and mother desire to have a child. Then the child is only an idea. (269)

* According to the Upanishads you cannot draw a line between the intelligible and the visible. In the search for truth, we abstract the common truth from innumerable individual instances. At the same time, the general is certified to be true because of the truth of what is individually experienced. Hence it is said that abstraction must be complemented with definition. (271)

* According to Aristotle, even in the most fleeting experience we get a glimpse of the universal. The universal is made available to us by the revelation of truth, which is like a twinkle in the eye of a shimmering star. Aristotle called it an entelechy. The forms we see here make a façade that hides the true nature of our Self from us. No realization is possible so long as we stand perplexed before the changing illusion of the seeming plurality of forms. Hence the Upanishad appeals to our good sense to become sober and not be carried away by the vicissitudes of the kaleidoscopically changing panorama. Truth is not far. It is the very foundation of our experience. Actually it is not experience but is the imperiential verity of everything. Seek that truth and it will set you free. (272)

An idea that pulsates is a symbolic throb that involves the location of a point in time and in space to begin a function. Before its commencement, there is neither time nor space. Time and space simultaneously arise as a spontaneous event. The idea can be given a name for future reference. After the first pulsation there will be several elaborations of it through reverberation. The first throb itself is a form. Through repeated reverberation that form becomes elaborated, occupying more and more space and transforming with more and more mass and details which can be classified. Thus one body involves three principles—form, name and function. (273)

The eternal is firmly sitting on the seat of the transient. (275)

Paradoxically it is truth that hides truth. (275)

The rishi wants us to remember our need to know the Self. All the fantastic elaborations spoken of are the non-Self. It is out of that mirage-like magical fortress that a speck of our consciousness has to fly in the opposite direction to get out of its imprisonment. The Self is a hidden splendor imprisoned in the non-Self. Such is the keynote of the challenge with which this chapter closes. Realizing the tragedy to which we have come through millennia, the rishi wants us to pray, “From the non-Self may I be led to the Self, from the dark ignorance of infatuation may I be brought to the light of clear discernment, and from the deepest core of death may I be restored to deathlessness.” So let us chant: Aum, shanti, shanti, shanti. (275-6)

(Appendix referring to the horse sacrifice): One should think of oneself as the horse. The sacrifice is to be understood in terms of one’s own personal evolution.... If we meditate on the mantras with this understanding of the sacrificial horse, we’ll be benefitted by our own intimate understanding of self-surrender and the transcendence of the physical. The allegory is presented with a philosophical purport of going from the gross and material aspect of the world to the essential silence of ultimate Truth. (280-1)

In spite of all the eagerness of the philosopher to present the nameless, the formless, the unutterable, he will be compelled to conceptualize and present concepts with the aid of name and form as a kind of necessary evil. Philosophers like Sankara in the East and Plotinus in the West fight shy of conceptualized word images, but they also ultimately succumb to the tyranny of words. This is also true of theistic concepts, especially in Islam, in which God is shorn of all attributes and all comparisons. Yet the word “Allah,” which is pure negation of all that can be conceived, ultimately turns out to be a concept, and the ninety-nine names of Allah come in through the back door, as it were. This is very much like Lao Tzu’s Tao Te Ching, which maintains the paradox that the name

that can be given is no name, and yet it is described with ten thousand names. (281-2)

In the modern age... so many philosophical insights have been achieved by both the East and the West. Modern science... has taken upon itself almost all of the problems ensuing from human encounter with the physical world. Many traditional theories connected with the elements of physical and chemical significance have now been thrashed out by scientists, and it has become imperative to revalue previous philosophical speculations in the light of modern science. Similarly, the speculations of science can be renormalized in the light of the visions of ancient masters which hold good, unaffected by time, space and climate. (284)

Mind is a direct product of the need of an individual. What can be seen in a newborn babe is its intense defense tactics against immanent death. The child knows nothing more valuable than its own life. Therefore the birth of an individual is also the birth of a person's need and self-centeredness. It is said here [third brahmana] "He moved about worshipping himself." In fact, this act of self-interest and self-defense is the entire history of a living being on earth. From this unceasing activity of bodily self-preservation, we find release only when we ultimately accept death. Thus the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad begins with an honest, candid reflection on the light of an individuated self which has to fight hunger to the very last day of the individual's life on earth. This plight is the prompting for all one's action. All actions of a person are programmed. The program is designed half by the compulsive procreative urge, which is the very stuff of the physical world, and half by the light that is shining through the individuation of the self, which is designed to be the spiritual counterpart of the individual's physical life. (285-6)

For the ignorant being who has no power to discriminate, there may be a million actions dragging them into the most painful situations, keeping the person tied down to phenomenality through several lives. Thus, at the very outset of the Upanishad we are advised that we live in a world of caprice where illusory promptings can always lead us astray from what is relevant and necessary to a million wrong paths which can make life a torment and distress forever. A wise person who sees the purpose of the first mantra of the third *brahmana* can set themselves on the right path. Even from the beginning, one can use this very life on earth as an occasion to educate oneself. That way one can avoid all promptings of unnecessary action and enjoy fully the discipline one undertakes. This will perfect one's personalized self, which is the gateway to regaining the supreme truth to which one truly belongs. (286-7)

The first marriage of spiritual and physical elements comes in the form of the functional factor of the vital breath (*prana*) being placed in a position of central importance so that it can ultimately transform the elemental, physical, quantitative, gross aspects of the phenomenal into the causal, spiritual, theistic immortality that links heaven and earth with a teleological purposefulness. Every word we utter is an epitomization of all the analytical principles that are neatly arranged to present a world picture ranging from hunger to the concept of immortal being. The immortality of the Self is established, item by item by the *prana*, using the technique of *udgitha* in which knowledge is infused with energy. (288)

There cannot be any mind without the articulation of words. (290)

Although there is an implied duality in making a prayer or expressing gratitude, the relationship between the divinity prayed to and the person who prays is like that of the numerator and denominator of a fraction. The numerator is the conspicuous

factor. The denominator is the base. The prayer that is heard is only the prayer that is made. The ultimate result of the prayer is postulated by the person who prays. [After this, Nitya details how every accomplishment is like a prayer being answered by our own actions.] (297)

298-320 is the story of Maitreyi. It has been typed up by Beverley and a separate copy is available.

321-327 is a very helpful review of the first brahmana.

When society evolved, it needed law. Law is to be enunciated and enforced. That made a king necessary. Thus the *kshatriya* came. He has the power to enact law and enforce it. Where there is power there will be corruption. There was a need for compassion, the administration of law with love and sympathy. A universal outlook was necessary. Thus the benevolent *brahmana* came. Even a mighty ruler and a compassionate benefactor cannot meet all the needs of people. For that there has to be a facilitator. That necessitated the *vaisya*. He cannot afford to be angry with anyone because he has to profit from others' love for him. Thus he is like a harmonizer. The world was still not perfect—there was no one to give food, clothing and shelter. Then came the universal savior of all, the *sudra*, who took upon himself the great responsibility of feeding and caring for all. Unfortunately his commitment tied him down to his station of life. He had to slave all day and night to be true to his parent-like love for all whom he cared for. Equity was needed in the social engineering. That came from *dharma*. (326)

To get over the vicissitudes of life, we are given the discipline of sticking to an ideal, a life of dedication. (326)

Later in the Upanishad Yajnavalkya describes the discipline of meditation for the benefit of his disciple Maitreyi as follows. First, you should listen to the word of truth with full attention. After

having heard, you should ponder over it, putting all your soul, mind and strength into it. That will enable you to go from the superficial levels of hearing to the deepest core of understanding which reveals truth to the contemplative. (328)

The traditional method of the Upanishadic world is that of bringing home the higher truth of the Self through a dialogue between guru and disciple. (328)

If the world seen through the physical agency is restructured through knowledge of the spirit, it will sublimate the earlier conclusion. (329)

Empirical facts have a measurability and a continuity. Because of that, the claims of empirical facts upon us are irrefutable. We think that whatever happens to us in our wakeful lives belongs to the real because we can act upon everything revealed by the sun. The great tragedy is that the brightness of the object obscures the reality of the subject. (330)

331-4 has a number of poetic paeans to soma from the Rig Veda. Afterwards Nitya writes: We can see that the great lyrics of the Rig Veda are remembered and retained in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad. The attempt of the Upanishad, in its revaluation of Vedism, is to preserve whatever is valuable in the Vedic lore while filtering out everything found to be malignant. Everything that enhances human dignity has certainly been preserved. (334)

The thirty days of a lunar month are a beautiful handicraft of the visible and the adorable which are all strung on the mystical string of the Self. When colorful beads are strung, they glitter and attract our attention, while the golden string that gives unity to all is held away from our gaze. The string is the independent Absolute and the beads are the dependent creations of time and space and their interactions with the passions of creatures. (334-5)

The Absolute or the Self being the cause of all causes, it has in it the purposiveness to direct animating energy to serve as the *kriya* or function in the field of the non-Self. The Self is the origin. Physical potential, chemical manifestation, and electrical activity are only subsequent modifications which come as phenomena. (337)

An Upanishad, like a cow, yields its milk of wisdom only when it is milked by deep pondering over it (*manana*). Only the conviction that comes from *manana* can give us a holistic intimacy to relate with the essential teaching. (338)

The poet is pinned down to an adorable value to which her heart is glued. At the same time, that releases her from all the bondages of earth so she can soar into the heavens on her wings of imagination. (339)

In between the sky and the earth, the poetry of life enters into the hearts of all beings. (342)

Indra and *Varuna* are considered to be the guardians of the sky and the earth. In between the sky and the earth, the poetry of life enters into the hearts of all beings. The association of poetry with the sky allegorically represents the liberating influence of the Self on the imprisoned spirit or *purusha*. It is that principle which enables the imagination of people to make homes, love fellow beings, form society, and live with all the riches of the world. The same liberating principle, in which one has the maturity of wisdom, gives us a glimpse of the vast expanse of the supreme Self to which we belong. Until then we are given a world of poetic amusement between the sky above and the earth below. Immutable are the laws of the heavens, and the earth is ingenious to cause a million mutations out of which variegated life is proliferated. Ajatasatru sees all these implications hinted at by the Vedas. So he

says: “I adore the immobility of the sky,” meaning the immutable laws and the generous care which *akasa* grants for all manifestations to have a rightful place in the world.

Ajatasatru sees not only the vastness of outer space but also the vastness of the sky within one’s heart. The outer sky provides for the content and form of all enjoyable things. The inner sky of the heart effortlessly generates all the modes of enjoyment as one traverses from the past to the future. Such is the beauty of the sky referred to here. (342)

Ajatasatru gives little credit to all the functional transformations which fire brings in the world of the non-Self. The entire phenomenal world of confusion and commotion (*samsara*) is generated by fire, the fire of life. Ajatasatru turns our attention to the very basis of all that, the Absolute, which is said to be non-modifying and functionless. This paradox lurking at the heart of the Absolute brings a contemplative to a neutral silence where pairs of opposites are cancelled out. Such is the wonder of fire mentioned here. (348)

Those who comprehend the illumination of an image as truly belonging to the Self by meditating on their own nature, become as bright as the original. (356)

In this Upanishad as well as the Isavasya, the time programed for a person to live in the world of physical magnitude and the natural environment is a hundred winters. A hundred winters can be divided into four quarters. The first quarter is to familiarize oneself with one’s *dharma*. The second is to accumulate means (*artha*) with which desires (*kama*) can be fulfilled. *Artha* and *kama* are bracketed in the time when a person lives as a householder. After one reaches fifty years, another quarter is earmarked for revising one’s value vision and preparing oneself to be weaned away from one’s activity and worldly achievement. The last quarter is for turning away from the non-Self to the Self, day after day merging

deeper into one's immortal reality. Allegorically every human is on the path of pilgrimage which is to be trod until one arrives at one's own true Self. (358)

Our conscious minds are so entwined with the physical events of the universe that we are unable to tell which event should be treated as belonging to the cosmos and which as belonging to our own psyches. (361)

Even the functions of the mind originate from a depth concealed from an individual's conscious awareness. When one attempts to relate the individual self with the universal Self, one turns inward and tries to pacify the stream of consciousness. (361)

Verse 16 of Atmo reads (Nitya translation):

A very vast wasteland suddenly
flooded by a river in spate—thus comes the sound
that fills the ears and opens the eyes of the one who is never
distracted;
such should be the experience of the seer *par excellence*.

Nataraja Guru comments on this verse as follows [first paragraph only]:

The sounds that open the eye of wisdom is an ideogram familiar in India and the recluse of full self-discipline is also a model popularly understood. The main point that we have to notice here is that wisdom gets established not by labored graded steps, but that it happens when the personal attitude and the intelligence work together to usher in the result. No staircase is needed to ascend to wisdom. The duality between ends and means is abolished. Further, speaking as he must be from his own personal experience, this view has to be given the full credit it deserves as a direct wisdom teaching of rare value. (362)

[Scott note: I'd say it should read "The sound that opens the eye of wisdom..."]

Here, as in all the previous verses, the wise contemplative king is leading us to our prospective liberation.... By simply seeing [Isvara] the manifested ego is corrected of its relativistic weakness. (369)

Human experience is such that when an impression is registered as having a name, form and variety of functions, a continuous replica of it becomes a built-in memory factor in all those who interact with each other and consistently and contiguously see the transformation of a particularized form which always bears the same name or identification and which has predictable behavior with which others learn to interact with confidence over [the] years. (370)

379-388 is a masterful review of the Upanishad to this point.

It is exactly here that the rishi who is behind this Upanishad wants to show that it makes a flight from Vedic thought to Vedanta. It makes a drastic revision of the conventions of the Vedic era. (389)

For fear of being accused of heresy, the scholars who have previously dealt with this Upanishad have usually toed the line of ancient Vedic scholars with a doggish loyalty in their *bhasyas*. The few who understood the revaluation fought shy of the implications of the truth revealed by the rishi. Many Indian scholars who have gone abroad and established themselves with high positions and attractive salaries in the temples of knowledge like Heidelberg, Oxford and the Sorbonne, have become Vedic apologists, twisting the intention of the rishi so their reductive readers would not see any drastic shift in the Vedantic rishi's stand. (389)

The book commences with a reference to the horse sacrifice with the glaring omission of any specific king for whom the sacrifice is to be performed. It looks like a deliberate slight to the reverence for tradition. (389)

Ordinarily a *brahmana* does a sacrifice aspiring for ordinary pleasures. Here such pleasures are considered to be out of place. A king does a horse sacrifice to declare himself as a king-emperor. In this context the sovereignty that is sought is not that of a king but a truth seeker seeking the sovereignty of truth. This is like treading on fresh ground, opening a new vista, embarking on a fresh goal of life. (390)

* As George Thiebaut honestly put it in his translation of Sankara's commentary on the Vedanta Sutras, "An average Indian will shudder to question the tradition of his country." However, we live in a new age where honesty in the explication of truth matters more than showing questionable piety. So we want to declare to the world that the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad is written with the honest intention of correcting many Vedic conventions so that truth can shine forth without a façade and without the "proofs" of dogmatic authority. The invocation given for this Upanishad is not to any deistic godhead but to the wisdom teachers of all ages, not just teachers but to all who are instrumental in presenting *brahmavidya* or universal wisdom. Thus from the very beginning it emphasized that this Upanishad is not a theological scripture. It is meant to be a treatise on the Science of the Absolute. (390)

Fulfillment in life comes only from love. (391)

The true claim for wisdom comes from absolute certitude and not from inane beliefs or speculations. (393)

Once you know that it is the Self that assumes every name and form and gives relevance to all specific activities and transactions,

then it is like the reservoir of absolutist wisdom overflowing in all directions This is illustrated in the Bhagavad Gita by the example of a Brahmin's little sacred well being submerged under the flood of a river in spate:

There would be as much use for all the Vedas to a Brahmin of wisdom as there could be for a pool of water when a full flood prevails all over. (II.46) (398)

To illustrate all the intricacies of the problem posed here, Narayana Guru has written *Arivu: The Gnosis of Epistomy*. He presents before us a man who is caught in the snare of uncertainty. Like Hamlet, he says that to be or not to be is his main problem, while one who has the certitude of absolute knowledge keeps his cool and does not have before him the baffling alternatives of dual appearances. It is like gaining a transparency both of time and space and not being caught in the world of identity crisis. This is one of the narrow gates of wisdom through which one has to pass to enter into the path of the Absolute, which is described in the Katha Upanishad as walking on the razor's edge. On the part of the seeker there is always the temptation to believe you have seen, but as the Qur'an says, "If you have seen it, it is not Allah." (399)

There are subtle ideational implications that are pertinent in making a situation whole, precise and helpful for objectivization. At the same time, from moment to moment, consciously or unconsciously, we disregard the purport and meaning of many obvious things or factors that constitute an experience so that there can be continuity in our confrontation and in the registry of our memory. This aspect is an ongoing experience of transcendence which is interlaced with our apprehension of the immanent. The recall of the transcendent in the specificity of the immanent is interfered with by the nature of an individuated person's rhythm of alternating states of consciousness. (400-1)

One's life has to consistently support a lifelong motivation. Thus experiences which lie forgotten in the past have to be considered as retrospectively contributing to the general flow of the mainstream of life. That means one has not only to account for simple incidents of each day but also for one's philosophy of life and style of life. Consistent behavior all through one's life is to be accounted for to one's own conscience or, in the case of a religious believer, to the ultimate judgment of the god or belief to which the faithful person is beholden. (431)

We are in a situation where simple perception or a linear vision of life is inadequate. (431)

Instead of using symbolic logic, the Vedantins have made a device of judging a superimposition in contrast to a valid ground of knowledge. They draw a distinction between the ground and its superimposition. The negation of the superimposition is called *apavada*, and the superimposition itself is called *adhyaropa*. Consequently certain admissions are tentatively accepted as real and later rejected as unreal.... Therefore, in higher philosophy such as in *brahmavidya*, ordinary logic is not admissible. (431-2)

433 lists Shankara's four qualifications for studying the Absolute.

Air should not be mistaken for gases which are mixed up with air. (434)

* Science is to help us avoid the folly of putting our trust in nonsense. (435)

If we seek immortality it should be in a scheme where bodily extension, periods of time with beginnings and ends, and the physicality of bodies which can be objectified have no significance. (435)

We presume the perennial by looking at the transient. (437)

We are so active in the daytime because everything we see, hear, touch, taste, smell and recall as an image of the past or project as an imagination of the future has an inner glow of a corresponding value as if each one is a pearl of precious worth. We struggle to reach it, to gain it, to possess it and never to leave it. (437)

II.3.3 has a beautiful exposition of hiranyagarbha (436-9)

II.3.6 is a beautiful meditation, especially the first half bringing a highly poetic mantra to life. (448-53)

Look, here is that Person. Where did you see him last? In the morning sun. It was as if his hair and beard were on fire. There were shooting beams of golden rays finer than hair filling the entire sky. His beard was of a brighter hue of silver and gold filling the mountains and valleys, making the atmosphere and the world of cities, pastures, rivers and gardens. Something flitted by like an oriole—such deep yellow in the wings that were spread across the sky. Or was it only an illusion? All that we see now is this large flock of sheep grazing in the pastures. What a snow white apparition! It's all gone. Wonder of wonders—one moment it is all blue and the next moment a brilliant red changing into violet. Is this true, or is the whole world burning away in a conflagration of flames? Oh what a beauty—from the very heart of the flames there comes that white lotus with supremely brilliant petals. There is no fire there. Otherwise there could not be those dripping dewdrops all over the petals. In the morning glory of the sun, every drop changes into many-faceted diamonds. It is certainly hard to look on when dazzling light blinds you with a terrific brightness. Have no fear, it is no longer shining. It is only like a stray lightning. This is fantastic. We have heard of the indestructible glory of Sri. Now it is as if we are bathed in it. All through, we have been asserting “it is, it is,” and the next moment, with equal conviction, “it is not, it

is not,” *neti neti*. However, one thing is sure—if you have seen it, you have not seen it. Before, you had only heard of the indescribable, but now you see it, hear it, feel it, yet you have no words to describe it. Have you no name for it, just to mention it to somebody else? Maybe we can say truth of truth (*satyasya satya*). Is it truer than your breath? Of course. Breath is truest of all we know, and yet this is truer than that. This is the truth of truths. And where is it? In your right eye. Yes indeed, in my right eye. (448-9)

Every molecule has an in-built consciousness. Each conscient being has a muffled articulation replete with the memory of everything it has passed through. However molecular it is, each one has a repository of the grand tales of life that are recorded and passed on from one transit to the next over several lives through millennia. What is it?—a specificity of conditioning. Is it a mutant, mechanical fixation? No. Each fragment of it has in it the appropriate knowhow to relate itself to what precedes it and what follows it. The most ingenious performances have their blueprint already maintained in a teleologic causal expression. That means every *vasana* is born of *vijnana*. From where do they come in such an orderly way that they have a sequence in their system and an efficiency in their manifestation?

This is the wonder of wonders. Individually they are bricks. Collectively the plurality disappears in unity and there stands a mansion of magnificent magnitude. Are such things real? Real enough to tempt. Real enough to strike fear in the onlooker. Real enough to evoke the desire to possess. What are they actually? The normative notion with which we measure our fantasies. You mean *maya*? Yes, indeed. But don't we experience it? Yes, we do. Aren't we all clothed in dignity? But you will not allow the ounces of your clothes to be pulled off one by one. That will put you to the shame of nakedness. So what is real, the yarn or the cloth? Or the dexterity of putting the yarn in a certain way which answers the needs of the consumer? Where does the stuff belong? (450)

When the dialogue between Balaki, the Gargya, and Ajatasatru, the king of Benares, was initiated, Balaki promised to teach Ajatasatru the secret of *brahmavidya*. The gentle and generous king agreed to the proposal with an open mind and listened patiently to Gargya. Gargya presented several perceptual aspects of the manifested world as a way of knowing the Absolute. King Ajatasatru dismissed each lesson as a relativistic aspect of the manifesting Absolute. When Gargya came to his wit's end, the king openly told him that what he knew was very peripheral. On seeing his limited knowledge of the Absolute, Gargya humbled himself and requested the king to teach him the science of the Absolute. (451)

The Upanishad takes every pain to teach us how the mortal is interlinked with the immortal and how the physical is fashioned so the spirit can articulate through it. In spite of the mortality of the body and the transience of life on earth, time and space are given another dimension so that many lifelong experiences can be linked to make this world a training ground, so to say, of the soul that aspires to perfection. (453)

One has to drastically revise and reform one's value outlook to turn away from *samsara* to *moksha*. (455)

Life on earth is like a preparation for the spirit to know all the varieties of manifestations into which the pure Self can go without betraying its true reality. It is a pleasurable festivity of the senses and mental fantasies that can be projected. It can also be the extreme pain into which an embodied life can go before a turning point comes to the individuated self to seek its true nature or the true Self. (455)

Thoughts are not possible without the sequence of words.... This magical device of a word occupying the central focus of consciousness has the mighty power to transfigure an external entity into a remembered or articulated word. This is our greatest

friend and our greatest enemy. There is a liberating light (*prakasha*) that enables consciousness to move and expand. But the restriction of the meaning of a word has an arresting frontier beyond which the connotation cannot go. Thus the word is a binding agent. (456)

Our own subjectivity can make a snare of entanglement with memories and imaginations, making us like spiders caught in their own webs, or it can show us that the pure light behind the subject has no names, forms, or promptings for action in it. (456)

In the first Adhyaya, 3.27-28, we made an ardent prayer to be resurrected from the veiling untruth to truth, from the darkness of ignorance to the light of knowledge and from the frozen state of mortality to the freedom of the immortal. It is entirely the individual's choice whether to remain with the unreal (*asat*), darkness (*tamas*) and mortality (*mrityu*). (456-7)

*The Indian scheme of spirituality is not exactly a theory of evolution. It is maximizing one's devolution to an absolute point of negativity where the search for freedom, knowledge and immortality becomes imperative. The true evolution of the individuated spirit to reclaim its true nature starts only from the point of being initiated by one's guru to seek the path of realization. (457)

From the first day of our birth we have learned to grab, to receive, to accumulate, to possess. Here you are asked to open your fist and give away what you have received, possessed, accumulated. You are asked to give up three specific claims: your identity with the possessiveness of a spouse, your pride of having generated a person of your resemblance to continue your heritage, and the possession you have legally established over what you can hold as indisputably yours. For a man it is his wife, his children and his property. For a woman it is her husband, the obligations of her

motherhood, and both the physical and spiritual inheritance for which she is valued. This reversal of attitude is termed here as *sannyasa*. (457-8)

In the Bhagavad Gita, which contains the essence of the Upanishads, *sannyasa* is reexamined and revalued; relinquishment (*tyaga*) is put in the place of renunciation. *Tyaga* has a moderating influence on *sannyasa*. (458)

Here Yajnavalkya takes a very drastic step to enforce the discipline of *sannyasa* on those who want to be liberated from the intellectual, social and moral snare of conceit. A seeker should forgo any identification as man or woman or as having any socially structured *varna* and go to the very basic notion that one is nothing other than the Self, the one Self without a second, which has no beginning or end. It is not located in just one body but is in everyone. (459)

*460 has a lovely exposition of the sutratma: how everything is linked together.

It is essential for us to correct the colorations of our minds, the prejudices and conditionings to which we are exposed. Every prejudice, every conditioning, every coloration is a bondage. Hence a human being is called a *bandha*, one who is bound. There is the need for liberation for everyone, liberation from prejudices, wrong identities, mistaken notions, and habit formations. This is called *moksha*. The burning away of social, moral and spiritual bondage is called *nirvana* (burning out). When a physical bondage is done with, its place is taken by an instinctive bondage, a moral bondage or an emotional bondage. (460-1)

In ancient days [India] had forest schools conducted by very wise teachers. These schools were called *gurukulas*. Parents sent their children to the gurukula at the age of twelve. They would study

there according to the requirements of the child's parents, the Vedas, and the Vedangas. As a teacher conducted his students in the path of *brahmacharya*, the guru was a *brahmachari*, one who sits, walks and lives in the path of the Absolute. That did not mean the guru was unmarried. Later the word *brahmachari* came to mean a person who conforms to celibacy. This is only an incidental meaning. The true meaning is to live in the path of the Absolute. (462-3)

What [the students of the gurukula] had heard was recorded in the minds of people as *sruti*, that which teaches universal truth which never changes. *Smriti* is the application of the teaching of the gurus which is to be modified according to the historical setting, current conventions, local beliefs, and personal requirements of the student. Hence the *smritis* are subject to correction from time to time. (463)

In the world of samsara there are many horizontal paths, some leading to *preyas*, worldly prosperity, some leading to *sreyas*, lasting values. *Preyas* is perishable in this world itself. Certain merits of *sreyas* will accompany the person even after death, but those can be taken at most to heaven or hell. (467)

If one truly knew the Self, he or she would not have any trace of dissatisfaction. (467)

Another verse of Narayana Guru's says that even the *sukritis* (persons of good action) go round and round, forcefully compelled to go in the vicious circle of right and wrong. This happens because we know only the conditioned way of desiring the meritorious and walking in horizontal paths.... To see the immanent in the transcendent and the transcendent in the immanent is the secret of unitive wisdom. (468)

In such a short mantra, the crossroads of life is very clearly shown. It is a paradoxical situation to which every wisdom-loving person has to come at least once in the course of several lives if not in the course of each life. (469)

II.4.2 reads; At this Maitreyi said: “Even if this whole earth replete with wealth be mine, venerable sir, will it make me immortal?” “No,” said Yajnavalkya, “Your life will be exactly like that of people well provided with materials, but there is no prospect of immortality through wealth.” (470)

In his commentary on the Brahma Sutras 1.1.1, Shankara says, “The knowledge of active religious duty has for its fruit transitory felicity and that again depends on the performance of religious acts. The enquiry into *brahman*, on the other hand, has for its fruit eternal bliss and does not depend on any acts.” (470-1)

In the *Brahma Mimamsa*, the object of enquiry, i.e. *brahman*, is something already accomplished (existent) for it is eternal and does not depend on human energy. (471)

Maitreyi, with her rhetorical question “Will wealth make me immortal?” is referring to the discipline of not desiring any thing in the here or in the hereafter. (471)

There can be two possible relationships of intimacy. One is horizontal and the other is vertical. Most worldly relationships primarily have a horizontal bipolarity, but the relationship between a guru and a disciple is of vertical bipolarity. (474-5)

Yajnavalkya himself openly says that Maitreyi has now become dear by choosing the path of wisdom, and he invites her to come closer and sit beside him. This act itself literally illustrates the Upanishadic context to which they belong. Upanishad means to sit

close, giving full attention, so that the guru can clearly show the otherwise mysterious truth of the Absolute. (475)

*In all these varieties of fields it is imperative for us to relate ourselves with our objects of interest. When we close down the shutters on any item it is as if that item is cut off from us. Each item one shows interest in is like opening a window of perception into the details of one's own self. Alienating an object has the counter-effect of that object becoming alienated from oneself also. The scope of one's life interest becomes more and more reduced as one gives up items of interest. Most people think renunciation means refusing to accept the empirical reality of wakeful life. This mantra clearly shows what a fallacious view that is. (481)

*In the wakeful world there are three areas of specific interest. The first is familiarization with all items by recognizing the differences in forms and assigning names to every form. That entails an analytical fragmentation of the world presented to us. In the modern world one tends to specialize until one insulates oneself within a highly mechanized world of name and form. While seeing the scheme of things and positions of items in the world of objectivity, you can also have a synthetic vision of the whole in which you know where you are and yet you are not devoured by the world.

Another area of interest is that of communication, where you can put yourself in the position of a silent observer, making no comment, or you can be like a sports commentator, jumping at every issue, giving your verbal reaction to whatever you notice. Most communications which come to a person are uncritically made by people of little understanding. One does not lose much by paying no heed to non-authoritative pronouncements. This field also includes newspapers, published books and periodicals, radio and television broadcasts, and the enormous quantity of propaganda and advertisements.

In this world of wakeful encounters, a wise person has to use discretion in formulating a hierarchy of transactional values with a view to relating oneself to one's society with the least amount of social distraction. The third and most hazardous arena is that of action. Individuals as well as masses of people feel compelled to enter into activities by the sheer presence of situations which are not clearly examined or critically studied. It is in this field that the Upanishad cautions us to minimize our activities with the intention of having a vision of life whose transparency is not vitiated by undesirable motivations.

All these belong to the consciousness of the wakeful, which has in it a fourfold division of the gross (*sthula*) and the subtle (*sukshma*), the general (*samanya*) and the specific (*visesha*). People who have superficial moorings may be impressed by the gross without understanding its subtle implications. Similarly, one who is impressed by the specific may mistakenly think that it is a rule for the general. Being in relation with the manifested world of the wakeful presents many snares and complications. This necessitates having safe guides and a code of conduct to safeguard us from getting into social confusions or self-deluding temptations. (481-2)

These are some of the implications of the present mantra we should be aware of so that in the name of Self-realization we will not reduce ourselves to ignoramus persons devoid of all insight and incapable of charting our own personal futures to make life the most successful adventure of spirit. (483)

The examples given here of the drum, the lyre and the conch shell make a heart-touching experiential illustration for us to go into the deeper strata of consciousness to which music can take us. It shows us that an arbitrary renunciation and denial of this world is neither a healthy attitude nor a feasible one. Phenomenal aspects can be taken advantage of to arrive at the unity of things, especially in the sphere of ecstatic and blissful rejoicings in the unifying power of

music. Pythagoras believed that the structure and composition of the world is essentially musical. India's great books ranging from the Sama Veda to the works of Narada, Kahala and more modern writers like Saranga Deva all present the Self as the purest basis of musical sound. (487)

All manifestations of the phenomenal world have two opposite phases. One is the self-luminous light of the spirit and the other is the inertial non-luminosity of inert matter. The best example of this is a spark. It is a particle of matter which has no light of its own, yet it bears within it a thermal glow of fire. It is visible only as long as the fire in it continues to glow. When the glow is gone, it turns to dust. Then once again it becomes part of the terrestrial soil. The human body is very much like a spark or burning candle. It is a combustible mass of inertial matter, but when it burns there is a glow. (490)

Poor-witted humans can be easily outwitted by the clever game of metamorphosis. (495)

The Vedantin is not the only one who teaches unity and oneness. Everything in this world is part of the grand orchestra which is always teaching the unity of the one Self. If you have eyes to see and ears to hear, the entire world is a Veda, revealing a new fact of truth and offering a fresh meaning of whatever you have yet to know. Although the Self is seemingly hidden, nothing is more public and no teacher is more vociferous than the Self, which is everywhere in all forms revealing everything in all possible ways. (495-6)

* Mantra II.4.12 is a beautiful meditation on everything and nothing, being and becoming, same and anya.

As people tend to make anthropomorphic images, they not only conceive of a person [God] as the listener-seer-thinker but because

of built-in sex images may even make the listener-seer-thinker a male person. This inherent defect of the human mind makes many people incapable of transcending fixed notions that are deeply engrained in their minds. (501)

Bondage mainly consists of biologic conditioning, conventional colorations and deeply ingrained conceptual flaws arising from uncritical language and articles of faith. Thus an average person stands submerged in thousands of undifferentiated prejudices. (501)

The eye can see only what is presented before it. Similarly the ear can hear only what is fed into it. Even though it is an external image that is received by the organ of perception, it is brought to the interior core of the psyche. There the spirit acts as an interpreter of the highly condensed, converged and epitomized image. Its identification and projection into a psychically devised time and space admirably coincide and concur with the source of external energy so that the person who experiences sense objects is not far from right in expecting a corresponding object which acts as a source of the feeding-in mechanism. Thus in Indian Vedanta, for all practical purposes, there is a transactional verity in the empirical data. (504)

This teaching is to be directly heard from a bonafide guru who is a fully realized representative of the *sruti* of Vedanta wisdom. After carefully listening, the student should critically examine every word he or she has heard. The critical enquiry is to clear one's mind of any doubt or uncertainty that might arise. (506)

It is between the question and the answer that the Self reveals a little of itself. This is a continuous process. Phenomenality is nothing other than a chain of disquiet and fulfillment. (507)

The supreme truth is not a dead weight, it is the most amusing, most entertaining, and most meaningful theme of life—truer than truth, more blissful than bliss, and most serious in its dispensation of freedom and free will. (508)

The unitive principle [is] like honey, which is a coming together of the essence from multitudinous sources. (508)

The Absolute is replete with the relative.... When the direction is right, it is honey to us. When we maintain the right direction we are honey to others.... Relationship is dialectical. You relate to your self. You relate to another. You relate to all that is known. You relate to the transcendental or unknown. When these four relationships are in perfect harmony, you are the harmonious darling of the world and everyone will think of you only with sweetness in their consideration and loving care. (531-2)

We are asked to give ourselves entirely to the honey of the eternal space. That can be done in the sweetest way by never smothering anything or anyone. Narayana Guru says, “The one religion towards which all beings, humble or gifted, are always moving, is to arrive at this blessed space where you breathe nothing but freedom.” (556)

Society has no patience to find out exactly why a person cannot respond to the call of the hour, which is seen only as a general law. Actually every person is an exception to everything in this world. (558-559)

You can be a honey to your neighbor only when you recognize the common value which you both cherish and in what respect you relate to them. (559)

Every consideration should oscillate between the totality and the inclusion of yourself in it as the recipient of the gains of your *dharma*. (559)

This is the challenge of life. You have not only to know your *dharma* but also the situation in which the call of *dharma* comes and all those who are along with you in the fray. From the Supreme Self that belongs to all to the very tip of your nails, *dharma* has its way. You should be able to spread yourself, open up and be as extensive as this vast world of the cosmos. Then you should be able to gather yourself into the most efficiently functioning inner drive of the supervising monitor of your life. Every consideration should oscillate between the totality and the inclusion of yourself in it as the recipient of the gains of your *dharma*. Then all is well and good. (559)

One of the ultimate aspects of truth is existence. Truth has a light of its own by which it shines. However great is truth, if it is not known, it is as if it does not exist. Existence has to be substantiated by the subsistence of knowledge. The existential ground of the Self is considered to be its self-luminous consciousness, called *cit*. (562)

Death is the immanent and instantaneous transcendence of being. (565)

The death referred to at the beginning was not a static death, not a barren, impotent state. Instead it was a call for being. Therefore it was qualified as hunger. This is not to be understood as the hunger in a belly. If you put together every need you can think of, every possible hunger and thirst, a supreme state of need, then nothing can have more potential than this necessity that can move towards its fulfillment. It is the archetypal theme for manifestation. (565)

Relativistic manifestation only gives one a false image of value. Hence it is to be rejected as “not this” (*neti*). A further question comes. Is *neti* (rejection) the ultimate stance one should take? To this, another categorical answer is given: “not this” (*neti*). Two negations make an affirmation, not of the first that is rejected, not of the second that is rejected, but of a holistic comprehension that includes all the relativistic positions within the ambit of the Absolute so that all counterparts are unitively recognized like the spokes of a wheel fitted into its hub. Such is the beautiful presentation of the Self given in this *brahmana*. This honey of immortality is such that when you die as a relativistic individual in the phenomenal world, you die to falsehood, ignorance and death, and you stand shining forth as the ever-existent, the eternally luminous, and the truth of truth never again to be affected by the stain of duality. (570)

The long list of the hierarchy of gurus is given to show that wisdom flows through generations of people like a great river of *brahmavidya*, which enriches the soul of a country. Just like those who take advantage of a great source of life like the Ganges, Nile or Mississippi go near to the river, those who want to be benefitted by the river of wisdom should go like pilgrims to the presence of a living guru and receive from them the wisdom which has been nourishing seekers from time immemorial and will ever go on through the bipolarity of gurus and disciples. (588)

What is prescribed in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad for getting over nescience is a total eradication of all previously conditioned preferences. Unfortunately, because of the very many stories given in the legends and mythologies of the world, emancipation (*moksha*) has come to be accepted by the public as some fantastic, magical experience. However, its meaning is very simple: to be free of all erroneous knowledge. We have many conditioned reflexes and colorations in our perception of objective and subjective stimuli. With partial knowledge or wrong knowledge,

several million prejudices are maintained in the individual's mind. Colored visions are to be de-colored. Conditionings are to be de-conditioned. Prejudices are to be dropped. It is in this sense that Sureshvara looks upon renunciation as imperative to attain freedom from prejudices and colorations. (593)

*Liberation or emancipation brings along with it an existential transcendence by taking away the hook of the ego from all preferences. This comes naturally, just as a ripe fruit falls away from the tree by itself, or a dry leaf flutters away from its branch. Renunciation is not actually a throwing away or a mechanical giving up. At the same time, renunciation will not happen without the cultivation of an intimate discrimination of values. It is easy to give up a thing of lesser value so that one may hold onto a higher value. In Vedanta, the highest value is the value of the Self. (594)

The reader will not fully grasp the purport of what is conveyed in these passages with a single reading. (601)

Everything in this world is temporally, spatially, and qualitatively related to everything else, and therefore we know what is relative. In contrast to the relative, we coin a word, "Absolute." On hearing the word Absolute we know it is not relative. All the same, we do not know what the Absolute is. From this situation there arises a need to find a satisfactory concept of the Absolute substantiated with experience. An individual is only a partial reality One's reason is only an infinitesimal part of the faculty of universal consciousness, and hence our instrument of cognition is inadequate to know the Absolute as such. That is why a beginner approaches the idea of the Absolute with the process of the *via negativa... neti neti*. (604)

The physiologic peculiarities of our senses and the interpretive mechanisms of our minds are responsible for focusing the consciousness on structurally configured images. This grand

obstruction in life is beautifully described by Plato in his cave allegory given in the *Republic*. According to Plato, individuation in a physical body is a biologic imprisonment of the spirit which brings us to the compulsion of staring at our shadows all the time and identifying ourselves with our shadows. Plato also presents before us a relative truth and an absolute truth. The relative truth he calls “the visible,” and the absolute, “intelligible.” The term “intelligible” may not be convincing. That was improved by Bergsonian philosophy as the “intuitive.” (605)

The second method used by Indian philosophers to arrive at the Absolute is to postulate the basics. Basically, the Absolute is pure existence, pure subsistence, and pure bliss, which is symbolized by the mystical sound-image AUM. These have an intimate resemblance to terms like omnipresence, omniscience and omnipotence, in which “potent” is not to be interpreted as powerful. It should rather be understood as “all-potential” or “of endless possibility.” The reference is to the ground of all values. (605)

We are helpless creatures. It is in this context that we invent and create the omnipresent, the omniscient and the omnipotent so that we may not shrink into the void of non-existence, darkness and death. Here the Upanishad is giving us a forewarning of our limitations before we enter into the path of the spirit’s adventure. (605)

It is not through argument that one arrives at God. (611)

In the *Udgita Brahmana* [third brahmana of the first adhyaya], the mantra that is given for emancipation implies the true spirit of *sannyasa*. *Sannyasa* is relating to what is valuable and giving up what is irrelevant. (625)

Only when the existential factor in the beloved is seen as an image of universal existence can one move away from the specified object of love to the entire universe, which is only a small fraction of the totality of existence. (625)

It is real blindness to have preference and a sense of responsibility for only one or two of life's manifestations. That is why parental attachment to children as an instinctive compulsion is looked upon as blindness. If a person is released from that blindness, their love will go to every ant and bee and wasp, to birds of all feathers and shapes, to reptiles of all kinds, and to every plant and animal in the world. The person who sees the universality of life will be more compassionate than millions of parents put together. That is the light one should seek, not the light which creates the urge to put one child alone in one's lap for fond kisses and admiration. (626)

What is transient and which is maintained only between two ticks of a clock is immortalized by the foolish. The wise have not come and are not leaving, so there is nothing to give up and nothing to gain. That is the last prayer for emancipation from death to deathlessness. (627)

The highest teaching of the Upanishad is epitomized in the instruction, "One should meditate on all aspects of the totality (*brahman*) as the Supreme Self (*atman*)" (I.4.7) The aspirant meditates on this aphorism after listening to the *sruti* reiterated by an authentic person as one's own guru, provided the guru is an accomplished *brahmavid* and an erudite knower of the *sruti*. (628)

When a person chants the sacred mantra AUM, the verbalization of A, U and M is suggestive of the chanter's wakeful, dream and deep sleep states. Then the person goes further into the deep and eternal silence which is inaudible but fills the entire consciousness as the inexpressible, imperishable verity of *turiya* (the fourth state). Similarly, *sravana* or listening is to be followed by a silent

mediation in which all specific idea formations are dissolved in the unnamable Self.

A beginner may not know how to proceed with the discipline of unifying the multitudinous proliferation of consciousness in the wakeful and dream states.... Hence it is necessary for a disciple to keep his or her body, words and mind in perfect attunement with those of the guru. (628)

The instruction to meditate on *brahman* as *atman* is called *vidya sutra* by Suresvara. Sutra is the conjoining thread. Although *atman* is invisible and all-pervasive and transcends the limits of time and space, it occurs to a personalized organism like a human being as an item of illumination. This light of awareness within the phenomenal scheme is felt in the individual's sensory system and memory storage and as the flash of judgment and consequent affectation about a circumscribed item of awareness. Each such illumination is like the fluorescent shining of a firefly in the night or a dewdrop that is made to glitter kaleidoscopically by a gleam of sunlight. (628-9)

In and through individuated experience, the thread of *atman* glows with the intention of unifying specific instances into a contiguous knowledge of the Self. Thus *brahman* can be meditated upon by recognizing the Self in and through the proliferated variegations which appear as the phenomenal shimmering in the wakeful and dream states. For this the meditator has to catch what precedes an illumination and what follows the glow of awareness. This is like diving into deep sleep or the causal consciousness and refusing to succumb to the breaking up of the Self into instances of display.

After listening to the teacher's pronouncement of the a priori truth, the disciple closes the eyes to efface the physical distance between the disciple and the preceptor. Then the natural oscillation of modulating consciousness (*bhava*) is substituted by the intuitive

flash of holistic apperception which is the heart and soul of the testimony of *sabda*. (629)

The thread that relates the understanding of the disciple and the vision of the teacher reflects the sutra that relates the Self with the cosmos or the Absolute. (629)

Illumination comes like a flash of wisdom, and it is the revelation of such knowledge that establishes in a person an unchanging attitude for the rest of one's life. Suresvara... maintains the belief that such a revelation will not come by itself unless a person seriously aspires for it. The seriousness of one's search depends on how one prepares oneself to gain such an insight. Every passing moment is an opportunity to have a hard look at the facts of one's life to see what blemishes are there that can be steadily removed." (630)

We have two alternatives if we want to renounce. One is totally obliterating one's ego sense so that one can remain as an eternal witness of the Absolute and see the world as an expression of the Absolute. The other is cultivating a transparency of vision of the Absolute, even when, by the intrigues of nature, one seemingly undergoes all the vicissitudes of life. (633)

Brahman (the Absolute) can be the most dynamic expression of the highest reality, and it can be the basic urge for a person to attain perfection in this very life. Brahman can also be a philosophical cushion on which to speculate, adding one more meaningless word to the verbiage of religion and philosophy. (634)

Many people muse on the glory of realization, and dream of someday reaching there while, as if from behind, they are eaten up by the canker of ego and the darkness of ignorance. Every religion and every philosophy is trying its best to assure us that there is a bright tomorrow when we will be in the benevolent hands of the

Supreme. This is a kind of panacea where the believer is held captive by self-hypnosis. But if we can shake ourselves out of this stupor and become more wakeful and conscious, we will see that we are in the hellfire of ignorance—an ignorance that we ourselves have generated, if not during this very life, then in a previous one. It is all because we glorify the highest and neglect our existential life.

Unfortunately, our existential life is one of functioning as a masochist and/or a sadist, taking pleasure in hurting ourselves, as well as feeling the vigor of life in the blood we or others profusely shed. Although we make many hypotheses painted in numerous colorful forms that fascinate our imagination, they do not help us to come out of the quagmire of illusion. The next course for us in our search for the Absolute or Self-realization is to give time to the factual situations of life. However, this does not mean one helpless person should hold another helpless person on their lap with the two sitting together bemoaning their fate. That will not help either. We have to see our egos clearly to know which aspects are malevolent and which aspects are benevolent. We have to rigorously clear away the agony-brewing aspects of ignorance or selfishness. The selfishness which we speak of here is the bias which in every walk of life leads us away from that central benevolence to which we should gravitate every moment.

The purificatory discipline of the individuated self is the major door to salvation. The same scriptural texts that give us the idea of release or liberation also help to give relief from the proliferation of our ego's power to demolish. Therefore, it is absolutely necessary to sublimate the ego's power by spiritual reconstruction if we wish to reach our goal. (635-636)